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Role Ambiguity and Team Cohesion in Division One Athletes

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Abstract

My study aims to discover the relationship between role ambiguity and team cohesion in a sports setting. I hypothesize that role ambiguity and team cohesion possess a negative correlation, that is, when team members experience role ambiguity, and then team cohesion is high.

Alternatively, low levels of role ambiguity correlate with low levels of team cohesion.

Ambiguity was measured using a multi-dimensional construct which included a) scope of responsibilities, b) behavior to carry out role responsibilities c) how role performance will be evaluated, and d) the consequences of failing to fulfill role responsibilities. In order to test my hypothesis, sixty-six Division One Athletes participated in an online questionnaire. The survey included questions regarding the four dimensions role-ambiguity, team cohesion, and demographics. The results showed a significant relationship between role ambiguity and team cohesion. In particular ambiguity related to scope of responsibilities and behavior needed to fulfill those responsibilities showed a significant relationship to team cohesion. My study suggests the importance of creating awareness about team roles and their effects on team cohesion. Implications of these findings and future research are further discussed.

Key words: role ambiguity, team cohesion

Role Ambiguity and Team Cohesion In Division One Athletes

The interdependent nature of sports teams inevitably causes individuals to be affected by other members' actions. Role ambiguity can impact any kind of team (business, family etc.), but it has an immediate impact on sports teams. In playing Division I soccer, I have observed that when players lose sight of their role, team performance suffers. I have witnessed players miss important game opportunities which have resulted in conflict on and off the field, and further spiraled into uncomfortable team dynamics. As team members' actions affect the entire team, it is important that each member is aware of their role responsibilities. Role ambiguity is defined as a lack of clear information associated with a particular role- (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Lack of clarity about one's role in a team may have outcomes that impact both the individual and team (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998). In the section that follows, I will first look at the impact of role ambiguity in general and secondly, role ambiguity on a sports team. I will then explain the multidimensional approach to role ambiguity. Next I will review team cohesion and its effects on sports teams. Finally, I will provide a rationale for a study that looks at the impact of role ambiguity on team cohesion.

Impact of Role Ambiguity

In this section, I will look at the research which has explored how a person's role ambiguity can impact athletes' performance and satisfaction on a team. A large amount of evidence suggests that role ambiguity can be problematic for individuals. Prior studies show that role ambiguity can negatively affect task self-efficacy, task cohesion (Eys & Carron, 2001), role satisfaction (Beauchamp, Bray Eys, & Carron, 2005b), overall athlete satisfaction (Eys, Carron, Bray, & Beauchamp, 2003), and role performance (Beauchamp et. al, 2002; Bray & Brawley,

2002). These findings show that role ambiguity often produces negative effects on team members and their team.

Kahn et al (1964) argued that role ambiguity would be particularly meaningful under interdependent circumstances. In other words, role ambiguity has more consequences when individuals must rely on others to fulfill their own responsibilities (Beauchamp et. al, 2006, 229). Kahn et. al (1964) found evidence that “change in any one part of the [role] system creates changes in other parts as well...ambiguity in many parts of the organization are almost inevitably the outcome” (76-77). Thus, when individuals experience role ambiguity, it affects the thoughts and behaviors of both them and their group members.

Traditionally, in measuring role ambiguity, researchers looked at role ambiguity as a single dimension. Instead of using the traditional unidimensional approach to measuring role ambiguity, Kahn et. al (1964) developed a conceptual framework involving a multi-dimensional approach. The construct included scope of responsibilities, behavioral responsibilities, evaluation of performance, and consequences of not fulfilling properties. Role ambiguity was subcategorized because researchers were curious about the idea that a lack of clarity about one construct could be more influential on a team than another construct. Their conceptual model involved two distinct dimensions: task ambiguity and socio-emotional ambiguity. First, we will look at the three levels of task ambiguity and then we will look at socio-emotional ambiguity.

