
Managing Teams

Comparing Organizational and Sport Psychological Approaches to Teamwork

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Abstract

This paper examines how teams and teamwork research have been conceptualised in the fields of sport psychology and organizational psychology. Specifically, it provides a close inspection of the general theoretical assumptions that inhere in the two disciplines. The results of a discursive analysis of research literature suggest that the fields have significantly different ways of conceptualising teams and teamwork and that conceptual borrowing may prove fruitful. A key argument is however, that in order for meaningful cross-fertilisation to take place a sound understanding of these differences is necessary. Working from this premise, the essential differences between sport and organizational approaches to teams are outlined. The paper is concluded with a discussion of contributions that organizational psychology can make to understandings of sport-oriented teams.

Key words: team theory, team processes, cohesion, discourse, language

Introduction

Teamwork is a term that is used frequently and often unreflectively in sport and exercise settings. Although teamwork has been investigated in several sport-related sub-disciplines (Barker, 2007, in sport pedagogy; Shogan, 1999, in sport ethics, for example), it has only come to be defined as an academic construct through sustained analysis within the field of sport psychology. Sport psychologists have used the notion of team *cohesion* (Brawley & Paskevich, 1997; Carron, Widmeyer, & Brawley, 1997) to capture what happens in teams. In the first part of this paper, we adopt a discursive approach to examine and evaluate the sport psychological literature on cohesion. Sport psychologists however, have suggested that organizational research on teams and teamwork may provide additional understandings of sport-oriented teamwork. In the second part of this paper, we employ the same discursive approach to explore both theoretical and empirical research that relates to teams in organizations. In the final section of the paper, we discuss the conceptual differences and similarities of the two disciplines and reflect on the potential gains organizational thinking might offer those working with sports teams.

Research methods

The review of literature took place between August 2004 and August 2009. Two search engines were utilized: Sportdiscus and Psycinfo. The search term “team*” generated results for literature on teams and teamwork which were de-limited by focusing on literature that appeared in English, and that were peer-reviewed (459 hits in Sportdiscus and just over 2200 in Psycinfo). The time-span of publication was bound to the 20 years from 1990 to 2009 with two exceptions: Ivan Steiner’s work on group productivity (Steiner, 1972) and Albert Carron’s work on cohesion in sport (Carron, 1982). Both were considered seminal pieces and deemed to be essential in understanding the conceptual underpinnings of the fields. Findings were judged relevant if they dealt specifically with teamwork or the idea of team process. Once a significant corpus of literature was produced, close reading and critique began. As this occurred, in-text citations and reference lists were used to locate and collect further examples of team-related literature. This process

continued in an iterative manner until a saturation point (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000) was reached and the authors were satisfied that they had identified the broad ways that teamwork came to make sense in the fields of management and sport psychology (total: 86 publications).

Analytic framework

The central objective of the review was to render the assumptions that theorists make with respect to teamwork open to scrutiny. In order to do this, we adopted a technique grounded in discourse analytic thought (Gee, 2005; Wetherall & Potter, 1988). The basic premise of this strategy is that ideas or theories find form in language (spoken or textual) and are represented by metaphors or models (Potter, 1996). Further, these models for meaning are expressed with recognizable and specific sets of language features (Fairclough, 2001). As a result, the review process involved a close inspection of the language that scholars used in their constructions of teamwork. In the discussion that follows, we have provided textual evidence to show how we arrived at our conclusions. Our goal is to present these theories in a straightforward but not simplistic manner. Finally, we would like to stress that our examination of the sport and organizational material is not a consideration of methods and findings but rather a consideration of the theoretical tools that the scholars used during their work.

