

The development and evaluation of a cohesion-building programme for a South African male collegiate basketball team

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Master of Social Sciences in Psychology
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by

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Coming together is a beginning.

Keeping together is progress.

Working together is success.

~Henry Ford

Abstract

There is a general consensus among sport coaches and practitioners that it is better to work with a cohesive team. Research on cohesion has provided positive links between cohesion and performance as well as the overall well-being of the team and its members. The purpose of this study is to develop and evaluate a cohesion-building programme under an Action Research paradigm. The Group Environment Questionnaire, in parallel with focus group discussions were used to assist in the development and evaluation of a cohesion-building programme tailored to the specific needs of the Rhodes University men's basketball 1st team. The team is known to be a good team but it was missing something that made it become great. Fostering higher cohesiveness was deemed to be the missing link to the chain of success. Various changes were brought to the 1) team structure, 2) team processes, 3) team environment to enhance the team's cohesiveness levels. It was found that the programme was positive and powerful in that it accelerated the process of cohesion building within the team. It was also found that the programme had the power to transcend demographical barriers and unite people from diverse backgrounds. Finally, the programme increased the team's performance level and enabled it to achieve objectives that were never achieved by any other men's basketball team at Rhodes University before.

Naturally there are going to be some ups and downs, especially if you have individuals trying to achieve at a high level. But when we stepped in between the lines, we knew what we were capable of doing. When a pressure situation presented itself, we were plugged into one another like a cohesive unit. That's why we were able to come back so often and win so many close games. And that's why we were able to beat more talented team.

- Michael Jordan (former Chicago Bulls; NBA Hall of Famer)

Special thanks to:

My supervisor, Mr. Gary Steele
The Rhodes Stallions, Rhodes University men's basketball 1st team
My family and friends

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work connected to this thesis was exclusively carried out by myself, under the supervision and guidance of Mr Gary Steele, and that the whole thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary, is my own work.

This thesis has never been submitted for a degree at any other university.

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Chapter 1: Literature review

1.1 Introduction

For many theorists, sport psychology is a branch of applied psychology which involves the application of the principles and findings of psychology to sport settings (Cox, 2007). In fact, as Morris and Summers (2004) put it, given the universal interest in play and games, which has been rapidly translated into the world of sport over the last century, it is hardly surprising that sport has come to play a major role in economic and political realms, or that it attracted the interest of academic scholars. Such interest initially focused exclusively on the biological, then mechanical and motor aspect of sport. But after observing elite athletes who were in perfect physical condition fail in the last moments of their competitive efforts, scholars started to focus on the application of psychological principles to sport, and thus to establish sport psychology (Morris & Summers, 2004).

The relationship between sport and psychology can be traced as far back as Triplett's (1897) study of coaction effects of racing cyclists, which has been acknowledged as the first social psychological experiment (Williams, 2001). Over the past forty years, the specialist area of sport psychology has developed from its hesitant beginnings to become a confident, mature discipline (Morris & Summers, 2004). The discipline is now supported by a very large body of texts, international journals as well as national and international associations. It was the foundation of the International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP) in 1965 that represented the formal arrival of sport psychology as a discipline (Morris, Lidor, & Hackfort, 2003). Before the Second World

Congress of Sport Psychology that was held in the United States of America in 1968, Americans established their national sport psychology organization, the North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity (NASPSPA) in 1967 (Morris et al., 2003). The French and other Europeans, especially psychologists from the former Soviet Union, East Germany, and other countries in the Communist world who were not allowed to attend world congresses by their governments, formed their own body, the European Federation of Sport Psychology (FEPSAC) in 1968 (Morris et al., 2003). But with time, differences between the ISSP and FEPSAC were resolved and the ISSP president Miroslav Vanek declared that the FEPSAC was to be for Europe what the ISSP was for the world. Since then, the ISSP has fostered the development of regional bodies that can focus more on the development of sport psychology in their own geographical areas (Morris & Summers, 2004). Moreover, the ISSP published the first academic journal focusing on sport psychology, the International Journal of Sport Psychology (ISJP) in 1970. Morris (1995) reported that sport psychology in Australia took a massive leap forward in 1991 with the formation of the College of Sport Psychologists (CoSP), a professional body within the Australian Psychological Society (APS). This led to the recognition of sport psychology as a one of the professional areas of psychological practices, thus developing programmes for aspiring professionals in sport psychology.

Japan has been involved in the ISSP from its commencement (Morris et al., 2003), in fact, the Japanese Society of Sport Psychology (JSSP) is the largest and longest established in the Asian region. The Asian regional body is rapidly developing, in fact, in its beginning, there were only a few member countries, including Japan, Korea, India, China, and Australia (Lidor, Morris, Bardaxoglou & Becker, 2001). Today, its membership counts up to fifteen countries and is

perhaps the region of the world where most rapid developments are to be observed over the next few years (Lidor et al., 2001). South America shows perhaps the most perplexing pattern of development in sport psychology, in fact, despite not having any formal association, there are a few individuals who regularly attend the ISSP congresses (Lidor et al., 2001). For that reason, the development of the discipline in South America seems to lie in the involvement of certain individuals. Africa shows a different pattern. Very little organised activity was evident until quite recently (Morris & Summers, 2004). Having received financial support from the ISSP, the African Sport Psychology Association has been formed, and membership includes sport psychologists from countries such as Nigeria, Morocco, Egypt and South Africa (Lidor et al., 2001). However, recent evidence has shown that the African Sport Psychology Association tapered off around 2002 and at this point there does not appear to be any activity in terms of a formal African sport psychology association. The expansion of sport psychology in Africa and South America is still awaited.

The worldwide interest in and rapid development of sport psychology is due to the fact that sport, in its many forms, is one of the most omnipresent institutions in the world. Sports are enjoyed by children, adults and older people, by males and females, by the able-bodied and people with disabilities, and participation in some form of sport at an appropriate level is denied but to a few (Morris & Summers, 2004). Another fact is that human beings are intrinsically social, cultural and political creatures whose actions are also deeply shaped by the historical events (Foster, 2003). Arising from the two facts mentioned above, it is comprehensible why people often come together as groups and put their physical effort and skills to play a given sport. Basketball is an instance of sport where people unite in groups and compete against other

groups according to widely agreed rules in order to achieve some common objectives. In a sport like basketball, it is important to have the adequate physical training and skills so as to perform at the best possible level. But to have a physical and psychological competitive advantage as a group and be successful at reaching the common goal, there are various issues that the group as a whole must face. Various group dynamics shape the nature of the relationships that exists within a given group, as well as the level of success that the group will experience (Sugarman, 1999). One of the most important group dynamics is undoubtedly cohesion, historically, cohesion has indeed been identified as the most important small-group variable (Golembiewski, 1962; Lott & Lott, 1965). Sugarman (1999) further argued that it is the most powerful group dynamic in the sporting world. Hence, one can assert that any team, regardless of their current level of cohesion (high or low) would strongly benefit from developing higher levels of cohesiveness. Research on cohesion has been extensive in North America and to some extent Europe, but still relatively small in the other parts of the world (Hanton & Mellalieu, 2006).

1.2 Groups

Groups have been, and always will be, essential to human life (Forsyth, 1999). Of the billions of people populating the world, all but an occasional recluse or exile belong to a group. Groups are omnipresent in human life: they are audiences, boards of directors, committees, families, gangs, orchestras, and/or teams (Forsyth, 1999). A group is defined as a unique collection of two or more individuals who have relationships to one another that make them interdependent to some significant degree (Cartwright & Zander, 1968). Tuckman (1965) argued that groups do not begin to exist over night, but they slowly evolve and go through a four stages development

process, namely, forming, storming, norming, and performing. Sugarman (1999) provides useful sport-related explanations to Tuckman's (1965) model of group formation. During the forming stage, the members are getting acquainted, and they experience resistance as members test boundaries and learn about the group's structure (Sugarman, 1999). The storming stage is the transition stage, during which members decide they want to become part of the group, and the structure begins to be resisted or challenged because each member is learning to work with differences (Sugarman, 1999). The third stage is norming, this is where cohesion begins to develop, norms are formed and trust increases. Social norms are being established and they will serve to regulate all group members' behaviours (Sugarman, 1999). A team is formed, its members are in place, a trusting environment is established, and cooperative behaviours are encouraged in an effort to attain team success. The group attains the performing stage, and the group's structure, purpose, and roles all come together so they can function as one (Sugarman, 1999). At this stage, the group has become a cohesive unit which is able to perform and achieve great things. However, according to Carron (1982), in comparison with other types of formal organization, sport teams are one of the most stable types of groups. This is due to generally higher levels of shared sense of purpose, structured patterns of interactions, interpersonal attraction, personal interdependence, and a collective identity in sport teams (Carron & Dennis, 2001). Development issues only rise during replacement processes, when new members need to be assimilated within the group so the latter can return to its productive state (Carron, 1982). In fact, Carron's (1982) findings stated that cohesiveness and effectiveness are related to member replacement rates in that teams that experience large turnovers will be less successful than teams with smaller turnovers.

According to Lewin (1951), groups tend to be powerful rather than weak, active rather than passive, fluid rather than static, and catalysing rather than reifying. Lewin used the term group dynamics to stress the powerful impact of these complex social processes on group members. Moreover, group dynamics is an attempt to subject the many aspects of groups to scientific analysis through the construction of theories and the rigorous testing of these theories through empirical research (Forsyth, 1999). But the term group dynamics refers to more than just a scientific field, it is also about the group processes. Theorists suggest that groups are greater than the sum of their parts, for groups often possess characteristics that cannot be deduced from the individual member's characteristics (Lewin, 1951). Moreover, group dynamics theories (Lewin, 1951; Tuckman, 1965) advance that groups are living systems. As previously demonstrated by Tuckman's (1965) theory of group development most groups move through four specific stages in their development process. Groups are also seen as real by perceivers (Forsyth, 1999). The basic principle here is that if people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences (Campbell, 1958a). This is linked to Campbell's (1958a) notion of entitativity, which refers to the extent to which something seems to be a unified entity, and according to Campbell, it is entitativity that helps people to intuitively determine which aggregations of individuals are groups and which ones are not. The last major feature of group dynamics theories is that groups influence individuals (Forsyth, 1999). Groups alter member's attitudes, values, and perceptions and in some cases cause radical alterations in personality and actions. Allport (1962) made early observations about individuals' behaviours in groups, and stated that people act differently when in groups. Allport's (1962) observations were later supported by Franzoi (2006), when the author argued that because it is in the nature of groups to develop characteristics of their own, a member of a given group tends to alter his or her personal characteristics to adhere and adapt to the

group's characteristics. Moreover, the type of group an individual belongs to may have effects on that individual's behavioural profile (Forsyth, 1999).

Groups never come into being without a purpose, people join together in all walks of life to accomplish a common goal knowing that together they can make great things come true (Sugarman, 1999). Carron and Dennis (2001) stated that groups are always dynamic, not static, in a sense that they always change in order to adapt to various internal and external demands. Group success thus rests upon the collective achievement of a collection of individuals working as one to achieve a specific goal or objective (Sugarman, 1999). The major characteristics common to most groups are interaction, structure, social identity, goals, and cohesiveness (Forsyth, 1999). Group membership generally implies some form of interaction among the members in that they do things to and with each other. Generally, the interaction revolves around the group's tasks and social activities (Sugarman, 1999). The structure of a group has to do with the norms and roles that the group members hold (Forsyth, 1999). Such roles and norms are essential to coordinate and organize the interactions within the group; therefore, it is vital for groups to ensure roles are clearly assigned and that norms are clearly stipulated and accepted (Forsyth, 1999). Roles are the behaviours expected of people in specific positions within a group whereas norms are the implicit standards that describe what behaviours should and should not be performed in a given context (Morris & Summers, 2004). Social identity is that part of the self-concept that derives from one's membership in social groups and categories, in other words, they are self-conceptions shared by members of the same group or category (Sugarman, 1999). As mentioned above, groups usually exist for a reason (Sugarman, 1999). Group members unite in their pursuit of a common goal, and because it is easier to achieve goals in well coordinated

groups, much of the nowadays jobs are performed in groups rather than individually (Forsyth, 1999). Goal-setting issues relevant to this study will be discussed in more depth in the following chapters. The final major characteristic of groups is group cohesion, and this concept will be discussed in great depth throughout this research paper.

A major characteristic of a group that has reached its peak development state is strong cohesiveness within the sport team (Sugarman, 1999). As Carron and Chelladurai (1981) stated, an elemental and critical characteristic of the group which distinguishes it from being simply a casual collection of individuals is the degree of attraction, commitment and/or involvement of the individual members to the collective whole. Carron (1982) further argued that one perspective of group functioning has posited cohesion as being central to group success.

Sport teams are perhaps one of the types of groups that need the highest level of cohesiveness so as to function and perform successfully (Sugarman, 1999). Sugarman (1999) further suggested that a sport team is a social system, which implies that psychosocial issues often play important roles in the shaping of the relationship between individual players and the team as a whole. It is therefore important to continually consider issues relating to socio-psychological matters when studying group dynamics such as cohesion. In their studies of cohesion, Carron, Brawley, and Widmeyer (1998) found that levels of cohesion within sport teams are affected by the individual's satisfaction levels paired with their perceptions of the team's structure. In other words, cohesion can be comprehended in terms of individual attitudes, feelings, and thoughts as well as the effects of the team's structure on individuals. Foster (2003) argues that all psychology is social, simply because human beings only become fully human through interactions with

others. But despite the claims that human beings are intrinsically social beings, theorists have separated two major realms within social psychology, namely, the individual on the one hand, and the social system on the other (Foster, 2003). This demarcation made between individual and social systems often leads to some uncertainty in that it becomes difficult to determine the causal nature of the relationship between the two realms. It also poses a problem when inquiring about social change issues (Foster, 2003), as it becomes complex to determine how people change their beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, and/or prejudices. It becomes unclear as to whether the change needs to be triggered in the individual or in the social system. Social psychology is the discipline that is concerned with the nature of the relationship between human beings and their social environment (Foster, 2003). Foster describes social psychology as the scientific field that studies the manner in which the behaviour, feelings, or thoughts of one individual are influenced and determined by the behaviour and/or characteristics of others.

Social identity theory is often used by researchers to elucidate the psycho-social inquiries within groups (Burr, 2002). Social identity theory has spread over the past twenty years to provide an understanding of various phenomena, such as social influence, conformity, or group dynamics (Foster, 2003). The basic principles and processes of social identity theory can be presented in terms of three 'individual' components, three 'social' components, and a further central assumption (Tafjel, 1981). The individual components are categorisation, social comparison, and self-concept. Categorisation involves the evaluative and emotional system of information processing. It has to do with the way individuals perceive similarities within a given group and the differences between groups, and it is worthy to note that such perceptions are often exaggerated (Tafjel, 1981). As the words suggest, social comparison is concerned with the way people compare themselves with other individuals. It is an interpersonal as well as intergroup

level of analysis and comparison. The outcome of such comparative processes is an evaluation of the self and/or the group of which a person is a member (Tafjel, 1981). The last individual component, self-concept, suggests that the self is regarded as the sum of two sub-systems, namely personal identity and social identity. Personal identity refers to the unique facets of a person; they may include likes and dislikes, and personality traits. Social identity refers to the social aspects of the self as a member of various groups such as being a woman, a gay male, or a graduate student. It is important to note that the social is regarded as an element of the self and not external to the self-contained individual (Foster, 2003). Tafjel (1981) suggested that personal and social identities are end-points of a continuum on which the self shifts along according to various social situations. The social components are status hierarchies, permeability of group boundaries, and legitimacy of group status hierarchies (Tafjel, 1981). All societies are characterised by various groups that are arranged in hierarchies according to status, granting more privileges, power, importance, and wealth to some groups rather than others (Foster, 2003). Social identities are drawn from the groups to which a person belongs (Tafjel, 1981). The permeability of group boundaries involves a social process known as social mobility, and it has to do with the ability of people to shift across the boundaries that demarcate categories (Tafjel, 1981). Legitimacy refers to perceptions of the current status hierarchy system as fair, reasonable, and just, or their opposites (Foster, 2003). Finally, the central assumption that ties together the individual and the social components of the social identity theory is that individuals are motivated to strive for a positive self-concept, especially a positive sense of social identity (Tafjel, 1981). This means that the social identity theory predicts that people are likely to adopt an individualistic strategy to achieve a more positive sense of social identity. It also suggests that people seek to enhance their self-esteem by identifying with specific social groups and

perceiving these groups as being better than other groups (Franzoi, 2006). In a situation where a given social system (e.g., sport team) attempts to bring change to its status, like cohesion level for instance, social identity theory suggests that groups are expected to adopt social change strategies to reach their desired state (Foster, 2003). Foster defined social change as the collective efforts of a group to change the existing social system. However, the author also argued that the nature of the social change is contingent with the specific nature of the desired change as well as the nature of the environment surrounding the group. For that reason, to bring change to or measure a sport team's cohesiveness levels, it would therefore be necessary to account for the relevant factors that may affect the process of bringing change to a group's cohesiveness. These factors will be discussed in greater depth later. And given its importance for groups, it is not surprising that numerous definitions of cohesion have been advanced over the last five decades.

1.3 Defining cohesion

One of the earliest definitions of cohesion was advanced by Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) when they defined cohesion as the total field of forces that act on members to stay in the group. The authors also suggested that two factors contribute to cohesion: the attractiveness to the group and the ability of the group to assist individual members achieve their goals. However, later that same year, Festinger (1950, p.274) proposed another definition of cohesion as the "resultant of all the forces acting on members to remain in the group". The difference between the Festinger et al. (1950) and the Festinger (1950) definitions was examined by Mudrack (1989) and the author advanced that in the Festinger et al. (1950) definition, the "total field of forces"

required researchers to identify and measure all “forces” that may influence a member to stay or leave a group. On the other hand, Festinger’s (1950) definition, “resultant of all the forces” implied that only those “forces” relevant to the group required attention from the researcher (Mudrack, 1989). However, it seems that despite the changes made by Festinger (1950), the need to identify either “all forces” or “relevant forces” remained a dreadful task due to the vagueness of the concept “forces”. Carron (1982) commented on this flaw of Festinger et al.’s (1950) and Festinger’s (1950) definition by saying that the word “forces” is so all-encompassing that for practical purposes it has no utility. For that reason, Gross and Martin (1952) advanced their definition of cohesion and referred to it as the “resistance of a group to disruptive forces”. The authors argued that their definition was more accurate than Festinger’s (1950) in that it addressed the construct from the perspective of what keeps groups together, claiming that in a crisis, it is the bonds among its members that would determine whether or not a group will stay united (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). Loughead and Hardy (2006) then argued that despite the numerous definitions (Festinger, 1950; Festinger et al., 1950, Gross & Martin, 1952) there were difficulties in the operationalization of the construct. Cota, Evans, Dion, Kilik, and Longman (1995) also indicated that it was difficult to operationalize the concept “forces”. In addition, Brawley, Carron, and Widmeyer (1988) stated that in Gross and Martin’s (1952) definition of cohesion, there were some important ethical issues that prevented researchers from exposing groups to disruptive events or external threats. In the 1950s, as a response to such inadequacies of previous definitions of cohesion and the difficulties to operationalize the construct, Libo (1953) measured cohesion in terms of the attraction of the group to its members. Libo’s (1953) attempts did address the ethical issues of the definition Gross and Martin (1952), but nonetheless, it was noted that unidimensional models of cohesion such as the ones provided by Festinger (1950), Festinger

et al. (1950), and Gross and Martin (1952) are problematic since they have limited generalizability to other types of groups (Cota et al., 1995). Therefore, as Loughead and Hardy (2006) stated, it was necessary to obtain a conceptualization and definition that reflected the multidimensional nature of cohesion. Carron (1982, p.124) laid the groundwork by providing a multidimensional definition of cohesion, defining cohesion as “a dynamic process which is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its goals and objectives”. But it was only two decades later that Carron, Brawley, and Widmeyer (1998, p.213) provided what is now considered as the most accurate multidimensional definition of cohesion, by defined it 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 the member affective needs”. The definition provided by Carron et al. (1998) differs from Carron’s (1982) in that it includes member’s affective needs (Loughead & Hardy, 2006).

