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The fluid team atmosphere in sport and exercise

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Abstract
While scholars have provided insights across various themes (e.g., coherence, guidance, functions, etc.), a recent evaluation proposed that the domain of collective interactions in physical activity presents substantial potential for advancement as a research focus (Eys & Spink, 2016). The aims of this review are to (a) underscore the significance of collective interactions within physical activity settings, (b) assess advancements made on particular but crucial enduring and emerging subjects, and (c) propose avenues for forthcoming research that will promote the evolution of the field. Consequently, a rationale is established for comprehending collective interactions grounded in the prevalence of groups in sport and exercise environments, alongside the prospect of fulfilling the inherent need for affiliation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Ultimately, pivotal themes and prospects for future research are integrated within four overarching segments encompassing (a) establishing the framework (e.g., the collective ambiance, team formation, and social integration), (b) organizational matters (e.g., functions, guidance), (c) collective processes and emergent conditions (e.g., coherence), and (d) the application of collective interaction principles. Overall, there exist extensive prospects for scholars to contribute to the theory, research, and application of collective interactions in sport and exercise.

Keywords: Biker, biking velocity, core stability

Introduction
One needs to look no further than the men's 2018 World Cup of football (Soccer) to find examples of how crucial collective dynamics are to the culture and performance of sport teams. For instance, European-based sport psychology professionals working with the English (Dr. Pippa Grange) and Swedish (Dr. Daniel Ekvall) teams gained attention for their contributions toward uniting team members and surpassing performance expectations Specifically, Ekvall emphasized that positive team dynamics provided "a competitive advantage. There are a lot of things that affect a match and if we can do as many of them as well as possible, it strengthens our chances. That includes good teamwork, unity and communication". The significance of collective dynamics is evident across physical activity contexts. Indeed, the fitness industry serves as another example where physical activity providers, such as the November Project, Soul Cycle, and Orange theory, have leveraged the power of groups to promote and sustain member involvement (Brown, 2016) [1]. Similarly, underscored the importance of organizational culture, social unity, shared experiences, and common goals for those engaging in Cross Fit classes. From a practical standpoint, few would dispute the strong influence that groups and collective dynamics wield within physical activity contexts. Collective dynamics is a term used to describe "the actions, processes, and changes that occur within and between groups", and subjects falling under this umbrella term have long intrigued physical activity researchers. This is evident through numerous editions of pivotal texts (e.g., Group Dynamics in Sport; 4th edition, as well as empirical articles published in journals focused on sport/exercise contexts (e.g., Psychology of Sport and Exercise) and others dedicated to group understanding in a broader sense (e.g., Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice). However, a cursory examination of the table of contents for Psychology of Sport and Exercise over the past decade (2008–2018; excluding special issues, commentaries, etc.), which seems appropriate given the purpose of this special edition, reveals observations about the relative coverage of collective dynamics. Firstly, out of over 900 titles surveyed, only 15% appear to address group-related issues, and this percentage might be generous as it includes titles with the most incidental references to the group environment.

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A stricter criterion (e.g., a clear focus on small group variables such as cohesion or roles) would considerably lower this percentage. Despite the limited research on groups compared to other psychological topics in our field a second observation is that the published research exhibits remarkable topical diversity. Notably, issues have been explored in groups ranging from dyads (e.g., coach-athlete relationships, peer friendships) to larger sport teams and exercise groups (e.g., cohesion, motivational climate). Additionally, researchers have been keen on understanding individual experiences stemming from group membership (e.g., social identity, motivation), how specific members influence a group compared to others (e.g., peer leadership), and broader societal or cultural implications (e.g., diversity). While traditionally emphasized topics such as cohesion and leadership persist, intriguing new subject matters are emerging (e.g., team resilience, collective emotions, Overall, our comprehension of collective dynamics within sport and exercise settings is considered to be in its adolescent stage (i.e., possessing strong potential for growth as a research focus;, and some introspection regarding progress and research opportunities in this area is warranted. Acknowledging that the depth and breadth of coverage are necessarily limited within one article, the objectives of the present review are to (a) underscore the importance of collective dynamics within physical activity contexts, (b) evaluate progress made on select but key longstanding and emerging topics, and (c) provide suggestions forr future research that will facilitate the progression of the field.