Teamwork in Sports Teams: The Case of Cohesion

Sports teams are broadly defined within the sport psychological literature as a type of group with special characteristics (Hodge, 1995). Carron, for example, asserts that a team has “a collective identity, a sense of shared purpose, structured patterns of interaction, structured methods of communication, personal and task interdependence, and interpersonal attraction” (1988, p. 7). References to a ‘singular’ identity and purpose construct the team as a unified whole, an idea that is reinforced further by the terms ‘structure’ and ‘interdependence’. The language has ‘systems’ connotations and proposes an understanding of teams as individual and distinct entities.

Within the discipline of sport psychology there is a general agreement on the core aspect of teamwork, with most researchers utilizing *cohesion* in their research. While not all sport theorists have employed the concept (Dunn & Holt, 2004; Fiore & Salas, 2006), the concept appears to have provided many sport psychologists with a valuable way of understanding what happens in teams (Bloom, Stevens, & Wickwire, 2003; Brawley, 1990; Brawley & Paskevich, 1997; Carron, Widmeyer, & Brawley, 1997; Heuze, Sarrazin, Masiero, Raimbault, & Thomas, 2006; Mroczkowska, 2002; Paskevich, Estabrooks, Brawley, & Carron, 2001; Spink, 1995; Spink & Carron, 1992; Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1985). Cohesion is a “process which is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in pursuit of its goals” (Carron, 1982, p. 124). It is commonly divided into *social cohesion*, which reflects the degree to which members like each other, and *task cohesion*, which is the degree to which members of a team work together to achieve a common goal (Hodge, 1995).

Cohesion happens ‘between’ team members and, as will become clearer, has an implicit link to the performance of the team – the greater the cohesion, the better the performance. In many respects, cohesion can be thought of as an *adhesive*. Teamwork as cohesion ‘holds’ team members together. One underlying assumption is that without cohesion, the team will fall apart and will be unable to complete its task.

Cohesion supposedly has causal relationships with a range of variables, such as group stability, role acceptance, and performance (Carron & Spink, 1993). Although not all commentators have agreed (Rovio, Eskola, Kozub, Duda, & Lintunen, 2009), many critics have proposed a positive causal relationship between cohesion and performance. Spink (1996, p. 277) for example, argued that cohesion is “generally *assumed* to be the critical intervening mechanism, through which team building enhances effectiveness” (emphasis added). The language points to the conjectural nature of the theoretical proposition. Such statements generally make up part of the rationale for examining the concept of cohesion. It is worth noting, however, that the rationale stems from an organizing logic where cohesion is already central. The cyclical nature of the argument is demonstrated by Prapavessis et al. (1996), who asserted that cohesion is an “ideal dependent variable” because it is “possibly the most important group property” (Prapavessis et al., 1996, p. 272).

Attempts to objectify cohesion and to measure it empirically in sport psychology have been met with limited success. Regardless, cohesion has

been operationalized – the Group Environment Questionnaire (Carron et al., 1997; Eys, Carron, Bray, & Brawley, 2007) provides measures of cohesion, and Prapavessis et al. (1996) describe the questionnaire as a valid, reliable instrument. Metaphorically, the instrument measures the strength of the adhesive. It enables observers to gauge how well team members are sticking together socially and in pursuit of their goals. The instrument also allows interventions to be conducted since *changes* in teamwork can be observed and measured. In fact, instrumentation, empirical data and intervention can be seen to be conceptually dependent. As Prapavessis and his colleagues (1996) argue, cohesion is an ideal variable because an instrument exists to measure it. Even if their argument is once again cyclical, their comment underscores the point that ways of describing teamwork and ways of practising it cannot be separated.

In contrast to this objective, scientific teamwork, Yukelson's (1997) research pointed to a more commonsensical, practice oriented understanding of teamwork. Indeed, this conception emerged from an investigation of athletes' and coaches' ways of understanding teams and teamwork. Here, athletes described teamwork as 'chemistry' where having the 'chemicals' to produce the desired reaction is a matter of chance. A volleyball player commented that "this year's team had a special chemistry both on and off the court that helped contribute to the success of the team" (Yukelson, 1997, p. 82). An ice hockey coach remarked that "as the season progressed, the chemistry of the team became real tight, we became more and more of a family" (Yukelson, 1997, p. 85). Similarly, Bloom et al. (2003) pointed out that many coaches emphasized that teamwork cannot be manipulated and often "just happened". McLean captures this 'everyday' understanding of teamwork when he states,

Some coaches view this team chemistry as an indefinable process that describes the interaction of team members, and something that is outside the control of the coach. It is seen as the unpredictable result of the mixture of the personalities gathered together in the team. When the chemistry is not right the team struggles to prosper (1995, p. 420).