1.4 Conceptual framework for the study and measurement of cohesion

In order to provide a sound understanding of cohesion, Carron, Widmeyer, and Brawley (1985) advocated that it was necessary to go to the root of the problem, which was the lack of clear conceptualization of cohesion. This led Carron et al. (1985) towards the development of a conceptual framework (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). And considering the fact that cohesion is a group property, it was necessary to have the framework grounded in group dynamics theory. Thus, Carron et al.’s (1985) framework was based on three major assumptions of group dynamics theory. The first assumption was based on research from social cognition theory suggesting that cohesion can be evaluated through perceptions of individual group members

(Carron et al., 1998). The second assumption derived from group dynamics theory is that the group needs to be distinguished from the individual (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). As a result, Carron et al.'s (1985) framework assumed that each group member held cognitions about the cohesiveness of the group which were related to the group as a totality and the degree to which the group satisfied personal needs and objectives. The third assumption based on group dynamics literature differentiated between task-oriented and social-oriented concerns of the group and its members (Cota et al., 1995). Thus, Carron et al. (1985) included task and social features in their conceptualization of cohesion. The task orientation represented the general orientation or motivation towards achieving the group's goals (Carron et al., 1998), whereas the social orientation represented the general orientation or motivation towards maintaining and developing social relationships within the group (Carron et al., 1985). The four dimension (individual/group and task/social) conceptual framework (see Figure 1) depicts the assumptions mentioned above.

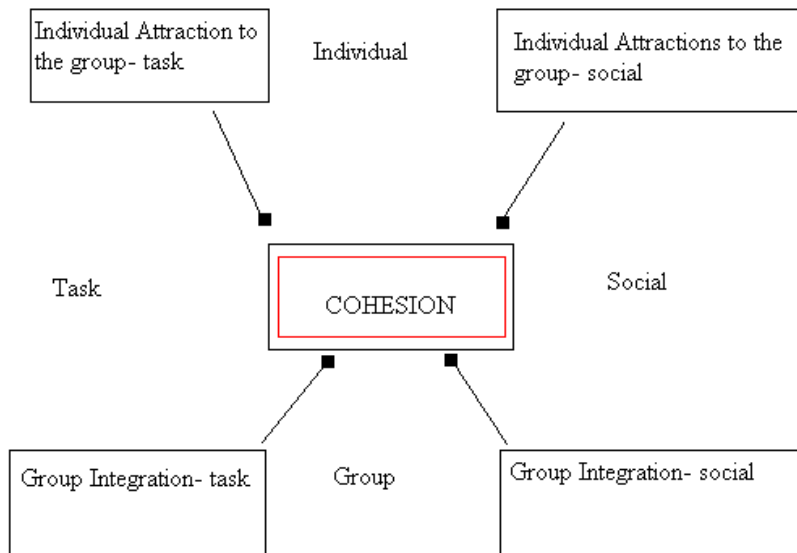


Figure 1. A conceptual framework for the study and measurement of cohesion in sport.

Carron et al. (1998) advanced definitions for each of the four dimensions depicted in figure 1. Individual Attraction to the Group-task (ATG-T) is viewed as the attractiveness of the group's task, productivity, and goals for the individual personally. Individual Attraction to the Group-social (ATG-S) is defined as the attractiveness of the group as a social unit and social interaction and friendship opportunities available for the individual personally. Group Integration-task (GI-T) is the individual's perceptions of task unity within the group as a whole. Finally, group integration-social (GI-S) is the individual's perceptions of the social unity within the group as a whole.

1.5 Characteristics of cohesion

Sugarman (1999) advanced that a cohesive team is characterized by well-defined roles and group norms, common goals, a positive team identity, a good working relationship, shared responsibility, respect, positive energy, trust, a willingness to cooperate, pride in membership, and synergy. Syer and Connolly (1984) defined synergy as the energy of the perfectly functioning unit and this energy is greater than the sum of the team's individual energies. This is often translated in reality by the frequency of the use of the term "we" and "us" instead of the terms "I" and "me" (Sugarman, 1999).

The advantage of Carron et al.'s (1998) definition of cohesion was that it highlighted four major characteristics in understanding cohesion (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). The first characteristic of cohesion was that it is viewed as a multidimensional construct (Carron & Brawley, 2000; Gill, 2000; Loughead & Hardy, 2006). These authors suggest that there are numerous factors that

caused a group to stick together and remain united, and that these factors may differ among even apparently similar groups. Therefore, the multidimensional nature of cohesion does not imply that all dimensions will be equally present across groups (Carron & Brawley, 2000). For example, a basketball team may be high in social unity (team members like each other) but may not be united about how to achieve its task objectives (e.g., some individual goals and team goals are clashing) and vice versa. A second characteristic had to do with the dynamic aspect of cohesion (Carron & Brawley, 2000; Gill, 2000; Loughhead & Hardy, 2006). Cohesion can change over time so that factors contributing to cohesion at one stage of the group's development may not be salient at another stage of the group's life (Gill, 2000; Loughhead & Hardy, 2006). For instance, when a team initially comes together, social unity may play a very important role in ensuring that the members incorporate the team successfully, but as the season unfolds, task unity may become more important in that individual goals must be aligned with team goals in order to compete with success. A third characteristic reflected the instrumental nature of cohesion (Carron & Brawley, 2000; Gill, 2000; Loughhead & Hardy, 2006), that is, all groups come together for a purpose (Carron & Brawley, 2000). Group members cohere for instrumental reasons, whether to be part of a university basketball team or to maintain an exercise programme (Gill, 2000). Loughhead and Hardy (2006) further argued that intuitively, many groups form for task-oriented reasons. Moreover, the authors argued that even groups that appear to form for "social" reasons (e.g. social clubs/associations) have an instrumental foundation for their formation (e.g. Greek immigrants wishing to mingle and forming a "Greek social club"). In other words, for one, individuals come together because they perceive the group as able to help reach individual goals, and two because groups fulfil individuals' needs to belong on a social level (Gill, 2000). A fourth characteristic of cohesion was its affective dimension (Carron & Brawley,

2000; Gill, 2000; Loughhead & Hardy, 2006). Baumeister and Leary (1995) stated that bonding is related to positive affect like enjoyment, whereas, a feeling of exclusion may lead to negative feelings such as depression or anxiety. Carron and Brawley (2000) noted that bonding whether it is for task or social reasons is satisfying to members, and pointed out that groups that lose the affective dimension are characterized by conflict and lack of harmony and may even break up. Finally because the goals of all groups are complex and varied, cohesion is perceived differently by different groups and members (Gill, 2000).

An important issue related to the study of cohesion is concerned with the extent to which individual perceptions reflect shared beliefs, in fact, as Carron et al. (2003) stated that the notion that members of a group share beliefs about matters of importance has been linked to the investigation of cohesion for some time. For example, in the studies of cohesion conducted by Janis (1982), the notion of “groupthink” stressed the single mindedness of thinking (i.e., sharing) which characterizes some groups (Carron et al., 2003). Correspondingly, a fundamental assumption of the Carron et al. (1998) approach is that “perceptions about the group held by group members are a reasonable estimate of various aspects of unity characteristic of the group” (p. 217). Another basic assumption is that these beliefs are shared. But as advanced by Hinsz, Tindale, and Vollrath (1997), the extent to which individual perceptions reflect shared beliefs about the group’s dynamics (including cohesion) is contingent with the degree of information sharing. The authors stressed that the characteristics of the groups (norms, roles, individual personalities within the group etc.) all influence the amount of information that is shared among members. According to Donnelly, Carron, and Chelladurai (1978), by definition, all groups have some degree of group cohesion. Thus, considering the accounts of Hinsz et al. (1997) which hold

that the extent to which individual perceptions reflect shared beliefs about cohesion is contingent with the degree of information sharing, and Donnelly et al.'s (1978) argument that there necessarily is some degree of cohesion in groups, it would be logically accurate to make the assumption that there is a positive relationship between the extent to which individual perceptions reflect shared belief, the degree of information sharing, and the level of cohesiveness within the group. Moreover, Carron et al. (1998) stated that the nature of the group also plays a major role in determining whether individual perceptions reflect shared beliefs. The authors argued that because interactive groups such as basketball teams have a higher degree of interdependence and cooperation, with time, individual perceptions of the group tend to mirror shared beliefs.

1.6 Development of measures of cohesion and the Group Environment Questionnaire

According to Mudrack (1989), defining cohesion is a relatively simple task because the construct seems to be intuitively easy to describe and understand. However, as Carron and Brawley (2000) noted, the difficulty lies in taking the definitions of cohesion and translating them into operational measures. Mudrack (1989) stated that among the 23 studies of cohesion conducted prior to Carron et al.'s (1985) study no two measures of cohesiveness measured the concept in the same manner. As a result, researchers could not agree on one measure of cohesiveness.

The first instrument developed to measure cohesiveness in sport was the Sport Cohesiveness Questionnaire (SCQ) developed by Martens, Landers, and Loy (1972). It was made of seven questionnaire items focusing on interpersonal attraction, contributions of members based on

ability and enjoyment, influence of each member, sense of belonging, value of membership, and perceptions of teamwork and how closely knit the sport group was (Ostrow, 2002). The SCQ was the only sport-specific measure before 1984, but researchers questioned its validity (Widmeyer, Brawley, and Carron, 1993), and it is seldom used today (Gill, 2000).

Yukelson, Weinberg, and Jackson (1984) developed another sport-specific measure, the Multidimensional Sport Cohesion Instrument (MSCI) to assess both task and social aspects of group cohesiveness. Initial studies with the MSCI indicated that cohesiveness includes attraction to the group, unity of purpose, quality of teamwork, and valued roles (Gill, 2000). The author further argued that the MSCI was not developed from a conceptual framework, and items were specific to basketball, which made the reliability and validity of the measures difficult to establish. For that reason, Gill (2000) argued that researchers did not use the MSCI to study cohesion.

Carron et al. (1985) found that there are three major measurement issues that characterized these earlier studies of cohesion, which may have greatly contributed to the difficulty in the measurement of cohesion. First, cohesion was treated as a unidimensional construct, thus researchers only studied one factor of cohesion, namely attraction to the other group members. This generated flawed findings because, based on its definition (Carron et al., 1998), cohesion is characterized by a multidimensional nature, which makes cohesion more than interpersonal factors (Carron & Brawley, 2000). Second, as noted by Loughhead and Hardy (2006), studies did not measure interpersonal factors directly, but measured aspects related to interpersonal attraction by examining factors such as group members' desire to stay in their group (e.g.,

Schacter, Ellerston, McBride & Gregory, 1951), group member's affinity to their group (e.g., Converse & Campbell, 1968), and the importance group members attached to group membership (e.g., Arnold & Straub, 1973). Consequently, by measuring cohesion in diverse ways, the findings could never be compared (Carron et al., 1985). And third, the psychometric properties of these earlier studies were suspect. The use of various and inappropriate measures of cohesion made it practically impossible to establish the reliability and/or validity of these measures (Carron et al., 1985). Mudrack (1989) supported these arguments by stating that confusion, inconsistency, and sloppiness historically marked the measurement of cohesion.

1.6.1 The Group Environment Questionnaire

In order to overcome some of the shortcomings regarding the measurement of cohesion, research called for the development of a measure that incorporated the four dimensions of cohesion as represented in the Carron et al. (1985) conceptual framework for the study and measurement of cohesion (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). And the result was the development, from 1982 to 1984, of the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ; Carron et al., 1985). As outlined by Carron et al. (1985) the GEQ is an 18-item inventory that assesses four dimensions of cohesion and items are measured on a 9-point Likert scale anchored at the extremes by 1 (strongly disagree) and 9 (strongly agree). Out of the 18 items, 12 items need to be reverse-coded; thus higher scores represent stronger perceptions of cohesiveness.

Research has shown that the GEQ is internally consistent and demonstrates content (e.g., Carron et al., 1985), concurrent (e.g., Brawley, Carron & Widmeyer, 1987), predictive (e.g., Carron,

Widmeyer & Brawley, 1988; Eys & Carron, 2001; Westre & Weiss, 1991; Widmeyer, Brawley & Carron, 1990; Williams & Widmeyer, 1991), and positive factorial validity (e.g., Carron et al., 1985; Li & Harmer, 1996). In fact, as outlined in the GEQ test manual (Carron et al., 2002), there is empirical evidence supporting that the GEQ measures what it claims to measure. Loughead and Hardy (2006) argued in favour of the GEQ that the cornerstone of any instrument lies in its validity. Moreover, to date, research has shown that the GEQ is reliable and valid; however, it is important for researchers to remember that validation is an on-going process rather than an endpoint (Carron et al., 1998). But despite the influence that the negatively worded items have on internal consistency (Eys, Carron, Bray & Brawley, 2003) as well as the influence of the dynamic and multidimensional nature of cohesion that may lead to minor internal inconsistencies (Carron et al., 2002), the GEQ still represents the best measure of cohesion in sport (Eys et al., 2003; Loughead & Hardy, 2006). In fact, negatively worded items were incorporated in order to counter response bias due to social desirability, and due to its dynamic and multidimensional nature, it should be no surprise that team members have sometimes answered items assessing the same manifestation of cohesion inconsistently (Loughead & Hardy, 2006).

After the initial research (Carron et al., 1985), the Cronbach alpha values (α) for the GEQ were Individual Attractions to the Group-Task (ATG-T, $\alpha = .75$), Individual Attraction to the Group-Social (ATG-S, $\alpha = .64$), Group Integration-Task (GI-T, $\alpha = .70$), and Group Integration-Social (GI-S, $\alpha = .76$) (Carron et al., 2002). The criterion that is usually approved as acceptable reliability is $\alpha = .70$ (Carron et al., 2002). The authors attributed the low internal consistency for the ATG-S ($\alpha = .64$) to the dynamic multidimensional nature of the cohesion, because this would mean that not all dimensions are equally present across different groups to the same extent at the

same time in the development of the group. It would therefore be vitally important to thoroughly understand the mechanisms surrounding cohesion in order to accurately measure the concept (Carron et al., 2002; Loughhead & Hardy, 2006).

1.7 Conceptual model for the study of cohesion

Carron (1982) developed a conceptual model framework for the examination of cohesiveness in sport teams. Unlike the conceptual framework which serves to identify the various components of cohesion, this conceptual model outlines the various elements that contribute to and result from cohesion. The model outlined the major factors that contribute to cohesion in sport teams as well as the consequences of desirable levels of cohesion in sport teams (Morris & Summers, 2004). The framework is a linear model consisting of inputs, throughputs, and outputs (see Figure 2; Carron, 1982). According to Carron (1982), the inputs are the antecedents of cohesion, the throughputs are the different manifestations of cohesion, and the outputs are viewed as the consequences of cohesion. The antecedents contributing to cohesion are classified into four categories: environmental, personal, leadership, and group. All these factors will influence the throughput of cohesion (Loughhead & Hardy, 2006). As for the consequences or outputs of cohesion, the conceptual model classified them into individual and group outcomes (Carron, 1982). The author further classified both of these outputs in terms of actual and relative perceptions of performance.

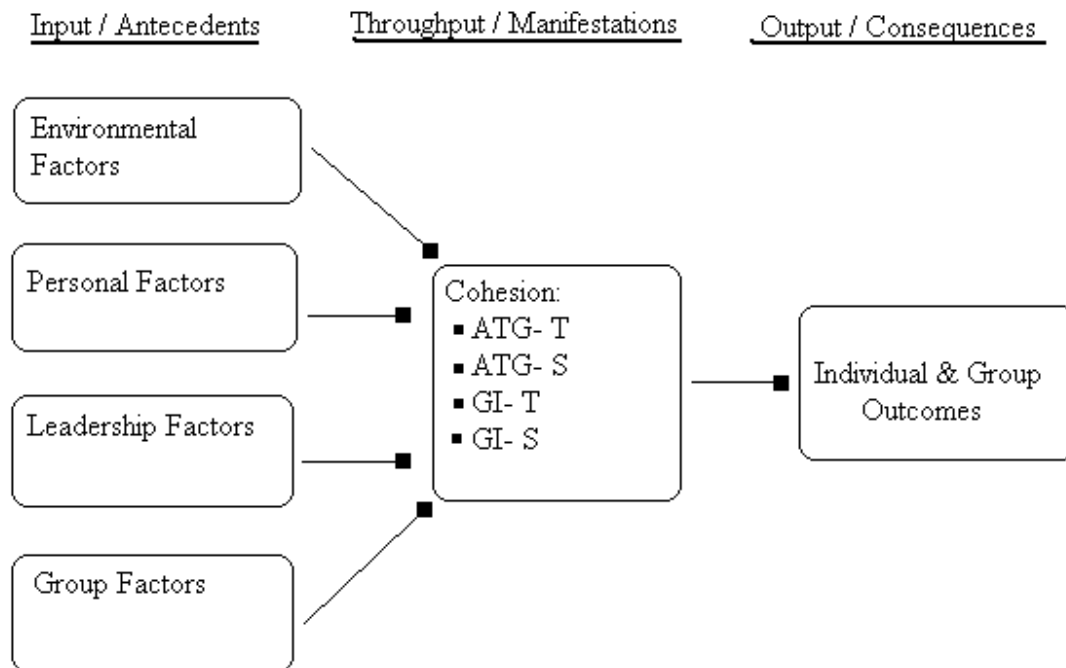


Figure 2. A conceptual model of cohesion.

1.7.1 Antecedents of cohesion

1.7.1.1 Environmental factors

1.7.1.1.1 Group resistance to disruption

In examining the group resistance to disruption-cohesion relationship, Brawley et al. (1988) conducted a study on elite male and female athletes (n=89) that were sampled from a variety of sports (e.g., ice hockey, volleyball, basketball, soccer, and field hockey). The athletes were asked to identify events that they considered disruptive to their team and they were subsequently asked to rate the degree to which these events would be disruptive. Additionally, the athletes also

completed the GEQ to measure team cohesion (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). The results showed that athletes who perceived high team cohesion viewed their teams as more resistant to disruptive events than athletes who perceived low levels of team cohesion. These findings suggest that there is a positive relationship between group resistance to disruption and cohesion (Brawley et al., 1988; Loughead & Hardy, 2006). In order to make conclusions about the way cohesion and disruptive events are perceived by teams as a unit, Brawley et al. (1988) conducted another study involving the same protocol but with different participants, as they took elite sport team athletes and intramural sport team athletes and conducted similar research to the first one with them. The results showed that for both elite and intramural athletes, high perceptions of team cohesion was paired with a view of their team as less vulnerable to disruptive events (Brawley, 1988). Taken together, these findings suggest that regardless of the level of competition, a positive relationship characterises perceived cohesion and perceived group resistance to disruption (Loughead & Hardy, 2006).

