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A SOCIAL IDENTITY PERSPECTIVE ON GROUP PROCESSES IN SPORT AND EXERCISE

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Introduction

Research on identity has grown exponentially within the field of psychology and related disciplines (1). This increased interest is perhaps unsurprising given that a consideration of identity across a diverse range of life contexts, including sport and exercise, has provided valuable insights into the cognitions, emotional responses, and behaviors of individuals as well as the social groups to which they belong. Identity exists along a spectrum ranging from the personal to the social (2). At the personal end of this spectrum lies the distinctive set of personality characteristics and observable qualities by which an individual defines him or herself (3). By contrast, at the social end of the spectrum, identity is characterized by the extent to which a person aligns with being a member of a particular social group, such as a sports team or a political party (4). The position one adopts on the identity spectrum is dynamic (i.e., sometimes the focus is on personal identity; other times certain social groups are more relevant). The focus of this chapter centers on the mechanisms through which people function at the social end of the identity spectrum as well as the outcomes that derive from identification with social groups in sport and exercise settings.

The Social Identity Approach (SIA [5]) incorporates two major theories that pertain to the social end of the identity spectrum—Social Identity Theory (SIT [6]) and Self-Categorization Theory (SCT [7]). In this chapter, we outline the theoretical tenets of SIT and SCT, as well as provide an overview of their application within sport and exercise settings. Following this, we offer practical implications that stem from work that has been conducted in this area, with specific relevance for sport and exercise settings. This chapter concludes with a series of suggestions for future research.

Theory and Research

Social Identity

Social identity is defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his[/her] knowledge of his[/her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (8). The main premises of SIT are that (a) people are motivated to create and maintain a positive self-concept, and (b) this desire for positivity extends to the evaluation of the social groups of which they are a part (8). Taking these premises in tandem, it follows that individuals will act more favorably toward members of their group (referred to as the *ingroup*) and/or discriminate against members of other groups (referred to as *outgroups*) (8).

Consistent with this perspective, in their early laboratory work Tajfel *et al.* observed that placing individuals into groups even on the basis of trivial criteria (e.g., flip of a coin) substantially shaped their behaviors toward other ingroup and outgroup members (9). Among other findings, these researchers observed that participants favored their own arbitrary group in the distribution of rewards and penalties. These effects were observed even immediately following group assignment and in the absence of any interaction with one's ingroup or outgroup (9), suggesting that group membership alone may represent the minimum condition necessary to stimulate discrimination among groups. Fittingly, Tajfel's experimental design would later become known as the *minimal group paradigm*.

Tajfel's theory and findings aligned with earlier research on intergroup behavior conducted by Sherif *et al.* (10). In their seminal *Robber's Cave Experiment*, Sherif *et al.* examined intergroup conflict and cooperation among fifth-grade boys randomly assigned into two newly formed groups at a summer camp (held at Robber's Cave State Park, Oklahoma). Sherif *et al.*'s study revealed the emergence of prosocial behaviors toward ingroup members (e.g., encouragement and support toward group members learning to swim) and antisocial behavior toward outgroup members (e.g., vulgar, derogatory remarks and physical aggression) (10).

Balanced against the negative intergroup outcomes that tend to emerge when people strongly identify with one (in)group at the expense of another (out)group, perceptions of group identification have also been found to be associated with a range of adaptive outcomes such as higher levels of self-esteem (11,12), positive social interactions with ingroup members (13), adherence to group norms (14), and the maintenance of group membership (14).

Social Identity in Sport Contexts

As highlighted above, one of the main tenets of SIT is that people are motivated to maintain a positive self-concept (8). When attempting to do so, individuals have been found to strategically attach or distance themselves from certain groups (15). That is, they preferentially align with groups that are viewed positively, and distance

themselves from those groups that are devalued. In the following sections we provide an overview of research that has applied the tenets of SIT in diverse sport settings. This work includes both fan and athlete social-identification processes, as well as theoretical considerations (e.g., conceptualizing social identity as a multidimensional construct) related to social identity in sport.

