

South Dakota State University  
**Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional  
Repository and Information Exchange**

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

---

2018

# No "I" in Team: A Sport Communication Ethnography of Cohesion and Leadership of a Collegiate Track and Field Team

Dean Stier  
*South Dakota State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Communication Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Stier, Dean, "No "I" in Team: A Sport Communication Ethnography of Cohesion and Leadership of a Collegiate Track and Field Team" (2018). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 2466.  
<https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/etd/2466>

This Thesis - Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. For more information, please contact [michael.biondo@sdstate.edu](mailto:michael.biondo@sdstate.edu).

NO "I" IN TEAM: A SPORT COMMUNICATION ETHNOGRAPHY OF COHESION  
AND LEADERSHIP OF A COLLEGIATE TRACK AND FIELD TEAM

BY  
DEAN STIER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Science

Major in Communication Studies and Journalism

Specialization in Communication Studies

South Dakota State University

2018

NO "I" IN TEAM: A SPORT COMMUNICATION ETHNOGRAPHY OF COHESION  
AND LEADERSHIP OF A COLLEGIATE TRACK AND FIELD TEAM

DEAN STIER

This thesis is approved as a credible and independent investigation by a candidate for the Master of Science Degree and is acceptable in meeting the thesis requirements for this degree. Acceptance of this thesis does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

~~Elizabeth Tolman, Ph.D.~~  
Thesis Advisor

Date

~~Joshua Westwick, Ed.D.~~  
Head, Department of Communication Studies

Date

~~Dean~~ Graduate School

Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First off, I would like to thank my committee members Liz, Becky, and Lee. Thanks for taking time out of your busy lives to offer help during this process. To my thesis advisor Liz, thanks so much! We worked well together, and you made this experience enjoyable and insightful. I appreciate the time and effort you put into helping me. To Becky, thanks for providing detailed feedback that truly pushed my thesis to where it needed to be. Thanks to both of you for your mentorship over the last six years.

Secondly, I need to thank everyone on campus who helped me in many ways. To my gatekeeper, thanks for all of your help throughout the study. To my fellow GTAs, thanks for being there for the positive encouragement the laughs. To my professors over the years, thank you for pushing me to be the student I am capable of being. To Adam and the library staff, thanks for greeting me every day with a smile and some MN sports talk; it kept me sane on those long days of writing. To Josh and Kelli, thanks for being awesome bosses who have taught me so much about teaching and caring for students.

Lastly, I need to thank my love ones. To my family, thanks for the constant support throughout my life. Love ya! To Car's family, thanks for always being there for Car and me. Love y'all! To my boys NaCl, Ole, and Smiddy, thanks for all of the fun at college including the much needed distractions from thesis work. We made some great memories! To Otter, thanks for always greeting me with love after a long day of school. Man's best friend! And finally, the person I need to thank the most. To Car, THANK YOU for being by my side and supporting our little family. I cannot describe how your consistency and patience has helped me stay focused in school and in life. Love ya, Bee!

Dean

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	vii
Chapter One.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background of the Problem.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Definitions.....	7
Value of the Study.....	9
Chapter Two.....	12
Review of Literature.....	12
Groupthink.....	14
Retrospective analysis and case studies.....	14
Laboratory studies.....	15
Role of Cohesion and Groupthink in Sports Teams.....	19
Cohesion in sports teams.....	20
Groupthink in sports teams.....	21
Leadership.....	23
Leadership in sports.....	24
Observational studies on leadership.....	29
Situational Context.....	32
Research Questions.....	34
Chapter Three.....	37
Methodology.....	37

Procedure.....	37
Description of the Site.....	37
Context.....	38
Ethnography.....	40
Fieldnotes.....	43
Sample.....	45
Sampling.....	47
Analysis.....	48
Chapter Four.....	52
Findings.....	52
Emergent Themes.....	53
Cohesion.....	54
Communicative cohesion and gender.....	54
Women and cohesion.....	55
Men and cohesion.....	63
Group and cohesion.....	71
Group cohesion vs team cohesion.....	71
Opponent competition and cohesion.....	75
Leadership.....	78
Group leadership vs team leadership.....	78
Coaching leadership at meets vs at practice.....	82
Chapter Five.....	88
Discussion.....	88

Summary of the Results.....	90
Addressing RQ1.....	90
Addressing RQ2.....	93
Gender and cohesion.....	94
Small group cohesion.....	99
Opponent competition and cohesion.....	100
Addressing RQ3.....	101
Group leadership vs team leadership.....	102
Coaching leadership at meets vs at practice.....	103
Limitations to the Study.....	106
Implications for Future Research.....	109
References.....	111
Appendices.....	124
Appendix A.....	125
T-Model of Notetaking.....	125
Appendix B.....	126
Interview Guide.....	126
Questions for Participants.....	126
Definitions for Research Participants.....	126

## ABSTRACT

NO “I” IN TEAM: A SPORT COMMUNICATION ETHNOGRAPHY OF COHESION  
AND LEADERSHIP OF A COLLEGIATE TRACK AND FIELD TEAM

DEAN STIER

2018

Based on an ethnographic method of observation and ethnographic interviews, this study examined naturally-occurring nonverbal communication and sport communication of a collegiate track and field team. The researcher conducted twenty-four hours of observations and ethnographic interviews with seven research participants (n=7). These approaches provided insight into communicative characteristics of cohesion and leadership, two main conditions of the groupthink theory. An analysis of the observational field notes and ethnographic interviews mostly supported prior research on cohesion and leadership. However, emergent themes are offered, which provide insight into gender communication, sport communication, and small group communication within this setting. A discussion of limitations and future research conclude the study.



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

One season, one team, one goal. Sports teams often adopt this philosophy for their group (Matheson & Mathes, 1997). With a singular thought process of winning, building a cohesive team is simple (Thompson, 2012). For sports teams, cohesion is the most crucial component to assess (Eys et al., 2015; Hardy, Eys, & Carron, 2005). Another important component to a sports team is leadership. How coaches communicate leadership to their teams is the most important aspect of coaching (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). A specific type of sports team called a coactive team offers a unique balance of individual competition and team competition. Coactive sports teams exist as teams where players compete as individuals to contribute statistically to the team (Matheson & Mathes, 1997). Examples of coactive teams are tennis, golf, cross country, trap shooting, archery, etc. Communication between athletes with other athletes, and athletes with coaches is an important aspect to a sports team (Chelladurai, 1984). Specifically, studying how team members and coaches communicate cohesion and leadership can help us better understand how and why the communicative characteristics of cohesion and leadership take place.

This study contributes to the research about sport communication by providing more evidence to how athletes communicate with each other and how coaches and athletes communicate. Specifically, this study adds to sport communication by providing insight into how athletes communicate cohesion and leadership, and how coaches build and maintain cohesion and leadership on their team. In this study, I examined the communicative characteristics of groupthink, cohesion, and leadership from an

ethnographic approach of a collegiate track and field team during three indoor track meets.

### **Background of the Problem**

Track was the first competitive sport documented in the human race (“History of Sports,” 2018). Track and field events consist of different variations of running, jumping, and throwing. As the growth and popularity of track and field in the United States reached the number one activity in high school sports (NFHS, 2016), the need for studies on it increases. However, in the field of communication, track and field lacks the studies on communicative characteristics of track and field teams. This study attempts to provide insight into the communicative characteristics of track and field athletes and coaches. Specifically, I conducted research on the communicative characteristics of cohesion and leadership of track and field athletes and coaches.

Cohesion, according to Carron, Brawley, and Widmeyer (1998), is defined as “a dynamic process that 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” (p. 213). Teams who strive for unity in the quest to achieve the goal may experience the adverse effects of cohesion, which can lead to the phenomenon called groupthink (Rovio, Eskola, Kozub, Duda, & Lintunen, 2009). Janis (1972) described groupthink as “a model of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when members’ strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action” (p. 9).

Janis (1972) proposed three antecedent conditions for groupthink: (1) highly cohesive group, (2) structural faults (e.g. biased leadership), and (3) situational context

(e.g. stressful and/or time motivated decision-making). While impartial leadership and a stressful environment are two important conditions for groupthink to foster, Janis (1972) claimed cohesion was the most important condition for groupthink to occur, but that high cohesion does not always lead to groupthink. Hart (1991) explained cohesion's role in groupthink by stating that all three conditions may occur in a decision, but do not need to; groupthink may only occur if cohesion pairs with another antecedent condition. Along with cohesion, Janis (1972) proposed structural faults such as impartial leadership as an antecedent condition of groupthink. For this study, I focused on communicative leadership aspects during my observation since "leadership play(s) an important role within the athletic context" (Karreman, Dorsch, & Riemer, 2009, p. 722). Leadership studies conducted in sport communication focused on the types of leadership styles of coaches (Turman, 2001) rather than focusing on the observational communicative characteristics of leadership. Although Janis (1972) believed cohesion was the most important antecedent condition to groupthink, leadership style plays a powerful role in the occurrences of groupthink as well (Flowers, 1977; Moorhead, Ference, & Neck, 1991).

Along with high cohesion and impartial leadership, Janis (1972) proposed situational context, the third antecedent condition for groupthink. Situational context focuses on how the situation may impact the outcome of group decisions. In sports, situational context plays an important role in potentially inducing more stress and/or anxiety during competition compared to practice (Behan & Wilson, 2008; Gucciardi, Longbottom, Jackson, & Dimmock, 2010; Murray & Janelle, 2003; Nieuwenhuys, Pijpers, Oudejans, & Bakker, 2008; Oudejans, Kuijpers, Kooijman, & Bakker, 2011;

Pijpers, Oudejans, Bakker, & Beek, 2006; Vickers & Williams, 2007). Furthermore, Hart (1991) found that groupthink thrives when “decision-makers” (e.g. coaches and athletes) experience higher levels of stress (e.g. track and field meet) compared to a low-stress environment (e.g. practice) where groupthink does not often occur (p. 258).

Many studies have analyzed how cohesion positively impacts a sports team (Carron et al., 2002; Eys et al., 2015; Prapavessis & Carron, 1997; Street, 1997) while other studies explained how cohesion impacted sports teams in a negative way (Hardy et al., 2005; Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012; Rovio et al., 2009). Even with the extensive research gathered on cohesion, gaps are present in observational research on communicative cohesion. Furthermore, observational studies on leadership in sports failed to relate their findings to the nature of groupthink, which this study attempts to do. I attempt to close this gap by providing research and a framework for studying the communicative characteristics of cohesion and leadership from an observational approach. Lastly, sports teams exist in different contexts and types. This study focused on one coactive sports team, specifically a collegiate track and field team, whereas previous research on the nature of groupthink focused on interactive sports (Rovio et al., 2009).

### **Statement of the Problem**

With the importance of team cohesion on a sports team (Eys et al., 2015; Hardy et al., 2005) and its significant impact on small group communication in general, (Hardy, Eys, & Carron, 2005) studying the nature of team cohesion is crucial for understanding how athletes, coaches, and organizations communicate. Furthermore, leadership is vital to an athletic team (Karreman et al., 2009). Even with extensive research conducted in both cohesion and leadership in sports, the literature revealed gaps in the literature

surrounding observational studies on cohesion and leadership in a sports context, as well as from a communication approach.

Rovio et al.'s (2009) observational work with an ice-hockey team failed to address sports type (interactive sport versus coactive sport) when describing cohesion's nature on the team. Furthermore, Rovio et al. (2009) used the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ), a quantitative survey, to assess cohesion on the team rather than observing the communicative processes of cohesion. Observational studies on cohesion in sports lacks breadth and depth, with no literature containing an observational model for cohesion. Another problem existing with cohesion and sport literature is the inconsistent results. Past studies found that cohesion was positively associated with performance on sports teams (Carron et al., 2002; Eys et al., 2015; Prapavessis & Carron, 1997; Street, 1997). Although "sport psychologists and coaches implicitly possess the expectation that more (cohesion) is better" (Hardy et al., 2005, p.167), a few studies suggested higher cohesion presents disadvantages socially and task-related, or poor outcomes for a team (Hardy et al., 2005; Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012; Rovio et al., 2009).

Inconsistencies present athletic teams with a problem in deciding how to effectively build the team. Furthermore, inconsistencies disallow sports organizations, sports teams, and sports leaders the ability to understand potential reasons for poor outcomes which may hinder the process of developing a solution. One consistent theme from the studies on cohesion was the lack of an observational study which is problematic due to quantitative studies being general in their scope (Frey et al., 2000). With communicative ethnographic approach, the findings help describe how a specific group of people communicate and interact with each other (Babbie, 2013; Saville-Troike, 1989)

which provides specifics about how athletes and coaches communicate in this study. Furthermore, ethnographic studies provide future researchers with the framework to look at another cultural group using the same standards of observations and interviews as the previous studied provided. Since cohesion presents inconsistent results quantitatively, an ethnographic study helps specific teams to better understand the communicative nature of cohesion on their own team. Furthermore, the study may help frame future observational studies on cohesion in sports teams from a communication approach.

Researchers have conducted extensive research on leadership in both sports and sport communication (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai & Arnott, 1985; Chelladurai, Imamura, Yamaguchi, Oinuma, & Miyauchi, 1988; Chelladurai, Malloy, Imamura, & Yamaguchi, 1987; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978, 1980; Dwyer & Fisher, 1988, 1990; Horne & Carron, 1985; Serpa, Pataco, & Santos, 1991; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984; Turman, 2001). However, researchers assessed leadership using Chelladurai and Saleh's (1980) Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS), which uses quantitative testing to assess types of leadership. Observational work on leadership exists in other fields such as the medical field (Henrickson-Parker, Yule, Flin, & McKinley, 2012), but lacks breadth and depth in the sports field.

The problem of generality exists due to the extensive research conducted quantitatively on leadership in sports but no ethnographic studies conducted which would help bring evidence to specific situations which is important in sports (Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012). With different types of sports (interactive and coactive), applying general recommendations for leadership may potentially hurt teams. Furthermore, track and field had no relation to other coactive sports during Chelladurai's (1984) study on

leadership in different sport teams. This study provided insight into cohesion and leadership within a coactive team, and also aims to provide a framework for future observational studies on leadership in sport communication.

### **Definitions**

This ethnographic study included the key terms of (1) cohesion, (2) leadership, and (3) groupthink as the main terms driving the study with situational context and specifics on the collegiate track and field team as important aspects to know for the study. For this study, I used Carron et al.'s (1998) definition of cohesion: "a dynamic process that 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" (p. 213). In a sports context, the objectives and satisfaction may exist as winning or performing well in the sport as a team and/or as an individual. Specifically track and field athletes often compete as individuals to gather scores for the team so both individual objectives and/or satisfaction and team objectives and/or satisfaction may exist in track and field.

Leadership takes on many definitions for many researchers with reference to their specific field of study. For this study, I used two definitions to guide my understanding of research. First, Tannenbaum, Weschler, and Massarik (1961) defined leadership as "interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals" (p. 24). Although Tannenbaum et al.'s (1961) definition originated many years back, it still provides a strong understanding of leadership in the communication discipline. Furthermore, the definition has a specified focus on achieving goals for a group which

applies to a sports team's focus (Matheson & Mathes, 1997). The second definition of leadership is found in Yukl's (2006) text as "the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 8). I selected this second definition to pair with my first definition because the observational method I chose used this definition to guide the observations. Furthermore, coactive teams exist as athletes that compete individually and as a team (Matheson & Mathes, 1997), which Yukl's (2006) definition highlighted when saying "individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 8).

Groupthink, developed and defined by Janis (1972), is "a model of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action" (p. 9). More recently, groupthink was described as the danger of a group with a very high level of cohesion and should be managed by limiting conformity of the group and promoting discerning opinions (Kowert, 2002). For this study, I observed two of the three antecedent conditions of groupthink rather than observing groupthink. I decided on this observation method based on the principles of groupthink that state groupthink's occurrence is more likely when the antecedent conditions (high-cohesion, structural faults, and situational context) are present, but the presence of the three antecedent conditions does not mean groupthink will occur (Janis, 1972). I used groupthink as a theoretical lens for communication characteristics of cohesion and leadership to see if Janis' (1972) framework applies to a collegiate track and field team during track meets.

Situational context is an important aspect of observational work, especially in



sports (Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012). Janis (1982) defined the situational context relating to groupthink as a highly stressed environment where decisions are made. Hart (1991) described the role of situational context with groupthink by stating that groupthink thrives when leaders making decisions experience higher levels of stress compared to a low-stress environment where groupthink does not often occur (p. 258). I did not observe situational context because the ethnographic interviews provided quality information on the situational context that each athlete is experiencing and what the team as a whole is experiencing. Although I decided against observing the situational context of this collegiate track and field team, extensive research indicates that highly certain contexts such as competitions for athletes and coaches play a role in how the athletes and coaches experience stress and anxiety (Behan & Wilson, 2008; Gucciardi et al., 2010; Murray & Janelle, 2003; Nieuwenhuys et al., 2008; Oudejans et al., 2011; Pijpers et al., 2006; Vickers & Williams, 2007).

The collegiate track and field team served as my observational group. The collegiate track and field team is comprised of both men and women with the same head coach leading both teams. Track and field is a coactive sport where athletes compete as individuals and as teams to contribute to the team whole (Matheson & Mathes, 1997). Track and field itself is defined as “competitive athletic events that take place on an elliptical track and/or on the field the track encircles” with “three broad categories of running, jumping, and throwing” (Rohland, 2016, para. 1).

### **Value of the Study**

Studying cohesion’s relationship with groupthink in sports teams is crucial to understanding how teams communicate. Cohesion remains one of the most studied

aspects of group dynamics (Hart, 1991; Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012) and impacts teams in both positive ways (Carron et al., 2002; Eys et al., 2015; Prapavessis & Carron, 1997) and negative ways (Hardy et al., 2005; Rovio et al., 2009). Previous studies showed the harms of high group cohesion on interactive sports teams (Rovio et al., 2005), and showed that the relationship of cohesion and performance on coactive teams presents inconsistent results (Carron et al., 2002). Coactive teams and the potential impact cohesiveness has on the potential of groupthink within that team is an area of future research.

Leadership also is crucial to study in a sport communication context and its potential impact of fostering groupthink. Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) stated that out of “the many and varied managerial functions of a coach, leadership is the most significant because other functions are performed away from the actual coaching context and can be performed by other individuals in the organization” (p. 35). Previous research examined how leadership impacted teams (Flowers, 1977; Moorhead, Ference, & Neck, 1991) and how coaches can apply effective leadership styles to their teams’ preferences (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai & Arnott, 1985; Chelladurai et al., 1988; Chelladurai, Malloy, Imamura, & Yamaguchi, 1987; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978, 1980; Dwyer & Fisher, 1988, 1990; Horne & Carron, 1985; Serpa, Pataco, & Santos, 1991; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984; Turman, 2001).

The main goals of this study were (a) to understand how athletes communicate cohesion in this coactive sports team, (b) to understand how leadership was communicated on this coactive team, and (c) to explore the nature of possible groupthink based on the communicative themes from the observations. Using an ethnographic

approach, I came to understand the communicative characteristics of the collegiate track and field team during specific indoor track meets. During my observations, I took fieldnotes using the T-model of notetaking where I wrote my initial observations of the communicative acts of the athletes and coaches on one side and then write detailed descriptions based on my initial observations that expand and provide analysis. The T-model of notetaking provides an initial observation with analysis of my interpretation of the observation (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). I analyzed the fieldnotes using an inductive approach following the observations. While in the field, I conducted ethnographic interviews in order to develop my investigation of the team. Furthermore, I included subjective reflections based on my own personal feelings during the observation to add context and clarity to why I noted certain observations.

In the following chapters, I review the seminal research in small group communication studies and how sports teams fit within small group communication research. Then, I review the literature on groupthink and the types of studies and methods that researchers used with groupthink. I discuss the literature of groupthink's main antecedent condition, cohesion (Janis, 1972), and the role it plays in communication and sports. I then included a review of the literature on leadership, which is another important aspect to sports teams. Following the literature review, I include a chapter about the method for this study, focusing on using an ethnographic approach to observe and interview collegiate track and field athletes and coaches. Following my methodology, I included a results chapter where I discuss my findings which emerged from themes from the observations and ethnographic interviews. Lastly, I discuss the implications in my final chapter and offered avenues for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Small group researchers expand the scholarship on communicative processes in small groups (“Small Group Research,” 1997, p. 2). Seminal research conducted by Lewin (1947) explained how group dynamics exist as a whole, and group members each have their own individual dynamics separate from the group. Another pioneer scholar in small group research was Bales (1950) who developed the interaction process analysis, which was a method to conduct “first hand observation of social interaction in small face-to-face groups” (p. i). Furthermore, Bales and Strodtbeck (1951) discovered important aspects of small group dynamics that directly apply to many of today’s studies. First, small group communication focuses on both group task and group relationships, and the conversation moves between the two to fill the needs of all team members (Bales & Strodtbeck, 1951). Second, Bales and Strodtbeck (1951) found that group members start by sharing opinions on the task and relationships which eventually evolves into decision-making discussions. Furthermore, small groups tend to have one or two leaders who verbally communicate to the group more than the other members (Bales & Strodtbeck, 1951).