1.7.1.1.2 Group Size

Carron (1990) proposed that as groups increase in size, cohesion between group members is reduced because the opportunity to develop strong relationships between members is more difficult in larger groups. Although research on the relationship of group size to cohesion has been limited, Widmeyer et al.'s (1990) study of the matter provides empirical evidence for Carron's (1990) suggestions. Widmeyer et al. (1990) conducted a study of the effects of group size on cohesion, where they assigned individuals to teams of three, six, and nine member team participating in a 3-on-3 basketball league and the GEQ was administered in pre-season and post-season to measure cohesion. The findings from this study showed that as group size

increased, perceptions of enjoyment decreased, and cohesion decreased. Loughead and Hardy (2006) thus argued that it is vital for coaches to remember that having an excessively large team may be detrimental to the cohesiveness of the group and the individual's perceptions of cohesion. Consequently, when attempting to develop group cohesion within sport teams, it is imperative that coaches, practitioners, and players remember that larger groups may generate more challenges. Basketball teams are normally composed of twelve players and, taking into consideration that larger group sizes can have detrimental effects on team cohesion, it is possible that having a basketball team go through a cohesion building programme can minimize the negative effects of larger group sizes.

1.7.1.2 Personal factors

1.7.1.2.1 Sacrifice Behaviour

Prapavessis and Carron (1997b) conducted research to examine the relationship between cohesion and sacrifice behaviour, and the overall findings suggested that there is a positive relationship between cohesion and sacrifice behaviour, that is, as more sacrifice behaviour occurs in a group, cohesion levels increase. Prapavessis and Carron (1997b) defined sacrifice behaviour as the behaviour whereby an individual voluntarily initiates an action or gives up a privilege for the sake of another individual or individuals without regard to reciprocity. The two authors operationalized sacrifice behaviour as a multidimensional construct comprising four dimensions. First, they referred to inside sacrifice as task-related sacrifices made by oneself and one's teammates in competitive and/or training situations. Second, outside sacrifice was related to sacrifices made by oneself and one's teammates at work or at home. Third, teammate's social

sacrifice represented sacrifices made by teammates in relation to their social life. And fourth, personal social sacrifice referred to sacrifices made in one's social life. In a similar study, Holt and Sparkes (2001) identified that in teams with high cohesion, individual members never display selfish behaviour. Group members often play to the point of exhaustion and sacrifice personal battles for the benefit of the team. Hall of Famer basketball coach Phil Jackson further argued that good teams become great ones when the members trust each other enough to surrender the 'me' for the 'we' (Jackson & Delehanty, 1995). Loughead and Hardy (2006) thus stated that coaches and team leaders should be reminded to give credit to sacrifice behaviour and encourage it so as to build and maintain a cohesive unit. Moreover, it may be of great value to bring each and every team member to believe that their individual actions contribute to the fulfilment of a greater purpose (i.e., the team). As Jackson and Delehanty (1995) mentioned, it is not only trust among players that makes them less selfish, but also a sound knowledge of their role and worth on the team.

1.7.1.2.2 Anxiety

Prapavessis and Carron (1996) studied the relationship between cohesion and competitive state anxiety, and they noted that improving the dynamics of a group may improve the psychological state of an individual. The authors conducted research on 110 high level athletes from a variety of sports (e.g., basketball, soccer, rugby, ice hockey) and administered the GEQ at a midweek practice and then assessed the intensity of cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and self-confidence with the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory fifteen minutes prior to competition. The results showed that athletes who expressed higher task cohesion on the GEQ had lower levels of pre-competition cognitive anxiety. Although it is impossible to make conclusions about the

causation in the relationship between competitive state anxiety and cohesion (Mellalieu, Hanton & Fletcher, 2006), Prapavessis and Carron's (1996) findings do hint that there is a possibility that group level team building interventions can enhance personal level variables (e.g., state anxiety).

1.7.1.2.3 Work output

In their study of the relationship between cohesion and individual work output - operationalized as a percentage of VO₂ max using the participant's heart rate and lactic acid levels, Prapavessis and Carron (1997a) conducted research on 252 elite athletes from a wide range of team sports (e.g., rugby, soccer, netball, water polo) and results showed that task cohesion was positively related to individual work output. Loughead and Hardy (2006) supported this by stating that athletes who perceived their team as more task cohesive were displaying higher work outputs. Loughead and Hardy (2006) also reported that in a study of cohesion and work output, Bray and Whaley (2001) found that work output-measured using an adapted version of Ryan's (1982) Expanded Effort Scale from the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory, was positively related to all four dimensions of cohesion.

1.7.1.2.4 Self-handicapping

Carron, Prapavessis, and Grove (1994) defined the term self-handicapping as the strategies individuals use to protect their self-esteem by adopting excuses for future events that may impede success. The researchers believed sport is the ideal sphere to examine self-handicapping due to its highly evaluative nature, to the uncertainty of success, and to potential threats to self-esteem if failure takes place. Carron et al. (1994) then proposed that cohesive groups could

provide individuals with psychological protection by diffusing potential threats to self-esteem. In their study conducted on 221 male athletes, results confirmed that athletes with disposition to self-handicapping (manifested through excuse making) were more likely to perceive their team as lower in task cohesion. Loughead and Hardy (2006) supported this point by stating that overall, a negative relationship was found between self-handicapping and task cohesion. Considering the gender bias of the study conducted by Carron et al. (1994), Hausenblas and Carron (1996) conducted similar studies on both male and female athletes, and their findings were similar, which confirms Loughead and Hardy's (2006) statement that self-handicapping and cohesion are negatively related. Therefore, group intervention levels on cohesion may be beneficial to individual athletes as they will indirectly enhance their psychological skills (Loughead and Hardy, 2006).

1.7.1.2.5 Mood

Terry, Carron, Pink, Lane, Jones, and Hall (2000) found that cohesion was associated with individual moods. Their study was conducted using the GEQ paired with the Profile of Mood States-C developed by Terry, Keohane, and Lane (1996). Overall, as outlined by Loughead and Hardy (2006), the results indicated that when athletes perceive themselves as part of a cohesive group, they have the tendency to experience enhanced mood. This suggests that team building interventions can be beneficial to the psychological state of the team members, as Loughead and Hardy (2006) indicate, athletes who perceive their team as high in terms of task cohesion were more likely to feel less tension and anger. Insofar as social cohesion is concerned, athletes who perceived their team as having high social cohesion levels were more likely to feel high in vigour and low in depression. One could thus argue, as proposed by Terry et al. (2000), that due to the

enhanced moods that characterises a cohesive team, a stronger sense of enjoyment can develop within the team and have positive effects on individual motivation and commitment to the team, which in turn may be translated into improved performance.

1.7.1.3 Leadership

The role of leaders is vital in developing team cohesion (Curtner-Smith, Wallace & Wang, 1999; Westre & Weiss, 1991). Clear, consistent, unambiguous communication from coaches and captains concerning various team dynamics plays a very influential role in cohesiveness (Carron & Dennis, 2001). Moreover, Westre and Weiss (1991) argued that leaders who involve team members in team decision-making processes help to develop cohesion by increasing each player's feeling of ownership and investment in the team. Westre and Weiss (1991) were one of the first to study the relationship between cohesion (using the GEQ) and leadership. Loughhead and Hardy (2006) reported that using male high-school American football players, Westre and Weiss (1991) found that players who perceived their coaches to engage in higher levels of training and instruction, democratic behaviour, social support, and positive feedback perceived higher levels of task cohesion. Pease and Kozub (1994) replicated the Westre and Weiss (1991) study on female high school basketball players and their results also revealed that coaching behaviours were positively related to task cohesion. However, these two studies could not make inferences about the relationship between leadership behaviour and social cohesion. Consequently, Gardner, Shields, Bredemeier, and Bostrom (1996) conducted research to examine the leader behaviour-cohesion relationship, and unlike Westre and Weiss (1991) and Pease and Kozub (1994), they found that positive coaching behaviour was positively related to

not only task cohesion but also social cohesion. Taken together, the results revealed that a positive relationship between leadership and cohesion exists (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). However, Jowett and Chaundy (2004) have shown that it is not leader behaviours alone that are important for team cohesion. In fact, they found that athletes' perceptions of the coach-athlete relationship (e.g., commitment, closeness, and complementarities) explained more variance in task and social cohesion than did leader behaviours by themselves. In practical terms, since research has found that there is a positive relationship between strong leadership and group cohesion level, interventions that aim at improving leadership skills in individuals within sport teams can be of valuable importance towards team building interventions as a whole (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). Jowett and Chaundy (2004) proposed that leaders, who are approachable and friendly, yet rigorous and disciplined, engender positive coach-athlete relationships. Moreover, according to Loughead and Carron (2002), research in sport has shown that coaches who adopted democratic behaviours, social support, sound training and instructions, and positive feedback had more satisfied players. However, their results also indicate that player satisfaction is not directly influenced by the leader's behaviour; rather, the leader behaviour-satisfaction relationship operates through team cohesion. Consequently, coaches should strive to increase player satisfaction by building greater team unity. Last, Loughead and Carron (2002) argued that greater player satisfaction is accompanied with better service quality, which in turn can enhance performance.

1.7.1.4 Group factors

1.7.1.4.1 Norms

Forsyth (1999) defined norms as the emergent consensual standards that regulate group members' behaviours. They provide direction and motivation, organize social interactions, and make other people's responses predictable and meaningful. Forsyth (1999) added that norms are developed in a unique manner depending on the specific characteristics of the group at hand. Moreover, as the norms become accepted, they turn into the group's stable structure, and are transmitted to newcomers naturally, that is, without coercion but through free will to adhere to the norms of the group they wish to join. Gammage, Carron and Estabrooks (2001) were among the first researchers to examine the influence of team norms on cohesion in sport (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). Their study examined athletes' attitudes towards off-season training and their perceptions of cohesion and team norms, and the result indicated that when cohesion was high and there was a high team productivity norm, it led to a higher probability of off-season training. But as Loughead and Hardy (2006) pointed out, there were some limitations in the results advanced by Gammage et al. (2001), for instance, only one type of norm was examined (i.e., the norm for productivity in the off-season). This is supported by Munroe, Estabrooks, Dennis, and Carron's (1999) earlier argument stating that norms existed within sport teams in four specific contexts: practice, competition, off-season, and team social interactions. Taking the importance of studying norms using real sport teams and the fact that several norms exist within sport teams, Patterson, Carron, and Loughead (2005) examined the influence of team norms on cohesion. The results showed that athletes gave greatest effort when on teams possessing stronger norms for social interactions and higher team social cohesion (Loughead & Hardy, 2006).

1.7.1.4.2 Roles

Roles are defined as a pattern of behaviour that is expected of a person in a social situation (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998). Salazar (1996) advanced another definition of roles and referred to them as the sets of behaviour that are characteristic of persons in a particular social context. As noted by Eys, Beauchamp, and Bray (2006), team members' successful execution of role responsibilities is critical to sport teams striving towards successful performance. One particular dimension that has attracted the interest of researchers in the realm of sport psychology is role ambiguity, which refers to a lack of clear, consistent information regarding the actions required in a particular position (Eys & Carron, 2001). These authors have suggested that when role ambiguity is low, players stop perceiving their roles as conflicting with their teammates' roles, which enables each participant to perform interdependent tasks harmoniously. Moreover, roles are important in sport psychology because they provide players with the necessary guidance and direction, and roles also help players assess their performance through appropriate feedback (Eys et al., 2006). The overall results from studies on roles and cohesion stress that when role ambiguity is low, the perception of cohesion is high since all team members are not in conflict as to their function on a team (Eys & Carron, 2001; Loughhead & Hardy, 2006). That is, when role ambiguity is low, task cohesion is greater on sport teams. Based on empirical evidence to date, Loughhead and Hardy (2006) affirmed that norms and roles influence athletes' perception of cohesion; therefore, teams should spend considerable efforts establishing standards of expectations and having clearly defined roles in attempts of fostering higher levels of cohesion.

1.7.2 Other factors related to cohesion

1.7.2.1 The cohesion-collective efficacy relationship

In sports that require a great deal of interdependence and interaction to perform tasks, coaches and practitioners alike have intuitively recognized that collective efficacy and cohesion are important variables to ensure successful outcomes (Heuze, Raimbault & Fontayne, 2006). Zaccaro, Blair, Peterson and Zazanis (1995) defined collective efficacy as “a sense of collective competence shared among individuals when allocating, coordinating, and integrating their resources in a successful concerted response to specific situational demands” (p. 309). Bandura (1997) suggested that this construct has important implications for sport teams because it should affect team choices, effort, persistence and performance, especially in sports that required interaction and interdependence to achieve task success (e.g., basketball). Bandura’s (1997) suggestion prompted many researchers to examine the relationship between collective efficacy and cohesion in team sport. Paskevich, Brawley, Dorsch and Widmeyer (1999) reported strong correlations between task-related aspects of cohesiveness and members’ shared beliefs about collective efficacy. Volleyball players from university and club teams who perceived high task cohesion also tended to perceive high overall collective efficacy in their teams. The authors also noted that relationships between cohesion and collective efficacy were reciprocal. Similar results were found by Kozub and McDonnell (2000) in a study involving seven rugby union teams. They found that the two task cohesion dimensions were positive predictors of collective efficacy, with Group integration-task being slightly better than Individual attractions to the group-task. Moreover, Kozub and McDonnell (2000) reported positive significant correlations between the two social cohesion scales and collective efficacy. Taken together, previous research provides support for positive task cohesion – collective efficacy relationship (Heuze, et al., 2006).

1.7.2.2 Goal-setting and cohesion

Johnson and Johnson (1987, p.132) identified a group goal as “a future state of affairs desired by enough members of a group to motivate the group to work towards its achievement”. Furthermore, they indicated that three aspects of group goal setting need to be addressed in order to understand how group goals can influence group behaviour. These aspects are, the group goal itself, the tasks the group must perform in order to achieve the goal, and the processes of interaction among members that are necessary for achieving the goal. Research suggests that nearly all athletes set goals in their attempts to perform successfully in their sporting activities (Brawley, Carron & Widmeyer, 1992; Burton, Weinberg, Yukelson & Weigand, 1993). Goal setting can directly influence team cohesion by providing a team focus (goal). In turn, singular group focus promotes intergroup communication and facilitates overall team commitment and satisfaction, all of which have been shown to enhance team cohesion (Carron et al., 2002). Participating in the development of group goals solidifies co-operation among group members because individual members learn to recognize the actions required by other members and themselves for group success as well as the ways each individual must depend on the others, which further leads to the development of a cohesive unit (Widmeyer & Ducharme, 1997). As reported by Widmeyer and Ducharme (1997), while there are only a few studies (Brawley et al., 1992; Widmeyer, Silva & Hardy, 1992; Widmeyer & Williams, 1991) that have examined the group goal-group cohesion relationship in sport; the link between the variables appears rather consistent. Having a team goal and team participation in a team goal have been shown in at least three studies to enhance cohesion especially task cohesion of athletic teams.

1.7.2.3 Social support to develop team cohesion

Members of a group must have a reason for working together, and they need to be interdependent, that is, to recognize their need for each others' experiences, abilities, and commitment in order to accomplish group goals (Shaw, 1981). According to Beebe and Masterson (1994, p.308), a group is a "collection of people working with each other rather than for someone", thus individuals who work together to achieve a common goal are considered as members of a group. A sport team is a group (Sugarman, 1999). Sport team members who provide each other with several types of social support (e.g., listening support, reality confirmation support, and task appreciation support) offer each other the opportunity to increase their physical and emotional well-being (Rosenfeld & Richman, 1997). Rosenfeld and Richman stated that there are three types of support that one can receive, namely tangible support (e.g., assisting someone in completing a task), informational support (e.g., telling an individual s/he is part of a network of communication and mutual obligation), and emotional support (e.g., providing someone with comfort). The authors further stated that research findings have presented a positive relationship between the social support an individual receives and her or his physical and mental well-being (Burlison, Albrecht, & Sarason, 1994; Dean & Ensel, 1982; Hardy, Richman, & Rosenfeld, 1991), evaluations of group cohesion (Manning & Fullerton, 1988; Westre & Weiss, 1991), and satisfaction with group experiences and leadership (Garland & Barry, 1990). For example, social support provided by coaches has been positively related to student-athletes' perceptions of task cohesion in high school football teams (Westre & Weiss, 1991), cohesion in college basketball teams (Weiss & Friedrichs, 1986), and higher performance in collegiate football teams (Garland & Barry, 1990); also, team, as opposed to leader, support has been related to soldiers' perceptions of cohesion in their groups (Manning & Fullerton, 1988). Complementing these findings, coach social support has been found to relate to student-

athletes' satisfaction with their athletic experience (Weiss & Friedrichs, 1986) and team leadership (Schliesman, 1987). These findings suggest that encouraging more social support (e.g., listening support, reality confirmation support, and task appreciation support) may be beneficial to a group cohesion-building programme.

1.7.2.4 Status and cohesion

Status has been defined as the amount of importance or prestige possessed by or accorded to individuals by virtue of their position in relation to others (Jacob & Carron, 1997). According to Jacob and Carron (1998), in social psychological research, such attributes as education, income, experience, occupation, language, religion, group role, ability, urbanity, marital status, race, and parents' occupations have been found to be associated with the status of individuals within micro and macro groups. And insofar as the sporting world is concerned, Jacob and Carron's (1997) studies have reported that the most important sources of status in sport teams are competitive experience, performance ability and team role (captain/co-captain). Individuals are not identical in terms of the degree to which they possess various status attributes (Jacob & Carron, 1998). The possession of various attributes considered prominent within a specific context (e.g. the culture, the organization, the group, or the team) contributes to the overall status of an individual, referred to as 'status rank'. In both macro and micro groups, differences in status ranks create differential expectations for the behaviour of individuals (Goodman & Gareis, 1993), affect attributions for responsibility (Caine & Schlenker, 1979) and influence the amount of interaction and communication that takes place (Driskell & Mullen, 1990). Also, individuals who have a higher status rank within a group are perceived to initiate more interactions and communications, and their ideas are more readily accepted by other group members (Martinez, 1989).

Furthermore, a lack of consensus on status ranking within a group has been shown to contribute to conflicting expectations, feelings of injustice and discomfort (Zimmermann, 1985). Jacob and Carron's (1998) study with collegiate athletes examined the relationship between status and cohesion, and they have found that in sports teams, unlike any other group structures, it is the consensus on status ranks in groups that are the most important. They also found that in teams where there is greater consensus on the relative rankings of individual members, the associativeness among individuals is stronger, and role clarity, goal achievement, team success, and group effectiveness are all superior. Consequently, they concluded that it is the reaching of a consensus with regard to status ranks that is most important to cohesiveness in sport teams (Jacob & Carron, 1998).