According to Eys et. al (2003), task ambiguity is “concerned with ambiguity related to the performance aspects of one’s role responsibilities”(535). Task ambiguity is then divided into three categories. The first subcategory is ambiguity about scope of responsibilities. The second component of task ambiguity is ambiguity about the behavioral responsibilities one needs to

fulfill his/her expectations. Finally, the third property of task ambiguity is “ambiguity about the hierarchal importance of each responsibility” (535).

The second dimension of the multidimensional approach is socio-emotional ambiguity. Socio-emotional ambiguity refers to uncertainty about the psychological effects and discomfort felt if one were to fail to meet their role responsibilities and expectations. This multidimensional technique allows the measurements to be consistent with theory and be used for potential application (King and King 1990).

Kahn et. al (1964) also made an important distinction between the objective and subjective aspects of role ambiguity. Objective role ambiguity refers to the actual lack of clarity about an individual’s role responsibilities and is a consequence of the environment. On the other hand, subjective role ambiguity regards an individual’s perception that he or she is unable to fulfill his or her role responsibilities and this is a result of the state of the person (Eys et al. 2003, 535). In other words, a person experiencing subjective role ambiguity may believe they are failing to meet their role responsibilities, but in actuality they are fulfilling them. Whereas a person experiencing objective role ambiguity is truly unable to accomplish their role, due to environmental factors such as limited access to leadership. In most cases, researchers focus on subjective ambiguity.

In agreement to other studies, Eys and Carron (2001) found negative effects when role ambiguity in a team was high. The study was performed with six university basketball teams. They used the teams to investigate role ambiguity and its relationship to both team cohesion and task self-efficacy. They used a multidimensional approach, however they made three alterations in the constructs to coincide with the nature of sports. First, they determined that a hierarchy of responsibilities in sports is rare. For example, there are very few, if any, levels of people (ex.

staff members) between athletes in coaches. (Bass, 1980). Therefore, role ambiguity occurring from various levels of hierarchy was considered to arise infrequently. Secondly, Eys and Caron (2001) examined the perception of the athletes. As previously mentioned, Kahn et al. (1964) makes the distinction between objective and subjective ambiguity. Eys and Caron (2001) chose to examine subjective ambiguity because it yields more valuable and reliable estimates in a sports team setting.

As a final alteration, the two researchers solely focused on formal roles, rather than informal roles. Bray (1998) defined formal roles as those that “encompass specific, task-related behaviors which are critical to the effective organization and potential effectiveness of a team” (9). In other words, formal roles are assigned to the individual and affect the team. For instance, a member of a soccer team may be assigned the role of playing the forward position and also assigned the leadership role of being a captain. Both his/her forward and captain position are formal roles. Informal roles, on the other hand, are roles that are not specifically assigned to an individual, and are sometimes not task-related or critical (Kahn et. al 1964). In addition, the member is sometimes unaware of his or her individual role because it is learned through communication with other members. For example, a member of a soccer team may be continuously asked to relay messages to the entire team. As a result of this informal role being created through interactions among group members, uncertainty may arise about whether, as captain, s/he should continue to relay messages. Hence, ambiguity is likely (Eys & Carron, 2001).

Results of Eys & Carron’s (2001) study indicated that team members who were unsure of their role responsibilities were more likely to perceive the team as less integrated in terms of their task approach to team play and possessed a lower level of attraction to the team. Similarly

to the Beauchamp and Bray (2001) study, individuals who possessed greater role ambiguity also had lower levels of efficacy in regards to performing tasks associated with their responsibilities on the team. One positive aspect of the study was that Eys and Carron (2001) found the multidimensional approach to be valuable in exploring specific relationships. However, one limitation of the study was the researcher's omission of contextual differences that are prevalent of roles on sports team. In other words, the researchers did not specify the athlete's role responsibilities on offense vs. defense. Athlete's may believe they know their expectations on defense, but lack clarity about their expectations on offense.

