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Reframing Sports Psychology: A Phenomenological Perspective on Mental Imagery, Motivation, Emotions and Teamwork

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Abstract

The majority of research in the field of sports psychology focuses on quantifiable, evidence-based, universally applicable theory. Current evidence-based programs of intervention are heavily based on symptomatology and often ignore the lived experiences of athletes; an unspoken assumption seems to exist that events, dialogue, and emotions will elicit identical responses from all athletes. Many clinicians find a large portion of their work focused on the subfields of mental imagery, motivation, emotions, and teamwork. Each topic has a dominating theory, which is typically derived from the concepts of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy.

While CBT certainly has its benefits, its shortcomings are evident in cases where the disposition and actions of athletes deviate from expectation. An extensive literature review can provide background on the aforementioned subfields, which allows for further development of theory that emphasizes the individuality of the athlete. The goal of this paper is to analyze the existing literature and reframe prevailing thought through an existential, phenomenological perspective. Through this research, it is hoped that a viable alternative to existing theory will be provided and a methodology will be developed that can enhance the field of sports psychology in education, research, and clinical application.

Mental Imagery

Mental imagery may be the most frequently used method to combat declining performance. It can be taught quickly, requires no equipment, and has been proven to be highly effective in achieving its goal. Studies in this field cover a variety of circumstances, and the technique used depends greatly on the situation an athlete finds themselves in. A golfer preparing

for a drive while on the course will approach mental imagery much differently than a marathoner

the night before a race. However, no type of mental imagery has been shown to be more

effective than any other, and a study supporting this claim was conducted on taekwondo athletes:

the performance of athletes who preferred internal mental imagery did not differ from that of

those who preferred external imagery (Parnabas et. al., 2015). Over time, the field has grown,

incorporating ideas such as placebo (Guillot et. al., 2012) and self-talk (Afsaneporak & Bahram

2012).

Parnabas et. al. (2015) determined that athletes competing at higher levels were more

likely to employ mental imagery techniques in their sport, indicating that less experienced

athletes may not benefit from mental imagery to the same extent as their more experienced

counterparts. In a study conducted by Khacharem, Ripoll, Zoudji, and Kalyuga (2013),

visualization, a form of mental imagery, was tested as a means of memorizing plays in a soccer

match. While the study was not focused heavily on mental visualization to learn a skill, the goal

was to see if the expertise level of a player would influence the type of visualization needed to

effectively learn a play. It was believed that non-experts would have a difficult time following a

dynamic condition, while experts would struggle with the oversimplified nature of static

conditions.

Players were measured on their recall accuracy, how many repetitions were necessary

before memorization was achieved, how much mental effort they felt they had to employ, and

their learning efficiency. In recall accuracy, the condition, level of expertise, and interaction

were all significant. Experts' recall accuracy was identical for all conditions, while non-experts

did best in the static conditions. For mental effort, the condition, level of expertise, and the

interaction were again all significant. Experts had to invest less mental effort on the dynamic

conditions than the static conditions, while non-experts put in less effort for static conditions. *For athletes who are just beginning a new sport, this may dictate the type of mental imagery employed. In other words, if level of experience is low, an athlete may benefit most from imagining themselves frame-by-frame learning a new skill rather than immediately attempting to follow along dynamically.*

Additional research has been conducted on age and level of play in determining effective methods of mental imagery. Veraksa and Gorovaya (2012) studied youth and adolescent soccer players and determined that younger players (aged roughly 8-13) preferred motivational mental imagery techniques, while older subjects (14-18) added cognitive imagery to their preexisting motivational techniques. This was explained by the fact that eight-year-olds "do not have well-developed movement skills, which might cause difficulties when trying to work them out mentally." While this claim is a bit overarching, motor coordination likely increases as a person moves from childhood into adolescence, so it would make sense that a younger athlete would prefer motivational techniques, which focus primarily on outcome rather than technique or skill. Younger athletes can often succeed on raw athleticism while older athletes, competing against many other people of similar ability level, must develop sound technique to succeed, which can be developed through cognitive imagery. *Therefore, therapeutically, it would make sense for a psychologist to emphasize a combination of motivational and cognitive imagery with clients who have matured to the point in which they can handle both.*