Sports Fans and Social Identity Processes

Focusing on the tendency for individuals to gravitate toward successful groups, Cialdini *et al.* (16) examined the propensity for people to publicize their association with a successful group, an impression management technique referred to as *basking-in-reflected-glory* (BIRGing). In the first of three studies, Cialdini *et al.* examined the percentage of students who wore university apparel (e.g., clothing, buttons) on the Monday following their (American) football team's victory or defeat. These researchers noted a greater tendency for students to wear university apparel after their team had won, relative to when their team had lost. The second and third studies provided further support for the notion of BIRGing by demonstrating that students used the pronoun 'we' more when describing a victory than a loss or tie. This linguistic marker suggested greater identification with the university following the success of its football team.

Researchers have exhibited continued interest in the influence of team identification on spectators' cognitions and behaviors in sport. For example, Wann and Branscombe (17) examined the effects of fan identification (defined as an individual's psychological connection and attachment to a team). The authors hypothesized that (a) people do not bask in the success of *all* groups of which they are a part but, rather, only those that are important to self-identification, and (b) sport fans who strongly identify with a team ('die-hard' fans) may be less likely to distance themselves from 'their' team following a defeat than persons with moderate or low levels of allegiance ('fair-weather fans'). The authors found support for their hypotheses. Die-hard fans tended to display increased tendencies to BIRG and decreased tendencies to distance themselves from the team (a process referred to as *cutting off reflected failure* [CORF] [18]) while fair-weather fans were less likely to BIRG and more likely to CORF. Building upon this work, Wann *et al.* observed a positive relationship between the magnitude of a fan's identification with a team, his or her willingness to act aggressively toward a rival team (19), and his or her willingness to engage in illegal behavior in order to assist his or her team (20).

Interestingly, identification with a sport team has also been associated with a host of health-related benefits including increased well-being, personal self-esteem, higher levels of mood (i.e., vigor), greater frequency of experiencing positive emotions, greater levels of satisfaction with one's life, and lower levels of fatigue, negative affect, depression, and alienation (for a review see Wann [21]). To account for this positive relation between spectator identification and health, Wann (21) proposed that team identification fosters well-being by increasing perceived social connections with the team and other fans.

By drawing together the foci of classic (e.g., Sherif, Tajfel) and current (e.g., Wann) research, Amiot *et al.* attempted to explain both the negative *and* positive consequences of social identity by examining the motives of individuals to identity with social groups and, in particular, sport teams (22,23). Amiot *et al.* (23) proposed that members' differing motives to identify with their groups may contribute to divergent consequences of social identity. In testing the above proposition, the authors applied Self-Determination Theory (SDT [24]—(see Standage and Vallerand, Chapter 15, this volume) to examine ice hockey fans' self-determined and non-self-determined motives for engaging in derogatory behaviors (e.g., insulting or making fun of others) toward an outgroup (i.e., another team). The authors observed that the more fans displayed derogatory behaviors for self-determined reasons, the greater the frequency of these behaviors, the higher their psychological well-being, and the more positive their social identity (i.e., the more favorable their evaluation of membership in the ingroup). By contrast, the more the hockey fans engaged in derogatory behavior for non-self-determined reasons, the less frequently they reported engaging in these behaviors, and the lower their well-being. These findings reveal an important caveat regarding the role of self-determined motives. In particular, an extensive body of evidence suggests that self-determined motives are generally associated with adaptive consequences (see Standage and Vallerand, Chapter 15, this volume). However, this study suggests that when anti-social behaviors become internalized (and self-determined) and are accompanied by a heightened sense of social identity with the group, there exists the possibility of certain maladaptive behaviors also potentially manifesting themselves.