1.7.2.5 Jealousy and cohesion

Kamphoff, Gill, and Huddleston (2005) stated that in the investigation of jealousy in the sporting world, it is necessary to move away from the romantic definitions of the concepts, and adopt a more social approach. Thus, they suggested that it is more appropriate to study social comparison jealousy in attempts to establish jealousy-cohesion relationships. Social comparison jealousy is defined as feelings, thoughts, and behaviours that occur when another person enjoys more success (Bers & Rodin, 1984). Researchers have identified a number of antecedents of social comparison jealousy. Specifically, Silver and Sabini (1978) stated that social comparison jealousy results when one person diminishes the status or self-esteem of another person. For example, naming one athlete as team captain could lower another athlete's self-esteem and how important they feel as a member of the team. Bers and Rodin (1984) found that people react in a jealous manner when another person is superior in some way or when another achieves

something that is desired. Social comparison jealousy in sport may be very common because athletes are similar and constantly compare themselves to each other (Kamphoff et al., 2005). In their study exploring the jealousy-cohesion relationship, Kamphoff et al. (2005) found that first, almost 90% of the athletes expressed feeling varying degrees of jealous sentiments in their teams, second, they also found that jealousy and cohesion have a strong negative relationship, which means that jealousy may have detrimental effects on team processes and create a negative climate that may turn into a decrease in cohesion levels. Although the literature on jealousy and cohesion does not seem to provide set procedures as to how coaches and sport psychologist should combat jealousy in sport (Kamphoff et al., 2005), there is a general consensus that it is imperative for coaches to find solutions to limit jealousy within their teams.

1.7.2.6 Gender and cohesion

The literature on group dynamics is replete with instances where gender has been found to be a moderator of fundamental relationships (Carron, Eys & Burke, 2007). Carron et al. (2002) found that the cohesion-performance relationship is no exception; the association between cohesion and performance is significantly greater in female teams than it is in male teams.

1.7.3 The cohesion-performance relationship / consequences of cohesion

While considerable research has examined the antecedents of cohesion as well as other factors related to cohesion, the focus of most research in the area of cohesion and team building has addressed the consequences of cohesion (Gill, 2000). In fact, as argued by Loughhead and Hardy (2006), researchers, practitioners, coaches, and players implicitly place great emphasis on the

importance of the cohesion-performance relationship (e.g., Bloom, Stevens & Wickwire, 2003), with the general assumption that more cohesion is better for performance (Hardy, Eys & Carron, 2005). Moreover, it has been argued that regardless of the empirical presence of a relationship between cohesion and performance, coaches prefer to work with close, cohesive teams as opposed to non-cohesive teams (Miller, 1997).

The overall picture from the sport-specific literature from the past is somewhat perplexing in that some studies have indicated positive relationships between cohesion and performance, meaning that the more cohesive a team is, the more likely it is to demonstrate better performance and unity (Arnold & Straub, 1973; Ball & Carron, 1976; Klein & Christiansen, 1969; Martens & Peterson, 1971). Conversely, some scholars have reported negative relationships between cohesion and performance (Landers & Luschen, 1974; Lenk, 1969; McGrath, 1962). This trend continued when Williams and Widmeyer (1991) found that task cohesion was a better predictor of performance rather than social cohesion, while Slater and Sewell (1994) found limited support for a relationship between task cohesion and performance, but stressed the importance of social cohesion in relation to enhanced performance. Carron and Chelladurai (1981) proposed a plausible explanation to these contradictory findings, and argued that the type of sport can determine the effect of cohesion on performance. In fact, the authors argued that interactive sports (e.g., basketball, rugby, soccer) required higher levels of interdependence and more complex interactions than coactive sports (e.g., teams competing in athletics and swimming). Carron and Chelladurai (1981) thus argued that cohesion-performance relationship is more positive in interactive sports rather than coactive sports. Moreover, one could intuitively assume

that the disparate findings could be caused by the early failure to address all the elements (mood, group size, leadership etc.) that affect an individual's perception of team cohesion.

The use of cross-lagged panel study has been frequent in cohesion research examining the causal direction of the cohesion-performance relationship (e.g., Carron & Ball, 1978; Martens & Peterson, 1972; Slater & Sewell, 1994). Loughhead and Hardy (2006) described the cross-lagged design and stated that it involves the measurement of cohesion and performance on (at least) two occasions (e.g., early season and late season measurements). Consequently, data examined within the same time panel (e.g., correlation between the early season measurement and late season measurement) is pertinent to the presence of an association between these two variables. Moreover, as the authors suggested, information concerning the associations between early season cohesion and late season performance (i.e., cohesion as the cause of performance) as well as between early season performance and late season cohesion (i.e., cohesion as the result of performance) is spawned. With regard to the causal relationship between cohesion and performance, Mullen and Cooper (1994, p.215) noted that "either direction is possible, on the one hand, group cohesiveness could energize and direct group members towards successful task completion, and on the other hand, excellence in performance should make group members feel much better about the group". Carron and Ball (1978) applied the cross-lagged design to their study with ice-hockey teams, and their results suggested an effect of performance on cohesiveness but showed no support for the influence of cohesiveness on later performance success. Conversely, Slater and Sewell (1994) found that there is a circular association between cohesion and performance, with a slight dominance from cohesion to performance. In other words, their findings suggested that there is a stronger positive magnitude in the cohesion-to-

performance correlation as opposed to the performance-to-cohesion correlation. The cohesiveness literature on the causality of the relationship between cohesion and performance presented contradictory findings (Carron & Ball, 1978; Martens & Peterson, 1972; Mullen & Cooper, 1994; Slater & Sewell, 1994), and as Loughhead and Hardy (2006) asserted, to gain a better understanding of these findings, a more systematic and objective method such as the meta-analysis technique is a good method for summarizing large bodies of contradictory findings. This technique employs effect sizes (a standardized score) to allow comparison across studies. Subsequently, Mullen and Cooper (1994) reviewed experimental and correlational findings from a diverse sample of studies taken from the business, military, and sport domains to examine the cohesion-performance relationship (Loughhead & Hardy, 2006). Their findings advanced that while more cohesion may cause enhanced performance, performance has a larger impact on a team's resultant cohesion. This was supported by Gill's (2000) statement affirming that the cohesiveness literature suggests that causality flows from performance success to cohesiveness, and that evidence in the other direction is weak at best. Despite the use of the meta-analysis technique, it is evident that the body of literature on the causal direction of the cohesion-performance relationship still presents rather inconsistent findings, and as Loughhead and Hardy (2006) concluded their discussion on the matter, one should guard against claiming that a performance-to-cohesion causal relationship is now largely established, because it still is not. Researchers and practitioners should be aware of the relationship and wisely interpret their findings in the context of their research.

Widmeyer et al. (1993) as well as other researchers identified several variables that may have an impact on the cohesion-performance relationship. They divided these variables into moderating and mediating variables.

Moderator variables affect the conditions under which cohesion and performance are related (Widmeyer et al., 1993). Task characteristics may be the most important variable for sport. Widmeyer et al. (1993) noted that positive relationships had generally been reported for divisible tasks (task into subtask, such as basketball and soccer), and negative relationships for unitary tasks (task does not entail mutual assistance, such as bowling or rowing). “Group drive” is another moderator proposed by Widmeyer et al. (1993), and they argued that if cohesiveness enhances commitment to team goals, and if team goals emphasize important individual contributions, then cohesiveness should enhance performance for coactive as well as interactive sports. Another moderating variable is group norms, and studies have confirmed that highly cohesive groups outperformed less cohesive groups only if the group norms called for better performance (Gill, 2000). The team climate also plays an important role in the way group members perceive team cohesion, in fact, Heuze, Sarrazin, Maserio, and Raimbault’s (2006) study with female elite basketball and handball players revealed that a task-involving climate positively predicted changes in athletes’ perceptions of group integration-task and collective efficacy whereas an ego-involving climate negatively predicted changes in athletes’ perceptions of social cohesion (ATG-S and GI-S) and the individual’s perceptions of task unity within the group as a whole (GI-T). One last moderator is the effect that winning or losing has on team performance and thus team cohesion, and studies conducted by Matheson, Mathes and Murray (1997) showed that cohesion levels of coacting teams were higher than interacting teams on the

ATG-T, GI-T, and GI-S subscales, for preseason, after winning and after losing. Interacting team members' scored higher than coacting teams on the ATG-S scale only during the preseason and winning. Coacting team members scored higher following a loss, rather than a win, on all cohesion scales. In contrast, interacting team members scored higher on all scales, after a win, than a loss.

To better appreciate the cohesiveness-performance relationship in sport, it is important to also consider mediating variables, that is, how and why cohesiveness influences performance (Widmeyer et al., 1993). The authors proposed team stability, role clarity, and role acceptance as likely mediators. In fact, Widmeyer et al. (1993) stated that researchers have tended to overlook the fact that too many variations in team stability could drastically influence the development and maintenance of cohesion. Furthermore, the authors argued that having clear roles that are accepted by all group members may provide sufficient direction to the team and influence the cohesion and/or performance of the team. The last mediator was pointed out by Martens and Peterson (1972) when they found that satisfaction plays a major role in the cohesion performance relationship. In fact, their study with basketball teams discovered that a circular relationship exists between team cohesion, team performance, and team satisfaction.

While the results of all these cohesion-performance studies do not provide consistent findings regarding the cause-effect relationship between cohesion and team effectiveness or performance, Carron et al. (2002) argued that the overall pattern of result does support a conclusion that when groups are more cohesive they are more effective. Furthermore, overall research on team sport demonstrates a positive relationship between group cohesion and performance (Carron &

Chelladurai, 1981; Hardy et al., 2005; Widmeyer et al., 2003; Yukelson, 1997). After a review of the majority of the literature concerning the relationship between cohesion and performance, one could argue that the constant failure to provide sound explanations concerning the relationship between the cohesion and performance may actually be caused by the incessant association of the two constructs. In fact, one could better understand the relationship between performance and cohesion, and vice versa, if one considered them as dependent variables that were influenced by various moderating as well as mediating variables (e.g., team climate, team roles, and team goals). The argument would be that performance and cohesion are not directly related, in that there are numerous other variables (e.g., team roles, team norms, team goals) that exist between the two constructs, and it is the change in these variables that would contribute to the betterment or impairment of performance and/or cohesion. For instance, one could argue that cohesion does not directly influence performance but it first influences the team climate and team role definition, which in turn influences performance. And similarly, performance would first influence motivation and sacrifice behaviour, which in turn would influence team cohesion. Arising from this argument, one could better appreciate the need of a cohesion-building programme incorporating interventions that aim at influence the various factors that are linked to cohesion in an attempt to better team cohesion and team performance.

1.8 Basketball and international research on cohesion in basketball

Researchers have identified basketball as an interactive sport, due to the high levels of interdependence and interaction between the players and the coach (Carron et al., 1985; Hardy et al., 2005; Yukelson, 1997). The same authors have suggested that due to the nature of the sport,

the nature of the cohesion-performance relationship is strong and positive in basketball, regardless of gender or level of competition. Basketball is a team [sport](#) invented in 1891 by Dr. James Naismith, in which two teams of five active players each try to score points against one another by propelling a [ball](#) through a 10 feet (3 m) high hoop (the goal) under organized rules. Basketball is one of the most popular and widely viewed sports in the world (Cousy Power Jr., 1983; Wikipedia, 2008). Points are scored by shooting the ball through the basket from above; the team with more points at the end of the game wins. The ball can be advanced on the court by bouncing it ([dribbling](#)) or passing it between teammates. Disruptive physical contact ([fouls](#)) is not permitted and there are restrictions on how the ball can be handled ([violations](#)). Through time, basketball has developed to involve common techniques of shooting, passing and dribbling, as well as players' positions, and offensive and defensive structures. Typically, the tallest members of a team will play centre, the shortest member usually plays "point" while often the best ball handlers are guards. While competitive basketball is carefully regulated, numerous [variations of basketball](#) have developed for casual play. In some countries, basketball is also a popular spectator sport (Wikipedia, 2008). The most successful basketball players and coaches all recognize that cohesion is very important to their sport and to sport in general (Carron et al., 2007; Jackson & Delehanty, 1995; Morris & Summers, 2004). Jackson and Delehanty (1995) stated that the most important feature that characterized the Chicago Bulls was that players and coaches alike surrendered their personal interests to something larger than themselves, and the subsequent sense of togetherness allowed them to be as successful as winning six national championships in eight years. Phil Jackson (National Basketball Association-NBA-Hall of Famer; Chicago Bulls basketball coach, six-time NBA Champions; LA Lakers coach, three-time NBA champions) quoted: "Good teams become great ones when members trust each other

enough to surrender the 'me' for the 'we' (Jackson & Delehanty, 1995). Even the greatest of all, Michael Jordan (NBA Hall of Famer, Olympic Gold Medallist, World Championship winner, Chicago Bulls, six-time winners of NBA Championship) admitted that cohesion is crucial to success, when the player quoted: "Naturally there are going to be some ups and downs, particularly if you have individuals trying to achieve at a high level. But when we stepped in between the lines, we knew what we were capable of doing. When a pressure situation presented itself, we were plugged into one another as a cohesive unit. That's why we were able to come back so often and win so many close games. And that's why we were able to beat more talented teams" (Jordan, 1994, p.23).

Numerous studies have been conducted on group dynamics and performance in basketball in North America and Europe, and overall results proposed positive links between cohesiveness and performance in basketball (Arnold & Straub, 1973; Butler, 1997; Hardy et al., 2005; Klein & Christiansen, 1969; Loughhead & Hardy, 2006; Martens & Peterson, 1971; Widmeyer et al., 1990). Martens and Peterson's (1971) study involving over 1200 male intramural basketball players on 144 teams constituted an early benchmark in sport cohesiveness research, generating some of the strongest support for a positive performance-cohesion relationship. In their study of group resistance to disruption, Brawley et al. (1988) conducted a study on elite male and female basketball athletes, and the results showed that athletes who perceived strong team cohesion viewed their team as more resistant to disruptive events than athletes who perceived weak team cohesion. Widmeyer et al. (1990) conducted a study investigating the effects of group size on team cohesion. The researchers used basketball players and assigned them to teams of three, six, and nine players to compete in a 3-on-3 basketball league and cohesion was measured pre and

post-season. They found that social cohesion was greater among the teams consisting of six players, and that task cohesion was higher in the teams of three. The teams consisting of nine players did not show significant variations in cohesiveness. Prapavessis and Carron (1996) investigated the relationship between competition state anxiety and cohesion among basketball players, and the results indicated that athletes who expressed higher task cohesion had lower levels of precompetition cognitive anxiety. Bray and Whaley (2001) also used basketball players to investigate the relationship between work output and team cohesion. Their results pointed out that work output was positively related to all four dimensions of cohesion on the GEQ, and they concluded that cohesion is positively related to individual work output. Basketball players were also used by Hausenblas and Carron (1996) to identify the relationships between self-handicapping and team cohesion. They have found that self-handicapping, reflected by excuse-making, was related to task-cohesion. Pease and Kozub (1994) also investigated the association between cohesion and leadership with basketball players. They took a sample of female basketball players and assessed cohesion levels along with their perceptions of their coach, and the results showed that athletes who perceived their coach to display supportive and democratic coaching behaviour also perceived their team to be more task-cohesive. However, their results did not indicate associations between coaching behaviour and social cohesion. Eys and Carron (2001) examined roles and role ambiguity among university basketball players, and they found that task cohesion is related to role ambiguity in that when task cohesion is greater on basketball teams, role ambiguity is low. Yukelson, Weinberg, and Jackson (1984) developed an operational measure of cohesion. It was a multidimensional group cohesion instrument specifically designed for intercollegiate basketball teams. Its purpose was to assess group cohesion based on both task-related and social-related forces that presumably exist in intercollegiate basketball (Ostrow,

2002). However, because the instrument's reliability and validity was difficult to establish because of its basketball specific nature, researchers did not make extensive use of it (Gill, 2001).

1.9 South African research on sport psychology and group dynamics

Despite the numerous studies on mental preparation in rugby that have been conducted insofar as South Africa is concerned (Edwards & Edwards, 2007), somewhat limited studies have been carried out in terms of groups and group dynamics. Van den Heever, Grobelaar, and Potgieter (2007) conducted studies on the factors that contribute to better performance in South African netball teams and their results suggested that satisfaction and strong leadership among players can lead to increased performance. Very little published research has been conducted on basketball in South Africa (Lyoka & Bressan, 2003), and despite studies such as the one conducted by Lyoka and Bressan (2003) on decision making in basketball players and coaches, there is a dearth of research on group dynamics in basketball in South Africa. Basketball is an interactive sport (Carron et al., 1985) and since research findings advanced a positive relationship between cohesiveness and performance, it can be of great value for basketball in South Africa if research is carried out on cohesion.

1.10 Developing a cohesion-building programme

Although the benefits of a cohesive group now seem rather straightforward, orchestrating a group of individuals -all with different personalities, backgrounds, and personal goals- to work together towards a common objective can be a rather arduous task (Yukelson, 1997). It is therefore crucial for coaches and practitioners to make efforts to develop more cohesive groups through team building. Widmeyer and Ducharme (1997) described team building as the process of attempting to enhance a team's locomotion as well as its maintenance. Locomotion is related to productivity or performance whereas maintenance is reflective of a team's ability to stay together or be cohesive. The emphasis is placed on enhancing performance and increasing perceptions of team cohesion.

The sport-related team-building literature is in its infancy and there is a dearth of empirical research examining the effectiveness of team building interventions (Carron, Spink & Prapavessis, 1997; Hardy & Crace, 1997; Voight & Callaghan, 2001; Yukelson, 1997). This is mostly due to the fact that most studies on team building have been conducted in the business and industrial settings (Hardy & Crace, 1997). It is worthy to note that in a meta-analysis of 126 studies from business and industry contexts, team building interventions were found to be the most effective techniques to enhance satisfaction and work-related attitudes (Loughead & Hardy, 2006).

In general, two types of team-building approaches have been used in sport settings, the direct approach and the indirect approach (Eys & Carron, 2001; Loughead & Hardy, 2006). The direct approach involves a consultant working closely with the team and its players in a "hands on" manner; the consultant is a direct participant in the team building process (Carron et al., 1997).

This approach actively includes team members in the team building process, thus empowering the athletes, which in turn fosters a sense of ownership in the team building programme (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). Moreover, as Carron et al. (2007) noted, the coach often takes the role of the consultant in this approach, since most coaches tend to work implicitly or explicitly on the development of a more cohesive team. However, they noted, in such a case, it is imperative that the coach has adequate knowledge of team building theories and practices. Yukelson (1997) developed a direct approach to team building, and it consists of four stages. The first stage is the assessment stage, and this allows the consultant to gain an understanding of the existing team dynamics. The second stage is the education stage; at this stage, the nature of groups is presented to the team. Third, a brainstorming stage will allow for the identification of areas for enhancement. And fourth, the implementation stage which entails applying tailored team building strategies that were generated in the previous stage. Team members are actively participating in all stages of the process, thus empowering themselves (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). Applied sport psychology researchers and consultants have used and still use this approach to develop team building procedures (Bloom & Stevens, 2002; Voight & Callaghan, 2001). The indirect approach involves the consultant working with the team's coaches, whereby the coaches are responsible for implementing the team-building strategies suggested to them by the sport psychologist (Carron et al., 1997). The consultant serves a more educational role, and the empowered coach takes up the role of the team builder, which may increase the likelihood of a successful intervention (Carron et al., 2007). Carron and Spink (1993) developed a modus operandi and conceptual framework for an indirect approach to team building (see Figure 3). This approach consists of four stages. First, the introductory stage presents the rationale for the team building programme. Second, the coach is presented with a conceptual framework so as

they gain a better understanding of the team building process (see Figure 3). Third, the practical stage entails the coach brainstorming with the consultant to identify strategies that impact on the factors in the conceptual framework (team processes, team structures, team environment). And fourth, the intervention stage is when the coaches implement the team building strategies previously developed. The empirical-based evidence for the indirect approach to team building has been found to be positive in the sport and exercise setting (Carron & Spink, 1993; Estabrooks & Carron, 1999).