Mental imagery exists as a technique to *improve* performance, but athletes can inadvertently create negative images in their head during competition. For example, while lining up for a field goal, a football kicker may see themselves miss the kick in their head. Afsaneporak and Bahram (2012) showed that positive self-talk was able to help the performance of dart

players, even in the presence of negative mental imagery. Unsurprisingly, negative self-talk paired with negative mental imagery was a deterrent to performance, but these results imply that, if athletes dwell on negative mental images, their performance can be adversely affected. *Therefore, in treatment, clinicians must emphasize coping techniques as well as preventative techniques, because sports produce unexpected situations frequently. Coping with inadvertent negative mental imagery through positive self-talk is one method which can help an athlete succeed.*

It would stand to reason that the underlying mechanism of the efficacy of mental imagery is to reduce anxiety and increase confidence. However, a study of Gaelic football players (Shanahan and Hyland, 2011) indicated that, while a two-week intervention of mental imagery training did significantly improve performance, anxiety was not lowered (as measured by the Sport Competition Anxiety Test) and confidence was not significantly improved (according to the General Self Efficacy scale). While it is possible that this was due to the fact that these athletes play at a high-level and were therefore already relatively confident, even elite athletes can suffer from low self-confidence at times. This data suggests that mental imagery does not act in the same way for all athletes, because, while many athletes likely would, these players did not see a decrease in anxiety or an increase in confidence. Yet, their performance still improved. As an interesting aside, it may be that there exists a physiological benefit to visualizing one's skill; it is possible that this phenomenon is not unlike what many colloquially refer to as "improving muscle memory."

In addition to skill development and confidence boosting, mental imagery can be incorporated into various other aspects of sport. For example, athletes will inevitably make mistakes in competition or find themselves in situations they may not be prepared for. Preparing

the athlete beforehand by having them imagine possible adverse scenarios and how they could respond may create a more well-rounded, and all-around better prepared, athlete. Physiologically, they can develop muscle memory for the situations that they picture, relieving them of some anxiety associated with the unknown.

However, as was shown by the Gaelic football study, improving confidence and decreasing anxiety do not necessarily have to be the results of mental imagery. *Therefore, it is essential to keep the individual athlete in mind when exploring treatment. A therapist should observe what seems to work best for them as an individual rather than what works best for the population as a whole. Sport-specific mental imagery techniques should, of course, be applied, but a focus on the athlete is the most critical aspect of therapy.*

Motivation

One of the biggest challenges sports psychologists face is the issue of motivation in athletes. There are conflicting views on whether intrinsic motivation is truly better than extrinsic motivation (Gillet, Berjot, & Gobancé, 2009), and, if this is in fact the case, methods of cultivating it become important (Frederick & Ryan, 1970). Athletes who begin attending sessions with sports psychologists often do so because they need help developing or enhancing motivation. Prevailing literature generally discounts extrinsic motivation altogether, and although intrinsic motivation would seem to be ideal, potential benefits of extrinsic motivation should be explored. An issue with motivation is that so many factors can influence it; therefore, it nearly impossible to develop one universally effective treatment. *For this reason, therapists need to begin focusing on which form of motivation can potentially get the best results in the athlete and teach methods that can cultivate it in a safe way.*

Instead of attempting to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, it may be more useful to focus on task orientation and ego orientation, as Duda et. al. discuss (1995). In task involvement, one's perception of their ability is "self-referenced," while in ego involvement, one feels accomplished or successful when their achievements stack up positively when compared to those of others. In other words, task involvement involves an athlete's goals to improve themselves relative to their previous performance, while ego involvement is concerned exclusively with performance relative to others. It is worth noting that task involvement can be driven by intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, while ego involvement is nearly exclusively extrinsically driven.

Task involvement allows the experience of being an athlete to be "an end in itself." According to the research of Deci (1975), humans have an inherent desire, or even need, to feel like they are autonomous, competent, and self-determining. Competence itself is actually less important than one's perception of their competence, and a feeling of lower competence (or lower self-determination) driven from ego involvement can result in decreased motivation.