Whereas Yukelson seemed to adopt the coaches' ways of seeing teamwork unproblematically, positing at one point that it "is important to keep the chemistry and spirit of the group together" (1997, p. 85), McLean (1995), sought to challenge the chemistry metaphor, arguing that it oversimplifies the situation. For McLean (1995), the notion of teamwork

as chemistry, along with an unwillingness to rationalize teamwork, presented a dilemma for sport psychologists in that it was inconsistent with the more accepted way of thinking about teamwork (cohesion). His final position however, appears to be that it is possible to understand teamwork in a variety of ways. He commented,

By drawing together knowledge and wisdom from areas as diverse as corporate philosophies and functioning, family and childrearing practices, social psychology laboratories and sporting locker rooms, it becomes possible to identify themes that recur and appear to be associated with individual group success (McLean, 1995, p. 433).

Here, McLean proposes an argument that we will discuss in the final section, that is, that there are many ways of theorising teamwork.

Teamwork and conceptual borrowing

Perhaps as a consequence of a wider cultural trend, sport psychologists have recently turned to organization and management literature for alternative perspectives and inspiration on the themes of teams and teamwork. Theorists have cited a paucity of teams research within sports psychology to justify venturing beyond the boundaries of the discipline (Bloom et al., 2003; Eccles & Tenebaum, 2004; Prapavessis et al., 1996). Often these academic forays have resulted in conceptual spoils. Hardy and Crace (1997) for example, borrowed a definition of teams, an outline of team functions, and a description of team effectiveness from the management literature. In a more recent paper on team coordination and communication in sport, Eccles and Tenebaum (2004) made scarce reference to sport literature, instead relying on organizational literature to frame their study.

Other commentators have supported this development. Weinberg and McDermott (2002) compared sport and business perceptions of factors involved with success, analysing leaders' perceptions of leadership, cohesion and communication. They concluded that there is a "good deal of similarity between success in sport and business" (Weinberg & McDermott, 2002, p. 296). Similarly, Jones (2002) reflected on his personal transition from sport psychologist to business consultant. He argued that "the principles of elite performance in sport are easily transferable to the business context" (Jones, 2002, p. 268).

Even when management literature has not been cited directly, loose conceptual links have been implied. Yukelson (1997, p. 73), for example, began a piece with a maxim from Henry Ford: “Coming together is a beginning, Keeping together is progress, Working together is success”. While Yukelson (1997) implicitly associated sports teams with production line teams, it can be assumed that Ford’s employees were working in entirely different circumstances to the team members in Yukelson’s research.

Given a modest degree of similarity between the *terminologies* of the psychological disciplines, claims of commonalities are perhaps unsurprising. The thesis we will develop in the following two sections though, is that there are *assumptive* differences between how the fields have dealt with teams and teamwork. For this reason, a closer examination the management literature on teams and teamwork is necessary.

Teams and work: An organizational perspective

In the last two decades, structural changes have occurred in the workplace (what Leonard & Freedman, 2000, refer to as ‘corporate reengineering’). These changes have fore-grounded teams in organizations and have led management theorists to invest significant resources into the study of teams (Gordon, 1992; Stout, Salas, & Fowlkes, 1997; Sundstrom, 1999; Sundstrom, McIntyre, Halfhill, & Richards, 2000; Tesluk & Mathieu, 1999; Webber & Klimoski, 2004; Wheelan, 2003). The practice of teams and the investigations that have accompanied this practice have constructed the use of teams largely as a management strategy. Within this framework, team members assume responsibility for work-related tasks and are self-directed rather than instructed by senior managers.