The importance of group dynamics in physical activity contexts

There are two overarching reasons to advocate for a research focus on the dynamics of small groups in sport and exercise contexts. Firstly, groups are ubiquitous within physical activities. While team sports and exercise classes are the primary scenarios often considered in group contexts involving physical activity, sports typically labeled as 'individual' are also imbued with varying degrees of interdependence that render them suitable for group investigations). For instance, track and field athletes may engage in activities during competition that do not necessitate task interdependence (e.g., javelin, 100m sprints), but their training environment and club/team-level outcomes (i.e., other forms of interdependence) can significantly influence their experiences. Additionally, exercise contexts can vary in terms of their objective group characteristics and subjective levels of interdependence. As an example, preferences for physical activity contexts differ based on the formality and types of relationships forming the social structure (Burke, Carron, & Eys, 2006) [5].

A second reason supporting greater exploration of group issues is that sport/exercise provides contexts through which the need to belong (can be satisfied, fundamentally altering the experience of physical activity. posited that humans possess a fundamental motive for interpersonal attachments, substantiated by various sources of evidence. Firstly, they highlighted the ease with which social bonds form. Clearly, sport teams provide a setting in which interactions and relationships are encouraged. However, even in situations porous from a group perspective (e.g., drop-in physical activity classes), researchers have demonstrated that participants subjectively perceive characteristics of group ness. reported that exercisers held moderately high perceptions that the collection of individuals in their class

shared a common fate, mutual benefits, were organized in a social structure, engaged in group processes, and viewed themselves as a group (e.g., self-categorized as a 'we'). Additionally, those perceptions of group ness were positively linked to adherence.

The need to belong is also evident in individuals' reluctance to sever existing bonds, even when doing so would be beneficial. Observed that transition periods (e.g., moving) resulting in decreased interactions prompted individuals to find ways to stay in contact and plan for reunions. Similar reunion pacts are often made by members of sport teams, and such efforts are likely facilitated in recent years with online social platforms (e.g., Facebook; Regarding the maintenance of negative relationships, sport team coaches have suggested that managing negative influences within their groups (i.e., cancers/bad apples) entails direct and indirect communication, supervision, discipline, and tolerance (Cope, Eye, Schinke, & Bosselut, 2010) [13]. This list of strategies primarily aims to maintain group membership, with expulsion of the negative member as a last resort, particularly if that individual is talented. Furthermore, team members may engage in dangerous and humiliating activities, reinforcing destructive group norms, solely to remain within the team (i.e., hazing; In fact, athletes' social identification with their team positively predicts their susceptibility to peer influence to engage in risky behaviors also suggested that the need to belong likely influences individuals' cognitions and emotions. There is ample evidence within sport/exercise research aligning with this contention. For instance, in a longitudinal study of a long-term aerobics program based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), found that perceptions of the social environment, including social support and group cohesion, predicted exercise adherence through mediating cognitions such as intentions to be physically active and participants' attitudes toward the exercise behavior. In addition to the TPB, it should be noted that many prominent theories within exercise psychology incorporate elements of the social environment as contributors to cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes, including Self-Determination Theory (e.g., need for relatedness; and Social Cognitive Theory (e.g., influence of vicarious learning/modeling and verbal persuasion. In relation to sport, perceptions of belonging have been associated with improved satisfaction, social cohesion, and motivation. Similarly, when athletes experience greater cohesion among their team, they are more likely to interpret precompetitive anxiety symptom favorably. Finally, reinforced the importance of the group by reporting that relationships among teammates and social norms are factors influencing athletes' emotions, both individually and collectively.