The connection between intrinsic motivation and task orientation cannot be understated, as Duda et. al. (1995) comment that "when task involved, subjective success evolves from trying one's best and attempting to improve on one's past performance," It is mentioned that situations that emphasize personal improvement and development can foster a state of task involvement, which, in turn can lead to greater intrinsic motivation. In ego involvement, individuals tend to focus more on the external factors that are out of their control and can have a profound impact on their own sense of control. Therefore, intrinsic motivation, "is at risk" (1995). However, task involvement can lead to extrinsic motivation; examples include a swimmer attempting to qualify

for a championship swim meet or a tennis player setting the goal of advancing to the final of a

tournament.

In terms of competition, Duda et. al. (1995) argue that the competitive process can allow

one to see either if they are improving (task orientation) or if they are more competent than

others (ego orientation). It is worth mentioning that competitive behaviors are not definitive

indicators of extrinsic motivation, and Kumlander, Doherty, and Lutz (2017) found that college-

aged athletes who experienced competitive interactions with their parents were actually more

intrinsically motivated. Duda et. al. also comment that athletes can tell when certain team

climates are task-oriented or ego-orientated, and ego-involved team climates typically lead to

greater anxiety regarding performance (1995). They also showed that task orientation was

positively correlated with effort and Total Intrinsic Motivation while also being significantly

negatively correlated with perceived pressure and tension. In contrast, ego-oriented males placed

less effort into their sport. In more experienced athletes, task orientation was significantly

correlated with enjoyment, interest and effort; additionally, a small but significant correlation

existed between task orientation and perceived competence. In males, task orientation led to

higher composite motivation. In females, surprisingly, higher task orientation correlated with

greater reported pressure and tension. The question as to why is left unanswered (Duda et. al.,

1995).

A study by Gröpel, Wegner, & Schüler (2016) breaks down these types of orientation

into different terms: implicit and explicit achievement motive. Implicit achievement motive

refers to the desire to do things well, with the reward typically being emotions of pride or

enjoyment at succeeding. When one is proud of themselves for beating a previous personal best

or even learning the correct form for an activity, they are more likely to participate in that

activity again. This rationale is predominantly carried out outside of the person's awareness. Explicit achievement motive is defined as the cognitive evaluation of the self, making it highly influenced by social norms and expectations. There is perceived value to being successful, and people tend to want to continue being valuable. Each motive interacts with a specific class of incentives: activity incentives and social incentive, respectively.

Further research explored whether each type of motivation would influence the adherence of athletes to their sport. One study was concerned with leisure sports, and the conclusion was that implicit motive was positively correlated to more days spent exercising. Another worked with amateur sports clubs and, as with study one, implicit motive was correlated to number of days active, but explicit was not. A third study focused exclusively on elite athletes, and the same result was found. In all three, high implicit achievement motive led to more time spent participating in sport, which indicates that the study supports the idea that *people's unconscious need to achieve is a better predictor of athletic engagement than the social aspect of achievement*. Additionally, one need not be high in both implicit and explicit achievement motive to participate in exercise. While implicit is not exclusively related to intrinsic motivation, because pride can be an explicit motivator, it is typically correlated with intrinsic motivation.

Interest value is a term referring to what extent a person's participation in an activity or effort put forth for the activity is related to personal enjoyment (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002). Interest value, therefore, can be considered intrinsic. In contrast, utility value captures the external reasons one has for doing something. Ego-orientation likely drives utility value; therefore, this concept is almost exclusively extrinsic. The most important takeaway from these terms is that interest value would be the "ideal" value to pursue if the goal is increasing intrinsic motivation. This could be important as children get older and face the inevitability of limiting

their participation to one or two sports. The objective in selecting one would be to choose the sport that has the highest interest value for the child.

Wigfield and Eccles (2002) also mention that, even when children are young, they have a fairly decent idea of what they are good at. It is worth questioning whether their self-assessment is accurate, as there are tangible linear decreases in their ability-related beliefs as children progress through elementary schools. This concept relates to many facets of ability, including sports, and these declines also continue to persist into high school. Despite the drop in ability perception, self-efficacy beliefs actually increase as children age. The most logical conclusion is that children are exposed to more of the world, including others of similar or greater abilities, as they age. Additionally, children become better at interpreting feedback, including criticism, while gaining a greater ability to understand how to make comparisons between themselves and others. Their confidence in their own capability to complete a task actually increases, but their perception is just that others can complete it better. This happens with athletes often, especially in the transition from recreational to high school sports and later from high school sports to intercollegiate sports. For example, a hockey player may still believe they are fully capable of executing a successful wrist shot, but they feel that a multitude of others can perform the skill better. *It seems that it would be important to channel positive self-efficacy in order to cultivate stronger intrinsic motivation* (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002).