Athlete Identification with their Sport Team

Beyond examining spectator identification with sport teams, a small but noteworthy body of work has also studied athletes' social identities within sport teams. Murrell and Gaertner (25) can be credited as being among the first to examine social identity in youth sport. They investigated the salience of common group identities in relation to performance (i.e., win versus loss) among a sample of high school American football players. These researchers measured identification with the team as a whole, as well as in terms of their respective offensive and defensive units. The results indicated that players on winning teams (as determined by season win–loss records) emphasized team identity more than players on teams with losing records. Players on losing teams were also more likely to emphasize their differentiated sub-group identities (defensive and offensive units) rather than their overall team identity, and attribute the poor season to the ineffectiveness of the other team unit (i.e., players on the offensive unit 'blamed' the defensive unit, and vice versa) rather than the team as a whole.

In a qualitative study on social identity and team performance, Zucchermaglio (26) adopted an ethnographic approach to investigate the variability of social identities in the discourses of a professional soccer team. In differing situations

(e.g., after a victory, after a defeat) conversations between team members were audio recorded. The resulting transcripts were, in turn, coded for the frequency of personal pronouns produced (e.g., I, we). Team performance (i.e., victory versus defeat) was found to correspond with the manner with which members referenced group membership and the specific sub-groups on the team. Paralleling the results of Murrell and Gaertner (25), after a victory, team members were more likely to discuss the group as a whole and there were fewer differentiations between sub-groups (e.g., forwards, defenders). By contrast, after a loss, team members were more likely to distance themselves from the team and identify specific sub-groups (e.g., poor play of defense) to account for the loss.

A recent study by De Backer *et al.* (27) investigated the effects of coach behaviors on team identification. In this research, elite athletes were queried about their perceptions of their coach's justice behaviors (i.e., the fairness of the coach's treatment of athletes), as well as the extent to which the coach created an environment that supported three basic psychological needs embedded within self-determination theory (24) (i.e., autonomy—athletes perceiving choice and volition with regard to their actions; competence—athletes feeling a sense of mastery; relatedness—athletes feeling a sense of connection with teammates and the coach). The perception of coaches' justice behaviors and psychological need supportive behaviors were, in turn, examined in relation to team identification. The results of this cross-sectional study revealed that when coaches were perceived by their athletes to be fair and supportive of their basic psychological needs, these athletes reported identifying more strongly with the team as a whole. Thus, it appears that coaches may be able to play a critical role in developing athletes' social identities toward their team.

Conceptualizing Social Identity in Sport as a Multidimensional Construct

To date, research in sport has predominantly conceptualized and assessed social identity as a unidimensional construct (28). This is surprising given the mounting evidence in social and organizational psychology supporting the notion that social identity has multiple dimensions (29–32). For example, Jackson (32) found empirical support for a three-dimensional model of group identity, that included *cognitive* (i.e., knowledge of membership to a group), *affective* (i.e., emotional significance of group membership), and *evaluative* (i.e., value of the group membership) components in groups. In this research, the affective dimension of social identity was noted as the strongest predictor of intergroup bias and attitudes toward the group (32). The relations between the cognitive and evaluative dimensions of social identity on group attitudes were also found to be dependent (i.e., moderated) on the presence of intergroup conflict (32). In this study, under conditions of low levels of perceived conflict, participants with stronger social identities in terms of the aforementioned cognitive and evaluative dimensions, expressed high levels of ingroup bias and low levels of outgroup bias. However, when there was high perceived conflict, participants with stronger social identities

with regard to these two dimensions expressed more negative attitudes toward outgroup members.

Drawing on SIT and empirical research, Cameron (33) proposed and tested an alternative three-factor model of social identity that included (a) *ingroup ties*—perceptions of similarity, bonding, and belongingness with other group members, (b) *cognitive centrality*—the importance of being a group member, and (c) *ingroup affect*—the positivity of feelings associated with group membership. Obst and White (34) reported empirical support for Cameron's (33) multidimensional model. Similar to Jackson (32), Obst and White showed this three-factor model of social identity provided a better fit to the data than one or two factor models (34).