Due to Bales and Strodtbeck’s (1951) findings and development of the linear phase model, communication scholars used these properties to research small groups through a communicative lens. Fisher (1970) followed 10 small groups through four stages of group development: “(1) orientation, (2) conflict, (3) emergence, and (4) reinforcement” (p. 65). Fisher’s (1970) findings suggested that applying the four phases to small group decision-making “seems plausible” (p. 65). Fisher (1970) admitted that the four stages of group development may not be applicable to every small group focused on

the task(s). This led to Poole and Roth (1989) studying different groups to understand why some groups go through the stages of group decision-making and some groups skip stages. Poole and Roth (1989) found that groups who struggled with the complexity of the task, cohesion, and leadership followed the four stages of group decision-making whereas groups with simplistic tasks that possessed strong cohesion and leadership would potentially skip certain stages of group decision-making that were unnecessary.

One type of small group that depends on cohesion and leadership is sports teams (Hardy, Eys, & Carron, 2005). According to Pescosolido and Saavedra (2012),

Sports teams represent unique opportunities within the realm of group and organizational studies. In comparison to most other types of organizational teams, sports teams have unusual clarity and consistency in terms of member ability, goals, role definitions and relationships, team structure, the rules and procedures by which they must function, and other aspects of their context. (p. 750)

Due to the uniqueness of sports teams in small groups research, researchers specific to the communication on sports teams need to explain their group dynamics.

Sports teams compete as interactive teams (basketball, football, soccer) or coactive teams (tennis, golf, cross country). Interactive teams depend on players to sacrifice individual goals for the success of the team, whereas coactive teams exist with more independent goals which mutually benefit the team (Matheson & Mathes, 1997). In the following review of literature, I examine the research conducted on (a) groupthink and the types of studies that used groupthink, (b) cohesion and its role in sports, and (c) leadership and how leadership relates to sports teams. Specifically, I am looking at these

aspects of communication because I observed and conducted ethnographic interviews based on the communicative characteristics of groupthink, cohesion, and leadership.

### **Groupthink**

Groupthink, according to the seminal research conducted by Janis (1972), occurs when “members of any small cohesive group tend to maintain *esprit de corps* by unconsciously developing a number of shared illusions and related norms that interfere with critical thinking and reality testing” (p. 35-6). To elaborate, members become so cohesive as a group that they develop symptoms that inhibit their decision-making for the group and/or organization. Janis (1972) used a retrospective approach to his groupthink theory by applying the phenomenon to faulty decisions in America’s past. Since Janis’ (1972) initial work, other studies focused on case studies of past events (Hensley & Griffin, 1986; Moorhead, Ference, & Neck, 1991; Smith, 1985) and laboratory studies on certain aspects of groupthink (Callaway & Esser, 1984; Flowers, 1977), as well as ways of avoiding groupthink (Kowert, 2002; Macleod, 2011; Simone 2008).

**Retrospective analysis and case studies.** In Janis’ (1972) book, *Victims of Groupthink*, he described the causes and symptoms of groupthink and how the causes and symptoms lead to the faulty decisions he wrote about. Since the groupthink phenomenon provided a retrospective analysis on negative outcomes of events, researchers applied groupthink theory to case studies. Smith (1985) answered Janis’ call for a case study of the United States’ hostage rescue mission in Tehran. Smith (1985) examined the United States’ failed rescue mission using the groupthink symptoms and grouping them into two groups: (1) faulty decision making and (2) tendency to unite and exclude the opposition.

Smith (1985) found both aspects of groupthink in the failed mission and “the failure of the mission cannot be explained in terms of simple bad luck” (p. 123).

Hensley and Griffin’s (1986) analysis of the Kent State board of trustees’ controversy on building an addition to the gymnasium on the grounds of a past school shooting found that every major condition of groupthink, including faulty decision making and exclusion of opposition, occurred. Although the findings of Hensley and Griffin (1986) supported Steve Smith’s (1985) findings, a concern for researcher bias is present. Hensley and Griffin (1986) attempted to address the issue of bias by explaining how the three problems in their methodology (objectivity, accepting/rejecting components of groupthink, and information available) lack a substantial impact on their findings, due to preventative measures.

Additionally, Moorhead et al. (1991) found that most of the symptoms of groupthink occurred in the failed NASA Challenger launch, which supported the findings of Smith (1985) and Hensley and Griffin (1986). However, Moorhead et al. (1991) highlighted two additional variables of groupthink that need inclusion into Janis’ (1972) initial framework: (1) the influence on time and (2) the powerful role of leadership. The findings of retrospective analysis and case studies offer support but also contest laboratory research on groupthink.

**Laboratory studies.** A few past studies have used a laboratory approach to studying groupthink (Callaway & Esser, 1984; Flowers, 1977; Moorhead & Montanan, 1986). Flowers (1977), who conducted the initial empirical study on groupthink, tested cohesiveness and leadership style, two important factors of groupthink. Using groups, Flowers (1977) tested open leadership versus closed leadership, and high cohesiveness

versus low cohesiveness using “one hundred twenty undergraduate students from Indiana University and Utica College of Syracuse University as subjects” (p. 890). Flowers (1977) trained leaders based on open (when leader does not state his/her own opinion on fixing a problem) and closed (when leader states his/her own opinion on fixing a problem) leadership. Open leaders also “asked for and encouraged discussion” for a possible solution to the problem and emphasized that considerations of “all possible viewpoints” were crucial to selecting the right course of action (Flowers, 1977, p. 890). However, closed leaders were trained to “not encourage discussion” and emphasize that “the most important thing was for the team to agree on its decision” (Flowers, 1977, p. 890).

Flowers (1977) tested low cohesiveness and high cohesiveness by splitting half of the groups in each leadership style. The low cohesiveness groups were formed by subjects who were unfamiliar with each other and the leader, while the high cohesiveness groups were formed by subjects who were selected by the group leader and previously knew him/her. After groups were split based on leadership styles and cohesiveness, Flowers (1977) studied the groups in a laboratory setting, where each group was presented a sheet with instructions, and the group needed to make a decision within 30 minutes, while the researcher recorded and watched the interactions from outside of the laboratory. Flowers (1977) found that leadership style had the strongest impact on how groups proposed solutions and made decisions. Flowers’ (1977) findings supported Janis’ (1972) research on leadership style where open leaders in a group led to more positive outcomes than the closed leader. However, no findings in Flower’s (1977) study supported cohesiveness, Janis’ (1972) first antecedent cause, as a predictor of groupthink



because groupthink in the high-cohesive groups and low-cohesive groups depended on an open or closed leader of those groups.

In contrast, Callaway and Esser (1984) found in their laboratory test that “high cohesive groups without adequate decision procedures tended to make the poorest decisions” (p. 157). Although high cohesiveness led to poor decisions, “the presence of groupthink was characterized by a lack of disagreement and a high level of confidence in group decisions” (Callaway & Esser, 1984, p. 157). Callaway and Esser (1984) argued the presence of groupthink exists because of cohesiveness and leadership style, which supports Janis (1972), who argued that high cohesion in a group leads to the symptoms of groupthink such as the illusion of invulnerability (high levels of confidence) and the illusion of unanimity (lack of disagreement).

Instead of viewing only various aspects of groupthink in a laboratory setting, Moorhead and Montanan (1986) conducted a comprehensive test of groupthink. Moorhead and Montanan (1986) examined all the proposed variables of Janis’ (1972) groupthink using 45 teams who competed in a simulation lasting three months. The key difference in Moorhead and Montanan’s (1986) study was the use of teams who worked together for a period of time, rather than forming teams beforehand. In contrast to Flowers’ (1977) findings of leadership style as the main cause of groupthink, Moorhead and Montanan (1986) found that “insulation of the group most strongly affects group performance,” meaning that the group received no outside opposition because the group protected itself from it (p. 409). Furthermore, Moorhead and Montanan (1986) found all three antecedent conditions impacting the symptoms and decision-making in groupthink.

Moorhead and Montanan (1986) explained how cohesion adversely relates to self-censoring and offering alternate plans while having a positive relationship with holding a minority opinion. Insulation negatively related to the group's feelings of invulnerability and actions of seeking out expert opinion. Moorhead and Montanan (1986) found that leadership positively related to the group's morals and silencing of minority opinions while negatively relating to the group's ability to offer alternative options. Although Moorhead and Montanan (1986) described the three antecedent conditions of groupthink as contributors to groupthink symptoms and faulty decision-making, the conditions, symptoms, and decision-making had no direct impact on group performance.

Furthermore, Moorhead and Montanan's (1986) findings on cohesion, insulation, and leadership were inconsistent with Janis' (1972) initial findings with some relationships supporting the framework and other relationships "opposite to those predicted by the Janis framework" (Moorhead & Montanan, 1986, p. 408). The research on groupthink focuses on the symptoms and causes of groupthink, including Janis' (1972) view on cohesion, the necessary condition for groupthink to occur.

The role of groupthink on groups has been studied in a multitude of ways. Even though most of the prior research on cohesion was conducted many years ago (Callaway & Esser, 1984; Flowers, 1977; Janis, 1972; Moorhead et al., 1991; Moorhead & Montanan, 1986), a few recent studies aim to provide strategies to avoid groupthink as a leader in politics (Kowert, 2002) and in the medical field (Macleod, 2011; Simone, 2008). The research on groupthink helped me better understand the characteristics of groupthink. Specifically, the prior research on groupthink provided insight into the communicative characteristics of groupthink to observe and ask about.

## **Role of Cohesion and Groupthink in Sports Teams**

Carron, Brawley, and Widmeyer (1998), defined cohesion as “a dynamic process that 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” (p. 213). Furthermore, “team cohesion is considered by some theoreticians to be the most important small group variable” (Hardy, Eys, & Carron, 2005, p. 166). Also in the sports context, researchers and coaches believe that cohesion positively associates with better performance and reduced conflict (Hardy et al., 2005). Performance in a sports setting often relates to the success of a team (i.e., wins and losses), but also relates to how participants in a particular study assess their own individual and group performance (Carron, Colman, Wheeler, & Stevens, 2002).

Past studies supported the claim of a positive association between performance and cohesion (Carron et al., 2002; Eys et al., 2015; Prapavessis & Carron, 1997; Street, 1997). Although “sport psychologists and coaches implicitly possess the expectation that more (cohesion) is better” (Hardy et al., 2005, p.167), a few studies suggested more cohesion presents disadvantages socially and on tasks, or low performance outcomes for a team (Hardy et al., 2005; Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012; Rovio et al., 2009).

Studies showing the negative effects of high cohesion in sports teams mentioned the role groupthink played in the specific context (Hardy et al., 2005; Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012; Rovio et al., 2009). Hardy et al. (2005) categorized disadvantages by social cohesion and task cohesion. Three potential disadvantages of high social cohesion described by Hardy et al. (2005) were defined as “balance, group-level disadvantages, and personal-level disadvantages” (p. 174). Hardy et al. (2005) described balance as

unequal cohesion between task and social. Hardy's et al. (2005) group-level disadvantages included "time wasting, goal-related problems, and communication problems" (p. 176).

Lastly, personal problems described by Hardy et al. (2005) included "decreased focus, social isolation, social attachment problems, and reduced commitment" (p. 177). Since sports teams exist in numerous different types (Katz, 2001), in the following section, I reviewed the literature on (a) the role cohesion plays on sports teams, and (b) the role groupthink plays on sports teams specific to the relevancy to coercive teams in this study.

**Cohesion in sports teams.** Cohesion in sports teams acts as an important variable to the success of a team (Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012). Prapavessis and Carron (1997) found cohesion as a positive influence on work output of individuals on a team. Prapavessis and Carron (1997) defined work output as volume of oxygen consumption (VO<sub>2</sub>) and determined VO<sub>2</sub> work output increased in the participants who perceived the team possessing high cohesiveness. Prapavessis and Carron (1997) used the Group Environment Questionnaire (Carron, 1985) to assess the relationship between cohesion and output.

Carron et al. (2002) stated researchers assessing cohesion since the 1980s largely used the Group Environment Questionnaire. Although cohesion often associates with positive performance (Carron et al., 2002; Eys et al., 2015; Hardy et al., 2005; Prapavessis & Carron, 1997; Street, 1997), high cohesion may lead to potential disadvantages for a sports team such as a task and social balance, group-level and personal-level performance (Hardy et al., 2005). Rovio et al. (2009) stated that high

cohesion led to groupthink in the case of a men's ice hockey team.

**Groupthink in sports teams.** Paskevich, Estabrooks, Brawley, and Carron (2001) claimed groupthink may occur from a cohesive team. Rovio et al. (2009) conducted a case study of a Junior ice hockey team to examine the role cohesion played on conformity, group polarization, and groupthink. Using the Group Environment Questionnaire (Carron, 1985) to assess cohesion, Rovio et al. (2009) found that "high social cohesion and pressure to conform may have led to the phenomenon of groupthink" (p. 429). Rovio et al. (2009) stated that the potential for groupthink existed from collecting data from observations throughout the hockey season, taking notes on the observations, and interviewing the coach (p. 429).

As Janis (1972) explained how high cohesion may lead to self-censorship, overconfidence, and other symptoms, the ice hockey team case study showed how certain players did not communicate their true beliefs in a meeting about assessing goals and perceived the team's performance as much higher than the coaches of the team (Rovio et al., 2009). Even though Rovio et al. (2009) presented findings supporting groupthink's relationship to cohesion in sports, they did not address the role of sports type (interactive and coactive) on groupthink and cohesion in sports. My study, however, examined a coactive sports team (track and field) and I provided insight into how coactive teams differ from interactive teams and specifically how track and field differs from other sports in general (Chelladurai, 1984).

Past studies offered support for the impact of sports type on cohesion (Carron et al., 2002; Carron & Chelladurai, 1981; Matheson & Mathes, 1997; Munroe, Estabrooks, Dennis, & Carron, 1999; Widmeyer & Williams, 1991; Williams & Widmeyer, 1990)

where coactive sports had the strongest impact present in the relationship between cohesion and performance meaning that cohesion had the largest positive association with performance in coactive sports, such as track, compared to interactive sports (Carron et al., 2002). Carron and Chelladurai (1981) also found that cohesion is predicted by different types of sports teams. Carron and Chelladurai (1981) found that “the variables which contribute to cohesion are different in an individual sport (where the athletes carry out independent tasks) and a team sport (where the athletes are engaged in an interdependent task)” (p. 136). Note that Carron and Chelladurai’s (1981) definition of individual sport directly relates to the definition I use for a coactive team; players compete as individuals to contribute statistically to the team (Matheson & Mathes, 1997).

Although Munroe et al. (1999) focused on group norms during different stages of a team (practice, competition, and offseason), they identified sport type as an important moderator in the development of group norms. Munroe et al. (1999) described group norms as “the group consensus of what is acceptable and unacceptable” (Munroe, et al., 1999, p. 171) and that athletes need to understand the rules of the norms on a sports team to have success (Silva, 1983). Munroe et al.’s (1999) understanding of group norms relates to how Carron et al. (1998) described cohesion as a group’s willingness to build relationships with the hopes of accomplishing a unified objective, whether that be relationally or tactically.

Lastly, Widmeyer and Williams (1991) examined how to predict cohesion on a coactive sports team. Widmeyer and Williams’ (1991) findings suggest a positive relationship with the size of the coactive team and task cohesion, while membership satisfaction on the team had the strongest relationship to cohesion. Even with a strong

conceptual framework supporting a relationship between sport type and cohesion, not all studies supported the impact of sports type on the relationship between performance and cohesion (Eys et al., 2015).

Cohesion's importance to athletic teams cannot be understated (Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012). Prior research on cohesion's positive impact on sports teams is extensive (Carron et al., 2002; Eys et al., 2015; Prapavessis & Carron, 1997; Street, 1997), however, some recent studies suggested high cohesion negatively impacts the team (Hardy et al., 2005; Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012; Rovio et al., 2009). Since the research on cohesion is inconclusive and lacks research in observational work in communication, my study aims to provide insight into the communicative characteristics of cohesion using observations and interviews with athletes and coaches.

## **Leadership**

Leadership is the most important aspect of coaching a sports team (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). Tannenbaum et al. (1961) defined leadership as "interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals" (p. 24). Tannenbaum et al.'s (1961) definition applies to a sports context with a focus on a group's achievement of goals, which Matheson and Mathes (1997) described as the main focus of a sports team. Leadership also focuses on individual goals along with group goals. Yukl (2006) described how individual objectives relate to leadership, which he described as "the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 8).

Research on leadership in sports is extensive (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai & Arnott, 1985; Chelladurai et al., 1988; Chelladurai et al., 1987; Chelladurai & Saleh,

1978, 1980; Dwyer & Fisher, 1988, 1990; Horne & Carron, 1985; Serpa et al., 1991; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984; Turman, 2001). However, most researchers who examined leadership in sports used quantitative methods such as Chelladurai and Saleh's (1980) Leadership Scale for Sports. Observational studies on leadership exist in other fields, specifically the medical field (Allan, Dixon, Lee, Savage, & Tapson, 2017; France, Leming-Lee, Jackson, Feistritz, & Higgins, 2008; Henrickson-Parker et al., 2012; Kolbe et al., 2012; Sakran et al., 2012), but extensive research has not been conducted in sports. In the following sections, I reviewed literature on (1) leadership in sports and (2) observational studies of leadership since I conducted a study on the communicative characteristics of leadership on track and field athletes and coaches using observations and ethnographic interviews.

**Leadership in sports.** Leadership in sports remains the most essential aspect for a coach (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). Sports exists as a large, yet specified context (Pescosolido & Saavedra 2012), so researchers have studied many different types of variables in the sports world. Besides cohesion, leadership is one of the most studied aspects of sports (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai & Arnott, 1985; Chelladurai et al., 1988; Chelladurai et al., 1987; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978, 1980; Dwyer & Fisher, 1988, 1990; Horne & Carron, 1985; Serpa et al., 1991; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984; Turman, 2001). Due to the popularity of sports studies, Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) developed a quantified measure to assess leadership in sports.

The Leadership Scale for Sports, created by Chelladurai and Saleh (1980), “consists of one direct task factor (training and instruction), two decision-style factors (democratic and autocratic behavior), and two motivational factors (social support and



positive feedback)” (p. 43). Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) described training and instruction as behaviors that enhance athletic performance. Democratic behavior is the amount the coach lets the athletes make decisions with him/her while autocratic behavior is the amount of authority the coach exhibits with the athletes (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980).

Lastly, Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) described social support as “the extent to which the coach is involved in satisfying the interpersonal needs of the athletes” (p. 42-43). Furthermore, the Leadership Scale for Sports assesses the athlete’s perception of the coaches’ coaching styles and the preferred coaching styles of the athletes (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) revised the Leadership Scale for Sports from their seminal work on the questionnaire (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978).

Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) sampled in three different stages for the development of the questionnaire and used 99 different items from previous leadership models in the first stage. Athletes were provided a statement and answered with predetermined responses consisting of “always, often, occasionally, seldom, and never” (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980, p. 36). After finding the most meaningful factors (training and instruction, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, social support, and positive feedback), Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) administered the revised questionnaire to a different sample of athletes and the findings supported their five factor analysis. Chelladurai and Saleh’s (1980) Leadership Scale for Sports would become one of the most popular measures for leadership in sports (Cruz & Kim, 2017) because it “deals with the athlete’s own coach, focuses on coaches’ specific behaviors, and allows for

perceptions of coaches' behaviors from the athletes' perspective" (Horne & Carron, 1985, p. 138).

While Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) built the Leadership Scale for Sports, Chelladurai (1978) was developing it and tested sport type for leadership preferences. Chelladurai (1978) found that independent (coactive) athletes preferred less training and instruction than athletes in interdependent (interactive) sports. Chelladurai (1984) applied the Leadership Scale for Sports to different sport types and compared preferred leadership behavior for athletes to their perceived leadership behavior for their coaches. Chelladurai (1984) found that sport type presented a "surprising" finding about track and field in which it differed from both interactive sports and other coactive sports. Specifically, Chelladurai (1984) found that unlike other sports studied, social support and positive feedback from leaders did not relate to member satisfaction on the team.

Similarly, Terry and Howe (1984) surveyed athletes of different ages, sexes, and sport type using the Leadership Scale for Sports and found that sports type was the only variable to distinguish preferences. Specifically, "athletes in independent (coactive) sports preferred more democratic behavior and less autocratic behavior than athletes in interdependent (interactive) sports" (Terry & Howe, 1984, p. 188).

Horne and Carron (1985) used the Leadership Scale for Sports to assess coaches' perceptions and players' perceptions and preferences, but also found that sports type differed in the Leadership Scale for Sports. Leadership in sports has also looked at how cultural leadership preferences may differ for coaches (Chelladurai et al., 1987; Chelladurai et al., 1988). Chelladurai et al. (1987) used the Leadership Scale for Sports to initially assess cultural preferences in sports leaders and found that sports type, along

with culture, impacted preferred leadership style for coaches which was unique at the time due to most studies focusing on American teams. Furthermore, in Dwyer and Fischer's (1988) study of wrestling coaches' leadership, their findings echoed that of Horne and Carron's (1985) findings in relation to sport type. With differences in sports type, researchers continued to assess differences in perceptions between athletes and coaches.