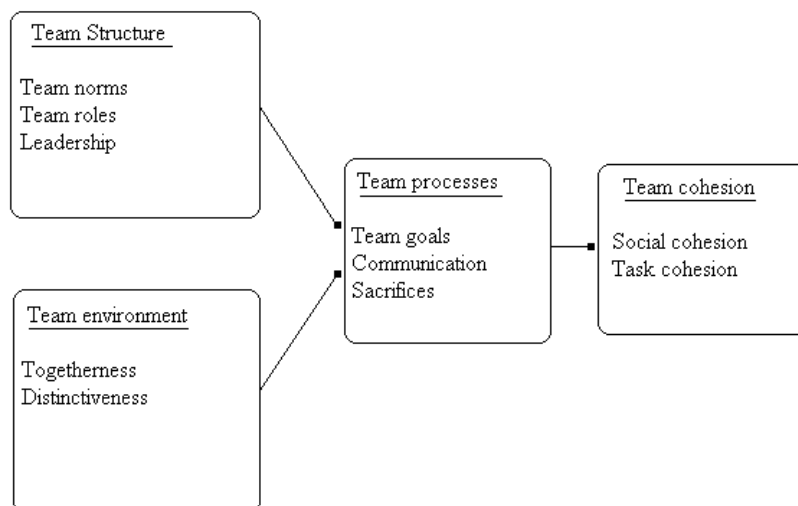


Figure 3. Conceptual framework for team building.

Loughead and Hardy (2006) suggested that researchers should incorporate elements of both direct and indirect approaches in their interventions. Yukelson (1997) stressed that the assessment of the situation is the most important part of any good team building intervention. However, Carron and Spink's (1993) indirect approach lacks this assessment feature. But Carron and Spink's (1993) conceptual framework provides clear guidance based on sound theory.

Combining the advantages of each method and taking the best of both can allow the researchers or consultants to maximize the effectiveness of their interventions (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). Regardless of the approach taken, researchers (Voight & Callaghan, 2001; Yukelson, 1997) indicated that group effectiveness is most likely to be improved when all athletes are included as active participants in the team building process. Higher-status members of the teams (captains, highly skilled athletes, or senior athletes) should also be involved in the development and implementation of the team building intervention in order to increase the sense of commitment among other team members (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998; Yukelson, 1997). Stevens and Bloom (2003) used a combination of both direct and indirect approaches in their study of the effects of team building on cohesion, and their results showed a significant improvement in the team's cohesiveness. This argues for the adequacy of the use of a less conventional approach to the team building process, taking the best of both direct and indirect techniques in order to match the specific needs of the research at hand.

1.10.1 Some sport- related team-building strategies

Team performance profiling: Yukelson (1997) emphasized the importance of assessing the situation prior to any intervention, and one method often used by researchers is team performance profiling (Carron et al., 2007). This method operates by assessing a team's primary strengths and weaknesses and also to facilitate goal setting (Butler & Hardy, 1992). With this

strategy, as outlined by Carron et al. (2007), athletes collectively identify all the characteristics (physical, mental, tactical etc.) of their sport perceived to be most important for success. The athletes then rate each of the characteristics in terms of their importance on a scale of 1 (least important) to 10 (most important), which is the ideal score. Next, the athletes are asked to rate their team's current level for each characteristic, again on a scale from 1 (could not be any worse) to 10 (could not be any better), which is the current score. Finally, the current score for each characteristic is subtracted from the ideal score, generating the discrepancy score. Larger discrepancy scores indicate that more attention should be paid to that characteristic, and group goals should be set accordingly (Carron et al., 2007; Stevens & Bloom, 2003). Carron and Hausenblas (1998) added that team performance profiling is particularly beneficial in that it allows all team members to express their opinions.

1.10.1.1 Team name

According to Carron and Spink's (1993) conceptual framework for team building, distinctiveness, as part of the team's environment, is a considerable factor in bringing about higher cohesion levels in sport teams. Elaborating a team name, a team logo, a team mission statement (Carron & Spink, 1993; Sugarman, 1999) are some aspects of a team's distinctiveness. In fact, having a team name for instance can produce a strong sense of identity among the team members, thereby enhancing a sense of belonging to the team. Carron and Spink (1993) advanced one way of creating a team name, and it involves the whole team brainstorming adjectives or words that qualify the characteristics of all the team members, as well as the team itself. After having produced a certain number of adjectives (e.g., smart, elegant, etc.), the team reaches a consensus as to what name (e.g., Panthers, Bulls, Hurricane, etc.) personifies all the

adjectives the most. It is imperative that all members relate to the name, in order to ensure a strong sense of identification.

1.10.1.2 Generating team norms

One way to develop team norms is proposed by Miller (1997), and it involves implementing discussions and obtaining consensus about the behaviours of the ideal player. Team members are asked to generate a profile of how the ideal player would react to particular situations (e.g., practice, competition, social evenings). The team is divided into small heterogeneous groups and each group is presented with the same list of hypothetical yet realistic situations for which they generate ideas on how the perfect player would react. After a certain period of time, a spokesperson for each group presents their ideas to the whole team. The team then discusses the ideas until they reach a consensus of what the acceptable and unacceptable behaviours are for various situations.

1.10.1.3 Team goals

According to Sugarman (1999), everyone needs to be on the same page when it comes to team goals. If everyone is striving towards the same thing then this will help cohesion develop. The author stated that it is vital that members know what their personal goals are, but they must also know what their teammate's goals are, as this will allow them to support each other towards achieving their goals. The team performance profiling method allows for coaches to establish the areas where improvement is needed and turn those areas into team goals, and since it is the

product of all team members' opinions, they are ensured to match individual goals (Carron et al., 2007).

1.10.1.4 Team meetings

Having periodic meetings is a good way to check if everything is going well within the team (Sugarman, 1999). Moreover, meetings are good situation where the team members can improve the communication levels of their team (Yukelson, 1997). Direct assessment given by players is the most accurate way to determine the amount of cohesiveness on the team (Sugarman, 1999).

1.10.1.5 Communication

Effective communication (which involves effective transmitting and listening skills) has been identified as the most important factor in developing and maintaining effective teamwork (Stevens, 2002). Consequently, team members and coaches should be encouraged to communicate in an open, supportive, and empathetic manner, which is best achieved via regular team meetings in which all members are encouraged to share information and discuss matters that affect the team directly (Yukelson, 1997).

1.10.1.6 Respect between players

There should be mutual respect among members (Sugarman, 1999). One way to achieve this was proposed by Munroe, Terry and Carron (2002), and essentially, each member writes down (confidentially and independently) why each teammate is a valued member of the team. Next the athletes' comments are collated by the coach or consultant and a single summary sheet is made up for each athlete. Apart from fostering mutual respect, Munroe et al. (2002) argued that it

provides players with an insight as to how their roles are viewed within the team as well as what makes them important. Clarifying role expectations and helping each individual feel valued, as well as having teammates to get to know each other's responsibilities to help build mutual understanding can also be used to develop team cohesion and confidence (Gill, 2000).

1.10.1.7 Continuity in practice

Sugarman (1999) also argued that having continuity in practice can help a team develop a sense of confidence. The author argued that people are creatures of habit, and the feeling of safety provided by continuity can develop a sense of comfort among the team, which in turn can enhance team cohesion.

1.10.2 Threats to cohesion

1.10.2.1 Social loafing

Social loafing refers to the reduction of individual effort exerted when people work in groups compared with when they work alone (Franzoi, 2006). A collective task can sometimes trap group members in a social dilemma. Group members may want to do their share to help the group reach its goals, but at the same time they are tempted to concentrate on their personal goals (Franzoi, 2006). This often results in members engaging in free riding, that is, doing less than their share of the work, yet still share equally in the group's rewards. Hardy (1990) suggested that social loafing is consistent with the social facilitation phenomenon in that 'evaluation' of

performance is the key issue. In social loafing, Hardy (1990) added, the absence of performance evaluation contributes to motivation losses, whereas in social facilitation the presence of others increases performance evaluation and consequently increases motivation. However, the author noted that social loafing is not the only form of possible motivation loss in sport. But it is imperative for coaches and team members to control social loafing so as to avoid behaviours that can be detrimental to the team's cohesiveness and performance (Hardy, 1990). Hodge and McKenzie (1999) proposed that it is necessary to develop ways to identify, recognise, evaluate, and reward each team member's role as well as contributions. Moreover, they proposed that leaders must try to increase members' sense of responsibility towards the performance of the team, mainly through better team interaction as well as setting and commitment to team goals. Finally, Hodge and McKenzie (1999) stressed that developing a sense of team pride and collective team identity will make team effort and team success a personal endeavour for each member. Hardy (1990) noted that the means that coaches or practitioners can use to control social loafing are all team building strategies that aim at improving cohesion levels, thus, it can be inferred that improving levels of cohesiveness can have positive effect on the controlling of social loafing in team sports.

1.10.2.2 Cliques and adverse effects on team cohesion

Cliques become a problem then there is more loyalty to that subgroup than there is to the team as a whole (Sugarman, 1999). Unresolved conflicts can sometimes spark the formation of cliques. Hardy et al. (2005) found that when members become more loyal to a selected few members, it can have debilitating effects on the team's performance because members are engaging in negative intra-team competition and develop animosity among players which in turn divide the

team. Coaches and other team leaders must be sensitive to negative attitudes displayed by team members and they must also encourage open communication and trust as a way to resolve team conflicts (Hardy et al., 2005).

1.10.2.3 Groupthink and cohesion

Research has reported that strong team cohesion has many positive effects on team performance and individual performance (Carron et al., 2002; Gill, 2000; Hardy et al., 2005). However, as Forsyth (1999) noted, very cohesive unit may suffer from groupthink, a distorted style of thinking that renders groups members incapable of making rational decisions. According to Janis (1982), groupthink is a mode of thinking in which people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise substitute courses of actions. During groupthink, members try so hard to agree with one another that they make mistakes and commit errors that could have easily be avoided with a clearer and more objective mindset (Forsyth, 1999). Janis (1982) identified cohesiveness as the factor that contributes the most to the rise of groupthink. The author added that when cohesiveness reaches high levels, it limits the amount of dissent in the group to the point that internal disagreements -so necessary for good decision making- disappear. Forsyth (1999) thus pointed out that it is important that coaches and members alike encourage good decision-making by allowing for criticisms and subjective views to be outspoken in a respectful and constructive environment.

1.11 Maintaining cohesion

For a group to achieve high cohesion levels, it is imperative that coaches and practitioners make maximum efforts to control all possible threats to cohesion. Once the team has reached a high level of cohesion, it is important to maintain it at that level (Sugarman, 1999). The coach and players need to keep the team on the same track that has gotten them to the point they are at currently. Sugarman (1999) suggests that having periodic meetings plays an important role in this as it allows for reflections and readjusting in case the team is drifting away from its optimal situation. Moreover, the author stated that any team can always improve, as there are always elements that can be worked on. Sugarman suggested that having a family atmosphere can also help maintain cohesion, because there is a strong sense of loyalty and dedication that unites members together especially through rough times.

Chapter 2 Methodology

2.1 Research aims

Through an action research approach, the aims of this research project are to:

1. Assess team cohesion within the Rhodes University men's basketball 1st team using the Group Environment Questionnaire (Carron et al., 2002) and focus groups so as to identify the needs of the team in an attempt to positively influence cohesiveness levels. The content of the focus groups will be determined by the responses obtained from the GEQ as well as the literature on cohesion and cohesion-building in sport teams (Carron, 1982; Carron et al., 1985; Carron & Spink, 1993; Carron et al., 2002).
2. Develop and evaluate a cohesion building programme tailored to the assessed needs of the basketball team identified during the investigation phase in order to influence cohesiveness within the team. The programme will be developed using various existing team cohesion building theories and strategies developed by prominent scholars and practitioners (Carron et al., 2002; Munroe et al., 2002; Sugarman, 1999; Yukelson, 1997).

2.2 Action research

As outlined in the research aims section, this research takes the form of an action research project. Action researchers argue that research should not be aimed solely at creating esoteric knowledge, nor should it be conducted only by people with advanced academic degrees (Esterberg, 2002). In fact, the outcome of research should be useful and should be aimed at

improving the lives of those who are the focus of research. This stems from the idea that individuals or groups are experts of their own lives, and involving them in the research process may generate information and knowledge that would not have been discovered otherwise (Esterberg, 2002). Esterberg further argues that action research can be thought of as an approach to doing research, a research framework with a very specific aim -the creation of social change- one that involves creating particular kinds of relationships among all of those involved in the research process. For all these reasons, an action research approach is best suited to addressing the aims of this study, which is to elicit change within an athletic team and improve its level of cohesion while involving all team members towards the achievement of such purpose. There are four stages to the continual process of action research, namely, reflect, plan, act, and observe (Cummings & Worley, 2001). Then the results of the action are assessed to provide further information to guide further action, and it is this iterative cycle of research and action that requires the researcher and the various members to collaborate throughout the research process (see Figure 4; Cummings & Worley, 2001)

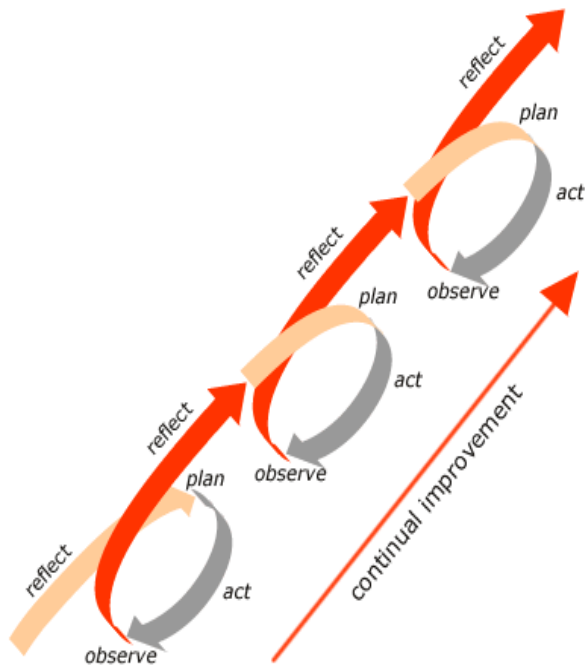


Figure 4. Action Research cycle

Another feature of action research is that action researchers believe that the process of conducting research should be empowering for research participants (Esterberg, 2002). In this research project, participants will be exposed to a great deal of team cohesion theory as well as team building strategies, and this will empower them in that it will allow them to gain a rich understanding of team cohesion and may in turn help other people or teams in their communities. This action research approach involves the following steps: entry, assessment, design, implementation, evaluation, and separation (Rothwell, McLean & Sullivan, 1995). Adopting this approach is well suited to this research because it allows for the adequate planning of the elaboration, implementation, and evaluation of the cohesion-building programme. Thus, the methodological process of this research project was designed in accordance with the major steps of action research proposed by Rothwell et al. (1995). Action research does not necessarily involve a particular method of conducting research, in fact as Esterberg (2002) suggested action

researchers may use many different strategies to gather data, both qualitative and quantitative, depending on the problem at hand and personal references. Cohesion is a multi-dimensional construct, which is influenced by many factors under various circumstances (Carron et al., 1985). Hence, it is necessary to ensure that the phenomenon is approached from as many different angles as possible so as to fully grasp its various manifestations. One way of achieving this is triangulation, which will be done in this research through the use of quantitative and qualitative techniques as parallel yet complementary research methods. Triangulation entails collecting material in as many different ways and from as many diverse sources as possible (Kelly, 2006). More specifically, this research project adopted a methodological triangulation approach, which refers to the use of multiple methods to study a single problem, looking for convergent evidence from different sources, such as interviewing, questionnaires, and surveys (Kelly, 2006).

2.3 Research techniques used in this project

Theorists suggest that groups are greater than the sum of their parts, for groups often possess characteristics that cannot be deduced from the individual member's characteristics (Lewin, 1951). Moreover, Carron et al. (1985) defined cohesion as a group dynamic. Therefore, it becomes crucial for this research to obtain information that reflects both the individual perceptions and the group attitudes in order to grasp an accurate and rich understanding of cohesion within the athletic group at hand. Hence, as mentioned in the previous section, a qualitative research technique will be used in parallel with a quantitative technique in this research project (triangulation). A focus group discussion will embody the qualitative technique whereas a questionnaire (GEQ) will be used as the quantitative technique. It is important to

emphasize that the two research techniques perform separate functions in this project, but they remain parallel and complementary source of data collection and analysis. This guarantees that the phenomenon is explored in as much depth as possible and the data obtained is as rich as possible.

Questionnaires are one of the most commonly used data collection techniques used by researchers in the social sciences (Kanjee, 2006; Vogt, 1993). A questionnaire can be defined as a group of written questions used to gather information from respondents (Kanjee, 2006); it usually consists of a number of measurement scales, open-ended items, and other questions that elicit demographic information from participants. The questionnaire used in this research project is a questionnaire specifically developed by Carron et al. (1985) to assess team cohesion, the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ). The GEQ has been recognized as the most accurate and most powerful measure of team cohesion (Eys et al., 2003; Loughhead & Hardy, 2006). For the purpose of this research, the questionnaire is used to grasp the subjective experiences of the individual athletes.

In order to gather information about the opinions, experiences, and attitudes of the entire group as a single independent entity, focus-groups are used as an additional data collection technique. The focus groups are conducted after the scoring of the GEQ and along with the relevant literature; the scores are used to develop the focus group schedule. Kelly (2006) stated that focus groups allow researchers to adequately study groups because it gives them access to intersubjective experiences that exist in the group, that is, the experiences shared by a community of people. The author also noted that focus groups not only give insight into

intersubjective experiences, but they also allow the researcher to gain information about the differences (areas where opinions diverge) between people in the group. This data collection method is best suited to the purpose of this study because along with gathering information about individual members' subjective experiences, it is necessary to obtain data about the experiences of the group as a whole hence capturing the two dimensional nature of groups (Lewin, 1951). Focus group is a general term given to a research interview conducted with a group. A focus group is typically a group of people who share a similar type of experience, but a group that is not 'naturally' constituted as an existing social group (e.g., family) (Kelly, 2006). Kelly (2006) further stated that most focus groups in psychology are composed of between six to twelve people. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) noted that focus groups tend to be very useful when more depth is needed after having gathered information from a more structured questionnaire. That is the reason behind using the focus group as a parallel yet complementary technique with the GEQ. In fact, the focus group allows respondents to react to and build upon the responses of other group members (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990), and this synergistic effect of the group may result in the production of data that might not have been uncovered in individual interviews. Moreover, social scientists often use focus-groups to evaluate programmes (Esterberg, 2002), which again makes the use of this technique relevant to this project. Another reason that makes the use of a focus group relevant to this research project is that focus-groups are generally considered 'fun' by participants, and a lively, interesting discussion tends to build a sense of cohesiveness; and bearing in mind that the aims of this project are to develop and evaluate cohesiveness in a basketball team, the focus-groups themselves then may constitute a strategy to develop cohesiveness.