A final source of evidence pertains to individuals' reactions when deprived of their involvement. Concluded that the lack of stable and positive relationships could lead to various negative outcomes (e.g., illness, dissatisfaction), many relevant to sport and exercise contexts. For instance, a significant aspect of the competitive environment is the selection process, and individuals deselected from their intended team experience a wide range of negative psychosocial and emotional outcomes (e.g., sadness, frustration, anger; Furthermore, described the experiences of ice hockey goaltenders who were benched (i.e., removed from competition due to poor play), which may be analogous to partial deprivation. The social atmosphere described by these individuals, at least in the short term, suggested that "the team bench, a place that was supposed to be associated with

support, bonding, and acceptance, became a place that fostered isolation and made the goalies feel like outcasts"

In sum, group processes play a significant role in physical activity contexts. Given the highlighted importance of the need or desire for social interaction as a fundamental human characteristic, continued efforts to explore group-related topics in sport/exercise are warranted.

Key longstanding and emerging topics

The purpose of the current section is to highlight some of the topics that have been investigated within collective dynamics and to propose specific paths for future work. Each of these topics deserves comprehensive reviews of its own, and in many cases, such summaries are available in the existing literature. In essence, we aim to simply bring attention to the breadth of collective dynamics issues and advocate for a greater focus within sport and exercise research. To achieve this objective, key topics and future research directions are integrated within four broad sections: (a) establishing the framework for collective dynamics, (b) the structural aspects within groups, (c) the ramifications of collective processes and emergent states, and (d) the application of collective dynamics principles.

Setting the stage

Coaches and sport psychology practitioners have long aimed to establish team structures that facilitate effective functioning. Foundational issues laying the groundwork for team effectiveness include comprehending the group's environment, considering team member attributes, and appropriately selecting and integrating new team members. Regarding the group's environment, two issues receiving considerable attention are the home advantage and motivational climate.

The home advantage refers to the consistent finding that "home teams in sport competitions win over 50% of the games under a balanced home and away schedule" (Building on this concept, proposed a feed forward framework comprising five key components of the home advantage: game location (home, away); factors associated with game location (crowd, learning/familiarity, travel, rules); critical psychological and behavioral states of competitors, coaches, officials; and performance outcomes. This conceptual framework served as a significant catalyst for research in this domain (e.g., are recognized as the first to systematically document the home advantage in professional baseball, ice hockey, and US collegiate football and basketball. Substantial supporting evidence has since emerged in professional sport and petitions such as the summer and winter Olympics (e.g., and winter Para Olympic Game. Research conducted prior to 2010 underwent meta-analysis to determine the overall effect and impact of potential moderators. A significant advantage for home teams was observed across conditions (Overall effect size of 0.604), with the effect being stronger for the pre-1950 era (compared to more recent eras), playoff/championship games (compared to regular season), and the sport of soccer (.674 winning percentage). No differences were found for the type of sport (individual vs. team) or competitive level (Collegiate vs. professional.

Beyond winning percentages, emerging research has also delved into investigating the influence of the home advantage on psychobiological responses. For instance, Fothergill, reported hormonal shifts in home versus away games in elite soccer, with home teams demonstrating higher cortisol levels (Indicating greater stress). Other psychobiological work

examined the effects of a circadian disadvantage (i.e., playing in a different time zone) on winning percentages in three major sport leagues in North America (i.e., NBA, NHL, and NFL). The results revealed an association between winning percentages and the number of time zones traveled for away evening games, with a clear disadvantage for teams traveling westward.

Motivational climate refers to "individuals' composite views concerning the situational emphasized goal structures operating in an achievement setting", and is broadly categorized into two types. The first is a task-involving or mastery climate, which pertains to the extent to which athletes perceive evaluation criteria to focus on individual progress/self-improvement, learning, achievement, and giving maximal effort In contrast, evaluation criteria within an ego-involving climate focus on social comparison and the ability to demonstrate superiority over other athletes and teams Researchers have advocated for assessing links between motivational climate and group perceptions. For instance, found that a task-involving climate positively predicted task cohesion within French adult basketball and handball teams, while an ego-involving climate negatively predicted dimensions of both task and social cohesion. In addition, based on Mastery Approach to demonstrate that youth soccer coaches involved in a motivational climate intervention had athletes who reported heightened perceptions of task and social cohesion at the end of the season.