Chelladurai (1984), using the Leadership Scale for Sports, found that athlete perceptions strongly differed from their preferred leadership styles for coaches. Horne and Carron (1985) also used it to assess the "discrepancy between athletes' perceptions of and preferences for coaching behavior" (p. 139) but tested coaches as well to assess the differences in coach perceptions and player perceptions and preferences. Horne and Carron (1985) found large discrepancies in the coaches' perceived behavior of themselves and the athletes' perceived behavior of the coaches with four of the five factors of the Leadership Scale for Sports.

Coaches perceived themselves as exhibiting more training behavior, democratic leadership behavior, social support, and reward behaviors than athletes reported. However, coaches' perceptions and athletes' perceptions of autocratic leadership behavior showed no significant difference (Horne & Carron, 1985). Researchers have also used the Leadership Scale for Sports to assess the differences in gender preferences of leadership styles of coaches (Chelladurai & Arnott, 1985; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978; Serpa et al., 1991; Terry & Howe, 1984).

Before Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) developed the first finished version of the Leadership Scale for Sports, Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) used a similar version to

assess gender differences for preferences in leadership and found that gender differences existed with leadership preferences. Similarly, Chelladurai and Arnott (1985) used the Leadership Scale for Sports to survey men's and women's collegiate basketball teams and found that decision-making behaviors of the coach was dependent on sex, meaning the women preferred to partake in the decision while men preferred a direct decision from the coach. Although sex and gender are described as different variables now, Chelladurai and Saleh (1978), and Chelladurai and Arnott (1985) used them synonymously.

Terry and Howe (1984) used the Leadership Scale for Sports to assess the differences in leadership preference based on age, sex, and sports type. After surveying 80 males and 80 females from the University of Victoria, Terry and Howe (1984) found “no overall significant difference in coaching preference attributable to the sex of the athlete” (p. 192). Similarly, Sherman, Fuller, and Speed (2000) found no significant difference based on gender for leadership preference.

Chelladurai et al. (1987) used the Leadership Scale for Sports for a cross-cultural study of preferred leadership. Using athletes from Japan and Canada, Chelladurai et al. (1987) found that Japanese athletes preferred more leadership than Canadian athletes. Although this study is specific to the two cultures, it provided Chelladurai et al. (1988) a framework for cross-cultural studies on preferred leadership. Chelladurai et al. (1988) used the same Leadership Scale for Sports as the measure and found that “Japanese athletes preferred more autocratic behavior and social support while the Canadian athletes preferred significantly more training and instruction” (p. 374). With the extensive quantitative research on leadership in sports due to the Leadership Scale for Sports, qualitative methods such as observational studies are lacking in sports. In other fields,

such as the medical field, observational leadership offers a unique comparative context to sport.

**Observational studies on leadership.** Although observational studies on leadership in sports are lacking, other fields have implemented the ethnographic approach to research to better understand the context they work in. For instance, the medical field provides compelling research on observational leadership that relates well to sports. Yukl's (2006) definition of leadership is how leaders direct individual and group tasks to achieve the goals of the group. The observational method I selected for this study used that definition of leadership as well. Coactive teams such as track and field teams compete individually and as a team (Matheson & Mathes, 1997), which means they function similar to an operating team according to the previously mentioned Yukl (2006) definition. Henrickson-Parker et al.'s (2012) study helped guide my observation due to the similarities of an operating room and a sporting competition which I discuss below.

Using observations from an operating room during surgery, Henrickson-Parker et al. (2012) observed surgeons' leadership behavior. Henrickson-Parker et al. (2012) found seven main leadership elements from the 258 behaviors that researchers collected. The first leadership element found was guiding and supporting which Henrickson-Parker et al. (2012) defined as "teaching and coaching perspectives, involving team in decisions and allowing for input from team members" (p. 350). Henrickson-Parker et al.'s (2012) first observational element relates well to the Leadership Scale for Sports' factor of democratic leader by allowing other team members in on the decision (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). Secondly, Henrickson-Parker et al. (2012) found that communicating and coordinating was the second most observed leadership element which they defined as

“enabling information exchange and helping the team to perform as a unit, rather than as individuals; asking for and giving updates; the ability to change depending on situational demands” (p. 350). This element supports Turman’s (2001) assertion that coaches adapt their leadership styles based on the situation.

Henrickson-Parker et al.’s (2012) third leadership element was managing tasks which is “the ability to maintain task performance while ensuring timely and effective task completion; maintenance of technical aspects of the task, calling for help when appropriate” (p. 350). Again, this third leadership element relates to both the Leadership Scale for Sports where leaders show democratic behavior in decision making (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980) but also within the research on cohesion in sports when focusing on task cohesion within Carron’s (1985) Group Environment Questionnaire.

Henrickson-Parker et al.’s (2012) fourth observable leadership element was directing and enabling which is “promoting accomplishment of task and interpersonal goals through team members, stating expectations, being confident in own ability” (p. 350).

Henrickson-Parker et al.’s (2012) fourth observable trait relates to the leadership style of autocratic behaviors, and training and instruction where coaches direct the team and show authority by making decisions and giving instruction. The fifth observable leadership element found in Henrickson-Parker et al.’s (2012) study was maintaining standards which means “behaviors that reinforce standards such as following the rules and established procedures” (p. 350).

Henrickson-Parker et al.’s (2012) leadership element of maintain standards relates to the autocratic behaviors found in Chelladurai and Saleh’s (1980) study on leadership styles. Leadership element six was making decisions by having “the ability to seek out

appropriate information, synthesize the information, and make an informed, prompt judgement based on the information, situation, and risk” (Henrickson-Parker et al., 2012).

Leadership element six relates to the autocratic behaviors found in Chelladurai and Saleh’s (1980) study as well as the situational context in which Hart (1991) described an increased feeling of stress when making a decision in a timely matter such as the surgeons needed to do. The last observable leadership element was managing resources which “refer to both people on the OR (operating room) team and equipment required for surgery, and the ability to assign resources depending on the situation or context (i.e., delegation)” (Henrickson-Parker et al., 2012).

The last observable leadership element relates to a number of elements of leadership in sports. According to Turman (2001), situational leadership relates to delegating tasks depending on the context. Furthermore, delegating tasks would fall under Chelladurai and Saleh’s (1980) democratic leadership behavior. Lastly, a coach manages his/her players just as a surgeon manages his/her doctors and nurses.

The importance of leadership in sports is one of the essential components to the team (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). Along with its importance, leadership is also a heavily studied area of sports (Chelladurai & Arnott, 1985; Chelladurai et al., 1988; Horne & Carron, 1985; Serpa et al., 1991), and provides insight into sport communication (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai et al., 1987; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978, 1980; Dwyer & Fisher, 1988, 1990; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984; Turman, 2001). However, with the extensive research on leadership, there lacks an observational study on the communicative characteristics of leadership on a track and field team. My study attempts

to provide insight into the communicative characteristics of leadership between athletes and coaches using an observational method and ethnographic interviews.

### **Situational Context**

Situational context is a unique element to sport in that athletes and coaches experience many different contexts (e.g., home vs. away competition, winning streaks vs. losing streaks, regular season competition vs. postseason competition, etc.) throughout a season (Oudejans et al., 2011; Turman, 2001). Because of this element and because Janis (1972) included situational context as an antecedent condition, I reviewed the literature on situational context in sports. Since I did not observe situational context, I trust the overwhelming support of the assumption that anxiety from the pressures of competition in sports lead to decreased performance (Behan & Wilson, 2008; Gucciardi et al., 2010; Murray & Janelle, 2003; Nieuwenhuys et al., 2008; Oudejans et al., 2011; Pijpers et al., 2006; Vickers & Williams, 2007).

Vickers and Williams (2007) studied the effects of cognitive anxiety during a biathlon by testing top biathlon shooters in low-pressure situations and high-pressure situations and found that “cognitive anxiety differed significantly because of pressure” (p. 386). As Vickers and Williams (2007) described the participants, “elite biathlon shooters” experienced anxiety in high pressure scenarios compared to low pressure scenarios. Similarly, Gucciardi et al. (2010) found that stress causes some athletes to choke. Golfers attended focus groups and interviews to discuss their perceptions of failing under pressure. Murray and Janelle (2003) found similar findings through a study on anxiety and performance using an auto racing simulator. Murray and Janelle (2003) found that participants were less proficient during high pressure situations.



This literature review documents that research within the context of small group communication and sports teams needs clarity on the communication characteristics of cohesion on a sports team, specifically coactive teams, how communicative leadership is observed, if possible, for a coactive sports team, the situational pressure of sports, and the communicative nature, if any, of groupthink in coactive sports teams. Previous research fails to provide conclusive evidence on observable communicative characteristics of cohesion or the characteristics of groupthink in coactive sports. Furthermore, previous research fails to provide insight into leadership or cohesion in a sports setting through observation. Because of the inconclusive evidence and the lack of research, this study provided a clearer understanding of observable communicative characteristics of cohesion, how leadership is observed through communication characteristics, and the communicative characteristics of groupthink on a track and field team.

Understanding the implications of cohesion on a coactive team offers coaches and players the opportunity to prevent groupthink from occurring if high cohesion causes groupthink. Furthermore, this study attempts to examine the nature of groupthink in sports due to the lack of research with sports teams and groupthink. This research builds on previous studies relating to cohesion and sports teams, but add the specificity of a coactive team that lacks in previous research. Also, this research engages with small group cohesion research by examining the nature of groupthink in sports teams. Along with understanding communicative cohesion, this study provides insight into observational research on the nature of leadership in sports. This study may provide a framework on how to observe the communication of leadership in a sports setting which is applicable to many different types of sports and different type of contexts in sports.

Due to the limited empirical research conducted on groupthink in social sciences and the findings in sports lacked application to all athletic teams (Rovio et al., 2009), this study provides an early framework for future studies in communication on groupthink and sports. Although I focused on the communicative nature of groupthink, cohesion, and leadership in coactive teams rather than the impact they have on performance, I included research on performance because of its importance to sports. Since inconsistencies in findings are present, this research offers a clearer image of the observable communicative acts of cohesion in sports teams, and provide a framework for future research on cohesion, leadership, and groupthink in coactive teams. Furthermore, this study provides a framework for observing communicative leadership in a sports context. Lastly, understanding the nature of groupthink on coactive sports teams, players and coaches can recognize and alter their communication styles to prevent groupthink from occurring. This research adds to both the sport communication and small group communication sub-disciplines.

Although high levels of cohesion have a positive relationship to performance and did not lead to groupthink in some cases (Carron et al., 2002; Eys et al., 2015; Hardy et al., 2005; Prapavessis & Carron, 1997; Street, 1997), Hardy et al. (2005) and Rovio et al. (2009) found high cohesion did in fact lead to groupthink in their respective studies. Thus, I propose the following research question:

***RQ1: What, if at all, are the conditions of groupthink on a collegiate track and field team? If so, what are the characteristics of the existing groupthink?***

Janis (1972) identified high cohesion as the main cause of groupthink while studies following Janis' indicated high cohesion positively associated with groupthink

(Carron et al., 2002; Eys et al., 2015; Hardy et al., 2005; Prapavessis & Carron, 1997; Street, 1997). However, Rovio et al. (2009) expressed how “high social cohesion and pressure to conform may have led to the phenomenon of groupthink” (p. 429) and “that high group cohesion did not lead to better performance” (p. 428). Furthermore, past studies measured cohesion quantitatively using the Group Environment Questionnaire (Carron et al., 1985). Although Holt and Sparkes (2001) studied cohesion using an ethnographic approach in sports, they studied a soccer team (interactive team), spent the entire season studying the team rather than one event, and found communication as one of their four themes rather than using communication as the lens in which to view the study. Due to the inconsistent findings on cohesion’s influence on groupthink in sports and the lack of research application to a specified coactive team, I propose the following research question:

***RQ2: What, if at all, are the communicative aspects of cohesion present on a collegiate track and field team? If so, what are the characteristics of the existing cohesion?***

Although research is extensive on leadership in sports teams (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai & Arnott, 1985; Chelladurai et al., 1988; Chelladurai et al., 1987; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978, 1980; Dwyer & Fisher, 1988, 1990; Horne & Carron, 1985; Serpa et al., 1991; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984; Turman, 2001), it lacks diversity in terms of methodology. Observational leadership has also seen extensive research (Allan, Dixon, Lee, Savage, Tapson, 2017; France, Leming-Lee, Jackson, Feistritz, & Higgins, 2008; Henrickson-Parker et al., 2012; Kolbe et al., 2012; Raes, Glunk, Heijltjes, & Roe, 2007; Sakran et al., 2012; Sims & Manz, 1984; Weinberg & Rovinski, 1979), but lacks findings in a coactive sports context. Thus, I proposed the following research question:

*RQ3: What, if at all, are the communicative aspects of leadership present in the collegiate track and field team? If so, what are the characteristics of the existing leadership?*

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

#### **Procedure**

In this study, I conducted a naturalistic observation of a men's and women's track and field team, at the collegiate level. Frey, Botan, and Kreps (2000) defined naturalistic inquiry as studying "the socially constructed nature of reality" (p. 18). Before conducting the study, I received approval from the IRB to conduct ethnographic interviews and observations. For this study, I observed the communicative characteristics of cohesion and leadership, two conditions of groupthink, of track and field athletes and coaches.

#### **Description of the Site**

When I first arrived at the track and field complex, I was astonished by the sheer size of the indoor facility. Once you get through the doors, you see the extremely high ceilings and the bleachers that stretch one hundred yards across one side of the complex. As I seated myself close to the starting line of the track, I observed that multiple events were taking place at once. All of the running and hurdling events either started and/or finished near the bleachers while the jumping competitions were close to the edges of the complex, and the throwing events were on the turf field that sat inside the oval-shaped track.

While trying to better understand the flow of events at the track meet, I observed where athletes, coaches, and trainers crowded. Although the throwing events took place on the field, they only took up a quarter of the field. The rest of the field was full of the athletes and coaches of every team in attendance. My initial plan was to gain access of that area to observe and document the communication that athletes use with each other

and coaches before and after events. However, after multiple attempts to gain access to the field through coaches, I did not hear back from them and thus, was not granted access to the field which allowed me the opportunity to focus on nonverbal communication. I sat in the bleachers by both the starting line and finishing line to observe the nonverbal communication between teammates before and after races. At times, I was able to hear what athletes were communicating to their teammates, but this only occurred when the races happened (cheering on teammates). Due to my emphasis on nonverbal communication, my analysis of the observations and interviews provided themes I was not anticipating about gender communication and group communication. My gatekeeper did provide me with interviews, including herself, to supplement my observations.

During the interviews, I asked questions about the communicative characteristics of cohesion and leadership. These interviews took place in multiple spots around the facility depending on where we could talk without the noise of the cheers and starting gun. Specifically, I talked with two research participants by an exit door, three research participants behind the bleachers, one research participant in a second level overlook area for filming, and one research participant on the bleachers when the entire event had concluded. After my initial interview with my gatekeeper, she told me she would be able to set up more interviews with athletes on the team which led to another interview that same day, two more the following meet, and three interviews over the two-day meet I observed as well.

**Context.** In this study, I conducted an observation during three indoor track meets held at one university in their fieldhouse. I observed the communicative messages of players and coaches on a specific collegiate track and field team. Even though many

teams attended these events, I focused on the same one team over the course of the three meets. At times, it was difficult to focus on only the particular chosen team due to the communicative characteristics of other athletes and coaches. However, I was able to focus on only the one team once I familiarized myself with the uniforms and times of races. Specifically, I observed how coaches interact with their athletes and how athletes interact with other teammates while seeing if cohesion and leadership are present.

The three track meets I observed were indoor track meets held at a specific university. The first indoor track meet was the DII Invitational held on January 19<sup>th</sup> starting at 2:00 PM which takes place in the university's fieldhouse. The second indoor track meet was an invitational which takes place on January 20<sup>th</sup> starting at noon in the university's fieldhouse. The third indoor track meet I observed was the Indoor Classic which runs from February 9<sup>th</sup> through February 10<sup>th</sup> starting at 2:00 PM on February 9<sup>th</sup> and 9:00 AM on February 10<sup>th</sup> in the university's fieldhouse. An indoor track meet has numerous competitions similar to an outdoor track meet, but due to the restriction of being indoors, some events may appear different inside than outside.

As for the participants, indoor track meets can vary depending on the size of the meet. During the 2017 Indoor Classic, an annual meet in the winter, over 1700 participants from more than 40 schools competed in the meet ("2018 Women's Track and Field Schedule," 2018). At larger track and field meets such as the Indoor Classic, the event can last many hours starting in the morning and extending into the afternoon. Since athletes compete individually, I anticipated seeing interactions between teammates and coaches before and after events with more reciprocity, and interactions between teammates and coaches during the event with most of the communicative behaviors

coming from an individual who was not performing in an event (e.g., supportive teammate or coach while another athlete is competing). I planned to attend the entire meet so I could observe the interactions before the meet and events started, during the actual meet, and how participants communicated after the events and meet concluded. I wanted to examine the communication characteristics of cohesion and leadership in the setting of a track and field meet due to the pressure of sporting events.

Oudejans et al. (2011) discussed how “there is converging evidence that pressure-induced anxiety causes shifts in attention that lead to a decrease in performance” (p. 60). Athletes experienced different levels of stress during a meet where performance is assessed compared to a practice where the content focuses on instruction. Porter, Wu, and Partridge (2010) found in their study on track and field athletes and coaches that “verbal instructions provide athletes valuable information on how to perform a future sports action” (p. 78). Furthermore, I examined a track meet because one antecedent condition of groupthink is situational context. Hart (1991) discussed that groupthink thrives when “decision-makers” (e.g. coaches and athletes) experience higher levels of stress (e.g. track and field meet) compared to a low-stress environment where groupthink does not often occur (p. 258). For my research, I used the observer-participant observation style so I was able to interview participants after the meet while observing the behaviors during the meet. The method of observing participants in a natural setting is called ethnography.

**Ethnography.** Ethnographic researchers have different approaches when it comes to ethnography. For instance, Saville-Troike (1989) defined ethnography as “a field of study which is concerned primarily with the description and analysis of culture, and



linguistics is a field concerned, among other things, with the description and analysis of language codes” (p. 1). Babbie (2013) agreed that ethnography focuses on describing a social situation and “ethnographers seek to discover and understand the patterns of living among those they are studying” (p. 305) but stopped short of saying ethnographers explain social life.

Once an ethnographer begins to study a social life or culture, they must select the type of observation style that best suits their study. The relationship between the observer and participant dictates the type of approach ethnographers use. One approach ethnographers use is “immersing themselves in the culture” which is complete participation by the ethnographer (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 169). With complete participation, ethnographers experience life within the culture which helps shape their findings and context. A drawback of complete observation is the chance of “going native,” which means the ethnographers immerse themselves too much and lose sight of the study and its perceived objectivity. Another strategy an ethnographer may take is an unobtrusive approach to observation where researchers observe participants and cultures without immersing themselves in the social life (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005).

The history of ethnography has developed and evolved from its original usage to different disciplines. Sands (2002) described ethnography and the history of ethnography as “a tool for describing a culture in a qualitative sense” where “previously the sole possession of anthropology, ethnography has now become the darling stepchild of many emerging social science fields as well as traditional fields of sociology and political science” (p. xix). One emerging social science field for ethnographers is communication. Hymes (1964) discussed how ethnography needed to evolve from a focus on linguistics

to a focus on communication. An ethnographic approach needs “not linguistics, but ethnography and not language, but communication, which must provide the frame of reference within which the place of language in culture and society is to be described” (Hymes, 1964, p. 3). Ethnography of communication has been used to study a variety of cultures and contexts such as the medical field inside an operating room (Henrickson-Parker et al., 2012) and an ice-hockey team competing at a semi-professional level (Rovio et al., 2009) lending itself as a fit for the method of this study.

However, ethnography in sports was not as widely studied as other disciplines. Although few ethnographers studied sports in the late 1800s and the early 1900s (Firth, 1931; Lesser, 1933; & Tylor, 1896), sport ethnographic research did not gain traction until the 1960s. Seminal work within the field of sport ethnography was conducted by Roberts, Arth, and Bush (1959) which Sands (2002) described as “the first systematic attempt to define the concept of games cross-culturally and opened a debate among anthropologists concerning the place of sport in human society” (p. 5). The reason sport ethnography was ignored before the 1960s was due to sport being viewed as low class which did not appeal to high culture until a shift occurred in societal views (Blanchard, 1985). Blanchard and Cheska (1985) continued the growth and legitimacy of ethnographic research in sport by successfully inserting sport studies in “rigorous methodology” (Sands, 2002, p. 5). Even though sports in American culture heavily influence society (Pedersen, Laucella, Kian, & Geurin, 2017), the study of sport and culture is underdeveloped leaving questions like ones posed by Miller (1997) such as “what might explain the continuing marginality of sports to anthropology and social theory even as it is central to popular, folk, and commodified life?” (p. 115). Due to this

lack of research in ethnography in sport, I used the approaches of multiple scholars across disciplines to conduct my ethnographic communication research on a collegiate track and field team.