In order to overcome these limitations, Beauchamp, Bray, Eys, & Carron (2002) utilized Kahn et. al's (1964) conceptual framework and created their own definition of role ambiguity in an interdependent sports team setting. Their new measurement accounts for four dimensions in both an offensive and defensive context. The dimensions include the scope of the athlete's responsibilities, behavioral actions required to fulfill those responsibilities, how the athlete is evaluated for his or her role performance, and consequences of not fulfilling responsibilities. From this criteria, Beauchamp et. al (2002) created the Role Ambiguity Scale (RAS).

Previous researchers had examined the effects of role ambiguity, but Eys, Carron, Beauchamp, and Bray (2005) conducted a study in an effort to discover its possible causes. They asked athletes to indicate why role ambiguity may occur in sports. The athlete's answers were categorized in to three separate sources of role ambiguity: a) the role sender, the person who develops and communicates the individual's role expectations, b) the focal person, the athlete himself or herself, and c) the situation. The results revealed that the most prevalent cause of role ambiguity for an athlete was due to lack of, or conflicting communication from the role sender. In an interdependent sports setting, the role sender is usually the coaches and team captains as

they convey the role responsibilities of each team member. Thus, the quality of communication from the role sender (the coach and team captains) to the receiver (the team members) affects the extent to which athletes understand their role responsibilities. (Beauchamp and Bray, 2005)

Eys et. al (2003) found that role ambiguity for each individual was expected, but also that ambiguity can reflect the time of the team's season and the individual's time spent with the team. The study used a questionnaire to assess the extent to which members of a team were aware of their responsibilities. The test was taken twice: once at the beginning of the season and then again at the end of the season. As the team progressed from early to late season, perception of role ambiguity decreased. In addition, first-year athletes experienced more role ambiguity than veteran athletes at the beginning of the season, but not towards the end. Thus, the team member's age and the part of the season appear to affect role ambiguity.

Overall, higher levels of role ambiguity tend to correlate with negative aspects in teams. Evidence suggests that the multidimensional approach to measuring role ambiguity is valuable in sports. In addition, it appears important to stress the difference between formal and informal roles on a team as formal roles are more likely to be ambiguous. Other factors such as the part of the season and the age of the athlete may affect role ambiguity. My study will examine role ambiguity in light of this research, and relate it to team cohesion.

Impact of Team Cohesion

The question of interest in my study is the relationship between the four manifestations of role ambiguity (the scope of the athlete's responsibilities, behavioral responsibilities required to fulfill those responsibilities, how the athlete is evaluated for his or her role performance, and consequences of not fulfilling responsibilities) and team cohesion. In this section, we will

explore the importance of team cohesion and its possible relationship to role ambiguity. Carron et. al (1998) defines team cohesion 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” (213). More simply, Yalom(1995) describes group cohesion as the “we-ness” felt by individual members of the group. Groups who possess higher levels of team cohesion tend to exhibit a wide variety of positive effects. Groups with high team cohesion often have greater levels of participation, mutual support from one another, and are more likely to defend one another (Yalom, 1995). In addition these groups, are also presumed to share a sense of bonding, a sense of working towards mutual goals, mutual acceptance, support, and a desire to be affiliated with the group (Marziali, Nunroe-Blum, & McCleary, 1997). Cohesion has been widely studied and the deep interest in this phenomenon leads some social scientists to believe that it is the most important small group variable (Lott & Lott, 1965).

Carron, Widmeyer and Brawley (1985) created five assumptions about team cohesiveness: a) the group has properties that can be observed, b) the members become socialized and are merged into the group and create opinions about the group, c) the individuals’ opinions derive from facts assembled about the group, d) group members’ opinions are reflections of the common values throughout the group, and e) group members’ perceptions of the cohesiveness of their group can be measured through a questionnaire.