A second aspect of laying the groundwork for an effective group is considering member characteristics. Given the wide range of attributes that members bring to a group attempted to simplify a complex topic by categorizing personal characteristics as either physical (e.g., size, body type, motor abilities) or psychological (e.g., attitudes, aptitudes, and personality traits). As an example of the latter, researchers have explored the role of personality in interpersonal relationships within sport teams. Noted that personality (and the diversity of personality traits within a team) may be related to the roles and positions athletes occupy, the coach-athlete relationship, and team cohesion. However, they also emphasized the need for researchers to "move beyond the conventional focus on the individual athlete to consider the wider implications of personality in social interactions and group processes" (p. 199). This represents a promising avenue for future research in sport group dynamics.

Another enlightening line of inquiry has examined the role of identity in group members. For example, Strachan, Shields, investigated personal identity (Operationalized as runner role identity) and social identity of participants involved in a running group. Running group identity was positively associated with the percentage of runs conducted with the group and maladaptive reactions to group disbandment. Not surprisingly, researchers have advocated for the exploration of social identity as a significant factor contributing to physical activity adherence Related research on identity in a sport context has utilized the Social Identity Approach to comprehend sport behavior, group formation and development, team member support, and leadership Of particular relevance to the current review, researchers have examined social identity in relation to group constructs such as cohesion (Bruner, Barley, & Corte, 2014) [2] and team performance. Given the mounting evidence of the team and individual benefits associated with social identity, researchers have also explored crucial antecedents such as leadership and group cohesion.

A third element of laying the groundwork pertains to team

selection and the subsequent socialization of group members. Despite the importance of these two processes for most coaches and a considerable body of research in organizational psychology, there has been minimal research, particularly in a youth sport setting. The limited work that exists has focused on the reselection process for athletes involved in competitive sport. As noted in an earlier section, for some deselected athletes, this may lead to negative psychological and emotional consequences. Given the scarcity of research in sport, we can look to other contexts to gain insight regarding group selection processes. A recent study by investigated the selection process of a high-performance air force military team, while specifically considering implications for sport. Thematic analysis of interviews with potential candidates and veteran pilots generated a number of concepts (e.g., integration of new members through mentorship, utilizing tradition) that have theoretical and practical implications for sport. Further work is needed on identifying and selecting the ideal candidates for teams.

Structural issues

The configuration of sport and exercise groups can be examined from both physical and psychological perspectives (Carron & Eys, 2012) [9]. The physical aspects of a group's structure encompass the geographical arrangement of group members within sport teams and exercise classes (i.e., positions), which are overt and identifiable. From a psychological viewpoint, structure emerges through specific and generalized behavioral expectations and interactions among group members. These are manifested in roles, norms, and leadership structures within groups, all of which have been subject to research scrutiny within the realm of sport and exercise.

Roles involve the expectations associated with a particular position within a group. These expectations can be formal (e.g., explicitly communicated by a coach to an athlete) or informal (e.g., inferred through behaviors and interactions). Both formal and informal roles are evident in interdependent sport teams. For instance, team sport athletes adopt specialized task-oriented roles (i.e., consistently contributing specific skills to the team's performance), auxiliary task-oriented roles (e.g., providing support as energy players or encouragers), leadership roles (e.g., formal captainship or informal mentoring), and social-oriented roles (e.g., organizing social activities) However, roles also exist in independent sport environments and exercise contexts. For example, physical activity interventions leverage individuals' desire to fulfill role expectations by assigning responsibilities such as taking attendance, monitoring collective goals, and organizing the class environment. While much research has focused on formal roles rather than informal roles, the literature highlights the complexity of role transmission and execution for both types. Successful role performance hinges on individual group members understanding their role responsibilities (i.e., role clarity), committing to their roles (i.e., role acceptance), believing they possess the necessary skills/abilities to fulfill their responsibilities (i.e., role efficacy), and avoiding being overwhelmed by conflicting or excessive expectations (i.e., role conflict and overload).