For this study, I used an observer-participant role when observing the three indoor track and field meets hosted by a mid-sized Midwestern university from the stands and ethnographic interviews with participants after the events. As an observer-participant researcher, I had minimal contact with the participants. After the observation, I conducted interviews with seven (n=7) research participants. An observer-participant role was most beneficial for my study because I observed the track and field team during events from the position of a fan so I was unobtrusive to the natural setting of communication between players and coaches. I conducted ethnographic interviews after the event to clarify my findings and ask questions about my observations. These interviews were open-ended and focused on the characteristics of communication in relation to cohesion, leadership, and groupthink on the team.

**Fieldnotes.** Fieldnotes are an essential part to any ethnographic study (Fielding, 1993). Although ethnographies have evolved over the years with changes in culture and approach, “written fieldnotes remain a staple method for taking what the fieldworker sees and experiences and translating those representations, images, and words into a record that can be accessed by others at a later time” (Sands, 2002, p. 75). Researchers take fieldnotes at different times depending on the opportunity to take notes. Some researchers complete an observation or conversation and then conduct fieldnotes due to their situation (Powdermaker, 1966; Spradley, 1970). Other researchers believe that taking fieldnotes during the observation and then adding analysis and depth after presents an ethnographer

with the best notes (Festinger, Riecken, & Schacter, 1956). Whatever approach is taken, most researchers agree that taking fieldnotes as soon as possible is necessary for the study (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005).

Fieldnotes date back to what some consider the seminal work of ethnography in Malinowski (1922) when he studied native enterprise and adventure in the people of the Western Pacific. Malinowski (1922) stated that “an ethnographic diary, carried on systematically throughout the course of one’s work in a district would be the ideal instrument for this sort of study” (p. 21). Furthermore, fieldnotes are “necessary, not only to note down those occurrences and details which are prescribed by tradition and custom to be essential course of the act, but also the ethnographer ought to record carefully and precisely, one after the other, the actions of the actors and spectators” (p. 21).

Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2011) provided further direction on taking effective fieldnotes by explaining that “your systematic way of taking fieldnotes should allow enough room to record details at the site, but it should also allow space to expand on your initial impressions away from the site” (p. 83). Furthermore, Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2011) provided a checklist to follow when taking notes: (1) date, time, and place of observation, (2) specific facts, numbers, and details, (3) sights, sounds, textures, smells, and tastes, (4) personal responses to the act of recording fieldnotes and how others watch you as you watch them, (5) specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations, and insider language, (6) questions about people or behaviors at the site for future investigation, and (7) continuous page-numbering system for future reference (p. 83).

Even though I did not have the ability to record all of these elements or need to record all of these elements (i.e. textures, smells, and taste), Sunstein and Chiseri-

Strater's (2011) checklist helped me take accurate notes. Using this checklist, I took fieldnotes using a T-model of note-taking. The T-model of fieldnotes has two sides where I wrote my initial observations on one side and an analysis of my observations on the other side. These fieldnotes took place during the track and field events. In the analysis section of the T-model, I included any questions I had about my observations that I asked the athletes and/or coaches after the observation (See Appendix A). Once the observation concluded, I then wrote detailed descriptions from my fieldnotes which "are the heart of any narrative field notes" (Berg, 2007, p. 198). Detailed descriptions build upon the initial observation notes and add more depth and context to the notes since I did not have time during the event to conduct a detailed description of each observation (Berg, 2007).

Since my study focused on cohesion and leadership, I observed and documented the characteristics of the athletes' and coaches' communicative behaviors. Even though my observation was based on present communicative behaviors of players and coaches, Turman's (2003) findings on promoting and deterring cohesion on athletic teams (track athletes being one group sampled) helped me with different cues of communicative cohesion which I discuss later in the chapter. I also observed and took fieldnotes on leadership. Henrickson-Parker et al. (2012) conducted an observation of leadership in an operating room and observed key leadership qualities of a surgeon and broke them into categories which I will discuss later in the chapter. These leadership characteristics also provided different cues for me when observing the collegiate track and field athletes and coaches at indoor track and field events.

### **Sample**

In this study, the population consisted of all of the collegiate track and field athletes on a particular team competing at the indoor track and field events and coaches of the particular track and field team. For this observational study, the number of participants depended on the observations and interviews conducted. I did not observe every interaction between every athlete and coach due to the countless interactions in the setting since I focused my observation on the single track and field team. However, I documented my observations on the communicative characteristics of cohesion and leadership. For this study, the participants were (1) an athlete of the particular men's and women's track and field team, (2) a competitor at the specific track meet(s) I attended, and (3) a willing participant to answer questions after the track meet for the study.

To explain, an athlete or coach on the specific collegiate men's and women's track and field team is an individual who is currently on the roster. Furthermore, the individual on the roster must coach or compete at the event I attended for observation meaning the athletes must participate in a varsity event on that date while coaches must be present and listed as a coach on the specific track meet date.

To elaborate, the potential participants of the study were the entire collegiate track and field team and coaching staff while the actual participants were the athletes and coaches I observed at the track meet. I estimated the potential participants sample was 63 men athletes, 60 women athletes, and 6 coaches. My expected participants ranged from 10-15 participants, plus the 2-6 coaches. I estimated the participants based on the 2017 track and field roster at the particular university. My actual participants were seven research participants ( $n=7$ ) ranging from first year female college athletes to fourth year male and female college athletes. Specifically, two male athletes and five female athletes.

## **Sampling**

For this study, I used non-random sampling to select my subjects. Specifically, I used a purposive sample where “respondents are non-randomly selected on the basis of a particular characteristic” (Frey et al., 2000, p. 132). The reason I used a purposive sample to select athletes and coaches who qualify with the specific characteristics I explained in the ‘Sample’ section. Although purposive samples have a potential for biased findings and lack of generalizability, in this study I examined the specific communicative characteristics of track athletes and coaches at a meet.

As for reaching the participants, I contacted a gatekeeper with the team via email. The gatekeeper was a hometown connection from high school. This athlete’s mother was my wife’s golf coach and my gym teacher. We initially talked about the potential of this study when randomly seeing each other at a football game. After exchanging emails, I contacted the gatekeeper once I did not hear back from the coaches. I asked the gatekeeper if any athletes would be willing to participate in my proposed study. The gatekeeper found willing participants at the three indoor track and field meets that I observed. Seven athletes (n=7) willingly volunteered to be interviewed for this study. Specifically, I interviewed five female athletes and two male athletes ranging from first year athletes to fourth year athletes. The participants competed in different events such as short distance, mid and long distance, and field events.

In this study, I used qualitative methods to collect data by interviewing and asking participants questions regarding the context of the meet and the events that took place during the meets once the meets concluded. I conducted interviews in an attempt to “understand people’s lived experience” and “understand particular social phenomena”

(Frey et al., 2000, p. 273). Along with post track meet questions (See Appendix B), I conducted an observation of the communicative messages of coaches and athletes at the track and field events.

Hart (1991) explained how cohesion, structural faults such as an impartial leader, and situational context are the three main conditions of groupthink which I examined through observation and questions for participants. Observational research for a team competing at an indoor track and field event fit well with three important interests of observational research: (1) communicative behaviors of a specific group of people, (2) communicative behaviors among people within a particular setting, and (3) a focus on a particular communicative act (Frey et al., 2000, p. 265).

From an observer-participant perspective, I noted my observations of the communicative characteristics of cohesion and leadership in the context and looked specifically for evidence of cohesion between participants and how leaders (coaches) communicated with athletes. When taking field notes, “the goal is not to record everything, but to carefully note those crucial moments when some meaning of the social action was revealed” (Anderson, 1987, p. 257-58). Furthermore, I used ethnographic interviews to inquire about the situational context after the track and field meets. After collecting the data, I categorized and coded my observations. Using open coding, I took an inductive approach and analyzed the fieldnotes and ethnographic interview data.

### **Analysis**

For the three research questions, I investigated the potential communicative characteristics of groupthink, communicative characteristics of cohesion, and the communicative characteristics of leadership through post-event interviews, as well as



observations to better understand the characteristics, if any, of cohesion and leadership during the specific track meets. For analyzing the interviews, I audio recorded the conversation and transcribed the tape. I then used constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze the raw data. I generated themes that emerged from the data and continued to develop these themes while comparing them to themes previously generated. I then implemented Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative analysis modeling Turman's (2003) strategies where first, each transcript is reviewed twice "to garner a holistic understanding of the experiences on the team" (p. 91). The next step was describing and documenting emergent themes from my fieldnotes and interviews. The last step in the coding process for interviews was reviewing the transcripts to "ensure the accuracy and consistency of the categories, looking for any rival explanations of the findings" (p. 91). I knew when saturation was reached when the textual data stopped producing new, emergent themes. I then compared the themes to the antecedent conditions of Janis' (1972) groupthink (high cohesion, structural faults of the group (e.g. leadership), and situational context). Comparing the themes to Janis' (1972) antecedent conditions of groupthink provided a better understanding of the communicative characteristics of groupthink in coactive teams.

For the observational aspect of this study, I examined the communicative characteristics of cohesion that both deter and promote cohesion in a sports setting described by Turman (2003). To elaborate, Turman (2003) described deterring team cohesion as "inequity and embarrassment and ridicule," and described promoting team cohesion as "coaches bragging about players, sarcasm and teasing, motivational speeches, quality of opponent, athlete directed techniques, team prayer, and dedication"

(p. 94-99). Furthermore, I examined the communicative aspects of leadership from coaches because Janis' (1972) second antecedent condition of structural faults focused on ineffective leaders. I will use Henrickson-Parker, Yule, Flin, and McKinley's (2011) observable leadership elements for surgeons which are described in Henrickson-Parker's et al. (2012) observational study as "(1) guiding and supporting, (2) communicating and coordinating, (3) managing tasks, (4) directing and enabling, (5) maintaining standards, (6) making decisions, and (7) managing resources" (p. 350). Although Henrickson-Parker et al.'s (2012) observable elements relate to surgeons, they offer insight into other contexts and "are aligned with models of effective task and team leadership in other industries" (p. 349). Sports works with this framework due to the situational context of both surgeries and in sports where leadership occurs more often "in higher-complex surgeries" and competition in sports (Henrickson-Parker et al., 2012, p. 349).

Rather than observing situational context, Janis' (1972) third antecedent condition, I asked questions in the interviews to understand the nature of track meets compared to practices and rely on the extensive previous literature to guide my understanding. I used Turman's (2003) aspects of deterring team cohesion and promoting team cohesion, as well as Henrickson-Parker et al.'s (2012) leadership elements as my coding schemes during my observations. I used a checklist where I looked for these specific themes during my observation. Also, I used member checking to ensure the themes align with what the participants believed to be true about cohesion and their team. I knew when the study has reached saturation when the multiple analyses of the observational data stopped producing new, emerging themes.

Chapter three provided an in-depth explanation of the methodology of this study. I explained the description of my site including the facility itself to where I was observing the athletes. I then explained my use of ethnography. Specifically, I used an observational method to analyze the communicative characteristics of cohesion and leadership, as well as conducted interviews to analyze the responses. Then, I explained my sample and sampling of the track and field team where I observed the athletes and conducted interviews with seven research participants (n=7). Lastly, I explained how I analyzed the raw data, and how I allowed the themes to emerge from the data.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

During my research, I used observational methods, along with ethnographic interviews to explore the nature of communication on a track and field team. Specifically, the observations and the ethnographic interviews provided me insight into the communicative characteristics of cohesion and leadership of the track athletes and team. As an ethnographer, I experienced many different feelings while observing and interviewing such as joy, excitement, intrigue, and at times, frustration and fatigue. Since this was my first ethnographic research project, I felt overwhelmed at my first observation event. Because of this, I observed and conducted interviews on four separate meet days. Specifically, I spent 24 hours observing and conducting interviews over the four meet days which comprised of three different meets. Due to the length of time in the field, my observations had become redundant and that I had reached saturation in my observations, as well as fatigue from sitting on the bleachers for multiple hours.

Since I was unable to gain access to the field where athletes prepared before their events and communicated with their teammates and coaches, I observed nonverbal communication acts related to cohesion and leadership. I sat in the bleachers close to the starting line to observe athletes, coaches, and teammates communicating with each other. Also, I sat by the finish line to see athletes nonverbally communicating with their teammates, competitors, and coaches. Since I was limited to the bleachers, my observations consisted of only nonverbal communication. If granted access, I would have observed from the field where I could hear conversations between athletes, coaches, and teammates. Although I was limited to observing nonverbal communication, previous

scholars have had success in observing nonverbal communication in sports (De Garis, 1999; Sands, 2002; Sibilio, Raiola, Carlomagno, Galdieri, & D'Elia, 2009) To strengthen my observations, I interviewed seven athletes (n=7) over the course of the three meets and four days. I then transcribed the interviews and examined the content with the observational notes. I used pseudonyms for the interviewees when referencing them in my study. Through this extensive process, a number of themes emerged in the data. Specifically, three themes emerged under cohesion and two themes emerged under leadership.

In the following sections, I discuss these emergent themes, and how the themes relate to cohesion, leadership, and situational context which are the three antecedent conditions of groupthink. To address my research questions, I looked for communicative cues of cohesion and leadership (two conditions of groupthink) during my observation using Turman's (2003) communicative promoters and deterrents of cohesion and Henrickson-Parker's et al. (2011) observational leadership characteristics. To study situational context, Janis' (1972) third condition of groupthink, I asked athletes during the ethnographic interviews about their personal and team stress and anxiety depending on different contexts. Through discussing the emergent themes and addressing my research questions, the findings of communicative cohesion and leadership add to the body of research in small group communication, sport communication, and gender communication.

### **Emergent Themes**

Through my observations and ethnographic interviews, I compiled an extensive amount of data. I transcribed my 18 singled spaced pages of interviews and reviewed my

22 pages of observational notes and found emerging themes from the observational data, the interview data, and themes that were found in both the observations and interviews. In the following sections, I discussed the emerging themes in relation to two of Janis' (1972) antecedent conditions: (1) cohesion and (2) leadership.

**Cohesion.** While observing the four days of track meets and conducting ethnographic interviews, communicative themes of cohesion emerged from the data collection. I reviewed the data until I reached saturation and no new themes emerged. Specifically, two themes emerged in relation to communication and cohesion: (1) communicative cohesion and gender, (2) small group cohesion, and (3) opponent competition and cohesion. While analyzing the themes, I discuss how they related to promoting team cohesion using Turman's (2003) findings and other notable works on cohesion.

***Communicative cohesion and gender.*** While observing the first day of the first meet, I noticed a constant trend that I did not anticipate. When watching teammates competing in the same races, I observed how they communicated with each other verbally and nonverbally. Since I was unable to hear the conversations, I focused on the nonverbal communication of the teammates in the same event. What stood out and became a consistent theme across all four days and three events was the difference in how female teammates who were competing against each other communicated nonverbally and how male teammates who were competing against each other communicated nonverbally. The difference was drastic and was apparent from the first heat to the last heat. Furthermore, when interviewing athletes, the same theme of differences in how men and women communicate to build cohesion were present. Some athletes talked about how

they communicate with their same gender while other athletes spoke to the specifics of how the other gender communicates with themselves.

*Women and cohesion.* The women that I observed and interviewed built cohesion with their teammates that they competed against before and after the race. Before the race, the women who were teammates would be standing next to each other and facing each other while communicating. The facial expressions of the women were positive to one another. Specifically, the women smiled to each other while communicating and used nonverbal gestures of agreement when communicating with their teammates. Furthermore, women expressed cohesion with each other through non-verbal interactions. After the race, women were supportive and communicated non-verbally with each other through different acts. During the ethnographic interviews, the female athletes/interviewees talked about their closeness and cohesion with their other female teammates. In the following paragraphs, I provided specific examples from each of the situations described above, and analyze how these themes add to sport communication and gender communication, and shed light on my research questions.

While observing the female athletes before races, I sat by the starting line where athletes warmed up and interacted with each other before stepping up to the starting line. While the women were warming up, they would often communicate with each other. Since I was unable to hear the conversations, I recorded their nonverbal communication. Women would stand facing each other while talking. Specifically, the women would face each other with an open stance with their arms often at their sides rather than crossing them. Furthermore, the female teammates were smiling and laughing with each other during the warm-up process.

The perception from an onlooker such as myself was that they were friends and were trying to maintain and build cohesion between each other. Since cohesion is the most important small group variable (Hardy et al., 2005) and women smile more and are more receptive to nonverbal communication (Hall, 1998), the perception makes sense on why women would use nonverbal communication to better the team. This perception was confirmed when I interviewed the female athletes. Specifically, Hannah said she “always says good luck to her teammates” that she is competing against. Even teammates who are not considered friends outside of the sport will communicate with each other before competing against one another. Kasey said she “talks with her friends before competition” and “I’ve even talked to teammates I’ve never talked to before.” Hannah and Kasey’s approaches relate to how Carron et al. (1998) described cohesion by supporting each other with the team goals and individual goals in mind.

Another strategy that women used before events was team/group prayer and motivational speeches to build cohesion. I observed on multiple occasions that teammates were huddled up before events. Some women would be supporters not competing in the same heat while other female teammates would be competing in the same heat. While huddled, women would sometimes close their eyes and bow their heads which may be a sign of prayer. Since I could not hear the conversations, I wrote down questions during my observation to ask later about the huddled up communication between athletes.

During my ethnographic interviews, I asked the female athletes to describe the communication they have before races while huddled up. Many of the female athletes I interviewed mentioned prayer and motivational talk as something they do as a group before each meet and/or before each race. Sammy explained, “we pray before every race



and every event and it does definitely take the stress off of things by just focusing on the big picture.” Abby echoed Sammy’s explanation by stating, “we always have a little prayer group before we run and it really helps me out because it makes it that much better being around the team.” Furthermore, Sharon said, “we (women) are very encouraging before and after by giving pep talks and we pray before we race.”

Sharon, who is a leader on the team according to Hannah and herself, talked extensively about building cohesion through communication before races. “I am making sure I check on them (other female athletes) like how they are doing so that motivational talk is helping them prepare before the race” Sharon explained and “before relays, our relay teams are healthier when we say a prayer and not everyone on the team has the same views but that is something we have incorporated.” Sharon shared how this helped bring them together because “team prayer shows a lot on our cohesiveness and our connectedness as a team because we are like a family.” The explanations support the previous communication research on communication differences between men and women, as well as building cohesion as a team.

The statements from the female athletes support the previous research on how women communicate with each other relationally. “Women relationships are categorized by high levels of intimacy defined in terms of self-disclosure, confiding, personal affirmation, and emotional support” (Wright, 1998, p. 50). Furthermore, prayer is a way that people provide emotional support to one another and a way to lower stress levels (Wilkum & MacGeorge, 2010). The female athletes used prayer to strengthen their bonds which in turn helps maintain cohesion for the team (Johnson, LaVoie, Spenceri, & Mahoney-Wernli, 2001). The women not only used prayer and motivational talk to

maintain cohesion, they used prayer and motivational talk to increase team cohesion, which was a concept I inquired about in my research questions.

Turman's (2003) study that I used to help guide my observations and ethnographic interviews found that talking highly of an athlete, motivational speeches, and group prayer were all builders of team cohesion. Abby and Sammy, as previously stated, talked about how they received motivational talk and team prayer to "help focus on the big picture" and to "make it much better being around the team." Furthermore, Sharon used team prayer and motivation because "team prayer shows a lot on our cohesiveness and our connectedness as a team" which directly supports Turman's (2003) findings on motivational speeches and team prayer being promoters of team cohesion. Although cohesion was present from the female athletes' experiences which helps answer two of my research questions, another theme emerged within how women use communication in athletics which helped answer my first research question related to the conditions of groupthink.

Another explanation for talking with each other, team prayer and motivation, and building cohesion with each other before meets was the idea that women experience anxiety before competition. Abby said, "I feel like when girls are more nervous, they talk to each other." Lowering stress levels is important to avoid groupthink since situational contexts with high levels of stress foster groupthink more easily (Janis, 1972). Sammy even said, "I try to keep a positive attitude and just go out there and have fun because the more you stress out, the more I feel like the worse your performance is going to be just because you are not focused on the ultimate goal of getting better." Sammy's feelings about how stress and anxiety impact her performance supports previous studies that

found that higher levels of stress negatively impact performance (Behan & Wilson, 2008; Gucciardi et al., 2010; Murray & Janelle, 2003; Nieuwenhuys et al., 2008; Oudejans et al., 2011; Pijpers et al., 2006; Vickers & Williams, 2007).

Research question one asked if there were conditions of groupthink on the track and field team and since a highly stressful situational context is present for some athletes in this study, conditions of groupthink were present on the team. The second part of the question asked about the characteristics of the conditions. From my observations of the women, they tried to lower stress levels amongst each other by using cohesion, another one of Janis' (1972) conditions of groupthink. The stressful context of competition as described by the athletes supports Janis' (1972) claim on high level stress situations negatively impacting decision making and performance, but the female athletes used cohesion to lower their stress levels which opposes Janis' (1972) claim that high cohesion causes poor decisions and performance. Although my findings on cohesion oppose Janis' (1972) findings on cohesion, they do support more recent studies and cohesion and performance in sport communication (Carron et al., 2002; Hardy et al., 2005). Not only did female athletes communicate before events with each other, I observed nonverbal communication after races between teammates competing against each other, as well as documented what women said about their communication after races.