2.4 Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select the group in order to obtain the most suitable population sample (Kelly, 2006). Purposive sampling is a sampling method based on careful selection of cases that are typical of the population being studied or phenomenon to be studied (Kelly, 2006). This method is often used to create small, relevant samples in qualitative research. Moreover, the purposive sampling method ensures that the findings are sound and fit the research enquiry. The phenomenon under investigation was team cohesion within a South African male collegiate basketball team, so it was essential to find a sample that would fit the requirements of the study. It is for these reasons that the Rhodes University Men's Basketball 1st Team was selected to be the participant in this research. As the coach of the team, there was no difficulty in gaining access to the team. Besides, it was necessary to integrate the programme in the team's routine so as to ensure that no disruptions were made to the team's functioning, and being the coach was undoubtedly helpful in this attempt.

The team enthusiastically took part in the research project to the point where they almost made it their own project. The team has consented to have the focus group discussions tape recorded and have signed written informed consent forms (see Appendix A for sample). This ensures a great deal of motivation and participation from the team members in the various stages of the process. Authorities (Rhodes University Sports Officer in charge of basketball and the Chairperson of the Rhodes University Basketball club) have also been approached and they have expressed their enthusiastic support for the project. The Rhodes University men's basketball first team have won the provincial league every year since the 2004 season. The team also won the yearly Tri-Varsity

tournament for 5 consecutive years since 2003, and in their first ever appearance in the National Championships in 2007, the team finished 6th out of the 12 universities that took part in the event. However, a number of players that were part of that somewhat successful unit graduated and have therefore left the team. Moreover, this year was characterized by the unusual arrival of a large number of talented rookies. Taken together, the departure of several seniors (six) and the arrival of several rookies (five) contributed to the drastic modification of this year's team. This year's team is made up of players from extremely diverse cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. There are 11 players in the team, ranging from 18-31 years of age, with 10 of them between 18-23 years and one member being 31 years old. The players are from Zimbabwe, South Africa, Spain, France, and the United States, and most players are students. There are only two players who work, of which one is employed by the South African Department of Sport and Recreation and the other is working at a local private school. Their involvement with Rhodes basketball goes back to 1998, which makes them as "part of Rhodes" as any other player on the team. These two players are from the local Grahamstown community, which is important to note because it makes the team that even more diverse. Overall, the Rhodes University men's basketball 1st team of 2007 was a highly competitive group. Considering the major changes in personnel experienced this year, it is necessary to maintain the team's high performance or even enhance it. Talent and skills have not been lost with the departure of the seniors. Quite the opposite indeed, the influx of very talented rookies may increase the athletic level of the team. The group we had up until last year played together for a few seasons, the players (including myself) managed build cohesion with time, but since the group is a new unit, and I have taken the coaching role, it seems necessary to improve cohesiveness levels in the team. Thus, it may be

the exposure of the team to a cohesion building programme that guarantees the maintenance or amelioration of last year's performance.

2.5 Role of researcher

Theory suggests that adopting a two-way approach, both direct and indirect, is often the most suitable way to develop team cohesion (Carron & Spink, 1993; Carron, Spink & Prapavessis, 1997; Yukelson, 1997). In this research project, the researcher assumed the role of a consultant, however, because the researcher was also the coach of the basketball team that is the object of study, a two-way approach was used to develop a high level of cohesion in the team. By default, the direct approach proposed by Yukelson (1997) where the consultant works closely with the team and its players in a 'hands-on' manner was adopted simply because the coach and the consultant are one person. However, the research also adopted a more indirect approach to the development of the team's cohesion, whereby the coach/consultant/researcher worked with the team's various leaders (captains and senior players) to implement the programme. In other words, the coach worked via the team leaders. This involved the coach working with a selected group of players, whereby the designated players were responsible for implementing the team-building activities suggested to them by the consultant (Carron, Spink & Prapavessis, 1997).

2.6 Research process

The major steps of this research are informed by Rothwell et al.'s (1995) action research approach that comprises the following steps: entry, assessment, design, implementation,

evaluation, and separation. Consequently, the outline of the research process is drafted in accordance with the steps mentioned above.

2.6.1 Entry

This phase is principally concerned with the logistics surrounding the access to the group of study. After introducing the team members to the research objectives, the first action that was taken was to ask if the team members were unanimously interested in taking part in the psychological research on team cohesion in sport. After obtaining the informed consent of the team, the University's official bodies in charge of sport were consulted. The sport officer in charge of Basketball as well as the Chairperson of the Basketball Club granted their approval and support for the project. One important aspect of this stage that needs to be remembered is to clarify the role of the researcher within the team. The participants were informed of the multiple roles of the coach/researcher/consultant and each role was clearly outlined to them so as to avoid any confusion and/or misunderstanding during the process. Additionally, it is important to inform the participants as to what is expected of them, in terms of time and commitment. This will ensure that there is no hidden agenda that comes out during the course of the programme, which may jeopardize the research process.

2.6.2 Assessment

The purpose of this programme is to address specific issues concerning the cohesiveness within the team in order to attempt to enhance the team's level of cohesiveness. Consequently, the first

step that was taken was the first assessment of the level of cohesiveness within the team, using the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ), developed by Carron et al. (1985). Once administered and scored, the results of the GEQ then assisted in the preparation of a focus group discussion, which was then conducted separately yet in relation with the GEQ; and that constituted assessment one. The triangulating nature of the data collection helps to ensure that the information gathered is valid, rich, and meaningful (Kelly, 2006).

The GEQ is a self-report questionnaire that contains 18 items. Four aspects of cohesion were assessed: individual attraction to the group – task (ATG-T), individual attraction to the group - social (ATG-S), group integration - task (GI-T), and group integration - social (GI-S). All items of the GEQ are rated along a 9-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 (strongly disagree) and 9 (strongly agree) (Carron et al., 1985). There are five items in both the ATG-S and GI-T scales and 4 items in both the ATG-T and GI-S scales. Scores for each subscale can be obtained by computing either the sum of average of the items in each subscale (Carron et al., 2002). As the authors pointed out, it is important to keep in mind that some of the items in the GEQ are negatively worded. This means that perceptions of high cohesiveness are indicated by strong disagreements with the item's statement (Carron et al., 2002). Subsequently, scores on some of the items were reversed to counteract the effects of negatively worded items.

According to Carron et al. (2002), an important consideration that needs to be taken into account when scoring the GEQ is to whether or not the four subscale scores need to be summed up to obtain one overall cohesion score. Since cohesion is a multidimensional concept (Carron et al., 1985) that is composed of task as well as social components, it may be accurate to assert that the four subscales of the GEQ measure related yet fundamentally different manifestations of

cohesion (i.e., ATG-T, ATG-S, GI-S, and GI-T). Moreover, research has shown that the four subscales of the GEQ are conceptually different, and they have different antecedents and different consequences (Carron et al., 2002). The authors thus suggested that it is not recommended to combine the four constructs to form an overall cohesiveness score. In this paper, the four subscales are treated separately to ensure that each different manifestation of cohesiveness is given adequate attention. Moreover, in order to obtain a thorough picture of the level of cohesiveness within the team, it was necessary to consider all four subscales separately. This is supported by Carron et al.'s (2002) argument stating that the decision should be specific to the research inquiry. The unit of analysis that is used in this research project is group averages, more specifically the group's means of each four subscales. This decision was made considering that the aim of this research is to investigate and instigate change to all manifestations of cohesion within a sports team.

The data collection and analysis of the GEQ was performed using the scoring key provided by Carron et al. (1985). Thereafter, the results were taken to inform the issues to be dealt with in a focus group. The focus group was carried out in a classroom setting, and lasted about one and a half hours. The issues that were raised were informed by the various trends provided by the responses obtained through the GEQ, as well as relevant matters presented by the literature. Important information was then explored in more depth through extensive probing during the focus group. It was useful to obtain information that reflected the group's attitudes and opinions insofar as cohesion is concerned. Especially since cohesion is a group dynamic, information generated by the group as a unit is of great value. The data collected through the focus group was

then transcribed and analysed with interpretive analysis (Kelly, 2006). There are five steps to interpretive analysis (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006):

- Step 1: Familiarisation and immersion in material through extensive reading.
- Step 2: Inducing themes, which involves identifying relevant and recurrent statements and classifying them into themes.
- Step 3: Coding, which entails marking different sections of the material as being instances of or relevant to one or more of the themes previously induced. Colour coding is a simple yet useful technique to code data. It is important to note that codes must never be considered final or unchanging, as new ideas may emerge as the analysis progresses.
- Step 4: Elaboration, or the exploration of themes in greater detail, in order to grasp the finer nuances not captured in the initial coding system. The principle here is to “code to redundancy”, that is, keeping on coding, elaborating, and recoding until no further significant new information emerges.
- Step 5: Interpretation and checking, which involves generating a written account of the phenomenon using thematic categories from analysis as subheadings. At this stage, the researcher may reflect on his/her role in collecting data and the interpretation. This means that the researcher should give some indication of how his/her personal involvement may have affected the data collection and data analysis processes.

2.6.3 Designing the programme

The two data collection methods carried out during assessment one (i.e., GEQ and focus-group discussion) generated ground information that determined the content of the programme. Moreover, it determined the areas where emphasis was needed. The results of assessment one (see Results Chapter for details), in combination with the existing body of knowledge on cohesion-building and team building (Butler & Hardy, 1992; Carron & Spink, 1993; Miller, 1997; Sugarman, 1999; Yukelson, 1997) thus informed the development of the programme.

2.6.3.1. Context of the programme

The programme started at the beginning of the season. It began with an introductory session followed later that week by the first assessment. The introductory session, as its name indicates, entailed introducing the programme to the team, its goals, the reasons behind it, and its length. Then, the first activity of the programme was a social gathering. These gatherings took place regularly thereafter, at least every second week, depending on the availability of the players and availability of resources. The first classroom session was conducted two weeks after the introductory session. Two weeks later, the second classroom was carried out. The third classroom session was only conducted 4 weeks after the second session, due to the University examination period. Ideally, it would have been conducted after two weeks, as for the first couple of sessions. Besides the classroom sessions, team building activities were regularly conducted during practice sessions during the course of the programme. Similarly, weekly team meetings were held at the end or beginning of a practice session. The meetings, as well as the classroom session were either held in a participant's flat nearby the gym, or in a quiet corner of the gym. The programme ended after the National Championship, and lasted three months. The

main motive behind the programme was to improve the team's overall performance for the Nationals and maximize their chances for success. In fact, a good performance at the Nationals seemed to be the missing achievement of the Rhodes University Men's Basketball 1st team. A cohesion building programme that would speed up the process of building cohesiveness could be helpful in maximizing the chances of national success.

2.6.4 Implementation of the programme

As proposed by Carron and Spink (1993), the implementation of the programme was made by addressing the issues that were relevant to the team's needs. Changes were brought to the group's environment, structure, processes, and communication levels (Carron & Spink, 1993) through the following tasks, activities, and exercises. The following section summarizes the programme's various components, and more details concerning the specific activities and their outcome can be found in the results and discussion chapter.

2.6.4.1 Programme outline

As mentioned earlier, the programme started out with a brief introductory meeting where the participants were initiated to the details of the programme. This meeting was followed by the first administration of the GEQ. A few days after the administration of the first GEQ assessment, the first focus group was conducted. The focus group schedule was based on the scores of the GEQ and the existing body of literature on cohesion-building. The focus group was followed by the first social gathering, so as to keep the participants enthusiastic in taking part in the study.

The first classroom meeting in which various activities were carried out constituted the next stage of the programme. The first one was the Team Performance Profiling (TPP) exercise. This was done in a classroom setting, where the players were asked to determine their team's levels of performance in terms of the characteristics of basketball they believed to be the most important. As mentioned in the literature review, this exercise allows the researcher and the participants to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the current team by identifying the characteristics of basketball where more work is required to better performance (Carron et al., 2007). Second, besides enabling all team members to express their opinion, which is crucial to better communication levels (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998), the TPP exercise allowed for team goals to emerge in that it allowed to identify where the team needs to allocate more attention (see Results and Discussion chapter for details). The next exercise that was done in this meeting was to address issues related to the group's environment, more specifically its distinctiveness (Carron & Spink, 1993). As the two authors suggested, bringing change to a team's environment partly involves bringing change to its uniqueness, to the features that are going to make the team distinct from all others and provide it with a sense of identity. To that end, a brainstorming session with the team was held in order to reach a consensus for a team name, team slogan, and team logo. Furthermore, yet as part of the change in environment, it was necessary to establish a mission statement. Sugarman (1999) defined a mission statement as the team's collective sense of purpose, and it reflects a deep personal meaning of the reason behind one's participation in a given sport. The team's mission statement was also created through a brainstorming session where all team members were asked to write down their own mission statements. They were then asked to present their ideas and those ideas guided a team discussion that ended with the team reaching a consensus as to what the team's mission statement would be. One can notice that

these exercises indirectly enhanced communication within the group as well as respect of other team members (by respecting one's ideas or opinions).

The second classroom meeting was carried out as a continuation of the first session and was used to address the team's structure (Carron & Spink, 1993). Leadership is a crucial feature of a team's structure (Carron & Spink, 1993), as illustrated by research findings depicting a positive relationship between leadership and team cohesion (Pease & Kozub, 1994). Thus, the final activity of this session saw the selection of two team captains whose jobs are to provide guidance and lead the team from within, as well as ensuring that all information relevant to the team's well being are well communicated throughout the team. It is common practice in basketball to have two team captains. The next exercise that was conducted in this meeting addressed a team structure issue, that is, team norms. Team norms are one of the team structure components identified by Carron and Spink (1993) in their conceptual framework for team building (see Figure 3). Team norms reflect what the team considers to be acceptable individual behaviour (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998). Team norms are important to teams in that they provide the standards by which team members are to be judged, such standards can be behaviour related, skills related, and physique related. (Miller, 1997). To develop team norms, Miller's (1997) method was used, which involves team members generating a profile of their perception of the ideal player and how such ideal player would react across various situations. After a brainstorming session, the team discussed the ideas until they reached a consensus. The ideas that were agreed upon then became the team's standards by which team members were judged. The last exercise that was carried out in that session was the establishing of team roles. Roles are a pattern of behaviour that is expected of a person in a social situation (Carron & Hausenblas,

1998). To establish team roles, the “hot seat” method was borrowed from Eys, Colman, Loughead and Carron (2004). It was done by asking individual members to draft and present to the team what they thought to be their own responsibilities on the team (Appendix B for sample). Shortly after the presentation, other team members and the coaching staff could alter, dispute, or expand on the responsibilities outlined by individual players. The final list of individual roles was then drafted for each player.

The third classroom meeting was organized to discuss the issue of team processes. The first task in this meeting was to address one aspect of team process, that was, to set team goals. The outcomes of the team performance profiling exercise performed in the first session were fed back to the team members, and again, keeping the information from the team performance profiling in mind, a brainstorming session was carried out with all the team members. Individual team members were asked to write down what they felt were the most important goals that they and the team needed to work towards. After some discussion, a consensus was reached and team goals were set. The brainstorming session along with the team discussion made it possible for individual goals to match with team goals, which is the most critical requirement of team goal setting (Sugarman, 1999). The second activity was used to address issues pertinent to another team process, sacrifices (Carron & Spink, 1993). Sacrifice behaviour is a type of behaviour whereby an individual voluntarily initiates an action or gives up a privilege for the sake of another individual or individuals without regard to reciprocity (Prapavessis & Carron, 1997). This session involved the researcher providing a mini-lecture to the team so as to ensure that the concept of sacrifice behaviour was clearly understood. After the mini-lecture, team members were asked to write down the sacrifices they would be willing to make as well the sacrifices they

would expect other teammates to make. All ideas were then brought into a team discussion. At the outset of the discussion, individual members generated a list of sacrifices they felt each team member should make for the sake of the team (see Appendix C for sample). After drafting individual lists, the team brainstormed ideas and came to an agreement as to which sacrifices each player should make for the team.

Carron and Spink (1993) advanced that togetherness as a feature of a team's environment along with communication are important features that need to be addressed in order to achieve social cohesion. Social get-togethers were thus organized in which all team members would gather up and spend some quality time outside of basketball in order to become closer friends. Carron and Spink (1993) suggested that having the team members spend time together away from the sporting world allows for trust relationships to develop, and by getting to know each other on a personal basis, players develop a stronger bond. The social gatherings took the forms of team parties, indoor/outdoor activities, and road trips.

Apart from the three classroom meetings and the social gatherings, weekly meetings were held after every week's first practice session with the entire team in order to discuss various matters, provide feedback on certain activities, and resolve conflict situations. The meetings were held in one team member's house which was close to the gym. As Sugarman (1999) suggested, periodic meetings are a good way to ensure that everything is running smoothly and that plans are adhered to, moreover, they provide a ground for open-communication as well as opportunities for the team to spend some time together off the court.

Moreover, some team building activities were conducted during the practice sessions and they were used in order to increase trust levels among team members, as well as to improve communication, problem-solving, and cooperation within the group. The activities that were used regularly were: Mine Field, All aboard, Circle of trust, and Multiple-way tug-of-war (Jones, 2002). “Mine field” involves a pair of players to guide each other through a ‘land mine’. One player is blind-folded and has to walk through a ten yard field scattered with objects, in order to not step on the objects, he follows the vocal instructions of his partner. This exercise is known to develop higher levels of trust and communication. “All aboard” involves the whole team to standing (fitting) into a circle, and as the circle is made smaller and smaller, the team attempts stand or fit in the circle over and over again. This exercise requires the team to come up with ideas of how to all fit in the circle together, it also improves its communication levels, and cooperation levels. The “circle of trust” is an exercise whereby all members sit in a circle and one after the other; they would say what they appreciated the most about the two people sitting next to them. This exercise is good for trust relationships as well for teammates’ self-esteem; moreover, it allows team members to feel accepted in the team, which is beneficial for the affective dimension of cohesion (Carron et al., 2007). Finally, unlike the regular tug-of-war which relies more on strength than strategy, the multiple-way tug-of-war requires team members to demonstrate strategic thinking and cooperation because it involves a great deal of synchronization and collectiveness as opposed to physical strength alone.

2.6.5 Evaluation

The overall method of evaluating the programme is a pretest-posttest experimental design (Cozby, 2007). For the GEQ, it will take the form of an experimental design in which the same participant/group is observed under more than one occasion (related samples) (Howell, 2008). The experimental design that was used is known to possess threats to internal validity, such as maturation, because there is only one group present and no control group. This threat of independent natural change (maturation) suggests that change can happen regardless of the intervention, for instance, because groups are naturally bound to become more cohesive with time (Tredoux & Smith, 2006). However in this study, this threat is controlled to some extent, on one hand, the scores of the GEQ were analysed in terms of variations in difference scores, and on the other hand, the results obtained in the GEQ were interrogated in the focus group. In other words, data collected through the focus groups can act as a consecutive, yet complementary source of data that reduced the impact of the threats by obtaining data that the GEQ may have failed to grasp. As far as the focus groups are concerned, maturation was controlled by comparing the results from the interpretive analysis of the two focus groups in order to identify significant changes in perceptions and experiences. Taken together, the information obtained through the GEQ (Carron et al., 1985) and the focus groups ensured that the research findings were valid and consistent. The evaluation phase was thus done in three stages.

The first stage involved performing a second assessment after the implementation of the programme (assessment two). This was done by administering the GEQ for the second occasion. The GEQ was yet again administered and scored using the scoring key provided by Carron et al. (2002). Following the GEQ administration, the second focus group was conducted a second time

and its content was determined by the scores of the second administration of the GEQ, the results from the first focus group discussion, and the relevant body of literature.