Two studies have taken a multidimensional approach to investigating social identity in sport. Using Jackson's (32) multidimensional concept of social identity, Dimmock *et al.* (28) examined the cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions of spectators' team identification. In these two studies, the authors found support for a three-factor model of social identity. However, unlike the findings from Jackson's research, the cognitive and affective dimensions merged onto one factor and the evaluative dimension sub-divided into two separate factors. The two separate factors corresponded to the evaluation of the self and the evaluations of others. In this study, when sport fans displayed greater levels of cognitive–affective social identity (i.e., highlighted the importance of the team to their self-concept and reported emotions associated with team membership), they exhibited greater ingroup bias (e.g., friendly versus unfriendly) toward fans of their team in comparison to fans of their most disliked opposing team (28).

In another study, Bruner, Boardley, and Côté (35) applied the multidimensional conceptualization of social identity put forward by Cameron (33) within a sport context. Specifically, the authors examined the relation between perceptions of social identity and prosocial and antisocial behavior in a sample of high school athletes from a number of different sport teams. Stronger perceptions of ingroup affect (i.e., positivity of feelings associated with group membership) were found to be associated with a higher frequency of prosocial acts toward teammates (e.g., encouraging or offering constructive feedback to a teammate). Taken together, the research by Dimmock (28) and Bruner (35) provides preliminary support for a multidimensional perspective of social identity and highlighted the salient role of the affective component of social identity within sport settings.

Social Identity in Exercise Settings

The examination of social identity in group-based exercise settings represents an emerging area of research. Bruner and Spink (36) recently examined whether social identity associated with a school-based physical activity (PA) club would be indicative of enhanced exercise adherence (operationalized as attendance to an exercise program). These researchers found that youth who held stronger social identity perceptions with their PA club assessed early in an eight-week program (after two weeks) exhibited increased levels of attendance during the remainder of

the program, after controlling for early attendance. More recently, Strachan, Shields, Glassford, and Beatty (37) examined the relationships between running group identity and social–cognitive and behavioral outcomes among a sample of adult runners from several structured running groups (i.e., organized group runs on a regular basis). When individuals strongly identified with their running groups, they tended to be more confident in their running abilities, and attended a greater proportion of runs with the group compared with those who identified less with these groups. Of note, however, runners who more strongly identified with their running group also exhibited greater perceived difficulty with their ability to maintain present levels of running if the group disbanded. Collectively, these results not only emphasize the positive effects of social identity on exercise behavior within the group (*vis-à-vis* greater adherence behaviors) but also highlight the potential costs that might arise when people become so attached to a given group that they are unable to maintain the target behavior (i.e., PA) when the rest of the group is not there to support them.

Self-categorization Theory

Turner (38,39) sought to extend Tajfel's SIT by developing SCT, which more explicitly outlined the processes and mechanisms by which individuals categorize the self and others into various social groups on the basis of salient attributes. A short, but non-exhaustive, list of the salient attributes that are often used when *categorizing* the self and others include demographic characteristics such as age (e.g., being 'old' or 'young') and gender (e.g., being male or female), as well as more malleable attributes including affiliation with certain sports teams (as a fan or a player) or workout programs (e.g., Crossfit, Parkour). Drawing from Bryne's (40) pioneering research on interpersonal attraction, Turner *et al.* proposed that individuals exhibit a general sense of positivity toward the social categories to which they belong, and have a less-favorable evaluation of the categories to which they do not belong.

Factors Influencing the Categorization Process

Several factors influence which attributes individuals use when categorizing themselves and others. First and foremost, attributes need to be salient to be implemented in the categorization of the self and others. This salience is a product of several variables including past experiences, current goals and motivations, and the confines of the context. For example, if a teenager has played soccer for most of his life, the category 'soccer player' may be routinely used [by him or her] to categorize others. The likelihood of doing so, however, is anything but static. Certain contexts stimulate the relevance of the applicable category relative to others. Returning to our example above, the likelihood that this individual divides the world into soccer players/non-soccer players will be greater in situations in which soccer is relevant (e.g., during the soccer season when many of one's peers may also be playing).