After observing how the athletes communicated at the starting line before their races, I moved to the other end of the bleachers and sat right next to the finish line. I was still unable to hear what athletes were saying to each other after the race, but I was able to document the nonverbal communication of the athletes with cohesion and leadership in mind. Similar to the nonverbal communication before the race, women communicated

more after the race than men. I observed women congratulating each other and communicating through high fives, smiles, hugs, and encouraging pats. Furthermore, the female athletes I interviewed talked about how they communicate with their teammates after races. In the following paragraphs, I examined how my observations and interviews on post-race communication related to building team cohesion among the female athletes.

During my observations of nonverbal communication, I sat by the finish line of races to record interactions between teammates. Before observing the nonverbal communication of athletes after the race, I was able to hear non-competing teammates cheering on the athletes who were competing. This was a rare observation for me during the four days since I did not have many chances to record verbal communication from teammates due to my observational spot. During the races involving women, the other female athletes not competing cheered on the teammates who were competing. They would yell, "Go Hannah! You can do this!" or "Chase her down, Kasey! You are doing awesome!" Non-competing athletes were clapping and jumping while yelling words of encouragement to their teammates competing. Cheering on and bragging about other teammates supports Turman's (2003) findings on building cohesion through bragging about players and cheering on teammates. Female athletes also maintained and built cohesion with teammates after the races.

Once all of the competitors crossed the finish line, women who were teammates would immediately find each other and embrace one another. Women used the nonverbal communication of hugging to show their support of one another. Women also smiled with each other while hugging, and would high five and pat each other on the back. Even though men rarely showed more nonverbal communication than a high five or pat on the

back, the biggest difference from my observations and interviews on post-race communication was how athletes would talk to their teammates who performed poorly. The women would embrace every teammate who competed regardless of where they placed. I observed women hugging and communicating nonverbally with teammates who performed well similar to teammates who performed poorly. Women would hug and pat each other on the back regardless of the place. To strengthen my observations, the women who I interviewed spoke about how they communicate with their teammates after a race.

Hannah talked about how she communicates with her teammates she competes against after races and said, “After races, women are more like, ‘you did good and hug’ while men are usually not like that.” One of the women on Hannah’s team that she competes against is Jackie. Hannah talked about how Jackie is pretty reserved and focused before and after races, but she will still show her support and team cohesion by “wishing me good luck” and after the race, coming over and saying, “hey, you did good.” Sharon echoed Hannah’s feelings on how women communicate with each other after track races by saying, “I feel like the girls’ team is very good at encouraging each other.” I noticed that Hannah specifically used “girls’ team” rather than referring to the whole team in general. This became another theme that I discuss in the group cohesion section. In one interview, Abby even talked specifically about how she communicates with female teammates after races when they may have not performed to the level they were hoping.

Abby talked about how she communicated with teammates after races. She spoke about how some teammates may perform poorly, but “I offer them (teammates) words of encouragement after the heats” and “ask them, ‘how do you think you did’ and I always

tell my teammates they did good because I feel like when I am running I am trying my hardest so when they are running I feel like they are trying their hardest.” Abby went on to say, “when you’re done running you say good job and if they feel like they didn’t do a good job you just lift her head up and tell her she will do even better next time and will get it right in the next race.” Abby shows that even when female teammates perform poorly, other women try to build them back up. This communication of building cohesion helped answer my research question about what communicative acts of cohesion look like on a track team. Furthermore, my findings support Turman’s (2003) findings on aspects that help build cohesion such as encouraging athletes and motivating athletes. Abby’s positive words after races can be seen as both encouraging her teammates and motivating her teammates to perform better. Although the female participants I interviewed had direct insight into how they communicate with each other after races, the men I interviewed talked about their perceptions of how women communicate after races.

Two of the male athletes that I interviewed talked about how they perceived women’s communication after races when comparing to how they as men communicate after races. Mike’s perception of women’s communication after the race supports my observations and how the women I interviewed described their communication. Specifically, Mike said, “I think girls are more positive regardless of how the race went.” Mike explained this thought by talking about what Abby said about women having a poor performance. “Girls are more subtle,” Mike said, “and will try to be more gentle if you’re having a bad day.” Mike’s perception reinforces my findings as well as Hart’s (1998) findings that women have a heightened sensitivity to nonverbal communication. Chad, another male athlete on the team, discussed that “girls you know, talk a little more if it’s a

bad race than what guys do.” The male athletes than I observed and interviewed had numerous different findings than the female athletes with a few similarities.

*Men and cohesion.* As interactive as the women were in regards to nonverbal communication, the men’s nonverbal communication was mostly non-interactive. The male athletes still nonverbally communicated a small amount, but were more focused on themselves than their teammates they were competing against. Before the races, I observed the male athletes focused on technique and not communicating with other teammates. If teammates were competing in a relay where they were competing on the same team, they would interact, but mostly male athletes would not communicate if they were competing against each other, even if it was one of their teammates. After races, men showed some forms of nonverbal communication with each other, but the communication differed based on how well teammates perceived performances were. Specifically, if male athletes performed well, teammates would give a high five and possibly say something. If a teammate performed poorly, he would avoid communication with his teammates and teammates would avoid communicating with him.

To strengthen my analysis, the male athletes I interviewed talked about how they communicated with teammates they were competing against before and after races. In the following paragraphs, I analyzed the data from my observations and interviews, and discussed my findings and how they build upon previous research on gender communication and sport communication.

When I first observed the men’s races, I sat in the bleachers by the starting line on the track. I started to observe the nonverbal communication of the men who were teammates and also competing against each other. Contrary to the women, the men did

not express their nonverbal communication to each other interactively. The men would warm up and often times have headphones in their ears rather than communicating with their teammates. The male athletes would at times avoid their teammates who they were competing against. For example, the male athletes would warmup by sprinting twenty meters or so in one of the eight lanes. When getting back in line, they would face forward for most of the time. When a teammate was standing next to them in another line, they would still face forward. Although the male athletes rarely communicated, they still nonverbally communicated on occasion. However, when they were talking, the nonverbal communication greatly differed from when the female athletes were communicating with each other.

When the male athletes were talking before the race, the facial expressions were more stoic than the women's facial expressions with rare smiles from the men. Furthermore, the male athletes would not face each other when communicating. They would stand side by side when talking and would not make eye contact. When talking, rarely did I observe times where men would provide nonverbal feedback of agreement or understanding. Another interesting observation was the lack of communication from male teammates who were not competing but watching the event. The female teammates often grouped up before the races and talked. The men, however, continued to keep to themselves. The men who were watching the race talked with each other, but did not communicate with their fellow teammates who were about to compete. After observing by the starting line, I moved to the finish line to see if male athletes communicated with each other after the race was over and to observe what characteristics of communicative cohesion emerged.



As I sat by the finish line, I observed the male athletes after the races were over. Specifically, I observed how teammates who competed against each other were nonverbally communicating with one another. Similar to before the race, male athletes did not communicate with each other as much as the women communicated with each other. The male athletes after the race would occasionally give their teammates high fives. A common theme from my observation was that the high fives were initiated by the teammate who performed well. Furthermore, the initiator of the high fives would only offer high fives to teammates that also performed well.

If a teammate performed poorly, the other teammates, both competitors and those watching, would avoid communicating with that teammate. The teammate who performed poorly, would also avoid communicating with other teammates who he competed against, and the other teammates who were watching the race. This avoidance of communication was not specific to poor performing men. The male athletes generally avoided each other regardless of performance as I go on to explain below. While observing the men's nonverbal communication with each other after the race, I noticed that men would walk farther apart than women after the race which helped them avoid conversations. The men would also stare at the electronic scoreboard and wait for their times and positions to be posted. The women would hug, high five, and embrace one another before looking up at the scoreboard for the results. Since this difference stood out when observing, I watched the male athletes for an extended time after the race to see when and if they would communicate with other teammates after the event.

Most men found a place to sit where they could see the scoreboard and took off their cleats by themselves. The men who performed well would have teammates who

were not competing against them approach them and communicate nonverbally with high fives, handshakes, and pats on the back. The most nonverbal communication between male athletes occurred in this context. Most of the male athletes who performed well were approached by non-competitor teammates who showed excitement for them. However, teammates who did not compete avoided teammates who performed poorly. From my observation, a teammate who was watching a hurdling event, approached his teammate who won the heat and gave him a high five while avoiding another teammate who finished poorly. Since the nonverbal communication was rarely interactive between male teammates, I analyzed my interviews with both male and female athletes to help strengthen my understanding on how men communicate with each other before and after races.

In my interviews with the two male athletes on the team, the emerging theme of communicative acts of cohesion emerged which brought clarity to my observations while also providing findings that I did not observe. In the interviews, both men talked about how they communicated with their teammates after the races from the perspective of a competitor and a teammate. Specifically, Chad talked about how his interactions with teammates after races depend on how the teammate/competitor performed. Chad said, “guys will usually high five or pat each other on the back. I would say both guys and girls have positive and negative reactions, but in different ways. In negative ways with guys, you are going to leave them alone whereas girls might communicate a little more.”

Chad’s feelings about how he communicates with his teammates who performed poorly support my observations. Furthermore, Mike talked about how he has male friends on the team that he won’t talk to after the race if they perform poorly. Specifically, Mike

said,

My buddy doesn't want someone to talk to him. I'm not going to tell him he did well when he did bad. Later on, we can maybe talk about what he can improve on and what he did well. Guys are cognizant of feelings, but we are not going to tell them good job. Guys are more straightforward whereas girls are subtler and will try to be more gentle if you're having a bad day. Or they may fake it and act like it (bad performance) never happened.

Mike's explanation of how some men avoid communicating with other teammates held true in my observations after races. The men who performed poorly avoided other teammates, and the teammates understood this unwritten rule of leaving someone alone if they performed poorly. Not only did the male athletes share their thoughts on how men communicate with each other before and after races, some of the female interviewees talked about their perceptions of how male teammates communicate with each other.

The female athletes shared their perceptions on how men communicate with other male teammates. As previously mentioned, the women talked about how they would communicate with other women on the team which helped team cohesion. However, they talked about how men had less communication with each other. Kasey mentioned,

I haven't witnessed men talking to each other. Guys are a lot more independent.

The girls are a lot closer. I talk with friends, but also talk to teammates I've never talked to before. With guys, they are distant. They zone out and get focused (on racing).

Kasey's perceptions relate to how Chad and Mike talked about how they communicate with their teammates. Mike and Chad talked about how they would not communicate as

much with their teammates as women. Abby echoed Kasey's perceptions of male athletes communicating with one another. Abby stated,

Guys just kind of keep to themselves. I don't really see guys talk too much I mean some guys on our team will talk to each other and stuff like that, but I don't see much communication between guys at the meets.

Abby's perceptions related to my observations of the male teammates. I observed that some men would talk to each other before and after races, but for the most part, male teammates kept to themselves, especially if they were competing against one another in a race.

Haley's perception of how gender influences how teammates communicate supports what her other teammates have said. Haley expressed that the "women are really close on the team, but guys are not as close." Furthermore, Sharon talked about how men communicate with each other and that even if they communicate differently from women, they still are positive and can build cohesion. Specifically, Sharon shared her perceptions by stating,

For guys I think they just communicate differently. I don't think it's negative at all but I think that some upperclassmen get intimidated by the competition of really good freshmen who come on the team because recruiting has gotten a lot better. So we have freshmen come on and they (upperclassmen) may get a little frustrated maybe if they're plateauing whereas the freshmen are excelling. So I would say that would impact their communication with each other because they get a little more frustrated, but I think they use that (competition) better like I think that they use that competition work a little harder and step up to the

challenge which helps them achieve what they want and helps the team.

After analyzing both my field notes and the interviews, I found it interesting that the male and female teammates communicated differently, yet both talked about and possessed a perceived cohesion amongst each group of teammates.

The women's nonverbal communicative acts I observed, along with the interviews about how women communicate directly support Turman's (2003) building blocks for team cohesion. However, my observations of the male teammates and the interviews with the male athletes only slightly supported Turman's (2003) builders of cohesion. The difference in male athletes and female athletes could be the perceived benefit of team cohesion. Carron et al. (2002) found a statistical significance in the difference in gender based on the relationship between cohesion and performance. Specifically, female athlete perceptions of cohesion impacted team performance whereas male perceptions on cohesion had less impact on team performance.

Even though the male athletes showed less cohesion than women, they still showed cohesion in some ways. Specifically, Mike talked about how he talked with male teammates after races about what went well and what the competitor could change or fix to improve upon. Similarly, Turman (2003) found that athlete directed techniques such as working on strategies to improve performance was a promoter of team cohesion. However, the male athletes did not emphasize team prayer or motivational speeches as a way to build team cohesion like the female athletes emphasized.

Another theme that emerged about cohesion in male teammates was the competitiveness of men with their teammates compared to women. Carron and Spink (1993) found that communication was a strong influence on team cohesion, but also

found that cooperation and competition positively influenced team cohesion. Although the male athletes communicated less with each other than female athletes, the men cooperated with their teammates by giving them space after a poor performance such as Mike not talking to his friend/teammate after a race if the friend/teammate does not want him to. Furthermore, the male athletes who competed against each other were more competitive and focused on their own success which promotes competition which in turn helps build team cohesion (Carron & Spink, 1993).

Hannah described this battle between teammates, both men and women, as “healthy competition” which Harden, Estabrooks, Mama, and Lee (2014) discussed in their article and stated, “one of the more interesting and perhaps unexpected, findings was the degree to which friendly competition was consistently and positively related across group cohesion dimensions.” Even though Harden’s et al. (2014) study focused on female athletes, Wolf, Eys, Sadler, and Kleinert’s (2015) study on cohesion and competition found no differences in gender when it comes to the relationship of competition and cohesion.

The female teammates and the male teammates shared unique insights into their communicative acts to build cohesion and how they interact with teammates their competing against. The interviews helped strengthen and clarify my observations. I not only observed communicative acts of team cohesion that led to the emerging theme of gender, I also analyzed the data collection and found another emerging theme under cohesion. When I observed teammates and conducted interviews with athletes, the theme of group cohesion emerged on a smaller level than team cohesion in general. In the following section, I explained and discussed the emerging theme of team cohesion and

how this theme adds to small group communication literature and sport communication literature.

*Group cohesion.* Since cohesion is one of the most important variables to a group or team (Hardy et al., 2005), the track and field team I observed attempted to build and maintain team cohesion either knowingly or unknowingly. I observed the track athletes and how they communicated with each other nonverbally, and I also conducted interviews with seven athletes to understand the characteristics of cohesion on their team. After my observations and interviews, an interesting theme emerged regarding group cohesion. When we think about team cohesion, we often think of the whole team rather than smaller groups of the team. However, with this track and field team, that was not the case. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the emerging theme of group cohesion through my observations and interviews.

*Group cohesion vs. team cohesion.* As previously stated, when I think of sports teams based on my prior knowledge and experience, I think of the whole team working as a cohesive group. However, the track and field athletes I observed and interviewed described team cohesion more in terms of groups based on their events and gender, rather than the team in general. Having access to the team roster, heat sheets (who was competing in what event(s) and at what time(s)), and list of events athletes typically competed in, I was able to observe specific events and see what teammates were communicating with other teammates. During my observations, I observed that the communication between teammates was from other teammates who were competing against one another or teammates who compete in the same event or similar event. Furthermore, the teammates communicating with each other were mostly of the same

gender. The gender dynamic was mostly due to circumstance from my observations. The men would be either cooling down (a light exercise after the race) or registering for an upcoming event while the women were competing and vice-versa.

However, the group dynamic I observed was based on what events people were competing in. There was a little overlap with some track events and some field events which may have led to no communication between athletes in those separate events, but I observed athletes who were watching their teammates along the track that did not communicate with them before, during, or after the event. When looking at the events that these athletes participated in, the athletes who would not communicate with a competitor were in other events unrelated to the competitor's event.

The athletes who communicated with the competitor at the time were teammates either competing alongside one another, or teammates who competed in similar events as the competitors. This theme was common among both men and women, with women communicating more with each other than men (as described in the previous theme). My observations needed further analysis since I had questions about the theme that was beginning to emerge. The interviews with the seven athletes provided more depth and clarity to the theme of group cohesion.

In my interview with Sharon, I asked her to describe the team's cohesion. Without mentioning any specifics from the question, Sharon started by saying, "I feel like I can speak pretty good for the girls' team this year" which indicated to me that she separated her team talk into a smaller group than the entire team. Furthermore, Sharon went on to talk about the cohesion of the girls' team, but specifically talked about a smaller subset of the team when she said,



The sprint side has to make sure we continue to push each other in workouts and continue to work together and make sure we are doing things right off the track as well as on the track because that counts for a lot because I feel like the girls' team is very good at encouraging each other and especially this year we just have a better overall atmosphere and encouragement is huge and that is really a part of how we treat each other.

Within Sharon's quote, I noticed she referenced the sprinters as a group she took ownership in. Sammy shared her thoughts on cohesion in a similar way talking a little more specific.

When I asked Sammy to explain her team's cohesion, she talked specifically about a teammate of hers that competes in the same event as herself. Sammy stated, our team is very close and we are always encouraging each other like today, Hannah got a PR (personal record) and I'm so happy for her so like I think that's great. I like competing, but my favorite part of track is honestly the team aspect and coming to practice every single day and being surrounded by positive encouragement from the group I compete with.

Since one could interpret these quotes as talking about the entire team, I asked about practice in general to better understand how involved the team is with everyone, or if the team was more separated based on events. Hannah and Chad provided some feedback that helped me understand what practice consisted of and how groups would maybe differ.

I asked Hannah about practice in general to see how practice was conducted. Hannah said that track practice differs from other sports because since the team is so big,

everyone practices at different times based on which events they are in. Furthermore, I asked Chad to talk about his team cohesion at practice and what practiced looked like.

Chad said after a chuckle,

I think the long distance runners are really close because we would do a lot of things as a group at practice and outside of practice like hang out with one another. I guess I don't know what that is like for the sprinters and jumpers, but I would say we (long distance) are pretty tightknit.

Chad talked about a specific subset of the team which were the male long distance runners. Similarly, Mike talked about his cohesion with his team, the distance runners. Mike brought up how there is not one leader who give a motivational speech before the meet (I cover this more in-depth in leadership section) which led me to ask about how leadership takes place in track. Mike's response was less on leadership and more about how cohesion is built and maintained at a smaller level. Specifically, Mike said,

Being on the distance side of track, I train with long distance runners such as the cross country guys. I spend all my time with 30 guys. So a lot of our training is together. We have team meals together but just in our group. It's mostly on the distance side because the size is manageable to get to know everyone. We workout and travel together. That's our group. We meet at different times and places compared to other track groups. We are separated from the short distance track team. Our distance team is close due to all of the time we spend together.

Chad and Mike shared similar perceptions of team cohesion which relate to a couple of Turman's (2003) builders of team cohesion. Specifically, Turman (2003) found that athlete directed techniques and dedication help build team cohesion. Chad and Mike both

talked about practicing together where you would work on technique. Furthermore, Mike talked about the commitment of time spent with the distance runners which shows dedication to his teammates and himself.

Sharon, Sammy, and Hannah all spoke in a similar way when talking about the team's cohesion. Kasey's answer to my question on team cohesion was similar to previous interviewees. Kasey, when asked about the team's cohesion, shared, "I feel like our cohesion is pretty strong in the individual groups like individual events. I definitely support my teammates and I am always there to encourage them." Since track is a coactive sport, the characteristics of building and maintaining cohesion in this particular study emerged as building small group cohesion rather than trying to build team-wide cohesion. This idea of small group vs. the entire team is discussed later in the leadership section. Along with gendered cohesion and small group cohesion, the last theme to emerge from the cohesion section was the perceived quality of competition and its impact on team cohesion.

*Opponent competition and cohesion.* The last cohesion-related theme to emerge from my data collection was opponent competition and its perceived impact on the team's cohesion. My observational data for this theme was limited due to the difficulty of observing quality of competition race to race. Although the observational data was limited, I did observe a difference over the three events in regards to how encouraging teammates were when watching other teammates compete.

The first meet I attended was a meet with mostly Division Two schools. Furthermore, the Division One schools did not have all of their best athletes competing. The meet was described by Sammy as "laid back." At this meet, teammates that were not

competing, mostly sat in the bleachers and talked with one another. There were some athletes closer to the track, but they did not cheer on the competitors with the same passion as the meets to follow. The next day, another meet took place where larger schools attended with a better level of competition than the day before. Hannah talked about how this meet “has ten times more competition than the D2 meet.” At this meet, I observed teammates more engaged with their teammates who were competing. I heard teammates cheering on other teammates more often than in the prior day’s meet.