The second stage involved the evaluation of the GEQ results from assessment one and assessment two using a test applied to means with two-related samples, more specifically the Student's t-test applied to difference scores (before and after the implementation) (Howell, 2008). The student t-test applied to difference scores is a statistical test used to test hypotheses applied to the means of two related samples (Howell, 2008). It is an experimental design in which the same participant/group is observed under more than one treatment (Howell, 2008). The t-test applied to difference scores involves measuring the variables before and after the implementation phase or treatment. Once the two scores are obtained, difference scores are calculated (i.e., the mathematical difference between the before score and the after score (Howell, 2008). This statistical measure is typically used to assess the impact of therapeutic programmes on groups or individuals (Howell, 2008), which makes its use in this research project most adequate. This research aims at evaluating the impact of the programme on the team's level of cohesiveness, which made the use of the use of this statistical test appropriate.

The third stage of the evaluation was to examine the data provided by the two focus groups, conducted before and after the implementation, so as to identify variations in the perceptions and experiences of cohesiveness among the participants. At this stage, the notion of reflexivity of the researcher comes to play a major role, especially regarding the interpretation of the changes in the participant's perceptions and experiences are made. It is worthy to note here that despite the apparent complexity of the design on paper, it has great practical capacities. Within the action

research approach, practicality was deemed vitally important, in other words, it was the pragmatic coherence of the design that was given the most attention. On the other hand, this resulted in the design to appear rather complex on paper.

2.6.6 Separation

The process of the implementation and evaluation of the cohesiveness programme transferred knowledge and skills to the team (Burke, 1982), and in so doing, empowered the team members to continue improving their level of cohesiveness in any team in which they find themselves. The programme ended three months after its onset, but the researcher never physically exited the team. In fact, because of the multiple roles of the researcher, despite the end of the programme, his role as a coach still remained the same. This was beneficial to the team in that if there were any issues concerning the programme that needed to be discussed, the coach could simply put on his researcher/consultant suit on and elucidate the various matters. The only issue that were raised was one participant's concern that there will not be anybody who will have the expertise to monitor the programme implementation for the next team. However, considering the amount of knowledge that was passed onto the team during the programme, it is more likely that nearly any team member could clarify dark areas about the programme. In fact, empowering the team in terms of knowledge transfer was an objective of the action research approach. Nonetheless, a meeting was arranged with the player who wanted to know more about some specific areas of the programme. During that meeting, the extensive amount of information relevant to the preparation, implementation, and monitoring of the programme was carefully explained to the player, who will be next year's team manager.

2.7 Trustworthiness, reflexivity, and representation

Many qualitative researchers have forwarded trustworthiness as a primary criterion for evaluation of quality in research (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999). Kopala and Suzuki (1999) defined trustworthiness as the elements of good practice that are present throughout the research process. The elements of good practice are: disclosure of the researcher's orientation, intensive and prolonged engagement with the material, persistent observation, triangulation, and discussion of findings and process with others. As far as this research is concerned, the researcher's orientations have been disclosed to the research advisor, approved by the departmental as well as University review committee, and discussed in detail with the research participants. Throughout the entire research process, all the information collected was consulted and theories have always been used to provide solid bases for guiding the research process. It is in the nature of action research to engage in continuous data collection (Esterberg, 2002), and in this research, this was done through the regular meetings with the team in order to obtain feedback of the study as well as to discuss any matters of relevancy or problems that need to be resolved (see Results and Discussion chapter for further details). Triangulation was achieved through the use of methodological triangulation, in which multiple data collection (questionnaire and focus-group) and data analysis (statistical analysis and interpretive analysis) were used to obtain an "all-angle" perspective of the phenomenon at hand. The process and findings were discussed on a regular basis in the meetings with the team, so as to ensure that all feedback was well communicated and

every party was on the same page as far as the research process. Moreover, the progress of the research project was regularly discussed with the research advisor.

In qualitative research, the researcher is often the instrument of research (Banister et al., 1994); the researcher is the one constructing the knowledge, by interpreting the information collected from participants. Thus, as Kopala and Suzuki (1999) argued, acknowledgement that the researcher is central in the construction of knowledge leads qualitative researchers to emphasize the reflexive aspects of the research process. The same authors defined reflexivity as disciplined self-reflection, and Banister et al. (1994) added that it represents an attempt to make explicit the process by which the material and analysis are produced. In this research project, reflexivity was guaranteed by constantly reflecting on and critically evaluating the topic, design, and process, together with the personal experiences of doing the research. This was done in the meetings with the research advisor as well as with the team where all topics were discussed and evaluated so as to ensure that the process produces quality results. These issues are discussed in more depth in the Discussion chapter of this research thesis.

Efforts to produce research that is reliable, valid, trustworthy, and reflexive are inextricably connected with issues of representation (Kopala & Suzuki, 1999). Representation is integral to the research process, and in this research, representation problems are addressed following Kvale's (1996) arguments which uphold that in qualitative research, information is not collected but "co-produced" and "co-authored" in that, which was the case in this project, the researcher and the participants co-generated the findings and the active participation of respondents through

the action research approach of this study enabled the sharing of responsibilities and co-ownership of the study.

2.8 Validity

A significant aspect of validity that is relevant to this project is the one of pragmatic validity. This refers to the actual usefulness and applicability of the project, in terms of the impacts it may have on the people or communities that encounter it (Kvale, 1996). It has been repeatedly stated that due to the action research approach that is adopted in this project, the ultimate goal is to bring change to the group/community, so, once this goal is reached, it can be assumed that pragmatic validity has been achieved. Pragmatic validation is thus reached when the knowledge concerning the team's cohesiveness can be applied to instigate change (Kvale, 1996).

2.9 Ethical issues surrounding the project

A central aim of social science is to contribute knowledge to ameliorate the human condition and enhance human dignity (Kvale, 1996). There are four widely accepted philosophical principles that are applied in various ways to determine whether research is ethical (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). This approach has become known as principlism, and the principles are: autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice. Autonomy and respect for the dignity of person issues have been addressed by obtaining voluntary informed consent from all the participants. Efforts were made by the researcher to protect individuals from any potential threat and confidentiality of individual members has been

discussed with the team members and it has been agreed that no individual information will be disclosed. The information gathered in the focus group remained confidential in that no individual comments were disclosed to the public, in fact, all comments were attributed to the group as a whole, and only the researcher had access to the data. Data are to be shredded once the project is fully completed. The researcher ensured that no harm was caused to the participants throughout the process, and channels of discussion between the participants and the researcher have been established so as to deal with possible negative incidents caused directly or indirectly by the research. The aim of this research project is to develop cohesion within a basketball team, so it is foreseen that all members and the team as a whole will fully benefit from the project, as the team's chemistry increased. Moreover, the individuals will be exposed to team-building strategies and theories, which will in turn empower them and give them opportunities to spread the knowledge to their communities. Last, all participants with no exception were treated with fairness and equity throughout the research process. Equal attention and effort was given to each and every participant, regardless of any demographical characteristics. Furthermore, the nature of the action research approach (Esterberg, 2002; Rothwell et al., 1995) ensures that collaborative partnership is performed, because participants will actively inform the various stages of the research project.

Chapter 3: Results and Discussion

3.1 Assessment

3.1.1 First administration of the GEQ

The GEQ was administered to the participants at the onset of the project as an initial assessment of the level of cohesiveness within the team. The participants were briefly introduced to the project's goal before the completion of the questionnaire, but no detailed information was unveiled. This was deliberately done to encourage objective responses from the participants. The questionnaire was administered in a secluded classroom setting to avert any possible distractions. There were no time constraints as the participants were given as much time as they needed to complete the questionnaire.

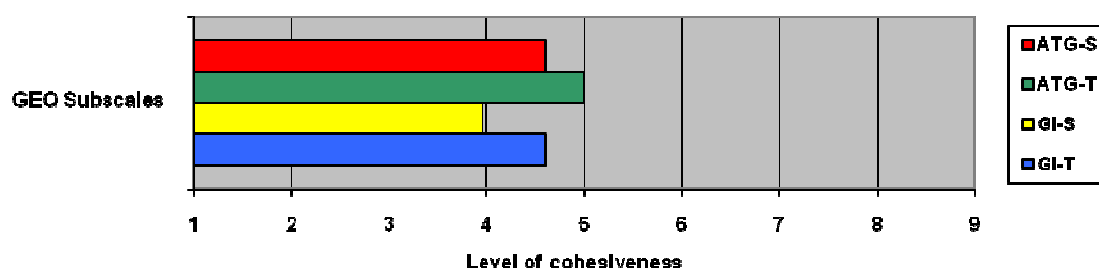
The results of the GEQ for assessment one are summarized and graphically presented in Table 1 and Figure 5:

Table 1

GEQ scores for assessment one of the whole team's mean score for each GEQ subscale

Manifestation	Definition	Score
Group Integration-Task (GI-T)	Individual team member's feelings about similarity, closeness, and bonding within the team as a whole around the group's tasks. Individual's perception of task unity within the group as a whole	4.61
Group Integration-Social (GI-S)	Individual team member's feelings about the similarity, closeness, and bonding within the team as a whole around the group as a social unit. Individual's perceptions of social unity within the group as a whole	3.95
Individual Attractions to the Group-Task (ATG-T)	Individual team member's feelings about his or her personal involvement with the group's task, productivity, and goals and objectives. Attractiveness of the group's task, productivity, and goals for the individual personally	5
Individual Attractions to the Group-Social (ATG-S)	Individual team member's feelings about his or her personal acceptance and social interactions with the team as social unit. Attractiveness of the group as a social unit and social interaction and friendship opportunities available for the individual personally.	4.61

Figure 5. GEQ assessment one results.



Despite the GI-S score that was relatively low, the scores from the three other subscales that were obtained were average. The most plausible explanation is that there is a relatively large number (nearly half of the team) of rookies that have incorporated the 1st team this year. One would expect the rookies to score relatively low scores, but with the presence of seniors on the team, the team scores somewhat reflected the demographics of the team.

Although the primary objective is to reflect upon the group scores, it may be enriching to note that individual scores reflected higher concerns for the following:

- Hope that teammates become close friends
- Team unity on and off-court
- Desire to spend more time with teammates off the court
- Clarification of on-court responsibilities

Group Integration-Task:

This subscale reflects individual perceptions of the task unity within the group as a whole. In comparison to the other scores of the other subscales, the GI-T score (4.61) is the second lowest. This means that out of the four manifestations of cohesion embodied by the four subscales of the

GEQ, the team perceived task unity within the group to be relatively low. According to this score, and based on Carron's (1985) conceptual framework of cohesion, the individual participants generally perceived the group they were part of as lacking on-court chemistry. These results suggested a need to incorporate steps to better the team's on-court understanding. Hence, the steps that were used were taken from Carron and Spink's (1993) cohesion building model, namely, a clarification of team roles, team norms, communication, and leadership.

Group Integration-Social:

This subscale reflects individual perceptions of the social unity within the group as a whole. The GI-S score (3.95) was the lowest out of the four subscales, which means that the team was perceived as having relatively low social unity. This was supported by recurring individual responses stressing the lack of social chemistry within the team. The GI-S score appeared to be the lowest of all four GEQ subscale scores, which reflected a perception of individual team members that their team particularly lacked off-court chemistry. In other words, the team members perceived their team as lacking a social bond. Carron and Spink's (1993) model proposed that bringing change to the team environment, more especially team togetherness is an important factor to enhancing cohesiveness. For both reasons, the programme had as integral part the social gatherings and/or social activities where the participants would come together as a unit and interact on a personal level to better relationships, and consequently better social unity.

Individual Attractions to the Group-Task:

This subscale reflects the attractiveness of the group's task, productivity, and goal to the individual personally. The ATG-T score (5) was the highest compared to the four other subscales. Although the ATG-T score is only slightly above average, it is the highest score out of all the four subscales. This implies that the individual members are quite attracted to the team as far as athletic performance is concerned. This is probably due to the background of the team. It is needless to say that being a University 1st team makes the team that much more attractive to people in general; moreover, the Rhodes men's basketball 1st team has won the provincial championship for the past 4 years, won the annual Tri-Varsity Tournament for the past 5 years, and is known to generally be composed by talented players who display very good basketball to people who come watch them play. All these reasons contribute to the fact that the individual team members, regardless of their status on the team, are generally attracted to the team's task, productivity, and goal. It is essential to maintain such attractiveness of the team and that is one of the main objectives of the programme, to ensure that past performances are maintained or improved.

Individual Attractions to the Group-Social:

This subscale reflects the attractiveness of the group as a social unit as well as the friendship opportunities and social interaction available for individuals personally. The ATG-S score (4.61) was the same as the GI-T score, and was ranked in between the GI-S and ATG-T. The ATG-S score is almost exactly situated at the average value on the GEQ scale. Taken simplistically, one could assert that half of the team is attracted to the team as a social unit, and the other half is not. Although this simplification of the issue might be erroneous because scores may not reflect such distinct patterns of reality, the fact of the matter is that the team is now actually divided almost

exactly in two groups of individuals, the seniors, and the rookies. One could then assume that the seniors, having been part of the team for a longer period of time, would feel more attracted to the group as a social unit and on the other hand, the rookies would be less attracted to the group on a social level, simply because they have not acquainted themselves enough with the other members. Assuming that this is the reason behind the almost exact average score of the ATG-S subscale, running the cohesion building programme could ensure that the gap between the two entities is filled and all the team members feel the same way concerning their attraction to the group as a social unit. In fact, as proposed by Carron and Spink (1993), team building interventions are useful ways to better teams' levels of togetherness.

In order to increase the level of cohesiveness within the team, it is necessary to address the issues uncovered by the GEQ in the same manner. Despite the slight differences of scores between the GEQ subscales, since the goal is to increase the overall cohesiveness level of the team, all four subscales will assist in identifying the focus areas of the programme. Additionally, the GEQ results were used to assist in the preparation of the focus group schedule. In fact, one objective of the focus group was used to elucidate some of the issues identified in the GEQ that were deemed of importance to the participants. Hence, the main focus areas of the focus group schedule were issues pertinent to the social aspect of cohesion, as well the issues of task unity within the team. The issues were more concerned with how individual viewed the team as a unit, as a group. This does not mean however that other issues were overlooked.

3.1.2 First Focus Group Interview

The first focus group interview was conducted subsequent to the first administration and scoring of the GEQ. The focus group was partly used to uncover specific issues relevant to the pattern of the team's cohesion depicted in the GEQ. In fact, as mentioned in the previous section, the results obtained from the GEQ assisted in the preparation of the content of the interview schedule, along with the body of literature on cohesion. The interview setting was carefully chosen and maximum efforts were made to make the participants comfortable, as this is crucial for establishing good rapport with participants. Once conducted, the interview was transcribed and analysed through interpretive analysis, and 10 themes emerged from the analysis.

3.1.2.1 Desire to know teammates outside of basketball

One theme that emerged rather early in the interview and remained emphasized throughout the interview is the desire to establish personal, intimate relationships with teammates outside of the basketball world. There was a general agreement that one of the most important ways to achieve on-court chemistry was to get to know teammates on a personal basis. One player commented on this topic and said that:

“...I think as a team, we still need to work on relationships, say for example last year's team, we had a stronger bond, and the thing is that we knew each other on the court and off the court, and you know we had that chemistry on the court where you know, you don't really need to tell someone to cut, because you know that he's going to cut...”

All the other players agreed that getting to know one another off the court was a very important factor that can help to build good team chemistry. One player supported that argument by saying:

“...just to add on what everybody is saying, we need to hang out outside of basketball as a whole, you know, talk to your teammates, consider them more than your teammates, like your friends, because I mean, if you can get to trust someone in everyday life, you will trust them on the court...”

The response of another player to the latter statement was:

“...yeah, I think we need to build life here, not a team...”

These comments illustrate the team’s awareness of the importance of building strong personal relationship in order to achieve on-court chemistry. Knowing each other outside of the basketball world can also facilitate the understanding of each other’s strengths and weaknesses, not only as athletes but also as people. But developing strong intimate relationships is often a task easier said than done, in fact, it takes a lot of effort to build close relationships. The team agreed that one way to help build those close relationships is honesty. The one player’s comments succinctly summarized the team’s opinion:

“...we just have to be honest with the team, and nobody must be shy to say anything, and this way we will learn to know and accept each other...”

These comments were collected from the participants at the beginning of the season. Moreover, the team is a new unit composed of players who did not really know each other at the time, so it was comprehensible that the players were longing to establish good relationships with their new teammates. It is worthy to note here that last year's team was made up of players who have played together and known each other for at least two years, which explains the existence of the stronger bond that was mentioned by one of the senior players. Being a member of last year's team, I remember that it took us at least a whole season to get the first hint of good team chemistry and genuine friendships, and it was only in the second year of playing together that we really started to gel and become a tight unit. To resume the discussion concerning this year's team need to know one another on a personal basis outside of the athletic realm, it is interesting to note that the team perceived the building of close relationship as a crucial factor that would contributed to better team chemistry. Burluson et al.'s (1994) research findings suggested that strong social support is positively related to cohesion in sport teams. Taking Shaw's (1981) argument that team members must have a reasons for working together as well as Rosenfeld and Richman (1997), who noted that team members who provide each other with several types of social support (e.g., listening support, reality confirmation support, and task appreciation support) offer each other the opportunity to increase their physical and emotional well-being, one could assume that the team has identified the development of strong social support within the team as their reason for working together. As the team members agreed, it was not only about sport, it was about life, hence about finding personal opportunities for increasing physical and emotional well-being. The implications of these issues on the programme were clear, that is, to ensure that the participants were given enough opportunities to really be able to establish strong personal relationship and develop strong social support. In a non-professional yet competitive

sport environment like University sport, it is important to identify what the team needs as a reason for working together, and a cohesion-building programme like this one may assist coaches, researchers, and/or practitioners in identifying their team's reason.

3.1.2.2 Talking about cohesion

Through experience and exposure to different basketball teams and coaches, the players on the team all had a naïve awareness of the notion of cohesion. Cohesion was associated with notions of bonding, team chemistry, or togetherness. They commented on the team's manifestation of cohesion at the time, and noticed that cohesion was present on the team but it was in terms of clusters. The one player's stated that:

“...at the beginning, cohesion was clustered, if you know what I mean, like some guys would cohere with some, and others with some other, like there were subgroups within the team that were cohesive but not the team as one, but I am sure this will change with time...”

At the time (i.e., beginning of the season), it was natural if clusters existed in the team, in fact, the team was situated in Tuckman's (1965) forming stage, where members were getting acquainted, and they experienced resistance as they tested boundaries and learned about the group's structure. The presence of seniors who have been together in the past also explains the presence of clusters on the team, as it is natural for people to remain with other people they are familiar with, for psychological safety (Franzoi, 2006). However, as Sugarman (1999) noted, cliques or clusters can become a problem when there is more loyalty to a subgroup than there is to the team as a whole. This is supported by Hardy et al.'s (2005) research as they found that

when members become more loyal to a selected few members, it can have debilitating effects on the team's performance because members are engaging in negative intra-team competition and develop animosity among players which in turn divide the team. Actions need to be taken to ensure that these negative effects of the presence of clusters did not impact on the team, and that is where the exposure of the team to cohesion building programme becomes useful. In fact, as suggested by Carron et al.'s (1998) definition of cohesion, if a team becomes more cohesive, the team members will display a stronger tendency to remain united in order to achieve instrumental objectives and personal fulfilment. The negative effects that cliques can have would definitely be minimized when teams remain united.