Much of the “organizational research” – which we use to encompass research employing organizational psychology and management theory – has dealt with issues of effectiveness. Questions like: what makes teams effective? (Sundstrom, De Meuse, & Futrell, 1990); how does one make teams effective? (Klimoski & Zuckin, 1999); and, how do teams capture their inherent effectiveness? (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993b) have dominated the research landscape. The preoccupation with ‘effectiveness’ (discussed in more detail below) is indicative of the field’s broader aims. It also suggests by implication, that as a strategy teams are contentious, hence a desire to ‘prove’ that they are an effective management method.

The two broad models of understanding between which investigators operate are: (1) that people work most effectively when they manage themselves; and (2) that people work most effectively when they are managed by others. This is not to say that researchers have investigated this second statement but this is an opposing assumption against which team research takes place.

Compared with sports psychology, organizational research contains a variety of ways of thinking about what happens in teams. Aspects of teamwork range from ‘role identification’ (Lembke & Wilson, 1998) to ‘decision making’ (Devine, Clayton, Philips, Dunford, & Melner, 1999). Marks, Mathieu, and Zaccaro (2001) alone devised ten ways that team members could display teamwork. Such definitions are generally expressed as task-type activities that are discrete and objective. Marks and her colleagues included ‘processes’ like ‘goal specification’ and ‘conflict management’, which they suggested represented *the* processes of teamwork.

Withstanding diversity in team definitions (Campion, Papper, & Medsker, 1996; Sundstrom et al., 1990), there exists a high level of ‘community agreement’ (adapted from Gergen, 2001) vis-à-vis what teamwork *does*. This relates to the effectiveness of teams. Probably influenced by the seminal work of social psychologist Ivan Steiner (1972) and his oft-cited model, *actual productivity = potential productivity – process losses*, organizational psychologists have agreed that teamwork is concerned with *process* – it *mediates* the execution of work-related tasks. In this way, teamwork happens *between* people performing work acts. These mediation processes influence effectiveness, defined in terms of productivity or performance.

This input-output model is appreciably based on a mechanistic metaphor where people function like parts of the same machine. For each ‘component’ to articulate with other parts, it needs a ‘lubricant’. This is teamwork. Simply having the lubricant reduces losses and results in the machine running smoothly and efficiently. This model of teamwork and efficiency is an interesting one since it assumes that losses automatically result from people interacting and equates teamwork with efficiency. Almost paradoxically, the assumption that teamwork – and teams in general – are inherently valuable can be seen in a number of texts. Savoie (1998) referred to the “power” of teams and Smolek, Hoffman and Moran (1999, p. 24) argued that teams are “more efficient and effective [than individuals]”. According to this literature, team is a ‘state’ for which

to strive. Katzenbach and Smith (1993a) began one piece with three anecdotes of successful business teams, suggesting that “such are the stories and the work of teams—real teams that perform, not amorphous groups that we call teams because we think the label is motivating and energizing” (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993a, p. 111). This research appears to both produce and be a product of the intuitive appeal of teams.

While teamwork has been presented as inherently positive by some researchers, others have attempted to define it as an objective, independent variable that (possibly) has causal relationships with other variables (Buller & Bell, 1986; Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Gist, Locke, & Taylor, 1987; Guzzo & Dickson, 1996; Hackman, 1998; Marks, Zaccaro, & Mathieu, 2000; Mullen & Copper, 1994; Prussia & Kinicki, 1996). Yet these authors still work within a mechanically-based metaphor that (implicitly) defines teamwork as positive. Even though they posit that the ‘lubricant’ can be refined and that teamwork is variable and measurable, they still define teamwork at the outset, as processes that they believe will benefit the output of teams.