The last meet, which occurred over two days, was similar in size and quality of performance of the second meet. Chad talked about how this meet “is bigger than other ones in the past which means you have more support from the fans and your teammates.” The excitement and engagement of athletes cheering on their teammates was similar to the previous event. My observations provided some insight into the emerging theme of quality of opponent and cohesion, however, my interviews provided more of the data which made this theme fully emerge.

The question I asked every athlete in one way or another depending on the flow of our interview was, “how does the quality of competition affect you and/or the team, if at all?” The answers from the athletes varied depending on the direction they took the question, but most athletes, when talking about the impact on the team, talked about how the team comes closer.

Kasey, when asked about the competition of opponents, brought up how teammates become more personal when the quality of an opponent increases.

Specifically, Kasey said,

Well the team’s cohesion when the competition gets tough, we get a lot closer.

It's a lot more personal. At a big meet it is hard to place so we are more encouraging as a team and trying to do our best. Bigger meets have more of an impact on this.

Kasey's perception of team cohesion was similar to what Chad talked about. Chad mentioned that when the competition increases, especially against conference teams, the team's focus shifts to a singular goal. Specifically, Chad said,

The reason my effort increases against better competition is because you know what is on the line and we are all working toward one goal of ultimately winning the championship so I think as the competition gets better we are definitely more supportive and when you see someone competing on the track you are definitely more likely to root them on then you would be against lower competition.

Chad talked about how teammates are more likely to cheer you on when the competition is tougher which supports my observations previously mentioned. Furthermore, Turman (2003) found that quality of one's opponents was a key builder of team cohesion.

The track and field team I observed showed many characteristics of team cohesion. Through my observations and interviews, three main themes emerged in relation to building and maintaining cohesion: (1) gender and cohesion, (2) small group cohesion, and (3) opponent competition and cohesion. Through my analysis, I discussed what cohesion looked like on this specific track and field team, and how my findings build upon the prior research on team cohesion. While cohesion is the main condition of groupthink (Janis, 1972), another important condition of groupthink and sports in general is leadership.

**Leadership.** Leadership in sports is an important variable for the team and the

coaches (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). Due to leadership's importance in a sports context, it's often one of the most studied variables in the sports research (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai & Arnott, 1985; Chelladurai et al., 1988; Chelladurai et al., 1987; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978, 1980; Dwyer & Fisher, 1988, 1990; Horne & Carron, 1985; Serpa et al., 1991; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984; Turman, 2001). In this study, I studied leadership through an ethnographic lens by observing nonverbal communicative characteristics of leadership, and by conducting interviews with athletes to hear their anonymous and candid feelings about leadership from the coach and other athletes on the team. Through my extensive observations and ethnographic interviews, two main themes emerged from the data collection about leadership on this specific track and field team: (1) group leadership vs. team leadership and (2) coaching leadership at meets vs. at practice. In the following sections, I discuss these themes using examples from my observations and quotes from my interviews with athletes, and comparing them to Henrickson-Parker's et al. (2012) study on observational leadership.

*Group leadership vs. team leadership.* Similar to group cohesion and team cohesion, group leadership emerged as a theme rather than the entire team when observing leadership. Since the track and field team is larger than many sports, many coaches are needed to coach different events and different groups of people. I used my observational data and ethnographic interviews to guide me to find this emerging theme.

During my observations, I noticed that particular groups of people who competed in similar events communicated with each other whereas athletes in other events would communicate with their own group that competed together. I also noticed that leaders on the team, whether it be a coach or captain, would be cheering on specific individuals that

were competing in a particular event. I observed two coaches and many other leaders directing athletes through nonverbal communication such as pointing, wheeling their arm to signify to speed up, clapping to encourage the athlete to keep going, and thumbs up if the athlete was in the lead. Furthermore, I could hear these leaders yelling at racing competitors that were on their team to “make a move,” “hold on to the lead,” “you got this,” “pass him on the inside,” as well as yelling splits (certain times based on how much of their race is completed). These phrases show the leaders communicating with the athletes, guiding the athletes to make certain decisions, and directing athletes to do something. All of these communicative actions are seen in Henrickson-Parker’s et al. (2012) study where they found that “guiding, supporting, communicating, directing, and decision making” were observable leadership traits (p. 350).

The two coaches and athletes showed leadership qualities expressed by Henrickson-Parker (2012), but this expressed leadership was not universal. For example, the one coach focused his leadership of athletes on those individuals who were competing in short distance sprints and hurdles. During long distance runs, the coach was standing off to the side of the track and did not communicate with athletes when they were racing or after the race. Similarly, the other coach focused on instructing and leading the long distance runners during and after the race, but did not embrace or offer leadership to the short distance sprinters and hurdlers. Furthermore, the athletes who helped lead during and after events focused on specific events similar to the coaches. These characteristics could be due to what Sammy described as a “limited coaching staff” with “only three main coaches” as Hannah stated. Not only did I observe a selective, grouped off leadership, I listened to interviews with athletes where they brought up similar

characteristics of leadership.

Sammy talked about the leadership on the team in terms of a leader who competes in the same events rather than the entire team in general. Specifically, Sammy explained,

I have a super great role model. Her name is “Victoria” and she’s a senior this year and I love competing with her because you know when you are doing a bad job, she will make you shake it off and go to the next event and she prays with me us before every race. So I wouldn’t necessarily say that we have a huge team prerace pep talk because it’s kind of just in our individual events, and it depends on who your senior leadership is.

Sammy’s experience with leadership was similar to my observations on leadership during the meet. I observed athlete leaders talking to competitors after the event (mostly women), and saw them use nonverbal communication such as hugs and high fives, along with technical moves to help the runners improve. Hannah experienced the same type of leadership from a teammate that Sammy experienced. Hannah said, “I consider Jackie our leader because she is the best. If I had a question, I would go to Jackie.” Similarly, Mike, as a leader on the team, talked about how he may meet with his teammates in a small group rather than a large group before meets. Mike said,

big speeches don’t happen as much in track and field. Everyone is racing at different times. There’s never one big team meeting before. People group off and go on their own so you never get that big speech from a coach. You might chat with your teammates in a small group about what everyone needs to do, but never a large group meeting.

Mike’s experience as a leader was similar to Sharon’s experience as a leader.



Specifically, Sharon stated,

So each group event typically huddles and when we are together and huddled, usually an upperclassman will lead us in prayer. It's usually me or Victoria, who is another senior. We are always making sure that we are checking with the other girls to see how they are doing before their race by prepping them before the race.

Sharon talked about prepping the other teammates before the race which aligns with Henrickson-Parker's et al. (2012) findings of observational traits of leadership.

Specifically, Henrickson-Parker et al. (2012) found that guiding, supporting, communicating, and coordinating are all observable leadership traits, which are similar to what Sharon used for leadership. Along with leadership taking place before races, some athletes talked about how their leaders expressed leadership during their races.

Chad talked about how his specific coach helped him during his races by letting him know where he was at and by offering encouragement. Specifically, Chase said, "coach is always there to give me splits at certain distances in the race and just really motivating us to get the most out of our run." Furthermore, Mike talked about how his coach, who is the same coach as Chase, communicated with him during his races.

Specifically, Mike stated,

You usually can't hear a lot. But you can hear "Ryan" at the two hundred (meter) mark. He will give you a split on where you're at. If you're making a move, he will get excited and tell you to "go for it." It's always short stuff; it just lets you know where you are. If you don't hear him, it means that the race is not going well.

Chad and Mike both talked about how their coach gives them split times and will

motivate them to improve. Henrickson-Parker et al. (2012) observable leadership trait of maintaining standards, as well as guiding and supporting, relate to what Chad and Mike experienced. Furthermore, I observed Ryan holding a stop watch and yelling something to these athletes while they raced. Ryan even signaled to speed up and pass other competitors by wheeling his arm and pointing at the people in front of Chad and Mike in their separate races. Although the coaches were engaged at times during the meet, for most of my observations the coaches were not communicating directly with athletes. This led me to my last emerging theme related to leadership: coaching leadership at meets vs. at practice.

*Coaching leadership at meets vs. at practice.* During my observations and interviews, this theme of leadership differing between coaches and athletes became more apparent the more I analyzed the data. While observing, I noted that most of the events, before and after, lacked a coach either giving last second instructions before the race or offering encouraging words after the race. Since leadership is the most important aspect to coaching (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980), I was intrigued as to why the coaches were seemingly not communicating with their athletes during most of the events. During my first observation, the coaches were rarely communicating with their athletes, and if there was communication, it was a quick nonverbal high five. The more I observed, the more I noticed the coaches doing other tasks such as setting up equipment and carrying clipboards directing athletes and coaches from other teams on where to go. The last two meets I attended, coaches communicated slightly more with athletes during and after events, but still were focused on coordinating and managing the tasks of the entire event itself. My confusion turned to clarity when athletes described their coaches' leadership

and explained why there was less leadership at the meets compared to the leadership they receive at practice.

As my observations went along, I continued to notice the lack of coaching during the events themselves. But as these observations continued, I noticed the athletes not bothered by this fact as if they knew or understood this type of hand-off approach was going to happen. Hannah explained why the coaches were not leading athletes during the first event I observed. Specifically, Hannah said,

We only have like three coaches and so they're the people that are putting on this meet like organizing the officials and organizing and helping at each event so like I really haven't talked to either of my coaches today because they are so busy and they know that we also understand that so at this meet especially and tomorrow's meet too, we probably won't get a lot of coaching interaction with them just because they're busy. I saw my jump coach "Jim" running back and forth and here and there. Also, "Evan" is all over the place too so we don't get a ton of coaching leadership at home. But when we are away (at an away meet or event) we have one on one coaches coaching us because they don't have as much on their shelves.

Hannah's experience with leadership during the event brought clarity to why coaches were rarely communicating with athletes during and after the event. Although coaches were not directly leading the athletes during and after the events, they were performing one of Henrickson-Parker's et al. (2012) observable leadership traits. Specifically, I observed the coaches managing events and officials for the entire meet and Hannah talked about this during our interview which provided more clarity to the situation. One

of Henrickson-Parker's et al. (2012) observable leadership traits is managing tasks which the coaches were doing so the entire meet could run smoothly. I wanted to see if this was a common theme at every meet, so I observed and inquired about the leadership of coaches at the other two meets.

The second meet I observed was similar to the first in regards to what the coaches were doing during the meet. Mike shared a similar experience to what I observed and what Hannah experienced the day before in a different meet. Specifically, Mike said,

at this meet, the coaches run the show so they can make more decisions. They're a lot more busy. They don't have time to talk to you before or after an event because they are making sure the event is running smoothly.

Mike shared his experience about coaching leadership and mentioned that the coaches are running the show and making more decisions. Decision making is one of Henrickson-Parker's et al. (2012) observable leadership traits. When observing the coaches, I noticed them deciding on when athletes could start warming up. Similar to the first two meets, coaches during the last meet, which took place over two days, were running the event and rarely communicating with athletes.

One of the athletes I interviewed during the last meet was Abby. Abby talked about how she interacts with coaches during home meets. Specifically, Abby said,

Leadership is different since we are at home because it's like they're (coaches) are running the show so it's (leadership) still pretty good but personally I won't talk to the coaches much on these meet days because it's like we're all over the place before the meet and before the race. After the meet is when we could actually talk.

Abby's experience with coaching leadership at the third meet was similar to Hannah and Mike's experiences with coaching leadership at the first two meets. Since coaching leadership rarely takes place at home meets (and I did not observe away meets), practice seemed like a logical place where coaches would be able to show leadership. Although I did not observe any practices, the athletes I interviewed were quick to defend their coaches' leadership by talking about how coaches lead at practice.

Since I was unable to observe a practice, my interviews led to the emergence of the theme of coaching leadership at practice. My first interview was with Sammy, who talked about how since most of the meet time for coaches at home events is managing the meet itself, her coach makes sure he fits all of his athletes into his schedule at practice. Specifically, Sammy explained, "at practice, he's making sure he gets all of his athletes in to work with him and if you can't schedule a time to work, he will help find a time to work." Similarly, Kasey talked about practice but offered specifics of what her coach does at practice.

Kasey stated, "coaches give good feedback. At practice, he coaches to your abilities and listens to you whereas at the meets, it is more of the team hanging with each other." Chase also talked about what his coach does for him at practice. Specifically, Chase said,

the coach lays out a gameplan for us you know it's kind of different scenarios that we need to do to go out and compete at the highest level. He will also give us technical feedback at practice.

Chase talked about the technical feedback which Hannah experiences in practice from her coach.

Hannah talked about how she prefers one coaches' leadership style due to his techniques to help her improve. Specifically, Hannah explained,

both Evan and Jim are great coaches but I mesh with Jim a lot better just because he's very like technical. He video records you and slows it down so you can watch and know what you are doing right and wrong. When I am doing long jump he will put it (film) in slow motion and give me technical advice. Whereas Evan, I will not feel good about an event and ask him what happened and he just says that he doesn't want me to overthink it.

Hannah talked about how she enjoyed the technical coaching leadership that her coach provided whereas other athletes, such as Mike, enjoy a more hands off approach to coaching leadership.

Mike talked about his specific coach shows leadership at practice by his patience and hands off attitude. Specifically, Mike said,

My distance coach is pretty constant in a way that he is quiet and laid back. You don't hear a lot from him. If you do something awesome, you'll know or really poor you'll know. But it's steady about how he goes about things.

Mike's experience, along with many other athletes I interviewed, was one with strong coaching leadership coming mostly at practice. The coaching leadership explained by the athletes fits well with Henrickson-Parker's et al. (2012) leadership traits of decision making, guiding and supporting, maintaining standards, communicating, and managing resources. Furthermore, the analysis shows that different athletes prefer different coaching styles which supports previous research on situational leadership (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978).

The emergent themes related to cohesion and leadership were developed from an extensive analysis of the observational field notes and ethnographic interviews (n=7). While my findings support past research on cohesion and leadership, some themes contradict certain studies on groupthink. Going into my observation, some of the emerging themes were expected while a few were surprising. The findings offer insight into the communicative characteristics of cohesion and leadership, and provide more research on ethnographic studies of cohesion and leadership in sports. Furthermore, my findings add to the fields of group communication, sport communication, and gender communication. In the following chapter, I summarize my findings and themes, discuss the limitations of my research, and offer implications for future study.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

Studying a group of people in a particular context helps understand their experiences and how they communicate with each other (Babbie, 2013). A sports team is compiled of athletes from many different life experiences who all share a unique experience of competing in the same group. Furthermore, a sports team is unique to small group communication due to its structure and consistency of member and group functionality (Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012). Two essential components of sports teams are cohesion (Hardy et al., 2005) and leadership (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). Although extensive research suggests the positive impact of cohesion on sports teams (Carron et al., 2002; Eys et al., 2015; Hardy et al., 2005; Prapavessis & Carron, 1997; Street, 1997) and the positive impact of strong leadership on sports teams (Chelladurai & Arnott, 1985; Chelladurai et al., 1988; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978; Dwyer & Fisher, 1988; Horne & Carron, 1985; Terry & Howe, 1984; Turman, 2001), Janis' (1972) groupthink theory suggests that high cohesion, certain leadership styles, along with certain contexts lead to poor decision-making and performance outcomes in groups.

In this study, I observed a track and field team, as well as conducted ethnographic interviews, with a focus on investigating cohesion and leadership. Furthermore, I used cohesion and leadership, two antecedent conditions of groupthink (Janis, 1972), to better understand if groupthink was present, and if so what were the characteristics. During my observational time, I observed three track and field meets over four different days, and I conducted ethnographic interviews ranging from 7-20 minutes with 7 (n=7) athletes on the track and field team. The interviews spanned over all four days of the observations to



help gather a more holistic understanding of the experiences on the track and field team. While observing, I sat in the bleachers and took field notes on mostly nonverbal communication between teammates and coaches, while taking fieldnotes of certain verbal communication from teammates and coaches to the competitors.

To strengthen my observation and analysis of my fieldnotes, I conducted ethnographic interviews with athletes where I asked about the team's cohesion, the team's leadership, and the overall feel of the competition. In addition, I asked follow-up questions in the interviews to develop an enhanced understanding of their experiences and develop more in-depth data. From my observations and ethnographic interviews, themes emerged. The themes that emerged related to cohesion and/or leadership. Certain themes built upon prior research and were expected, while other themes that emerged were unexpected, but still supported previous research on the issue. The themes add to group communication and sport communication. However, the implications of gender and communication were not considered prior to the ethnographic observations.

My data collection and emergent themes allowed me to answer my research questions. However, this study has some limitations due to uncontrollable factors along with my experience in the ethnographic communication field. Through these struggles, I was able to use my observations and interviews to add to the research in group communication, sport communication, and gender communication. In the following sections, I provide a summary of my results, my emergent themes from the data collection, and answer my research questions. After summarizing my results, I discuss the limitations of this study and my research. Lastly, I offer suggestions for future research.

## Summary of the Results

My purpose for this study was to answer my research questions about groupthink and two of the main conditions of groupthink: cohesion and leadership. Specifically, my research questions for this study were:

*RQ1: What, if at all, are the conditions of groupthink on a collegiate track and field team? If so, what are the characteristics of the existing groupthink?*

*RQ2: What, if at all, are the communicative aspects of cohesion present on a collegiate track and field team? If so, what are the characteristics of the existing cohesion?*

*RQ3: What, if at all, are the communicative aspects of leadership present in the collegiate track and field team? If so, what are the characteristics of the existing leadership?*

*Addressing RQ1.* To have my research grounded in a theory, research question number one was important. Furthermore, the applicability of groupthink to sports is inconclusive so this research question guided me to add to the literature on groupthink in sports. Since Rubio et al. (2009) found that groupthink may have negatively impacted the interactive sports team (ice hockey) in their case study, I wanted to explore the communicative characteristics, if any, of groupthink on a coactive team such as track and field.

Groupthink initially provided insight into situations retroactively (Hensely & Griffin, 1986; Janis, 1972; Moorhead et al., 1991; Smith, 1985) which led to each researcher finding conditions of groupthink that led to the faulty decisions. However, recent studies studied the conditions of groupthink on sports team rather than

retrospectively analyzing a sports team's faulty decisions, and how they negatively impacted performance (Hardy et al., 2005; Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012; Rovio et al., 2009). While these studies showed the negative impacts of high cohesion and strong leadership, two conditions of groupthink, other studies show the benefits of high cohesion (Carron et al., 2002; Carron & Chelladurai, 1981) and strong leadership (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980; Turman, 2001). For these reasons, I examined the conditions, if any, of groupthink on the track and field team and the nature of the characteristics.

After my observations and interviews, my analysis revealed that all three conditions of groupthink were present, but did not reveal that groupthink itself was present. The team communicated high cohesion through nonverbal feedback between each other by both showing support for one another, and showing friendly competition and respecting of other's personalities. Furthermore, the research participants talked about how they used communication to build cohesion while I interviewed them. The research participants talked about how they use supportive words and gestures to motivate and help teammates with technique, which relates to Turman's (2003) motivation and athlete directed techniques as builders of cohesion. Furthermore, the female research participants talked about how they prayed together before meets and races. Team prayer was also one of Turman's (2003) builders of cohesion. Lastly, the research participants reported how they come together and are closer when faced with more difficult competition from opponents. This too was a builder of cohesion from Turman's (2003) study. Not only was high cohesion, a condition of groupthink, present, strong leadership emerged from my data, but in a unique way.

When we think of leadership on a sports team, especially at a game or event, we often think about the coaches leading the team due to leadership's importance to coaching (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). However, at the meets I observed, the captains and athlete leaders communicated more with the athletes from a leadership perspective than the coaches did. This was partially due to the fact that the coaches were using their leadership to run the event itself as expressed by the research participants in the interview. Mike reported in the ethnographic interview about how the coaches like to run the home events so they can be the decision makers. Making decisions for the track team and program is one of Henrickson-Parker's et al. (2012) leadership traits, as well as one of Janis' (1972) explanations of impartial leaders which can lead to groupthink.

As for the athlete leaders, I observed their leadership at the meet where I saw them supporting the competing athletes, communicating with teammates before events, and maintaining standards for their teammates. Furthermore, the research participants I interviewed talked about their teammate leaders who they often go to for advice and support. The research participants who considered themselves leaders that I interviewed, talked about how they go to younger athletes and give them direction, guidance, and help them compete at their highest levels. All of these characteristics of leadership support past research on strong leadership (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980; Henrickson-Parker et al., 2012; Turman, 2001).

Lastly, situational context, specifically a highly stressful situation, was Janis' (1972) last condition of groupthink. Since situational context would have been difficult to observe, I asked the interviewees to explain how this track meet differs from previous track meets which often led to the question about the differences in events and practices,

or a question about the competition differences between track meets. Through the seven in-depth interviews with athletes, I analyzed the raw data which led to the emergence of teammates becoming closer and more encouraging when feeling more stressed due to an increase in competition. So the athletes illustrated Janis' (1972) first condition of groupthink, cohesion, to suppress Janis' (1972) last condition of groupthink, highly stressful situational contexts.