The tricky nature of motivation also makes it dangerous to athletes. Types of motivation are typically carried out outside of the athlete's athletic career, and how an individual is motivated will influence how they take on various life experiences. College athletes are often under a tremendous amount of pressure from peers because their team is a large aspect of their social life and a feeling of belonging is important. Previous research has shown a relationship

between being a college athlete and substance use, which could be a result of peer pressure. Rockafellow & Saules (2006) were interested in motivation to exercise and its relationship to the potential risk of substance use. The researchers were interested in whether students who are extrinsically motivated in their sport are more likely to be involved in risky behavior than those who are intrinsically motivated due, according to self-determination theory, to the psychological needs to feel competent, relatable, and autonomous. They hypothesized that extrinsically motivated athletes and people who exercise are more likely to be involved in substance use, while athletes who were part of team sports would also show elevated rates.

There was a significant interaction between athletic involvement and motivation type, but athletic involvement was also correlate with alcohol consumption. Those who were categorized as "athletes" were more likely to partake in alcohol consumption than those classified as "exercisers." Additionally, those who admitted to using alcohol more frequently were, more often than not, extrinsically motivated athletes. It was concluded that both athletes and exercisers who are extrinsically motivated to exercise were much more likely to be involved in risky substance use behaviors than those intrinsically motivated. Therefore, intrinsic motivation not only increases satisfaction and possibly performance, it also may protect athletes against the pitfalls often associated with peer pressure.

Lastly, drawing off the theory of Frederick and Ryan (1970), motivation may simply be an issue of perceived control. Feedback, in general, can be divided into three categories: informational, controlling, and amotivating. While controlling feedback and amotivating feedback, especially when conveying incompetence and/or helplessness can reduce intrinsic motivation, informational feedback has been shown to enhance intrinsic motivation (Kumlander,

Doherty, & Lutz, 2017). Criticism is not necessarily negative if the athlete perceives it to be informational, but it can be amotivating once it becomes controlling.

Self-determination, or the perception of autonomy, is also critical. Many athletes on scholarship report a lower level of enjoyment of their sport when compared to non-scholarship athletes. This is because many perceive scholarships to be controlling; however, this is not the case for all athletes. Intrinsic motivation in male wrestlers and many female athletes, according to one article, was not undermined by scholarships like it was in the football players (Frederick & Ryan, 1970). Whereas football players felt that scholarships existed in order to keep them on the team, wrestlers and female athletes, who "were receiving scholarships at a…lower [rate] than football players," (1970) saw their scholarships as tokens of recognition of achievement. *Therefore, a feeling of personal control over one's athletic career may be critical to maintaining motivation.*

The complex nature of motivation implies that clinicians must focus on the lived experience of the athlete in therapy. An outright elimination of extrinsic motivation may severely hamper certain athletes, so analysis must be client-specific. A focus on task orientation, which is often but not always connected to intrinsic motivation, may be more fortuitous. While the source of motivation for every athlete may differ, a focus on improvement of interest value and gaining personal control would likely be a good place to start.

Emotions

While motivation is one point of contention among current sports psychologists, another is how to deal with emotions. The prevailing idea is that there are helpful emotions and harmful emotions, which are definitively divided by a commonly-referenced structure known as the emotional matrix. In the emotional matrix, anxiety, for example, is a harmful emotion; therefore,

athletes should be taught how to control and ultimately eliminate it from their psyche. While

many athletes may agree that anxiety negatively affects their performance, it is unfair to assume

that this is universally true. Viewing emotions in certain ways can be detrimental to some

athletes (Wollenberg, Shriver, & Gates, 2015). *Therefore, therapies should be more strongly*

focused on deciding which emotions benefit the athlete by making them more aware of which

emotions are present when they thrive. This will allow for a middle ground between emotional

expansion and emotional mastery.

Anger, according to the emotional matrix, is a negative, unhelpful emotion that should be

mastered and eventually eliminated during competition. However, Woodman et. al. (2009),

empirically showed that a state of anger led to increased performance in a force-generating task.