Like sport psychological investigations, organizational psychologists have favoured interventions as ways to measure possible consequences of manipulating teamwork (Bottger & Yetton, 1987; Cooke et al., 2003; Ganster, Poppler, & Williams, 1991; Kacem & Rozovski, 1998; Marks et al., 2000; Offerman & Spiros, 2001; Stevens & Campion, 1999). Along with experimentalist approaches has been an attempt to represent teamwork in numeric form (Mullen, Salas, & Driskell, 1998). This thinking is reflected in the tendency towards quantitative methods and attempts to ‘count’ teamwork in some way. Some researchers went so far as to calculate the monetary value of teamwork training. Fitz-enz (1994, p. 54) stated emphatically that “soft-skills training” can be “traced objectively and quantitatively to an organization’s bottom line”.

Fitz-enz’s comment draws attention to another counter-argument, that is, that teamwork training cannot be “objectively and quantitatively” measured. When one examines the types of activities that occur in the name of team building interventions, it is possible to see why such an argument might arise. Many team building interventions take place in outdoor settings, are based on experiential learning assumptions, and are described in personal or subjective language (Badger, Sadler-Smith, & Michie, 1997). Ng (2001, p. 425) for example, asserted that participants benefit from a “personal self-discovery journey”. McEvoy and Buller (1997, p. 215) suggested that “spiritual energies are tapped

when participants relate to the larger whole and/or access inner wisdom that lies hidden beneath the surface”, and Long (1987, p. 31) compared her encounter with an outdoor team building program with “stumbling onto magic”. In most cases though, theorists have attempted the difficult task of merging the subjective, experiential frameworks of the programs with the scientific traditions of their discipline (Badger et al., 1997; Bronson, Gibson, Kichar, & Priest, 1992; Burke & Collins, 1998; Crawford, 1988; Holman & McAvoy, 2003). In spite of efforts to merge the subjective with the objective, difficulties are evident within the comments of the researchers. Buller, Cragun and McEvoy (1991, p. 58) complained that “virtually no rigorous, empirical evidence exists regarding the effects of outdoor training programs”. Burke and Collins (1998, p. 136) believed there was a “lack of both empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives to support theories related to the efficacy of the learning process and its transfer to the workplace”. And Ibbetson and Newell (1998, p. 240) noted little “hard evidence” to support effectiveness.

Given the lack of agreement on a *specific* definition of teamwork and the almost infinite variation in performance variables, it is unsurprising that organization and management research has failed to reach any level of consensus with respect to ‘the effects’ of teamwork. Despite (or perhaps, because of) this lack of consensus, the association between teamwork and performance has proven persistent. These circumstances may have resulted in the discipline’s appeal to those working with sports teams. The argument that we will make in the final part of this paper is that meaningful cross-fertilization of ideas can take place, but for this to happen, appreciation of these differences is essential. The following is an exposition of what we believe to be the key conceptual similarities and difference between the disciplines.

Convergences, divergences and implications for practice

Cohesion appears to provide a relatively neat concept for investigation. It captures an aspect of teams, it fits with the broader tenets of traditional psychological thought and it has been used with a degree of success over several decades. We might well ask why sports researchers have gone outside of the discipline and what they might hope to gain from the organizational literature. The answer is, of course, theoretical diversity

and alternative ways of thinking. The previous sections point to a number of differences in starting assumptions between the disciplines of sport and organizational psychology with respect to teams. These differences suggest that interdisciplinary ‘borrowing’ might prove fruitful. The purpose of this section is to discuss these differences in more detail and show how an appreciation of this variation can lead to new ways of thinking about teams and teamwork in sport.