Norms differ from roles in that they represent generalized expectations shared by all group members. They are informal guidelines that inform behavior within a social setting. Individuals can perceive group norms in a descriptive manner (i.e., observing how others behave) or in an injunctive manner (i.e., understanding how others expect them to behave). In sport, typical norms include the expectation of maximal effort in both competition and training, as well as participation in team social activities. Furthermore, normative beliefs indicating that significant others engage in physical activity can enhance individuals' physical activity behaviors, particularly when their motivation to comply aligns with exercise-promoting norms.

Leadership is a extensively studied structural aspect of sport and exercise groups. Interventions for and with exercise instructors serve as a means to promote greater exercise adherence. Additionally, both the quantity and quality of leadership behaviors exhibited by coaches and athlete leaders have long been of interest to sport researchers. Transformational leadership, which surpasses transactional approaches, offers numerous avenues for future research. The importance of formal (e.g., captains) and informal (e.g., mentors) peer leaders in group hierarchy and performance has been recognized. Moreover, effective leadership is contingent upon the presence of followers. Proactive and context-sensitive followership is deemed critical to the leadership process by coaches and represents a compelling area for further research.

Ultimately, the structure of a group lays the groundwork for interactive processes (e.g., communication) and states (e.g., cohesion) to emerge. Together with the effective selection of individuals possessing the right mix of skills and abilities, devising an appropriate structure helps create the underlying conditions that enhance the prospects for group success. Numerous avenues for future research exist concerning roles (e.g., informal role occupancy), norms (e.g., considering broader organizational norms and culture), and leadership (e.g., peer leadership and followership). Additionally, underdeveloped or novel contexts (e.g., structure of exercise groups) and topics (e.g., cliques) present several opportunities for further exploration. Regarding the latter example, the presence of subgroups/cliques/faultlines represents a meaningful subdivision within the overall structure of a group that may yield both negative (e.g., isolation) and positive outcomes (e.g., social support for in-group members), although further understanding is required to discern the conditions and specific effects of their presence.

Processes and emergent states

The group's task and social objectives, along with its member characteristics and group structure, ultimately determine the course of a group's development and lifespan. It is helpful to distinguish between the overt activities that a group undertakes as it pursues its objectives (Referred to as group processes) and the largely intangible "properties of the team that are typically dynamic in nature and vary as a function of team context, inputs, processes, and outcomes" (Known as emergent states. In a sport environment advocated for this distinction and outlined a teamwork model that includes processes such as team goal setting, communication, performance monitoring, and problem solving occurring across various teamwork stages (Preparation, execution, evaluation, and adjustment periods). The identified emergent states encompass group cohesion and collective efficacy.

Among the variables mentioned above, group cohesion has garnered the most research attention within sport and exercise psychology. It is an emergent state characterized by "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) [8]. Despite the focus by group dynamics

researchers, much remains unknown about cohesion. suggested future research should focus on (1) elucidating the mechanisms underlying the emergence of cohesion and its impact on group and individual outcomes, (2) understanding the temporal dynamics of cohesion, (3) employing complementary measurement approaches (e.g., combining observational methods with surveys), and (4) exploring cohesion in understudied populations, particularly youth, high-risk groups, and athletes with disabilities. Thus, despite the existing evidence base on the significance of this longstanding topic, further investigation is warranted. teamwork model succinctly integrates and proposes a flow of group processes, although previous research endeavors often concentrate on one concept at a time. For instance, intra-team communication (i.e., verbal and non-verbal information exchange) is a crucial group process investigated through various methods. Different conceptualizations and coding systems have been employed to study intra-team communication, emphasizing its importance from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Future research directions include the continued use of multiple data collection methods, consideration of communication frameworks beyond sport/exercise, and exploration of cultural differences in communication practices and preferences.

The examples provided (Cohesion and communication) are just two of numerous processes and emergent states. Significant contributions have also been made to our understanding of intrateam coordination, competition, conflict, and collective efficacy, among others. A comprehensive and integrated approach that seeks to comprehend the interrelationships among various group processes and emergent states, considering these relationships over the group's lifespan, would significantly advance the field of group dynamics.