Individuals tend to make use of social categories that maximize the difference *between* one's ingroup and other groups (i.e., outgroups), while also maintaining the greatest degree of homogeneity *within* each group; a principle termed *comparative fit* (41). Another distinct principle is *normative fit,* which dictates that a given social attribute is more likely to serve the basis of social categorization insofar as those in possession of this attribute behave in a manner consistent with the stereotypes associated with the applicable attribute (41). The influence of both types of fit is present in the following example. Suppose that a running group, composed of older and younger members, holds a dinner party in which spouses and significant others (who are external to this group) are invited. If the differences among older and younger attendees are perceived to be greater than the difference between members and non-members of this running group, then age is likely to be the attribute used to categorize party attendees (comparative fit). Furthermore, the probability that age becomes the relevant category is increased to the degree that older and younger attendees behave in ways that accord with age-related stereotypes (and members and non-members of the running group do not exhibit corresponding stereotypical behavior, i.e., lower normative fit).

Self-categorization Theory in Sport Settings

The categorization process outlined in SCT carries significant implications for behaviors within sport settings. Among other contributions, SCT helps to explain why fans of opposing teams often perceive the same game quite differently. Due to shared group membership (and the positivity extoled toward those categories with which an individual possesses membership), fans of a team will be more likely to interpret the behaviors of that team favorably relative to fans of an opposing team. Providing evidence for this process, Hastorf and Cantril (42) examined the way in which Dartmouth and Princeton students perceived a previous (American) football game between their respective universities. Interestingly, these students differed quite substantively in their interpretation of this game, remaining largely positively disposed to their own team's behaviors. For instance, when asked whether Dartmouth players started the rough play, a minority of Dartmouth students (36%) relative to a majority of Princeton students (86%) believed this to be the case (42).

As highlighted in the above example, people hold a largely favorable view of the social categories to which they belong. If, for some reason, a person's membership in a specific category is terminated this is often accompanied by that person reducing their favorability of this category. This mechanism is described as a means of self-protection (43). For example, if an athlete is dropped or deselected from a particular sports team, s/he might be inclined to *disidentify* (44) with that social group and role as an athlete in order to protect one's sense of self. In a longitudinal examination of this process, Grove, Fish, and Eklund (45) considered the development of identification with the social category of being an athlete as a function of success/failure in making a state all-star team. Interestingly, and

consistent with the tenets of SCT, those who did not make this 'select' team exhibited a reduction in their overall athletic identity, relative to those who were successful in this regard.

Self-categorization Theory in Exercise Settings

SCT also carries implications for the evaluations of, and behaviors within, various exercise contexts. In many different domains and contexts, age serves as a particularly salient social dimension with which people often categorize themselves and others, and thereby create ingroups and outgroups. Recognizing this, as well as the fact that people prefer similar others, Beauchamp *et al.* (46) examined the exercise preferences of adults across the age spectrum, and found that people tend to prefer to be active in exercise groups composed of those of a similar age, relative to exercise groups comprising those of a dissimilar age.

Dunlop and Beauchamp (47) built upon these results by examining the relation between perceptions of social category similarity, cohesion, and adherence behaviors within group-based exercise contexts. In this study, when exercise group members perceived themselves to be similar to other group members in terms of their respective physical characteristics (such as age and physical condition) they tended to report higher levels of social cohesion later on in the exercise program, and also displayed better adherence behaviors relative to those who perceived themselves to be dissimilar to other group members.

The work of Beauchamp *et al.* (46) and Dunlop and Beauchamp (47) make clear the fact that within exercise group settings, age is a particularly salient social category. This assertion has been supported in more recent research. For example, Beauchamp, Dunlop, Downey, and Estabrooks (48) considered perceptions of age similarity among exercisers enrolled in a group-based exercise program for postnatal women, and found a positive relationship between initial perceptions of intra-group similarity and women's subsequent adherence behaviors. Although Beauchamp *et al.* found a relationship between intra-group similarity and adherence behaviors, it should be noted that their measure of interpersonal similarity was based on members' *perceptions* of similarity, rather than the *actual,* or objective, degree of similarity present in the exercise class. Building upon these studies, Dunlop and Beauchamp (49) more recently examined the actual age similarity within exercise groups in relation to program adherence. Consistent with the above studies, Dunlop and Beauchamp (49) observed a positive relationship between intra-group age similarity and program adherence.