There are obvious practical distinctions between sports and business teams (working sites, motivations for membership, for example) that can be deduced readily and do not need to be discussed here. Still, it is vital to note that rather than a possible management strategy, sports teams are structurally pre-determined – they are part of the definition of ‘team sports’. True, the division of people into teams may be a first step towards *managing* a group of soccer players but a soccer coach cannot choose to play his team members as an eleven one season and then as individuals the next. Unlike in business, whether teams constitute an effective strategy is immaterial in team sports since no other option is available. This premise is reflected in the sport psychological literature by the lack of attempts to prove that teams are effective. As we have seen, sports theorists have typically invested their resources into an alternative set of questions.

Definitions of teams have been relatively stable in the sport psychological literature. Characteristics like a collective identity, a shared purpose, structured interaction and communication, interdependence, and interpersonal attraction (Carron, 1988) have been used to describe the institutionalised phenomenon of sports teams. In contrast, organizational theorists have considered the constitution of teams at great length. Several authors have provided typologies of work teams (Campion et al., 1996; Sundstrom et al., 1990). Initially, examining the nature of sport teams might seem unnecessary and a typology superfluous. On the other hand, a reconsideration of what we take for granted is exactly what may lead to new insights. A typology of sports teams’ characteristics, for example, would serve to underscore the *differences* between the requirements and functioning of various teams. One can imagine significant differences, for example, between water polo teams and rowing eights. If we accept that teams are qualitatively dissimilar, then we would also expect concepts of teamwork for these teams to vary.

As suggested, in the management literature, teams are first and foremost – and perhaps unsurprisingly – a management strategy. They are a way of working but they are simultaneously a way of getting people to

work effectively, or ‘getting the most out of people’. While it has not been decisively proven (and never will be), the idea is that the organization of people into self-directing teams and the removal of hierarchy result in ‘better’ performances than directing employees externally in an authoritative manner. This type of approach is used less often in sports contexts and although there may be some interest in player-centred strategies, hierarchical structures are still typical. Such an understanding of teamwork would see ‘flatter’ authority structures and give players more control (and responsibility) for their performances. Importantly, just as in business teams, the focus of this perspective would still be on the performance of the team’s task. The methods and approaches adopted to complete that task, however, may come from social interaction between the team’s members. The benefits that are proposed to accrue from the use of teams in business situations include team members: becoming better at making decisions, being more motivated, growing accustomed to working with a limited range of resources, and becoming more proficient at solving problems (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993b). All of these advantages appear useful for athletes.

Both sport psychological definitions of teams and the concept of cohesion emphasise sameness. A common identity and purpose require similarity in thinking and similarity of action. When team members are dissimilar, they threaten the cohesion of the team and hence performance. In this way, the concept encourages uniformity and has a tacit conformist bias. This might not make a significant difference in co-active sports such as rowing but it might be conceivably debilitating in interacting sports such as soccer where a degree of variation is desirable. Surprisingly, the mechanical metaphor for teamwork processes appears to avoid the convergence tendency. As long as members fulfil their individual tasks within the team, they can choose which strategies they adopt and how they go about their work. The benefit of teamwork results from the team members *articulating* with one another, not from being the *same as* one another. Such an approach might prove useful with sports teams where team members do not display a tendency to stick together.

Cohesion also stresses constancy. There is an assumption that a team that develops cohesion sticks together over time and that this is beneficial. The lubricant metaphor is more task-bound and flexible. Team processes are used for the duration of the team’s work together (a business project, for instance) but the idea that these processes need to be lasting is not stressed. This kind of thinking could have implications for

sports theorists. It encourages us to think about teamwork as it relates to particular team tasks. How, for example, might practice-teamwork be different from tournament-teamwork? How might teamwork change over a season? It may not be necessary (it may even be detrimental) to think that team members need to stick together permanently in the sense of cohesion.

In a similar vein, the cohesion metaphor implies that the longer team members are together, the more likely they are to stick together and the better we can expect performance to be. This is not always the case. The organizational metaphor assumes that teamwork is a characteristic of teams that needs ongoing attention, rather than a topic of interest only when new members meet. Effective performance may at times be better served by the smooth interaction between members, which in turn needs to be practised and polished regularly. An organizational perspective suggests that we cannot rely on teamwork to improve automatically over time.