Although the data collection provided valuable insight into the conditions and characteristics of groupthink, there was no ethical way to determine if groupthink impacted the track and field team. Groupthink is often applied retrospectively to a situation so from my methodology, groupthink's impact could not be assessed. Even with other methodologies besides retrospective analysis, groupthink would be hard to assess due to the variable of performance in sports. These findings for research question number one provided more insight into groupthink's conditions and characteristics in group communication and sport communication. However, these findings also shed light on groupthink's potentially outdated claims within the context of sports and communication. The reason recent researchers have avoided groupthink as a theoretical lens for studies is shown in my own findings with its' lack of applicability to present situations. In the next two research questions, I looked more in-depth at cohesion and leadership due to their importance in sports.

*Addressing RQ2.* I used both my observational fieldnotes and interviews to analyze the raw data which helped answer RQ 2. Cohesion has been extensively researched in the sports field (Carron et al., 2002; Eys et al., 2015; Hardy et al., 2005; Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012; Prapavessis & Carron, 1997; Rovio et al., 2009; Street,

1997). However, studies are inconclusive on whether high cohesion is positive for a team (Carron et al., 2002; Eys et al., 2015; Prapavessis & Carron, 1997; Street, 1997) or negative for team (Hardy et al., 2005; Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012; Rovio et al., 2009). Since these past studies focused on cohesion and performance outcomes in sports, I focused on the communicative characteristics of cohesion on a specific team using an ethnographic approach, since past studies used different methodologies. My emerging themes under the topic of communicative cohesion were (1) gender and cohesion, (2) small group cohesion, and (3) opponent competition and cohesion.

*Gender and cohesion.* When conducting research for this study, I did not anticipate the strong emergence of a gender-based theme. Although I did not anticipate gender and cohesion as a theme, it was my most prominent theme. Because of this, I briefly reviewed literature on gender communication in the following section.

In the area of gender communication, research and findings are often contentious and disagreed upon due to the implications of findings when it comes to similarities and differences between men and women in culture and society (Canary & Dindia, 1998). Through my review of literature, findings are inconclusive on definite similarities and differences. However, I explained a few key studies that relate to the emergent themes in my own study.

In my study, female athletes communicated through nonverbal interactions more than the men. Furthermore, both male athletes and female athletes discussed this difference in communication during the ethnographic interviews. Similarly, Hall (1998) examined nonverbal differences in males and females. Hall (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of numerous studies to discuss the findings and implications of differences in

nonverbal communication between males and females. Specifically, Hall (1998) examined smiling as a social interaction. Through meta-analysis, Hall (1998) discussed that of 15 studies examining smiling in males and females, over 90 percent displayed females smiling more than males, and over 50 percent of those same studies finding as statistical significance. Furthermore, Katsumi, Dolcos, Kim, Sung, and Dolcos (2017) found similar results on approach behaviors based on gender. Specifically, Katsumi et al. (2017) found that women expressed more positive social appraisals in their interactions with other women than men expressed with other men. These findings support my observations on differences in male and female athletes when it comes to smiling to and with each other.

Another major concept to Hall's (1998) analysis was the differences between males and females in terms of nonverbal sensitivity. Hall's (1998) analysis concluded that women in the study were stronger at judging nonverbal communication than men. However, the analysis showed that there was not a difference in empathetic accuracy between men and women meaning the ability to know how the person one is communicating with is feeling.

This study relates to my study because my analysis revealed that women communicated more with each other after a bad race to build each other back up while men avoided these types of interactions. For example, they did not acknowledge each other after a race. This finding supports Hertenstein and Keltner's (2011) findings on differences in how sympathy is communicated by genders. Specifically, Hertenstein and Keltner (2011) found that women communicated sympathy through touch with other females whereas males did not. Furthermore, women communicate happiness with each

other through touch. However, both male athletes and female athletes discussed the nature of their communication or lack of communication which supports the notion that men and women similarly judge the feelings of a person they are communicating with. The male athletes said they avoided their teammate when the performance went poorly because their teammate does not want someone talking to them, whereas the female athletes talked about building up a teammate after a poor performance because they feel like the athlete needs it.

Overall, Hall's (1998) meta-analysis provided insight into my findings, and helped explain some of the emergent themes from the analysis. Hall (1998) stated that "it is justified to conclude that sex differences in smiling and nonverbal sensitivity are relatively large" (p. 169). Similarly, I found distinct differences in how male athletes and female athletes communicate. Hall's (1998) analysis helps provide past research to the area of gender communication since this emergent theme is crucial to my study. In the following paragraphs, I discussed at greater length how my findings addressed research question two through observations and ethnographic interviews.

From the beginning of my observations, the difference in how men and women nonverbally communicated was evident. The female athletes who were competing against each other nonverbally communicated by giving each other high fives, hugging, facing each other while they talked, patting each other on the back, and huddling up before races with other teammates. These all showed signs of building cohesion. Specifically, Turman (2003) found that building each other up through compliments and bragging, as well as using team prayer and motivational talks to bring athletes closer.



Although the observations did not directly illustrate Turman's (2003) promoters of cohesion, the interviews with the female research participants provided insight into those conversations before the races. The research participants reported in the interviews that they encouraged one another and would wish each other good luck. Furthermore, several research participants reported in the interviews about how they use team/group prayer before the game with other teammates which, as Sharon described, brings everyone closer together. The women not only used communicative characteristics to build cohesion before events, but also after events.

When I observed women's events, the athletes nonverbally communicated in a similar way compared to their nonverbal communication before races. Teammates patted each other on the back regardless of where each person placed. Furthermore, they gave each other hugs and high fives, as well as grouped up again and talked face to face. Showing support for teammates builds cohesion (Turman, 2003) which emerged from my observational data. Moreover, women talked about how they communicate with teammates after events during our interviews. An analysis of the interview data from the (how many females did you interview) revealed how they would tell each other that they performed well and would try to be supportive and understanding if someone did not perform as well. However, the male athletes communicated teamwork and cohesion in different, less obvious ways.

When observing the track and field meets, the male athletes rarely communicated with teammates they were competing against before the race. The men, based on my analysis, avoided each other and did not face each other when communication occurred. Furthermore, male athletes who competed against their teammates avoided each other

after the race unless they both performed well. Since the men were less interactive when nonverbally communicating, I asked questions during the interview to strengthen my analysis. Specifically, the men talked about how there are certain unwritten rules that men follow like not talking to someone who performed poorly since they most likely do not want you to talk. Mike stated that he is straightforward with teammates who perform poorly and won't tell them they did a good job unless they actually did. Rather, he would talk about ways to improve for the next race. The women also offered their perceptions on the difference in gender when communicating with teammates.

An analysis of the female research participant interview data revealed that female athletes view males as more competitive and less talkative. However, both men and women agreed that this lack of communication was not a negative thing. Rather, the men use the competitiveness between teammates to motivate them. This idea of healthy competition to build cohesion builds upon previous research related to competition and cohesion. Teammate competition positively influences team cohesion (Carron & Spink, 1993), and specifically, "healthy competition and friendly competition was consistently and positively related across group cohesion dimensions" (Harden et al., 2014, p. 5). The men also built cohesion by giving technical advice to athletes who performed poorly. Turman (2003) found that athlete directed technique, such as how to change a technical aspect of running or hurdling, builds cohesion amongst the team. Gender and cohesion was the emergent theme with the most data which allowed me to partially answer research question number two about the communicative characteristics of cohesion. Along with gender, another emerging theme relating to cohesion emerged: small group cohesion.

*Small group cohesion.* Since an entire track and field team has a large population, I partially anticipated the theme of smaller group cohesion vs. the entire team working as a cohesive group, but I did not anticipate the extent of this theme. When observing the athletes, I documented in my field notes that the athletes competed in similar events, tended to stay by each other. I had access to the events that each athlete competed in, and was able to determine that the athletes grouped together all competed in the same or similar events. The athletes that grouped up cheered for each other during the race. However, an interesting finding was emerging when I observed race after race that most of the cheering was coming from the athletes who competed in the same or similar events as the person they cheered for.

To strengthen my analysis, I conducted interviews where research participants were asked about their general thoughts on cohesion, and some athletes were specific about the groups they were in. Certain research participants, when asked about their team's cohesion, reported in the interviews that their group of athletes in similar events were close, rather than talking about the entire team's cohesion. The research participants that talked about their specific event teams explained the dedication on and off the field of that team to become closer. This dedication is a direct builder of cohesion (Turman, 2003). This emergent theme provided a unique clarity to the communication characteristics of cohesion on a track and field team. Specifically, the track and field team maintained and built cohesion in smaller groups of people who they spend the most time with and compete with, rather than the track and field team as a whole. The findings added to the research on group communication and sport communication. The last theme that emerged in relation to cohesion was the quality of the opponents.

*Opponent competition and cohesion.* When trying to answer research question number two, I did not think I would have observational data emerge relating to the quality of competition and cohesion. Rather, I thought that if that data emerged, it would be solely due to my interviews. However, I observed three different track meets over the course of four days. And I observed a difference between the first track meet I observed and the last two meets I observed. At the first meet, the competition level was low for the athletes. Athletes cheered on their teammates, but not to the extent I was imagining. The following two meets showcased a high level of competition due to bigger and better teams coming. At these two meets, the teammates who would cheer on other teammates in their similar events were much louder and seemed more supportive.

To strengthen my observations, I asked questions about the meet itself which led to research participants talking about how competition varies depending on the meet. The research participants told me that when the competition increases, they become closer in their groups and as a team. Furthermore, research participants said they cheer harder and act more positively toward teammates because of the increased anxiety and stress of bigger meets. My findings on increased competition being a factor in how the team perceived cohesion and how they communicated with each other supports previous studies on competition's association with cohesion (Harden et al., 2014; Turman, 2003; Wolf et al., 2015).

These emergent themes offer implications for collegiate track and field teams. Specifically, coaches of track and field teams can better understand how their team builds cohesion through groups rather than the whole team. Furthermore, coaches can use these findings to better understand how different genders communicate cohesion on the team.

Track and field athletes can use the findings to understand how cohesion is communicated within groups and genders. This insight can provide athletes with a better understanding on why certain athletes communicate in different ways than themselves. These emergent themes also offer implications for organizational communication. Specifically, larger organizations who employ numerous employees can take the group cohesion theme to better understand how cohesion is built within groups and at the organizational level. Companies can better understand how different departments communicate cohesion within themselves rather than on a large scale.

*Addressing RQ3.* Similar to my first two research questions, I analyzed my raw data from my observational notes and interviews to answer research question number three. Since leadership is essential for sports teams (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980; Dwyer & Fisher, 1990; Terry, 1984; & Terry & Howe, 1984), I observed coaching and athlete leadership, as well as interviewed research participants about the perceived leadership on the team. Even though observational leadership has been observed in the medical field (Henrickson-Parker et al., 2012), it's been rarely used in sport communication. Because of this, I explored the communicative characteristics of leadership on this track and field team. Even though my methodology is different than most previous studies on leadership in sports (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai & Arnott, 1985; Chelladurai et al., 1988; Chelladurai et al., 1987; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978, 1980; Dwyer & Fisher, 1988, 1990; Horne & Carron, 1985; Serpa et al., 1991; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984; Turman, 2001), my findings support past studies on characteristics of leaders. My emergent themes from communicative leadership were (1) group leadership vs. team leadership and (2) coaching leadership at meets vs. at practice.

*Group leadership vs. team leadership.* When conducting my study, I did not fully anticipate leadership on a track and field team to be split up based on events. Since track and field teams are made up of many different people participating in many different events, I anticipated some sectioned off groups, but not to the extent in which I observed and heard in my interviews. Through my observational data, my analysis showed that the same people continually were standing near each other and cheering on the same people. Furthermore, these groups of people would limit their communication to almost strictly themselves. Having access to what events every athlete was in, I concluded that the same athletes were grouped off in the same or similar events as other athletes. Although this information is similar to the group cohesion section, the grouping nature also show characteristics in leadership.

Two of the coaches and athletes who showed leadership to athletes on the track and field team expressed leadership through my observations by guiding, directing, supporting, and communicating; all of which support Henrickson-Parker's et al. (2012) observational leadership traits. However, the communication, guidance, and support was strategic. Only athletes participating in similar events to teammates competing would direct and guide athletes through communication such as pointing and yelling out splits (certain time that athlete is running at particular point in race). The coaches would only guide and support the athletes under their direction. The long distance coach did not embrace or offer leadership to the short distance runners. Similarly, the short distance coach stood off to the side and did not offer support to the long distance runners during or after the race. Not only did the observations provide characteristics of small group leadership, the interviews provided data as well.

During my interviews with the research participants, they expressed leadership in terms of their specific events. When asked about the team's leadership, research participants started referencing their captains and/or athletes in leadership roles who participate in their same events, or the specific coach who leads them in practice. Research participants talked about how their leaders within their event gave them direction and offered guidance before races and after races. Furthermore, research participants talked about how their coaches would sometimes offer technical guidance during the race, as well as updates on where they are positioned if it was a long distance race. Even though the research participants expressed that their coaches did not communicate with them much right before and during the meet, the coaches do communicate leadership more in practice.

*Coaching leadership at meets vs. at practice.* When conducting my study, I did not anticipate the extent of the difference in how coaches communicate leadership at meets compared to at practice. Similar to the small group leadership, I understood the sheer size of a track and field team may impact how coaches show leadership to athletes at meets since multiple events can take place around the same time. During my observations, track coaches managed the entire meet itself rather than communicating with athletes. During a few instances, coaches did communicate with athletes during and after their races, but this observational pattern was few and far between. Rather, coaches were setting up different events and communicating with officials, and athletes and coaches from other teams on where to go and where to stand. For example, one coach called the officials of a sprinting event together and communicated with them. Some nonverbal communication occurring from the coach was pointing to the starting line and

demonstrating a technique on how to use the starting gun (starting gun signals beginning of race). Since I was observing the communicative characteristics of coaching leadership and not how the leadership impacted the athletes, I asked the interviewees about their coaches' leadership in general.

During my ethnographic interviews, I asked research participants to describe their coaches' leadership at the particular event I was observing, and talk about how it compares to other interactions they have with their coaches (e.g. other events and practice). Most of the research participants talked at different lengths about their coaches' leadership at the meet. They explained that the coaches at home meets run the entire meet so they do not have time to talk much at the actual meet. One research participant stated that the coaches do this so they can be the decision makers. Even though Henrickson-Parker's et al. (2012) leadership trait of decision making was not directly applied to the athletes, the coaches show this leadership trait by making decision to help the entire meet run smoothly which in turn helps the track and field team. Though the coaches' leadership was minimal for the athletes at the meets, the interviewees talked about their coaches showed leadership at practice.

Specifically, the coaches at practice work with athletes on technical improvements. Some coaches used highly technical leadership by communicating with athletes using videos of them and breaking down specific aspects of their technique to improve upon. Other coaches took a different leadership approach and would encourage athletes while not providing technical feedback so, as Hannah explained, "you don't overthink it (technique)." Similarly, the male research participants talked about their distance coach's approach to leadership, and Mike explained it by saying, "you don't



hear a lot from him; if you're doing awesome, you'll know or if you're doing really poor, you'll know." Although the coaches' communicative characteristics of leadership somewhat support Henrickson-Parker's et al. (2012) leadership traits of guiding and supporting, communicating, directing, maintaining standards, and managing resources, the coaching leadership was not as interactive as I initially thought.

Although I did not collect data on athletes' satisfaction with leadership, this hands off approach to leadership with limited communication between athletes and coaches at events seemed like it would affect athletes' satisfaction levels. However, a reason for the track and field coaches to focus on running an event smoothly rather than focusing on encouraging and leading athletes at the event can be explained by Chelladurai's (1984) findings. Specifically, Chelladurai (1984) found that social support from a coach/leader was unrelated to team satisfaction and team leadership in track and field while impacting the other sports in the study. Furthermore, positive feedback from coaches to athletes was unrelated to satisfaction and leadership in track and field while affecting the other sports in the study. My findings support past work such as Chelladurai (1984) and Henrickson-Parker's et al. (2012) studies.

These emergent themes add to the research on small group communication, sport communication, and gender communication. Specifically, coaches can take these findings to better understand how to communicate leadership on their sports team, as well as understand that leadership is communicated differently depending on the context. Track and field athletes can take these findings to better understand leadership expectations in practice and at meets. Furthermore, organizations can take these findings to better understand how leadership is communicated within the organization. Specifically, these

findings provide insight into how different departments have leadership within themselves rather than just one leader for the entire company.

The results of this study are beneficial to many areas of study. Researchers can apply this study to their fields of interest. For example, these emergent themes offer insight into the communicative characteristics of cohesion and leadership on a track and field team using observations and ethnographic interviews. Even though my study provides findings that add to the body of research in many areas, I, along with the study, experienced some limitations.

### **Limitations to the Study**

Due to both internal and external factors, this study has limitations. I was limited on the amount of time I could observe the athletes, the number of events offered during the indoor track and field season, the locations of the track and field meets, the seating location of my observations, the athlete only interviews, and the observational biases. In the following paragraphs, I explain the limitations I experienced due to the circumstances.

The track and field meets that I observed took place over the course of entire days or even two days in one case. Since two of my observational days were on Friday, I was unable to observe the beginning of the meets because of my teaching schedule. This limited my study by not allowing me to observe how athletes and coaches communicated before the entire track meet began. This time may have offered more insight into team prayer and motivational talk as Turman (2003) described as cohesion builders for teams. Furthermore, since track and field meets last most of the day, I experienced observational drift at some point during every day of observations. When I felt the observational drift, I

paused my work and regathered myself by walking around and grabbing food/drink to regain my focus. This limited my study by forcing me to miss some observational data. Even though my breaks cut into my observational time, I still observed twenty-four hours of track and field events. Not only was time a limitation in this study, my status as a graduate student limited my observations.

Since the indoor track and field season only from December to February, I was unable to observe more events. Even though I tried to select three different types of meets, this short time frame of the indoor season limited a more holistic study on the track and field team over a larger period of time with more meets. Furthermore, this short indoor season limited my ability to fully explore the changes in communicative characteristics of cohesion and leadership over the course of an entire season. Moreover, due to the limited time of the indoor track and field season, I was unable to interview a more expansive group of people. This study included interviews seven research participants, with only two of the research participants being male. Not only did I face a time frame limitation due to a short indoor track season, I also faced a locational limitation to my study.

For this study, the observations were completed at the team's "home" facility. I anticipated this being a minor limitation due to the comfortableness of competing in your home facility compared to competing in some other team's facility in another town. However, I did not anticipate the potential coaching leadership differences at a home meet vs an away meet. This limited my study because I only observed how coaches lead their teams at home meets where they have to plan and manage the meet itself rather than the athletes.

Another limitation I experienced while observing was my actual observational location. I was not granted access to the field where athletes, coaches, and trainers hung out before and after events. This limited my study to mostly observing nonverbal communication. While observing nonverbal communication, I was careful to not draw conclusions before interviewing athletes since I was unable to hear most of the conversations taking place. Even though I was granted access to interviews with athletes, I was not granted access interviews to coaches.

My answer to the research question on leadership was not as fully developed as it could have been if I were granted interviews with coaches. Although research participants, along with the observations of athletes, provided insight into the leadership of coaching on the team, I could have strengthened, or at least compared the coaches' perceived leadership to what the research participants said. Since the coaches never responded to my emails or my advisor's emails, this could have limited my study by creating biases before observing.

In any observational study, the chance of bias is present (Frey et al., 2000). As I attempted to contact potential gatekeepers to the team such as coaches, I did not only fail to gain access, I never received a response from them. This could have limited my research from the beginning if I allowed this lack of access cloud my observations. Being a former athlete who competed in many sports, along with my literature review on cohesion, leadership, and observational work, I could have created biases before my observations. To help ensure my observations did not experience bias, I used the T model of notetaking where I wrote down my observations, but also included an analysis section where I would label something I was unsure of with a question mark so I could ask

interviewees questions to provide clarity to my observations.

### **Implications for Future Research**

As I was observing the track meets and conducting ethnographic interviews, options for future research started to emerge. Certain themes, along with certain limitations, provided me with new ideas for future studies. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the three future areas of research that can be taken from my study.

An emergent theme was the gender differences in the communicative characteristics of cohesion. This future study would involve a similar observation, but the observer being intentional about observing communication characteristics of men and women, and examining how they compare and differ. Not only would I observe gender differences in communication amongst athletes, but also observe the gender differences in communication amongst coaches. Taking this approach would also allow the researcher to extensively study gender communication to support his/her findings.

Secondly, I envision a similar study to my observational study, but observing the team over the course of the entire season to provide a more holistic understanding to the nature and characteristics of communication on the track and field team. I would take a more general approach to this study and allow the observations on communication dictate where the study goes rather than focusing on aspects such as cohesion and leadership.

Lastly, future research could be completed beyond home meets, I would also advise the observer to observe away meets and conduct ethnographic interviews there as well. Furthermore, I would advise the observer to do the same at practices, and potentially interview coaches as well. This would also provide a more holistic understanding to the nature of communication on a track and field team. Specifically, I

would observe and conduct interviews about coaching leadership at both home and away meets. Since research participants talked about how coaches do not have much of an option to lead during home meets, I would like to understand how they lead at away meets, and if that coaching leadership is similar or different to how the research participants described home meets and practices.