While this may not seem to be a groundbreaking conclusion, this would be useful information for

athletes such as shot-putters, weightlifters, and sprinters. However, anger was also shown to

increase mental effort without increasing cognitive performance. This data shows that the utility

of emotions is situationally-bound; anger can be extremely helpful in certain situations but is

likely harmful in others. *Therefore, emotional awareness is critical, as athletes should realize*

when certain emotions help their performances. Sometimes, it may be necessary to expand the

emotions, but it is also true that certain situations call for emotional mastery.

Woodman et. al. also explored the effects of "positive emotions," and a mental state of

hope increased reaction time, cognitive performance, and motivation. However, the researchers

hypothesized that happiness would also increase performance on the cognitive task, and this was

disproven, as no significant difference was observed across any conditions. They attempted to

account for this by remarking that happiness could be a signal to the body that things are going

well; therefore, there would be no reason to alter any cognitive processes. While positive

emotions can make one feel better, athletes cannot simply assume that they *must* be present at all times, because they do not always improve performance. Acknowledgement of one's emotions is important, but no mold fits all athletes. Some may struggle in a state of pure happiness, while others may struggle without it. *The focus should be the effect of the emotion on the athlete in the situation rather than the universal effect of the emotion.*

For example, happiness may be an emotion ideally used by athletes that are already confident and possibly successful. Because happiness, according to Woodman and his colleagues, may put the mind in a state of contentment, if the athlete is already confident and (potentially) successful, happiness would be an emotion conducive to maintaining these levels of confidence and success. However, if a significant change is needed, it would likely be more beneficial to the athlete to attempt to cultivate a feeling of hope rather than happiness.

The effect of the situation is important as well. For a soccer player, for example, anger could help them tackle stronger, run faster, and jump higher, so emotional expansion may be important. However, if that player finds themselves taking a penalty kick, anger could be harmful because they could easily shoot the ball over the crossbar. Additionally, excessive anger could lead to reckless play on the field, which could result in the injuring of an opponent or the ejection of the player. Therefore, *anger can be both harmful and helpful for the same athlete in the same game. Emotional mastery alone or emotional expansion alone could hinder performance; therefore, a middle ground between the two is essential. The athlete must be aware of their emotional state and attempt to use it in a constructive manner, if possible.*

Continuing with the idea that emotions cannot be put into exclusive categories of helpful and unhelpful, a study conducted by Lane, Beedie, Devonport, & Stanley (2011) looked into instrumental emotional regulation in sport. This idea encouraged people to regulate their

emotions to support a level that would lead to the successful pursuit of goals. In this case, the connotation of an emotion does not matter if it helps to support a goal. This is particularly useful for athletes, considering that traditionally unpleasant emotions, such as anger and anxiety, may actually aid performance. Additionally, these "unpleasant" emotions can even yield happiness if they help an individual achieve a specific task

It is interesting to see how athletes assess the emotions they feel before competition, especially in how they feel a particular emotion may have benefitted them. Lane et. al. (2011) wanted to examine the different emotional states and meta-emotional beliefs that increase anxiety and anger. The study was conducted with runners ranging from national level to regional to club level. Data was entirely self-reported scales of emotion and emotional states before and during races. Additionally, the researchers also asked the athletes if they felt like they could have done anything differently to be more successful.

Interestingly, *15% of the athletes surveyed reported that increasing anxiety and anger would aid their performance.* While 85% may not agree, it is possible that they already feel a high state of anxiety before competition and have no desire to intensify the emotion. However, this does not necessarily imply that it does not help them. The result of this study discourage emotional mastery and the emotional matrix because these concepts assume that everyone benefits only from pleasant emotions. This study, in contrast, shows that *each individual should be allowed to determine which emotions they think benefit them personally. From this information, they can then cultivate strategies that will help them achieve their goal.*

The role of secondary appraisal, which is one's perception of their ability to cope with a challenging situation, is also important in emotions. Marc V. Jones (2003) uses the example of an 800-meter runner finding themselves in a particularly physical race. Primary appraisal may

show this aspect of the competition to be extremely important to their goal (whether that is to win the race or run a personal record time), but it is secondary appraisal that ultimately determines emotional responses. If there is no perception of an ability to cope, anxiety likely results. Jones mentions that "demystifying" a situation is a positive result of secondary appraisal, as making a situation realistic rather than fantastic can aid greatly in confidence and perception of ability. *Anxiety can be debilitating, but the perception of the ability to cope would allow the athlete to live with their emotion and channel it into the best performance they can muster.*