It remains an open question as to why age corresponds particularly closely with meaningful processes (i.e., cohesion) and outcomes (i.e., adherence) within exercise settings. It is certainly possible that individuals prefer to exercise alongside those of a similar age because the activities engaged in can be more easily tailored to members' abilities (as age and physical ability are strongly related) (49). If this possibility was tenable, then individuals would be expected to exhibit a heightened preference for exercising in the company of physically similar others within

structured group-based exercise contexts, relative to unstructured exercise contexts whereby exercisers are not expected to complete the same exercises/routines and/or at the same time as other group members (e.g., exercising in the cardio section of a health and wellness facility). Dunlop and Schmader (50), however, found that social preferences did not vary across such structured and unstructured exercise contexts. Furthermore, in the study by Beauchamp *et al.* (48), physical condition similarity was not found to be related to adherence behaviors among group members. When taken together, these findings suggest that additional mechanisms may be at play linking intra-group age similarity and adherence behaviors within exercise group settings.

Practical Implications

Research on SIT and SCT offers important practical implications for coaches, exercise leaders, and practitioners. In sport settings, coaches play an important role in fostering team identity (27). Specifically, the perceived fairness and support of the coach has a crucial role in the development of athletes' identification with their team. Given the positive effects of social identity on how athletes view the team (26) and treat other team members (i.e., more prosocially) (35), coaches should strive to build a strong team social identity, one that accentuates the uniqueness of the applicable team. Effective strategies to do so can be adapted from field research by Sherif *et al.*, highlighted earlier in this chapter, who developed a strong sense of ingroup ('we') and outgroup ('them') among adolescent campers by creating team songs, designing a team flag, and overcoming challenging obstacles as a collective.

A real-world example of how social identity approaches can be used to inform team building comes from the sport of rugby union. Each year England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales battle each other (along with France and Italy) in the Six Nations Rugby tournament. However, every four years the best players from each of these four countries come together, on the same team/squad, to represent the British and Irish Lions on a tour of Australia, South Africa, or New Zealand (historically the three strongest Southern Hemisphere rugby playing nations). On the recent successful tour to Australia (in 2013), the Lions coaching staff (led by Warren Gatland) purposefully developed a *higher order social identity* among the players whereby these players stressed that 'we're in this together as British and Irish Lions', and downplayed the nationalist identities of their separate countries (e.g., English). Parenthetically, this British and Irish Lions team went on to beat the Australian 'Wallabies', with many observers noting the considerable role that team unity played in the British and Irish Lions team's success. In a similar manner, whenever athletes from different schools, clubs, geographical locations, or socio-economic groups come together to form a team, such a process of emphasizing a higher order, and common, social identity represents a sound theory-driven and evidence-based method of bolstering team unity (51).

In exercise settings, social identity has important implications for exercise leaders and practitioners. There is emerging evidence that, when individuals

develop a strong social identity with an exercise group, they tend to participate in a greater portion of the exercise classes when compared with those who identify less so with their exercise group (36). Exercise instructors and leaders can look to the team building literature for strategies to enhance group distinctiveness noted to foster social identity. Examples of team building strategies used to enhance distinctiveness in exercise settings include developing a group name, group clothing (e.g., identical color t-shirts), and group music (e.g., theme song) (52,53). Further support for exercise leaders making the additional effort to focus on developing a sense of distinctiveness can be drawn from the considerable evidence highlighting the benefits of team building on greater attendance, fewer dropouts, and greater return rates in a diverse range of populations (e.g., youth, young adults, and older adults [54–56]).

Research conducted within exercise settings also points to the value of drawing from SCT in the development and implementation of PA programs. Specifically, in light of evidence that people prefer to exercise with others who share membership in social categories, exercise program organizers should attempt to provide people with an opportunity to exercise with others of the same age (45,48,57) and/or gender (49, 50). In a study conducted by Dunlop and Beauchamp (49), those who were overweight reported a particularly strong preference for exercising within classes with people of the same gender, and indeed it seems likely that such contexts would result in lower personal evaluative concerns (e.g., social physique anxiety). In a similar vein, given that people tend to adhere to programs when they comprise others of the same age, community programmers might pay particular attention to ensure that a sufficient number of programs are offered for specific age-cohorts, such as older adults who tend to be at particular risk for inactivity, compromised health, and reduced quality of life.