This chapter provided a discussion on the summary of the findings from the observations and ethnographic interviews on the communicative characteristics of groupthink, cohesion, and leadership. The findings mostly support prior research on cohesion, leadership, and groupthink in sports. However, some emergent themes were unexpected and offered new insight. I also discussed the limitations of the study such as the limitation of time, location, access, and biases. Next, I offered implications of future research that focused on gender, time, and location for ethnographic work. This sport communication ethnography of a track and field team offered insights into the communication of cohesion and leadership between athletes and coaches. Although extensive research has been conducted in sports in regards to cohesion (Carron et al., 2002; Eys et al., 2015; Hardy et al., 2005; & Rovio et al., 2009) and leadership (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai & Arnott, 1985; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984; & Turman, 2001), this methodological approach to studying cohesion and leadership is unique to the field of sport communication. The emergent themes and analysis offer insight into the fields of gender communication, small group communication, and sport communication.

## REFERENCES

- 2018 women's track and field schedule. (2018). *South Dakota State University*. Retrieved from <https://gojacks.com/schedule.aspx?path=wtrack>
- Allan, H. T., Dixon, R., Lee, G., Savage, J., & Tapson, C. (2017). Governing body nurses' experiences of clinical commissioning groups: an observational study of two clinical commissioning groups in England. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 22*(3), 197-211. doi:10.1177/1744987117702694
- Anderson, J. A. (1987). *Communication research: Issues and methods*. New York: McGraw-Hill
- Babbie, E. R. (2012). *The practice of social research* (13<sup>th</sup> ed.). Belmont CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Bales, R. (1950). *Interaction process analysis; a method for the study of small groups*. Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Press.
- Bales, R. F., & Strodtbeck, F. L. (1951). Phases in group problem solving. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 46*, 485-495.
- Behan, M., & Wilson, M. (2008). State anxiety and visual attention: The role of the quiet eye period in aiming to a far target. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 26*(2), 207-215. doi:10.1080/02640410701446919
- Berg (2007). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Blanchard, K. (1985). Sports studies and the anthropology of sport. *American Sport Culture*, Lewisberg, PA: Bucknell University Press.
- Blanchard, K., Cheska, A. T. (1985). *The anthropology of sport: an introduction*. South

Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey.

Blommaert, J. & Kie, D. (2010). *Ethnographic fieldwork: A beginner's guide* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

Bristol, CT: Multilingual Matters.

Brawley, L. R., Carron, A. V., & Widmeyer, W. N. (1987). Assessing the cohesion of teams: Validity of the group environment questionnaire. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 9(3), 275-294. doi:0.1123/jsp.9.3.275

Callaway, M. R., & Esser, J. K. (1984). Groupthink: Effects of cohesiveness and problem-solving procedures on group decision making. *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal*, 12(2), 157-164.

Carron, A. V., & Chelladuari, P. (1981). The dynamics of group cohesion in sport. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 3(2), 123-139. doi:10.1123/jsp.3.2.123

Carron, A. V., Brawley, L. R., & Widmeyer, W. N. (1998). The measurement of cohesiveness in sport groups. In J. L. Duda (Ed.), *Advances in sport and exercise psychology measurement*, pp. 213-226. Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.

Carron, A. V., Colman, M. M., Wheeler, J., & Stevens, D. (2002). Cohesion and performance in sport: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 24(2), 168-188. doi:10.1123/jsep.24.2.168

Carron, A. V., & Spink, K. S. (1993). Team building in an exercise setting. *Sports Psychology*, 7, 8-18.

Carron, A. V., Widmeyer, W. N., & Brawley, L. R. (1985). The development of an instrument to assess cohesion in sport teams: The group environment questionnaire. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 7(3), 244-266.



Doi:10.1123/jsp.7.3.244

- Chelladurai, P. (1984). Discrepancy between preferences and perception of leadership behavior and satisfaction of athletes in varying sports. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 6(1), 27-41. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsp.6.1.27>
- Chelladurai, P., & Arnott, M. (1985). Decision styles in coaching: Preferences of basketball players. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 56, 15-24.
- Chelladurai, P., & Saleh, S. D. (1978). Preferred leadership in sports. *Canadian Journal of Applied Sport Science*, 3, 85-92.
- Chelladurai, P., & Saleh, S. D. (1980). Dimensions of leader behavior in sports: Development of a leadership scale. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 2, 34-45.
- Chelladurai, P., Imamura, H., Yamaguchi, Y., Oinuma, Y., & Miyauchi, T. (1988). Sport leadership in across-national setting: The case of Japanese and Canadian university athletes. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 10, 374-389. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.10.4.374>
- Chelladurai, P., Malloy, D., Imamura, H., & Yamaguchi, Y. (1987). A cross-cultural study of preferred leadership in sports. *Canadian Journal of Sport Sciences*, 12, 106-110.
- Cruz, A. B., & Kim, H.-D. (2017). Leadership preferences of adolescent players in sport: influence of coach gender. *Journal of Sports Science & Medicine*, 16(2), 172–179.
- De Garis, L. (1999). Experiments in pro wrestling: toward a performative and sensuous sport ethnography. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 16(1), 65-74.
- Dwyer, J. M., & Fisher, D. G. (1988). Leadership style of wrestling coaches. *Perceptual*

*and Motor Skills*, 67, 706.

- Dwyer, J. M., & Fisher, D. G. (1990). Wrestlers' perceptions of coaches' leadership as predictors of satisfaction with leadership. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 71, 511-517
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Eys, M., Evans, M. B., Martin, L. J., Ohlert, J., Wolf, S. A., Van Bussel, M., & Steins, C. (2015). Cohesion and performance for female and male sport teams. *The Sport psychologist*, 29(2), 97-109. doi:10.1123/tsp.2014-0027
- Festinger, L. (1956). *When prophecy fails*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Festinger, L., Riecken, H., Schachter, S. (1956). *When prophecy fails*. New York: Harper and Bros.
- Fielding, N. (1993). *Ethnography in*: Gilbert, N. Ed. *Researching social life*. London: Sage
- Firth, R. (1931). A dart match in Tikopia. *Oceania*, 1, 64-97.
- Fisher, A. (1970). Decision emergence: phases in group decision-making. *Speech Monographs*, 37(1), 53.
- Flowers, M. L. (1977). A laboratory test of some implications of Janis's groupthink hypothesis. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 35(12), 888-896.
- France, D. J., Leming-Lee, S., Jackson, T., Feistritz, N. R., & Higgins, M. S. (2008). Physician leadership: An observational analysis of surgical team compliance with perioperative safety practices after crew resource management training. *The American Journal of Surgery*, 195546-553. doi:10.1016/j.amjsurg.2007.04.012

- Fransen, K., Haslam, S. A., Steffens, N. K., Vanbeselaere, N., De Cuyper, B., & Boen, F. (2015). Believing in 'us': Exploring leaders' capacity to enhance team confidence and performance by building a sense of shared social identity. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 21(1), 89-100. doi:10.1037/xap0000033
- Frey, L. R., Botan, C. H., & Kreps, G. L. (2000). *Investigating communication: An introduction to research methods*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967) *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyler.
- Gold, R. (1958). Roles in sociological field observations. *Social Forces*, 36(3), 217-223.
- Gucciardi, D., Longbottom, J., Jackson, B., & Dimmock, J. (n.d). Experienced golfers' perspectives on choking under pressure. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 32(1), 61-83. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.32.1.61>
- Hall, J. A. (1998). How big are nonverbal sex differences? The case of smiling and sensitivity to nonverbal cues. In D. J. Canary & K. Dindia (1<sup>st</sup> Ed.) *Sex differences and similarities in communication* (155-178). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Harden, S. M., Estabrooks, P. A., Mama, S. K., & Lee, R. E. (2014). Longitudinal analysis of minority women's perceptions of cohesion: a role of cooperation, communication, and competition. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 11(57). doi:10.1186/1479-5868-11-57
- Hardy, J., Eys, M. A., & Carron, A. V. (2005). Exploring the potential disadvantages of high cohesion in sports teams. *Small Group Research*, 36(2), 166-187.

doi:10.1177/1046496404266715

Hart, P. (1991). Irving L. Janis' victims of groupthink. *Political Psychology*, 12(2), 247-278. doi:10.2307/3791464

Henrickson-Parker, S., Yule, S., Flin, R., & McKinley, A. (2011). Towards a model of surgeons' leadership in the operating room. *BMJ Quality & Safety*, 20(7), 570-579. doi:10.1136/bmjqs.2010.040295

Henrickson-Parker, S., Yule, S., Flin, R., & Mckinley, A. (2012). Surgeons' leadership in the operating room: an observational study. *The American Journal of Surgery*, 204(3), 347-354. doi:10.1016/j.amjsurg.2011.03.009

Hensley, T., & Griffin, G. (1986). Victims of groupthink: The Kent State University board of trustees and the 1977 gymnasium controversy. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 30(3), 497-531. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/173966>

Hertenstein, M., & Keltner, D. (2011). Gender and the communication of emotion via touch. *Sex Roles*, 64(1-2), 70-80. doi:10.1007/s11199-010-9842-y

High school sports participation increases for 27th consecutive year. (2016). *National Federation of State High School Associations*. Retrieved from <http://www.nfhs.org/articles/high-school-sports-participation-increases-for-27th-consecutive-year/>

History of sports. (2018). *Topend Sports Network*. Retrieved from <https://www.topendsports.com/resources/history.htm>

Horne, T., & Carron, A. V. (1985). Compatibility in coach-athlete relationships. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 7, 137-149. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsp.7.2.137>

Janis, I. L. (1972). *Victims of groupthink; a psychological study of foreign-policy*

*decisions and fiascoes*. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin.

- Johnson, H., LaVoie, J., Spenceri, M., & Mahoney-Wernli, M. (2001). Peer conflict avoidance: associations with loneliness, social anxiety, and social avoidance. *Psychological Reports*, 88(1), 227-235.
- Karreman, E., Dorsch, K., & Riemer, H. (2009). Athlete Satisfaction and Leadership: Assessing Group-Level Effects. *Small Group Research*, 40(6), 720-737.  
doi:10.1177/1046496409346450
- Katsumi, Y., Dolcos, S., Kim, S., Sung, K., & Dolcos, F. (2017). When nonverbal greetings 'Make It or Break It': the role of ethnicity and gender in the effect of handshake on social appraisals. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 41(4), 345-365.  
doi:10.1007/s10919-017-0257-0
- Katz, N., & Koenig, G. (2001). Sports teams as a model for workplace teams: Lessons and liabilities [and executive commentary]. *The Academy of Management Executive (1993-2005)*, (3), 56-59.
- Kolbe, M., Burtscher, M. J., Wacker, J., Grande, B., Nohynkova, R., Manser, T., & ... Grote, G. (2012). Speaking up is related to better team performance in simulated anesthesia inductions: an observational study. *Anesthesia and Analgesia*, 115(5), 1099-1108. doi:10.1213/ANE.0b013e318269cd32
- Kowert, P. (2002). *Groupthink or deadlock: When do leaders learn from their advisors?* (SUNY series in the presidency). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Lesser, A. (1933). The Pawnees ghost dance hand game: a study of cultural change. *Columbia University Contribution to Anthropology*. 16 New York: Columbia

University Press.

- Lewin, K. (1947). Frontiers in group dynamics: concept, method and reality in social science; social equilibria and social change. *Human Relations*, 1(1), 5-41.
- Macleod, L. (2011). Avoiding "groupthink" A manager's challenge. *Nursing Management (Springhouse)*, 42(10), 44-48.
- Malinowski, B. (1922). *Argonauts of the western Pacific; an account of native enterprise and adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. United Kingdom: Dutton.
- Malinowski, B. (1922). *Argonauts of the western Pacific: An account of native enterprise and adventure in the archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. Dutton.
- Matheson, H., & Mathes, S. (1997). The effect of winning and losing on female interactive and coactive team cohesion. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 20(3), 284.
- Mayo, E. (1933). *The human problems of an industrial civilization* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: The Macmillan Company.
- McKay, J., Selig, S., Carlson, J., & Morris, T. (1998). Par under pressure. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 20(2), 229.
- Miller, T. (1997). The oblivion of the sociology of sport. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 21(2), 115-119.
- Moorhead, G., & Montanan, J. R. (1986). An empirical investigation of the groupthink phenomenon. *Human Relations*, 39(5), 399-411.  
doi:10.1177/001872678603900502
- Moorhead, G., Ference, R., & Neck, C. P. (1991). Group decision fiascoes continue: Space Shuttle Challenger and a revised groupthink framework. *Human Relations*,

44(6), 539-550. doi:10.1177/001872679104400601

- Munroe, K., Estabrooks, P., Dennis, P., & Carron, A. (1999). A phenomenological analysis of group norms in sport teams. *Sport Psychologist, 13*(2), 171-183. doi:10.1123/tsp.13.2.171
- Murray, N. P., & Janelle, C. M. (2003). Anxiety and performance: A visual search examination of the processing efficiency theory. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 25*(2), 171-187. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.25.2.171>
- Neck, C. P. & Moorhead, G. (1995) The importance of leadership, time pressure, and methodical decision-making procedures. *Human Relations, 48*(5), 537-557. doi:10.1177/001872679504800505
- Nieuwenhuys, A., Pijpers, J. R., Oudejans, R. D., & Bakker, F. C. (2008). The influence of anxiety on visual attention in climbing. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 30*(2), 171-185. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.30.2.171>
- Oudejans, R. D., Kuijpers, W., Kooijman, C. C., & Bakker, F. C. (2011). Thoughts and attention of athletes under pressure: skill-focus or performance worries?. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping, 24*(1), 59-73. doi:10.1080/10615806.2010.481331
- Paskevich, D., Estabrooks, P., Brawley, L., & Carron, A. (2001). Group cohesion in sport and exercise. *Handbook of sport psychology, 2*, 472-494. New York: John Wiley.
- Pedersen, P. M., Laucella, P. C., Kian, E. M., Geurin, A. N. (2017). *Strategic sport communication*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Pescosolido, A. T., & Saavedra, R. (2012). Cohesion and sports teams: A review. *Small Group Research, 43*(6), 744-758. doi:10.1177/1046496412465020
- Pijpers, J. R., Oudejans, R. D., Bakker, F. C., & Beek, P. J. (2006). The role of anxiety in

perceiving and realizing affordances. *Ecological Psychology*, 18(3), 131-161.  
doi:10.1207/s15326969eco1803\_1

Poole, M., & Roth, J. (1989). Decision development in small groups IV: a typology of group decision paths. *Human Communication Research*, 15(3), 323. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2958.1989.tb00188.x

Porter, J., Wu, W., Partridge, J. (2010). Focus of attention and verbal instructions: strategies of elite track and field coaches and athletes. *Sport Science Review*, 19(3-4), 77-89. doi:10.2478/v10237-011-0018-7

Powdermaker, H. (1967). *Stranger and friend: the way of an anthropologist*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Prapavessis, H., & Carron, A. V. (1997). Cohesion and work output. *Small Group Research*, 28(2), 294-302.

Raes, A. L., Glunk, U., Heijltjes, M. G., & Roe, R. A. (2007). Top management team and middle managers. *Small Group Research*, 38(3), 360-386.

Rohland, L. (2016). Track and field. *Salem Press Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from: <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/>

Rovio, E., Eskola, J., Kozub, S. A., Duda, J. L., & Lintunen, T. (2009). Can high group cohesion be harmful? A case study of a junior ice-hockey team. *Small Group Research*, 40(4), 421-435. doi:10.1177/1046496409334359

Sakran, J. V., Finneman, B., Maxwell, C., Sonnad, S. S., Sarani, B., Pascual, J., & ... Sims, C. (2012). Original report: Trauma leadership: does perception drive reality?. *Journal of Surgical Education*, 69236-240.  
doi:10.1016/j.jsurg.2011.09.004



- Sands, R. (2002). *Sport ethnography*. Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics.
- Saville-Troike, M. (2003). *The ethnography of communication: an introduction* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Serpa, S., Pataco, V., & Santos, F. (1991). Leadership patterns in handball international competition. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 22, 78-89.
- Sherman C., Fuller R., Speed H. (2000). Gender comparisons of preferred coaching behaviors in Australian sports. *Journal of Sport Behavior* 23, 389-406.
- Sibilio, M., Raiola, G., Carlomagno, N., Galdieri, M., & D'Elia, F. (2009). Behaviour and motion analysis of bodily communication in volleyball. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 27, S26.
- Silva, J. M., III (1983). The perceived legitimacy of rule violating behavior in sport. *Journal of Sports Psychology*, 5(4), 438-448. doi:10.1123/jsp.5.4.438
- Simone, J. V. MD (2008). Groupthink. *Oncology Times*, 30(23), 4. doi:10.1097/01.COT.0000342986.94112.c8
- Sims, J. P., & Manz, C. C. (1984). Observing leader-verbal behavior: toward reciprocal determinism in leadership theory. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 69(2), 222-232.
- Smith, S. (1985). Groupthink and the hostage rescue mission. *British Journal of Political Science*, 15(1), 117-123. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/193750>
- Spradley, J. P. (1970). *You owe yourself a drunk: an ethnography of Urban Nomads*. Boston, MA: Little Brown Boston.
- Street, M. (1997). Groupthink. *Small Group Research*, 28(1), 72-93.
- Sunstein, B. S., Chiseri-Strater, E. (2012). *Fieldworking: reading and writing research*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford/ St. Martin's.

- Tannenbaum, R., Weschler, I. R., & Massarik, F. (1961). *Leadership and organization*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Terry, P. C. (1984). The coaching preferences of elite athletes competing at Universiade '83 [Abstract]. *The Canadian Journal of Applied Sport Sciences*, 9, 201-208.
- Terry, P. C. & Howe, B. L. (1984). Coaching preferences of athletes. *Canadian Journal of Applied Sport Science*, 9 (4), 188-193.
- Thompson, L. L. (2012). *Making the team: A guide for managers*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Turman, P. D. (2001). Situational Coaching Styles: The Impact of Success and Athlete Maturity Level on Coaches' Leadership Styles Over Time. *Small Group Research*, 32(5), 576-594. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104649640103200504>
- Turman, P. D. (2003) Coaches and cohesion: the impact of coaching techniques on team cohesion in the small group sport setting. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 26(1), 86-104. Retrieved from:  
<http://www1.udel.edu/ICECP/resources/coachingstyles/Coaching%20and%20Cohesion>
- Turman, P. D., & Schrodt, P. (2004). New avenues for instructional communication research: relationships among coaches' leadership behaviors and athletes' affective learning. *Communication Research Reports*, 21(2), 130. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.ebscohost.com>
- Taylor, E. (1896). *On American lot-games: As evidence of Asiatic intercourse before the time of Columbus*. E.J. Brill.
- Vickers, J. N., & Williams, A. M. (2007). *Performing Under Pressure: The effects of*

- physiological arousal, cognitive anxiety, and gaze control in Biathlon. *Journal of Motor Behavior*, 39(5), 381-394.
- Weinberg, S. B., & Rovinski, S. H. (1979). A longitudinal field study of leadership development. *Journal of Applied Communications Research*, 7(2), 125-133.
- Widmeyer, N. W., & Williams, J. M. (1991). Predicting cohesion in a coaching sport. *Small Group Research*, 22(4), 548-569.
- Wilkum, K., & MacGeorge, E. L. (2010). Does God matter? Religious content and the valuation of comforting messages in the context of bereavement. *Communication Research*, 37(5), 723-745. DOI: 10.1177/0093650209356438
- Williams, J., & Widmeyer, W. N. (1990, September). *The cohesion-performance outcome relationship in a coaching sport*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology, San Antonio, TX.
- Wolf, S., Eys, M., Sadler, P., & Kleinert, J. (2015). Appraisal in a team context: perceptions of cohesion predict competition importance and prospects for coping. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 37(5), 489-499.  
<https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.2014-0276>
- Wright, P. H. (1998). Toward an expanded orientation to the study of sex differences in friendship. In D. J. Canary & K. Dindia (1<sup>st</sup> Ed.) *Sex differences and similarities in communication* (41-64). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Yukl, G. (2006). *Leadership in organizations*. (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## T-Model of Note Taking

- 
1. Write out my initial observations of athletes, coaches, and their communicative acts with each other. Also, note the surroundings of the observation.

1. Write out my analysis of my observations. Also, include the feelings I have during the observations. Also, include any questions for the ethnographic interviews at the end of the track meet.

This model was adapted from Blommaert and Jie (2010) and Emerson et al. (1995).

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Guide

#### **Questions for Participants**

1. How would you describe your team's cohesion at the track meet? (I will provide definition I use for my thesis for cohesion)
2. How does this track meet compare to other track meets you have competed in?
3. How would you describe your stress at this track meet compared to other events and/or practice?
4. Describe your coaches' leadership at this event. (I will provide definition if asked)

After these initial questions, I asked different questions to different research participants depending on responses.

#### **Definitions for Research Participants**

Cohesion Definition used in thesis: "A dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs" (Carron et al., 1998, p. 213).

Leadership definitions used in thesis: 1. "Interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals" (Tannenbaum et al., 1961, p. 24). 2. "The process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (Yukl, 2006, p. 8).