Runners sometimes develop emotional regulation strategies on their own, and self-talk and visualization are a few of the skills they practice. Lane et. al. (2016) devised a study that argued that pacing strategies are influenced by emotional regulation. They make the connection to middle and long distance track events, where the idea is typically to start and end fast. They felt that pace would be enhanced by anger and anxiety because these emotions have been connected to bursts of energy. Therefore, it is worth asking whether athletes can or will cultivate ways to increase anxiety if they feel it will help them perform successfully. In the experiment, the strategies employed were specifically designed to increase or decrease the intensity of "unpleasant" emotions. It was believed that high anxiety or anger would lead to a fast opening portion of a mile race. The results showed that emotions felt during the race did have an impact on the pace, but this was only true for the first 400 meters. The overall time of the full mile, however, was not affected.

By professing that certain emotions must be eliminated in all circumstances, there is no acknowledgement of the lived experience of the athlete. Some people work better under pressure, while others do not, but athletes know themselves better than the consultant does. Therefore, they should be allowed to at least have a hand in crafting their specific intervention. If the athlete

struggles with determining how they handle various emotions, therapy can be centered around

discovering this.

Teamwork

In sport, a team atmosphere can be as diverse as the athletes that comprise it. No two

team dynamics will look exactly the same, which makes teamwork a difficult domain for sports

psychologists to address. Prevailing literature focuses primarily on cohesion and how this

phenomenon is essential to develop in order for a team to be successful. Cohesion can increase

communication and respect, which, in turn, *should* minimize conflict and increase motivation.

On the other hand, cohesion can be hurt by ridicule, embarrassment, and inequity, which are

often, but not always, dictated by the coach. Additionally, if a lack of cohesion breeds initial

failure in a group of ego-involved athletes, without strong leadership, self-handicapping and

tanking can result (Papasideris, 2012).

Cohesion is even important in sports such as golf and swimming, where the focus is more

so on individual performances than team performance. There is a widely held belief that

individual sports are damaged by team cohesion because the ability to work well together does

not necessarily affect performance. Therefore, cohesion would cause a lack of inter-team

competition and be more harmful than helpful. Research has offered up compelling evidence

against this assumption; it suggests that team cohesion is just as important in individual sports as

it is in team sports (Evans, Eys, & Wolf, 2013). *In many cases, athletes are dependent on each*

another for cues, such as training success or even social engagement. Leadership on the team

and the role of each individual athlete must be considered when trying to figure out if the team is

an influential part of a particular athlete's training.

McEwan and Beauchamp (2014) develop an interesting perspective on teamwork that focuses on relating inputs, processes, and outcomes. *The inputs include each member of a team's personal traits and characteristics, the attributes of the team as a whole, and the environmental factors that affect the team on a day-to-day basis. Processes include teamwork-specific behaviors, and the four-step sequence of preparation, execution, evaluation, and adjustments. If a team follows this sequence as a unit, team efficacy and cohesion are supposedly developed. Outcomes include the individual and team behaviors that result from the aforementioned processes, the results of competition, the social identity of the players and the team, and the team members' cognitive states. It is worth noting that developmental processes proceed regardless of the success of the four-step sequence; therefore, outcomes may not necessarily be the fulfillment of goals. However, this is sometimes inevitable, as, on occasion, the wrong adjustments are made through no individual's personal fault.*

McEwan and Beauchamp define teamwork as "a dynamic process involving a collaborative effort by team members to effectively carry out the independent/interdependent behaviors required to maximize a team's likelihood of achieving its purposes" (2014). It is critical to emphasize the word "dynamic," because it implies that teamwork is a constantly-evolving, never-static process. Also, it is noted that even independent tasks such as passing a soccer ball should be done in cohesion with teammates, which makes sense considering that a player has to pass the ball to *someone*, and being on the same page with a teammate is crucial to the successful performance of this relatively simple, seemingly individual task.