A final difference is that, by definition, cohesion is context-bound. Team members develop connections with other particular members of that given team. The teamwork-as-processes theory is less restricted by environmental factors. It implies that if team members are used to working with certain processes, they can perform with different team members and in other teams in a similar way. Teamwork is, in other words, more functional. This approach could be valuable in teams where a turnover of players is typical, either during a game, season, or over consecutive years. If players and coaches approach teamwork as skill-like and transferable (as most would do with physical skills) they may be more likely to invest time and effort into the development of these 'skills'. They may also be less likely to see mobility as a barrier to teamwork.

With the advantages of drawing on an alternative theoretical framework come disadvantages. One set of assumptions is necessarily replaced with another. The emphasis that the management literature places on the articulation between individual members, for example, results on less attention to the team as a whole. Furthermore, although both organizational and sport psychological disciplines share an emphasis on performance, neither conceptual framework appears to offer detailed explanations of how the personal might interact with the cultural within teams, in a way that a more pedagogical approach might (Barker, 2007). Although this appears at first to present a no-win situation where, whichever theory we adopt, something is always obscured, it does not

have to be the case. The challenge is to see these theories for what they are: ways of understanding what happens in teams. We are not obliged to adopt one theory of teamwork and stick with it firmly and perhaps obstinately. With a degree of ‘intellectual agility’, we are able to move between understandings, utilizing theories when they help us to make sense of certain questions.

Finally, some consideration should be given to the limitations of the current review. In attempting to capture the general assumptions that support research programmes, we have painted with broad brushstrokes. There are undoubtedly more subtle differences and tensions that relate to teams and teamwork that have been omitted in this examination. An alternative course of investigation might be to look for these differences and perhaps attempt to construct a typology of teams research. It is also evident from investigations presented here that some coaches and athletes understand teams and teamwork very differently to theorists. While it is important to grasp how scholars have theorized teamwork it seems equally important to understand how practitioners and participants understand teamwork. A productive research task would be to investigate ‘everyday theories’ of teams and teamwork and see how these guide activities and how they might be implemented, adapted or extended. Another element stressed by (female) readers of drafts of this manuscript was the gendered nature of teamwork. Again, while outside the scope of this review, an interesting question might be ‘how is teamwork gendered?’

Conclusion

Sport psychologists have offered a useful theory of teamwork in the form of team cohesion. Cohesion is based on an adhesive metaphor that is connected to a number of principles. These include assumptions such as: the team functions as a singular unit, sticking together is necessary for success and, similarity of team members is positive. In line with the broader discourses of sport psychology, teamwork is also a phenomenon that can be observed and captured in numeric form. Sports theorists have, however, ventured into management research and have adopted definitions and descriptions to frame their studies of teams and teamwork. We have argued that this is a potentially productive move but a first and necessary step is to understand the assumptions on which the theories are based. With this in mind, we have reviewed and analysed teamwork literature

in the respective fields to distinguish the assumptive similarities and differences. While there are parallels between the disciplines including a focus on performance and a concern for what happens between team members, there are significant differences. Such differences are, to our minds, what make inter-disciplinary borrowing potentially fruitful and our specific aim in the second part of this paper has been to describe *how* organizational understandings might assist sport theorists and practitioners to understand and deal with teams. Specifically, we proposed that a management approach to teams might lead to a greater appreciation of the differences between types of sports teams and a reconsideration of instructional styles. Organizational approaches to teamwork could encourage us to re-think individual diversity in teams, the need for flexibility, and the relationship between teamwork and changing contexts. Two additional points were made. First, the adoption of one theory should not mean the abandonment of another. As people who work with teams, we are able (perhaps even obliged) to move between alternative theories. Second, this paper has dealt with *academic* theories. Sports psychological literature suggests that teams and teamwork look different again in practice. We would do well to gain an understanding of these everyday theories as well.

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