Applying group dynamics principles

In sports, group dynamics principles have predominantly been utilized to enhance athlete and team performance. This research falls under the broader umbrella of team building (TB), which is defined as "a method of assisting the group in (a) increasing effectiveness, (b) fulfilling the needs of its members, or (c) enhancing work conditions" Given the strong emphasis on performance in sports, scholars have explored various TB approaches aimed at enhancing team functioning. Martin, synthesized this literature in a meta-analysis, revealing that TB interventions generally had a medium to large effect on performance outcomes (Hedges g = 0.71). However, a notable finding was that TB primarily influenced individual athlete cognitions (g = 0.80) more than team cohesion (g = 0.21 for social cohesion and not significant for task cohesion). This finding is significant considering that (a) the TB conceptual model proposed by Carron and Spink (1993) [10] identifies cohesion as the primary outcome variable and (b) a citation network analysis highlighted the predominant focus on cohesion within the TB literature (Bruner *et al*., 2013) [3]. Based on this review, Bruner and colleagues (2013) stressed the need to diversify TB efforts, emphasizing approaches such as goal setting and personal disclosure mutual sharing which target many of the structural topics (e.g., roles, norms) and processes (e.g., communication) discussed previously.

Despite the predominant focus on cohesion in applied group dynamics literature, significant advances are underway. Recent interventions have explored emotional regulation and intelligence training in organizations social identity

development PDMS strategies and teamwork (Mc Ewan & Beauchamp, in press). For instance, and expanded on previous PDMS work, demonstrating improvements in perceptions of social identity, collective efficacy, and team performance by having athletes collectively disclose personal stories and information in elite soccer and cricket contexts.

Another example is the preliminary support for the efficacy of a teamwork training program for interdependent sport teams demonstrated by McEwan and Beauchamp (In press). This program includes feedback provision to teams, team and individual goal setting, brief and debrief training, scenario simulations, and the creation of a team charter. Initial findings showed that intervention teams receiving teamwork training displayed improvements in teamwork behavior relative to control teams (McEwan & Beauchamp, in press), although further research is needed to advance this line of inquiry.

In exercise contexts, group dynamics principles have traditionally aimed to enhance individual self-perceptions and experiences to increase participation and maintenance. emphasized the importance of group processes, stating that "the primary rationale for utilizing small group interventions is that the group can positively influence individual behavior" (p. 164). Indeed, interventions delivered to groups have been more effective in promoting physical activity compared to those delivered to individuals alone. Additionally, the presence of co-exercisers or random others can enhance motivation and effort, with targeted group dynamics principles further improving connections and support within the exercise environment-creating "true groups" (Burke *et al*., 2006) [6].

Several examples underscore the significance of group dynamics in promoting physical activity. For instance, Estabrooks and colleagues implemented community-based interventions aimed at enhancing physical activity levels, incorporating strategies such as team-based goal setting and fostering quality interactions. These interventions resulted in significant increases in moderate and vigorous physical activity levels among previously inactive participants.

Furthermore, recognizing the influence of similarity among exercisers on group dynamics, conducted the group-based physical activity for older adults (GOAL) randomized controlled trial. They found that adherence to the program was significantly better for groups comprising similar ages and genders compared to mixed-age mixed-gender groups.

Lastly, group-mediated cognitive behavioral approaches (GMCB), which combine social and behavioral interventions, have shown promise in improving adherence, social cognitions, and physical functioning across various populations, including older adults, post-natal women, and individuals in cardiac rehabilitation These approaches typically involve an intensive phase of group integration and self-regulation training followed by a transition phase aimed at promoting self-management skills outside the group context.

In summary, group dynamics principles play a crucial role in both sports and exercise contexts, with interventions aimed at enhancing team performance and individual physical activity participation.

Summary

This review aimed to underscore the significance of group dynamics within the realm of sport and exercise psychology, assess advancements in both traditional and emerging subjects, and outline prospective research pathways. It is imperative for researchers to consistently acknowledge the

social milieu inherent in physical activity settings and to further develop the foundational and applied research that has enriched our current comprehension of group dynamics. Progress in theory, measurement methodologies, analytical approaches, and intervention formulation and implementation is crucial to construct a comprehensive knowledge base for this intricate subject.

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