While cohesion is highly important in teamwork, groupness is another factor that may be involved in how dedicated an athlete is to their sport. Cohesion refers to how well players work together to achieve a common goal, while groupness is more about how involved one feels with

the team. This "groupness" is necessary for groups to even exist, as team members must see themselves as something bigger than a collection of individuals. In some cases, groupness is more important than cohesion because people are more likely to stay on a team if they feel included. When both cohesion and groupness work together, an even greater adherence to team is expected (Spink, Ulvick, McLaren, Crozier, & Fesser, 2015). *It may be that it is actually more important for an individual to feel like a strong, contributing member of a group than for group cohesion to be maximized.*

Inevitably, conflict can and does arise amongst teammates. According to McEwan and Beauchamp (2014), in any good team dynamic, there exists a situational need for maintenance. Ultimately, the goal is a quick solution to any interpersonal conflict, whether that be through psychological support or integrative conflict management. Integrative conflict management would likely be attempted before searching for psychological support simply because it involves problem-solving within the team instead of bringing in a third party; additionally, there are financial implications that go along with psychotherapy. Integrative conflict management can be through team meetings led by coaches, captains, or other team leaders, communication with a mediator present, or personal communication. *While the most appropriate solution does depend on the personalities of the involved parties and the nature of the conflict, it is essential that it is addressed quickly.*

According to Tarricone and Luca (2002), there are several attributes that contribute to successful teamwork. These include commitment to team success, commitment to shared goals, interdependence, interpersonal skills, open communication and positive feedback, appropriate team composition, commitment to team processes, respected leadership, and accountability. Leadership may be the most important of these because, if teams rally behind a leader,

commitment to team success and processes often follow. Shared goals are then inevitable, and one would assume that, if the leader is respected, they would have fostered an environment of open communication and positive feedback. Fearing a leader is not equivalent to respecting a leader, and fearing a leader can lead to the feeling of being controlled. As detailed previously, this can have a deleterious effect on intrinsic motivation, and, if this occurs, the other aspects of successful teamwork could also break down.

One of the biggest threats to team cohesion is thought to be jealousy. Kamphoff, Gill, & Huddleston (2005) did a study of Division I athletes, which asked if they had ever found themselves in situations where they felt jealousy. Social comparison jealousy was the most relevant, which was reported to having been felt by all athletes. Almost all said that at least one of the situations presented would mildly upset them. Interestingly, none of the athletes showed signs of being outrageously jealous; there was an average feeling of mildly jealous among the sample. As the researchers hypothesized, cohesion and jealousy had a negative, significant relationship. The results indicate that jealousy may be detrimental to team processes and cohesion was subsequently affected. Additionally, jealousy also negatively affects satisfaction. Females on team sports were more jealous, on average, than men; this may be because of the female emphasis on relationships, which can make it more difficult to maintain cohesion. Jealousy is a social factor that can be seriously harming to a team's success; if it threatens the productivity of a team, it can threaten their success.

It is easy to simply say that strong cohesion gives rise to successful teams. While this may be true, there are a significant number of other factors that generate success. McEwan and Beauchamp's input/process/outcome model is a solid start because it acknowledges that developmental processes continue regardless of results; it also acknowledges that failure is

sometimes inevitable. However, if teams remain committed to preparation, execution, evaluation, and adjustment, results will fall as they should.

Conclusion

In each of these subfields of sports psychology, the lived experience of the athlete is of paramount importance. All four can, in some way, incorporated the athlete's personal experiences in order to make their methods of intervention more effective. While having evidence that certain techniques work is helpful, it is essential to remember that athletes will respond to situations in different ways. Sports are not a lab, and athletes are not rats that will behave and respond predictably. Additionally, an expansion of the practice needs to happen so that therapy is applicable to more than just the athlete's athletic life.

There is value is expanding these subfields beyond the realm of competition and practice, because athletes do have lives outside of sport. For example, emotions relating to one's professional or social life can have a significant impact, for better or worse, on the field. Motivation can travel beyond sport into careers or family life, and the same is true for teamwork, especially in the corporate world. Mental imagery can allow athletes to develop skills found outside of sport; an example would be sales pitches. These skills can all become useful in career transitions, in which the athlete looks for a job that provides an outlet for their athletic energy. While competing, however, the goal of an athlete seeking therapy will almost always be to improve performance, and for a clinician to effectively do so, they must take a holistic, phenomenological approach to cater to the lived experience of the athlete.

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