Based on these assumptions, Carron et. al (1985) formulated a conceptual model of group cohesion. The basis of this model revolves around the idea that cohesiveness is derived from individual’s perceptions of the attractiveness of his or her group and the group’s integration. In addition, these two aspects involve either a task or social orientation. As a result, a four dimensional model of cohesion was formed. The model consists of

“ a) Individual attractions to the Group-Social (i.e., perceptions by the individual about his or her involvement in the group’s social activities (ATG-S), b) Individual Attractions to the Group-Task (i.e., perceptions by the individual about his or her involvement in the group based on the task; ATG-T), c) Group Integration-Social (i.e., perceptions by the individual about the group’s unity toward social aspects; GI-S), and d) Group Integration-Task (i.e, perceptions by the individual about the group’s unity toward task aspects; GI-T)” (Martin, 2011, 68-69)”

From this model, Carron et. al. (1985) constructed the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) which targets individuals’ perceptions of their group’s level of cohesiveness. According to Carron, Eys, & Martin (in press), the GEQ is the most widely accepted measurement of cohesion for sport. A restriction of this model is that it was developed for athletes between the ages of 18 and 30. Furthermore, the model assumes that individuals’ beliefs about cohesion are shared by other team members. However, Cole (1991) argues that no individual has complete knowledge about its group members.

The main aim of my study was to to explore the affect of role ambiguity on team cohesiveness in Division One athletes. The athletes’ role ambiguity was measured based on the previously mentioned four dimensions: the scope of the athlete’s responsibilities, behavioral responsibilities required to fulfill those responsibilities, how the athlete is evaluated for his or her role performance, and consequences of not fulfilling responsibilities. Individuals’ perceptions of team cohesion were operationally defined using the four dimensions in the Group Environment Questionnaire: Group-Social, Individual Attractions to the Group-Task, Group Integration-Social, and Group-Integration Task. Groups experience low levels ambiguity when members lack clear communication. When confusion of one individual’s role exists on a team, then the entire team is affected. Consequently, the affects of role ambiguity conflict will be particularly powerful in a sports team due to their interdependent nature.

Rationale

From the above mentioned literature, I believe that Eys and Carron's (2001) study provides evidence for operationalizing role ambiguity into the four dimensions of scope of responsibilities, behavior, consequences, and evaluation. I use these dimensions to measure role ambiguity. Beauchamp, Bray, Eys, & Carron (2002) suggest assessing these four dimensions on the individuals' experiences of both offense and defense. However, I believe that regardless of the position, individual role ambiguity will relate to team cohesion. Thus, my questionnaire will include ambiguity regarding an athlete's overall roles. In addition, I will include Carron et. al (1985)'s Group Environment Questionnaire as it is the most widely accepted measurement of cohesion for sport (Carron, Eys, & Martin, in press). Past research suggests that high levels of role ambiguity are associated with negative effects. Marziali, Nunroe-Blum, & McCleary 's (1997) research proves the positive effects associated with high levels of team cohesion.

Hypothesis 1: Role ambiguity will relate to low levels of team cohesiveness in Division One Athletes.

Furthermore, Eys et. al (2003) mentions the possible impact of the athletes' year in college, and the current part of the season they are in. As the season furthers and athlete's grow in age, I have noticed that athletes gain experience. From this experience, these athletes appear to be more comfortable with their responsibilities on the team. This leads me to my second and third hypotheses.

Hypothesis 2: Role ambiguity decrease as the athlete's season progresses.

Hypothesis 3: Role ambiguity decrease as the athlete's year in college increases.

Methods

Participants

The participants (n=65) in this study were Division One collegiate athletes. The sample consisted of both male and females from a variety of different college universities. The participants included athletes who participated in baseball, basketball, cross country, soccer, tennis, track and field, volleyball, and others.

Measures

Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity was assessed through Beauchamp et al. (2002)'s Role Ambiguity Scale. This conceptual model views role ambiguity as a multidimensional construct. The model examines four dimensions: a) Scope of Responsibilities, the extent to which the individual knows his or her responsibilities; b) Behaviors Necessary to Fulfill Responsibilities, the extent to which the individual knows which behaviors are expected; c) Evaluation of Performance, the extent to which the individual knows how he or she will be assessed; and d) Consequences of Not Fulfilling Responsibilities, the extent to which the individual knows the penalties related to not fulfilling his or her expectations.