Future Research Directions

Emanating from the emerging evidence on social identity, there are a number of exciting avenues of future research. One interesting area is formative work linking theory and research on personal and social identity. Surprisingly, minimal dialog exists between researchers using these two approaches (58,59). As highlighted earlier in the chapter, Grove *et al.* (45) examined the role of athletic identity surrounding selection to a sport team. One approach to extend this work in sport would be to examine athletic identity and identification with one's athletic team at multiple time points over the course of the season. It may be informative to use a qualitative approach, such as narrative inquiry, to gain meaning into the identities (personal and social) and experiences of the athletes over the season. Narratives have been used in a number of fields within psychology (e.g., health psychology, occupational psychology, gerontology, and counseling psychology) (60). However, only relatively recently have narrative approaches been used in sport psychology (60).

Another informative line of research may consist of implementing and evaluating the generalizability of the social identity findings described in this

chapter across sport and exercise contexts. For example, would similar social identity–exercise adherence findings hold true in an adolescent sport setting investigating social identity and sport participation? Higher team social identity may attenuate the high dropout rates that tend to exist in sport, and the low PA levels associated with adolescence (61). As another example, it may be beneficial to determine whether the observed relations between social identity and prosocial/antisocial behavior that exist in sport (35) transfer to PE classes. Would stronger perceptions of social identity in a PE setting lead to increases in prosocial behavior (e.g., greater levels of encouragement toward class members) and decreases in antisocial behavior toward classmates (e.g., reduced name calling, frustration with class members)? Conducting such research could have important implications for improving classroom management and dissuading bullying, which represents an ongoing concern during childhood and adolescence (62).

An additional area for research consists of developing a deeper understanding of the *dimensions* of social identity in sport and exercise settings. While researchers in organizational psychology have highlighted the multidimensionality of social identity (32), sport and exercise psychology researchers (28,35) have only recently begun to examine the applicability of the proposed cognitive (e.g., thoughts about being a group member), ingroup ties (e.g., commonality and sense of belonging with the group), affective (e.g., emotions associated with the group), and evaluative (e.g., value of the group to oneself) dimensions conceived in other settings. Further work delving into these components of social identity may be illuminative to determine the relevance of these distinct dimensions in sport and exercise settings.

A final future direction relates to the extension of social identity research in sport and exercise through the use of experimental designs. For example, laboratory experiments could manipulate social identity (e.g., using vignettes, subconscious primes) to examine potential behavioral consequences. Alternatively, researchers could make use of field-based experimental protocols to examine the effects of team building interventions, designed to foster social identity, in relation to group members' cognitions (e.g., commitment), affect (e.g., pride), and behavioral responses (e.g., effort exerted) in sport and exercise settings.

Summary

Groups are pervasive across spheres of human life and have powerful effects on the behavior of people (63). In this chapter, we have considered the processes and implications that correspond to the identities that individuals form through membership in social groups. We outlined two prominent social identity approaches (SIT, SCT) within the literature that have informed our understanding of behavior between (intergroup) and within (intra-group) groups. Drawing on SIT and research in social psychology, we highlighted how the mere process of allocation of individuals into social groups, even based on arbitrary criteria, can influence an individual's behavior toward ingroup and outgroup members. We also discussed how SCT can help us explain the observed preferences individuals hold

for the attributes of their fellow group members. In summary, social identity perspectives continue to have considerable potential in shedding light on a diverse array of inter- and intra-group processes in sport and exercise settings. Future research in this area, involving a diverse range of methodological approaches, is clearly warranted. Such efforts have the potential to inform evidence-based intervention initiatives, such as those designed to support the improved functioning of interdependent sports teams as well as greater involvement in active lifestyles among people across the age spectrum.

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