Athletes responded to a series of questions regarding the extent to which they perceived their roles as ambiguous. Role ambiguity was evaluated using a 20-items scale. The items were displayed on a 5-point Likert scale and ranged from "strongly disagree"=1 to "strongly agree"=5. The higher scores indicated greater perceived role clarity and the lower scales indicated lower perceived role clarity.

Cohesion

In order to assess team cohesion, I used The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ; Carron et. al., 1985). This questionnaire consists of 18 items. The scale measured four main aspects of cohesion: a) Individual Attractions to the Group-Task, b) Individual Attractions to the Group-Social, c) Group Integration-Task, and d) Group Integration Social. The responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale and ranged from “strongly disagree”=1 to “strongly agree”=5. The higher scores indicated greater perceived team cohesion.

Procedure

The subjects of this study were recruited by me through Facebook and personal e-mail. I e-mailed an explanation of my study to athletes I know and provided a URL for SurveyGizmo that they could use if they would like to participate in my study. The introduction to the online survey contained a consent form. The participant was notified that if he or she chose to go forward with the study, it would signify their consent. I then asked these athletes to forward the message to the rest of their team and other Division I athletes they may know. I also posted the same announcement on Facebook.

The participants then took an online self-administered questionnaire that consisted of the Group Environment Questionnaire, the Role Ambiguity Scale, and demographic questions.

Results

The purpose of this research was discover the relationship between role ambiguity and team cohesion in Division 1 sports teams. Participants participated in an online survey created by Survey Gizmo which included Beauchamp et. al’s (2002) Role Ambiguity Scale, Carron et. al’s,

(1985) Group Environment Questionnaire, and demographic questions. Results were exported to SPSS and from there computations were conducted.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that role ambiguity would be related to team cohesion. Pearson's bivariate correlation was performed, and Hypothesis 1 was supported. $R=.403$, $p=>.002$. The Role ambiguity Scale (Beauchamp et. al, 2002) and Group Environment Questionnaire (Carron et. al, 1985) were tested for reliability, and both scales proved to be highly reliable.: Role Ambiguity Scale Cronbach's $\alpha=.855$, Group Environment Questionnaire Cronbach's $\alpha=.840$.

Another reason for this study was to discover how the subscales of role ambiguity (scope of responsibilities, role behavior, role evaluation, role consequences) related to team cohesion. I performed Pearson's bivariate correlation on each separate dimension in relationship to team cohesion. The Role Consequences subscale (i.e. the consequences of being unable to fulfill roles) and the Role Evaluation subscale both yielded insignificant relationships. They were not related to team cohesion. However, the Scope of Responsibilities subscale was significant, $R=.404$ $p<.01$. The Role Behavior subscale was also related to cohesion, $R=.367$, $p<.01$. Thus, level of role ambiguity related to scopes of responsibilities has the greatest relationship to team cohesion. Role behavior ambiguity does not have as large of a relationship, but the results are still significant. Finally, there is no significant relationship between role ambiguity consequences and role ambiguity evaluation, in regards to team cohesion.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that role ambiguity would decrease as the athlete's season progresses and Hypothesis 3 theorized that role ambiguity would decrease as the athlete's year in college increased. I performed a one-way ANOVA test these hypotheses as well as various other factors such as how many years they had been playing their sport, what part of the season their

team was in at the time of the survey, what year of college they are in, what position they primarily played and role ambiguity followed by cohesiveness. No significant differences emerged in these follow-up tests. Therefore, hypothesis 2 and 3 were not supported.

The sport with the greatest role ambiguity was track and field, $M=70$, followed by basketball $M=64.00$, cross-country $M=63.60$, baseball $M=62.00$, soccer $M=61.38$, volleyball $M=58.00$, and tennis $M=52.00$. However, there were two or fewer cases in track and field, basketball, and tennis, thus not allowing overall conclusions to be drawn. I was also curious if there was any difference between role ambiguity in men and women. An independent t-test was run, and no difference between the two groups was found. In fact, the means were almost identical Male $M=61.58$, Female $M=61.57$. The same was true for team cohesion as there was no difference between male and female, Male $M=78.95$, Female $M=80.43$.

Discussion

The overall objective of this study was to examine the relationship between role ambiguity and team cohesion in an interdependent sports team setting. Kahn et. al's (1964) multidimensional model was used to assess four dimensions of role ambiguity: a) scope or responsibilities, b) role behavior, c) role evaluation, d) role consequences.

Consistent with my hypothesis, role ambiguity was found to be associated with team cohesion. Pearson's bivariate correlation showed a .403 relationship between the two variables. In other words, when an individual experienced high role ambiguity scores, he or she was associated with lower team cohesion scores. Conversely, low role ambiguity scores were associated with higher levels of team cohesion.

This information is useful for coaches who are interested in acquiring strong team cohesion and/or reducing role ambiguity. Research suggests that team members who are

uncertain of their role responsibilities, are more likely to view their team as less integrated, and consequently have a unfavorable view of their teammates (Beauchamp & Bray,2001). These results suggest that high levels of role ambiguity are often related to negative effects in regards to the overall group. Team cohesion is considered a positive quality as numerous studies demonstrate its benefits. Yalom's (1965) study shows that groups with high team cohesion often have greater levels of participation, mutual support from one another, and are more likely to defend one another. In addition groups with high levels of team cohesion, also tend to possess a sense of bonding, a sense of working towards mutual goals, mutual acceptance, support, and a desire to be affiliated with the group (Marziali, Nunroe-Blum, & McCleary, 1997). With that said, it follows that higher levels of role ambiguity in individuals would be associated with the undesirable quality of low team cohesion. The results of my study prove that, indeed, high levels of role ambiguity is associated with lower levels of team cohesion.

The relationship between role ambiguity and team cohesion has several implications for coaches. If a coach desires team cohesion, then he or she will want to be aware of its relationship with role ambiguity. The coach will want to alert people about the importance of knowing their role and sticking to it. Through simply creating awareness of the value of knowing one's role, the team members will likely make a more conscious effort to learn their role. It makes since that when individuals' are aware of their role responsibilities, then they will feel more comfortable on and off the field. These individuals will be more likely to maintain positive relationships with team members as they will not need to worry about their specific roles on the team. Thus, the coach or team leader can make sure he or she takes precautionary measures to prevent or reduce role ambiguity. He or she can do this by communicating with the individuals on a consistent basis and assuring that they feel comfortable and confident with their roles on the team. It is

important that athletes are able to communicate with coaches and team members when they feel any uncertainty about their responsibilities on the team. Through keeping open channels of communication and making a conscious effort to assess role ambiguity, coaches can work to reduce ambiguity, which as my results suggest, relate to higher levels of team cohesion.

In addition, my results shine light on the reason conflict ensues in teams. Conflict occurs when people who are interdependent perceive interference from others (Folger, Poole, Stutman, 2013). Role ambiguity occurs when an individual is uncertain about their responsibilities on a team (Kahn et. al, 1964). Carron & Hausenblas' (1998) study prove that when an individual is unsure of their role, then both the individual and team will be affected. Take for instance, a baseball player who plays the shortstop position. One of his roles is to collect all baseballs that are hit near his area of the field. During one play, the shortstop runs out of his area to catch a ball near the second basemen. This shortstop comes running in to where the second baseman is supposed to catch the ball. The shortstop did not follow his role, and as a result the second baseman was unable to fulfill his own role. This could likely cause animosity between the two individuals, because the shortstop prevented the second baseman from completing his task. As a result, conflict between the team may ensue and negatively affect team cohesiveness. Beauchamp and Bray's (2001) study supports this finding as they found that team members who were unsure of their role responsibilities were more likely to perceive the team as less integrated in terms of their task approach to team play and possessed a lower level of attraction to the team. My results and shortstop example further stresses the importance of players knowing their responsibilities and being aware that players who know and follow their own role, will positively affect the players around them.

Another interesting result is the significant relationship between role ambiguity concerning their scope of responsibilities and behaviors, but not the two other manifestations (ambiguity regarding role evaluation or consequences). A possible explanation for these results could be that the two role ambiguity dimensions of “scope of responsibilities” and “behavior” both affect the entire group. For instance, the fact that the shortstop was unaware of his responsibility to stay in specific location and/or did not know the behavior required to perform the responsibility, affected his teammate’s ability to perform his role. On the other hand, role ambiguity related to the extent to which the individual knows how he or she will be assessed and role ambiguity related to the extent to which the individual knows the consequences of being unable to fulfill his or her responsibilities occurs on a more independent level. For example, if this shortstop was unaware of the consequences of not fulfilling his responsibility or how his roles are being evaluated, then this will less likely affect his other teammates. Thus, if an individual does not know the consequences or evaluation of his role ambiguity, then it appears as though it will less likely directly affect teammates’ ability to perform their own roles. When teammates feel the capability to perform their own role and that their teammates can perform their own role, then it follows that team cohesion will likely be higher. The different levels of significance of each role ambiguity dimension suggest that the multidimensional construct is valuable.

Although this study offers valuable insight on the affects of role ambiguity on team cohesion, several limitations should be noted. The study only consisted of 65 participants. Of those participants 34 of them were soccer players. Several sports had five or fewer participants. This caused problems in analyzing data. In addition, I recruited my athletes via emailing all University of Portland Division One athletes, and also emailed people I know who play Division

1 sports at other schools. It was difficult finding a way to get people to take my survey. Consequently, I cannot confidently generalize my results for all sports. In order to allow for a more accurate generalization, future research should seek to examine a larger number of athletes who play a wide variety of sports. Perhaps providing an incentive such as money would attract more individuals to take the survey.

Another limitation of the study is that both role ambiguity and team cohesion were measured at the subjective level. Some athletes may believe they possess a certain level of role ambiguity and team cohesion, but in reality, they do not. However, I saw no way to assess these two measures objectively and this will likely represent a challenge for future researchers. In addition, this study shows that there is a relationship between role ambiguity and team cohesion, but causation cannot be inferred. Future research should incorporate both experimental and longitudinal data to test for a causal relationship.

Contradictory to Eys et al.'s (2001) study, my results revealed no significance between role ambiguity and the part of the season the athletes were in or the athletes' year in college. One possible explanation for this is that the athletes were answering the questions based on their role ambiguity during regular season, rather than their role ambiguity in the current time they took the survey. To avoid this problem, future research should have the athletes take this survey once at the beginning of the season and once at the end, and compare differences. In addition, it would be interesting to examine role ambiguity and team cohesion in relation to other dependent variables such as stress, anxiety, socio economic status, and whether the athletes are starters or not. These factors could have had an influence on the results.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to compare the results of Division One athletes, with other levels of sports such as athletes who participate in, Division Three athletics, recreational

sports, and professional leagues. Athletes I know, who play at sport at a recreational level, usually play for reasons such as having fun and building relationships. As the level of sport increases, there appears to be a greater focus on winning and individual excellence. Thus, it would be interesting to see if these individual aspirations affect team cohesion. Furthermore, as players gain more experience and are comfortable with their positions, it makes sense that role ambiguity would be lower. Therefore, it would be interesting to see how role ambiguity affects team cohesiveness at various levels of athletics.

In conclusion, my study offers insight on the relationship between role ambiguity and team cohesion in a sports environment. Teams can use this information to understand the importance of each team member knowing his or her role responsibilities and how individual role ambiguity affects the entire team. My results suggest high team cohesion relates to low role ambiguity and lays down the groundwork for future researchers interested in examining these variables.

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