There was a team consensus that cohesion was the desired state, but the players also knew that it would take some time to build a cohesive unit, and that the amount of time, they said, would depend on the interactions among teammates as well as the type of relationships within the team. One of the senior players stated that:

“...you know it takes time for a team to gel, it does not happen overnight, sometimes it takes teams a whole season to build that chemistry, so by the time it is there, the season is almost over...”

However, the team members expressed a positive feeling concerning the group's ability to develop cohesiveness. One player said that the awkward stage where rookies and seniors are uncomfortable with each other did not really take place, that from the first practice sessions, the team's environment was positive. These comments were a good sign for the programme since its objective was to speed up the cohesion building process within the team. It was like everything

was in place for the programme to be successful, and this provided the researcher and the team with the confidence to carry out the programme effectively. Another interesting idea arose out of the interview; it was about the way the team perceived the focus group session itself as being contributing to developing cohesiveness. In fact, the participants said that the session made people feel good about being on the team as well as the prospects of knowing all the teammates on a personal level. They also mentioned that the focus group session provided them with opportunities to be honest and talk freely about the team and their personal queries. One rookie player said:

“...I really enjoy this (referring to the focus group session) because this gives us the opportunities to talk about things openly that we would only talk about after months of being on the team...”

As Yukelson (1997) suggested, meetings are good situations where the team members can improve the communication levels of their team. Moreover, Sugarman (1999) argued that direct assessment given by players is the most accurate way to determine the amount of cohesiveness in the team. The focus group appeared to be an instance where the team members could come together and discuss matters freely and openly. Sugarman (1999) further argued that allowing the players to talk freely about matters concerning their team is a good way to instil respect among players, which is a key component of success in any group. The focus group thus turned out to be a powerful way to start the programme, as it already set the pace as how quick cohesion was to develop on the team. This shows the importance of holding team meetings or any sort of formal gathering where team members can discuss various matters relevant to them and their team. Moreover, it is a warrant of the development of good team chemistry (Yukelson, 1997).

The last issue that was tied up to the team's idea of cohesion was the need to have a team mission. The team used the term mission to refer to the notion of task, or set of activities that the team has to perform. They said that having a mission would help the team by giving each player means to achieve specific tasks for the benefit of the team. There seemed to be a misuse of the word mission there, as what the team was really referring to was simply a set of team goals. In fact, as proposed by Sugarman (1999), if everyone is striving towards the same thing then this will help cohesion develop. Moreover, goal setting can directly influence team cohesion by providing a team focus (goal). In turn, singular group focus promotes intergroup communication and facilitates overall team commitment and satisfaction, all of which have been shown to enhance team cohesion (Carron et al., 2002). However, it is worthy to note that the participants mentioned their wish to adopt a team mission in order to foster their performance. From the theory on cohesion and team-building, goal setting was initially an integral part of the programme, but the comments raised by the players stressed the importance that having a common purpose can have on a team's cohesiveness.

3.1.2.3 Roles and responsibilities

The participants were of the same mind concerning roles and responsibilities on the team, in fact, there was a consensus that it would be extremely helpful to be told what individual roles are, so that one knows what is expected of him, which may relieve a great deal of pressure. The one player said that:

“...it would be very helpful to know what you are required to do, I mean it would prevent you from chasing after the wind, you know what I mean, and you will not help your teammates at all, so I think feedback in that regard could never be enough...”

The participants also agreed that being aware of individual roles on the team would be beneficial to their personal achievements in that it could assist them in setting and achieving personal goals. In sport psychology, the notion of role is often attached to the notion of role ambiguity, which refers to a lack of clear, consistent information regarding the actions required in a particular position (Eys & Carron, 2001). The overall findings from research on role ambiguity and cohesion, as noted by Eys and Carron (2001), have shown that when role ambiguity is low, perceptions of team cohesion are high. This happens because team members perform interdependent tasks harmoniously. Moreover, as outlined in Carron and Spink's (1993) team building model, developing team roles is an essential component of the team's structure that needs to be in place so as to ensure optimum team cohesion. For all these reasons, the clarification of team roles constituted a major part of the programme, and exercises addressing role clarification were performed to provide the participants with clear individual roles. However, as expressed by certain participants, there should be a line not to cross in terms of playing by the roles one has been assigned. They believed that solely playing according to what one has been told to do might impair performance because the team might just become so robotized that it lacks the crucial element of versatility that characterizes successful basketball teams. The following statements made by two players illustrate this:

“...I think it is very important to know your place on the team, but you also need versatility, otherwise other teams will just have you all figured out and you would not have any answers...”

“...you have to take what the coach gives you, and then you add your own spice to it, it sorts of gives you the lead.”

A few participants also expressed their concern about the level of expectations they are wanted to meet. It was said that when expectations are too high, the fear of failure that is consequently induced in players may cause them to overdo things, and by overdoing things they are more likely to perform poorly.

3.1.2.4 Feelings of inadequacy

The discussion on roles and expectations led to the topic of inadequacy. Some players stated that, in the pre-season period, the high expectations and high performance standards set by the coach were overwhelmingly pressurizing. But by the time the season started, they said, this pressure somewhat decreased because players realized that the expectations were realistic and that it was necessary to adopt a more positive attitude and rise personal performances. Moreover, the participants said that with time, they have learnt to understand the leadership style on the team. This helped the players realize that regardless of the coaching style, it was all about learning. The following comments made by a few players illustrate this point:

“...at the beginning, the expectations were so high that it caused this overwhelming pressure that made me not looking forward to practice (...) but with time, things got better and now I know that I am the one who has to step up...”

“...the coach is demanding but I think that because we can talk to him openly and he really listens to us makes the learning that much easier, because I mean even if he yells at you, you can go to him and ask what went wrong?”

The strategy adopted by the coach/researcher was to attach separate responsibilities to the two roles that he had to assume. The responsibility of ensuring that athletic training was duly performed was attached to the coach role, whereas the responsibility of ensuring that the sport psychology-related activities was attached to the researcher role. This organization made it possible for the coach/researcher to maintain high standards in every aspects of the team's training. These feelings of overwhelming pressure that initially triggered some sense of inadequacy were caused by high athletic standards set by the coach. And although the athletic component and the psychological components were made separate, they were complementing each other in ensuring the team's optimum training. Moreover, because the rookies are gifted in terms of athletic capabilities, matching high athletic standards is an achievable task. Research on the relationship between individual work output and cohesion has revealed that as a team becomes more cohesive, individual work output typically increases (Bray & Whaley, 2001; Prapavessis & Carron, 1997a). The players realized that the solution to eliminate the pressure of high standards was to “step up”, and according to the theory, increasing individual work output (or “stepping up”) is positively related to cohesion. Therefore, the individual members would

highly benefit from the cohesion building programme as it will aid them in their efforts to “step up”. In a quest to clinch a position among the country’s best, individual athletes need to realize that the efforts have to come from them, but coaches should be aware of this and provide every possible support for their payers to perform at their best.

3.2.1.5 Leadership

The participants unanimously stated that there was sound leadership on the team. First, they said that the coach’s openness and approachability is greatly valued by the team. One player commented and said that:

“...on this team, if I think that if something is not working, I can talk to coach and he would think about it, and actually take your say into consideration...”

“...the great thing is that after practice, we actually hang out with coach and we just chill like boys...”

Westre and Weiss (1991) argued that leaders who involve team members in team decision-making processes help to develop cohesion by increasing each player’s feeling of ownership and investment in the team. Moreover, these authors have stated that sound leadership plays a very influential role in developing cohesiveness. And since this research project has adopted action research as a paradigm, its objective is to involve participants to the point where they can take ownership of the programme, it was crucial that the researcher/coach demonstrated good leadership skills. Phil Jackson of the Los Angeles Lakers affirmed in his book (Jackson &

Delehanty, 1995) that the synonym of the word coach should be teacher, mentor, leader, and friend. This supports the importance of having good leadership qualities, even more so while attempting to improve team cohesion.

Second, there was a consensus that senior players provided good leadership to the rest of the team. It was interesting to hear the senior players asserting that it is their duty to guide and lift up their fellow teammates' spirits. One senior player made an interesting point when he said that the team can only be as strong as the weakest player, and it was therefore vital to help the weaker individuals bettering their performance. The following statements were made by a senior player and a rookie:

Senior player: "...our team is really only as strong the weakest guy, so I think it is one of our duties as seniors to help out and give them that support..."

Rookie: "...you know, I don't think twice before I approach guys (refers to seniors), because I know they are going to give me positive feedback..."

Since there is a positive relationship between leadership and cohesion (Loughead & Hardy, 2006), it is necessary to encourage team members who have good leadership abilities to assist the coach in providing good guidance and support to the rest of the team. The team captains were selected via team consensus, nominees were proposed and two captains were elected from the panel of nominees. Once selected, the captains were clearly informed as to what their responsibilities and expectations were on the team.

3.2.1.6 Emotions and peer support

The participants agreed that it would be good for the team if emotions were controlled more effectively. There was a consensus that the expression of disappointment or negative emotions can impair the team's morale. Moreover, the participants felt that more effort should be made to learn how to encourage teammates. The team rookies asserted that the simple awareness that the teammates, especially seniors, believe in them would bring them the confidence needed to succeed. Finally, the team stressed the importance of honesty, as they felt that it was very important for every team member to be honest to and genuine with each other in order to lift the team's morale. In the learning endeavour, the team also felt that it was necessary to be as emotionally strong and positive as possible in order to interpret teammates' comments and criticisms constructively. The following comment can sum up the statements above:

“...you know when a junior player, a new guy goes out and makes a mistake, and he looks at the senior players on the court, as a senior, actually anybody, I think we should just tell him you know what, it's ok, like encourage him, but also tell him that hey, you better make the next one, and that way the kid will not miss again because he will say to himself, I'm safe because so and so is backing me up...”

Positive emotions and mood are positively related (Terry et al., 2000), in fact, when one experiences enhanced mood such the absence of anxiety or depression, there is a tendency for that person to also experience positive emotions. One can assume that the collective moods of the team members would be well representative of team morale. Since Loughhead and Hardy (2006) have reported that athletes who perceived their team as cohesive were more likely to

experience enhanced mood, and also because research findings have shown that team building interventions can be beneficial to the psychological state of the team members (Terry et al., 1996; Terry et al., 2000), a cohesion building programme can be helpful in assisting players at improving their mood and emotions. If athletes who perceive their team as cohesive experience less anger and tension (Loughead & Hardy, 2006), then this programme can indeed be very helpful to this team. This shows that while doing research on group dynamics, because it falls under sport psychology practices, researchers and practitioner should be aware of individual psychological states and the way they can shape and influence an entire team's morale.

3.2.1.7 Complacency

This issue of complacency was believed to manifest itself in two ways. First, it is about the team being complacent vis-à-vis the opposition. In fact, the participants realized that because their team is very competitive and composed of very talented players, they have the tendency to somehow underestimate the opposition and intentionally decrease their level of performance. The participants then agreed that it was necessary to address this issue because it may become a negative characteristic of the team. The following comments illustrate the point made above:

“...like in the games we played this weekend, yes we are a strong team, but we play like, as if we know we are a strong team, and we, we are too relaxed...”

“...there is nothing really stopping us but ourselves (...) I am looking forward to the day when we will all click from the start...”

These issues reflect a certain lack of motivation, or incentive to perform from the team members. The problem seems to be that when they play against poorer opposition, they tend to do the strict minimum to get the win. This may lead the team to develop negative habits of average performance that may impede their chances of success. The solution that was found to fix this problem was to set specific goals for each specific event. Setting team goals is part of the cohesion building programme, because research has shown that setting high and achievable team goals is positively related to cohesiveness (Widmeyer & Ducharme, 1997), so in other words, the solution was provided by the programme. The key was to make the players play for themselves, in achieving specific goals (e.g., beat a team with a 40 points margin), that way, there was an incentive to perform. Moreover, according to Prapavessis and Carron (1997a), individual work output is relatively related to task cohesion. Therefore, one can assert that improving task cohesion within the team through a cohesion-building programme can help counteract the loss of motivation from the participants, as higher task cohesion will encourage them to increase their individual work output.

The second way in which complacency manifests itself is internal to the team, that is, there is a tendency to be complacent among individuals in the team. And again, it is due to the presence of talented and experienced players on the team, as such presence causes other players, who may be a bit less talented or experienced, to believe that their input is not necessary. In fact, some players think that because there is a group of 'capable hands' on the team, they can hold back and not perform at their optimal level. The one player commented on that point and said:

“...sometimes because there are players like ***** (star players) on the team, it makes you feel small, and you start holding back and not give your all because you think to yourself that they’ll do it anyway...”

But players holding back can, according to one senior player, be positive for the team. The argument was that holding back could be viewed as altruism in that players hold back on their personal capabilities for the benefit of the team. In a situation where every player wants to perform the same role, say scoring, and try to do so to the best of their abilities, the team could suffer from the resulting lack of organization. About the point made above, one player commented and said:

“...yeah I think that is true, because you cannot have ten guys wanting to do the same thing all night, it is important to be aware of how you can best contribute to the team and do that as well as you can...”

Players become team players when they are altruistic enough to know when they need to increase or decrease their personal performance, at any given time (Jordan, 1994; Sugarman, 1998). However, on this team, the way some players were complacent did not seem to be a display of altruism; because of the reasons they advanced (there are enough talented players on the team). In fact, it seemed to be more like a deliberate reduction of personal efforts, which possesses strong connotations of social loafing. Social loafing is defined as a group-induced reduction in individual output when performers’ efforts are pooled, thus impossible to individually evaluate (Franzoi, 2006). The players who have a tendency to be complacent feel

safe in the group and just “ride along” knowing that their efforts will go unnoticed, regardless of their intensity. Social loafing can also explain the decrease of motivation from players when they face weaker opposition. In fact, because the opposition is weak and the players perceive their team as superior, they have the certainty that even if they personally perform at their minimum level, the team will manage to be successful. As a result, the players perform at a bare minimum level and simply ensure that their team remains victorious. This may have negative impact on the team’s performance and on its cohesiveness, in that some players may start feeling out of place or start dropping out. A viable solution to this problem is the assignment of specific roles, in fact, as Hodge and McKenzie (1999) argued an increase in members’ sense of responsibility may decrease the need to “ride along”. Moreover, Hodge and McKenzie (1999) stressed that developing a sense of team pride and collective team identity will make team effort and team success a personal endeavour for each member. The cohesion building programme can thus assist in reducing social loafing in that one of its activities is the clarification of team roles, along with the development of a stronger sense of pride and team collective identity in addressing issues pertinent to the team’s distinctiveness (e.g., “Stallions”). It is essential for researchers and practitioners to find ways to address social loafing, especially in teams where social loafing can have negative impacts on cohesion and performance.

3.2.1.8 Intra-team competition

It has been repeatedly stated that the team is a very competitive unit in that it for one comprises of many talented players and two, the team as a whole is among the finest in the country. For these reasons, the amount of intra-team competition within the team is understandably very high. Players talked about the necessity to fight for a place on the team to actually get some playing

time, or the need to prove themselves to the coach, or even the need to achieve personal victories by defeating one's teammates. The participants showed their awareness of the double-edged sword nature of competition, in that it can be positive or negative depending on individual attitudes. The one player made a comment regarding the dangers of intra-team competition and said that:

“...can I say something, like, about competing for a place in the team, the one thing where it can be quite bad is individualism, like, say I am competing against another forward for a place, then I know when I am on the court and get the ball, I might not look for the pass because I want to make the basket a prove to coach that I am good enough for the team...”

But the general sentiment of the team regarding competition was that intra-competition is needed, and it is actually good for the team, as it helps the team to become stronger in terms of athletic skills as well as bonding. In terms of athletic skills, positive competition manifests itself through individual battles that force players to raise their game in order to keep up to their teammates, and in so doing, they continually promote mutual growth. The participants also mentioned that competition promotes team bonding, because players develop confidence in their teammates. And this confidence in the team's abilities automatically unites the players. To illustrate this point, one player said that:

“...I think one thing as well, is that I think we know that individually and as a team, we know that we are the best in the Eastern Cape and among the best in the country, that I don't to lie about, so when we compete against each other and say for example, I can guard *** or ***, I will have the confidence comes game time that I will be able to defend against anybody...”

Yet, the team agreed that competition can be positive only under certain conditions. The participants agreed that individual attitudes, namely honesty and constructive attitude (that is, possess the ability to constructively assess situations and receive criticisms) are key to ensure that competition stays positive. One participant also mentioned that it is very important to learn to communicate with each other without offending each other, which he said would come with time and stronger relationships. In their study of collective efficacy on sport teams, Paskevich et al. (1999) found that high levels of intra-team competition are positively related to team's collective efficacy, mainly because the more team members become aware of each other's weaknesses and strength and continue elevating each other's skills, the more they develop a sense of collective competence. And since the participants have reported that there are high levels of positive competition within their team, it can be assumed that the team's level of collective efficacy is correspondingly high. On the other hand, Heuze et al. (2006) reported that previous research indicated a positive relationship between collective efficacy and team cohesion. One could then argue that increasing cohesiveness in sport teams would contribute to the enhancement of its collective efficacy, and in turn, maintain healthy competition within sport teams. A cohesion building programme could therefore enhance a team's well-being in both ways, first by promoting and maintaining good levels of competitiveness and secondly by allowing each individual player to improve their game.

3.2.1.9 Sacrifices

From their past experiences in other athletic teams or in other spheres their lives, the team members seemed aware of the fact that any road to success is filled with sacrifices. So when they

were urged to discuss the type and amount of sacrifices they would make for the team, the participants became quite emotional. The general opinion concerning the topic was that of never giving up on a teammate. In fact, it was said in the interview that if ‘boys count on you, you have to be ready to do anything’. They have referred to the team as their ‘family’, their ‘life’, and they would ‘never forget this unit. However, despite the general exhilaration that the topic triggered, some players mentioned that because they have their academics and their careers to think about, basketball is the number two priority. It was commented that:

“...to be honest, I can’t give my life for this team, just because life is more important, and my academic and my career are more important, but it’s not to say that, actually the team comes second, and there is a lot of things that come third, and fourth, and fifth...”

One player made a very interesting point when he said that he was yearning to know the team members as people, as that would give him more reasons to really ‘bleed’ for them. It was agreed that this type of situation where everybody would be so committed and ready to sacrifice so much for the team could only come with time. Theory suggests that the more cohesive a team becomes, the more sacrifices its members are ready to make, and vice versa (Holt & Sparkes, 2001; Prapavessis & Carron, 1997b). Despite the great enthusiasm the team attached to their readiness to make sacrifices, as Holt and Sparkes (2001) suggested, players are usually ready to make sacrifices, but they do not always know which ones they need to make. And the resulting sense of confusion attached to sacrifices gives them the impression that theirs go unnoticed, which can lead to poorer morale (Holt & Sparkes, 2001). One could then advocate the tremendous benefits that a cohesion building programme addressing the issue of player sacrifices

could have on a sport team. The programme can help ensuring that the players are aware of the types of sacrifices that are warrants of success, as well as ways to ensure that sacrifices are noticed and well appreciated.

3.2.1.10 It is about having fun

To end the focus group, the participants/players were asked to talk about the amount of fun they were having on the team. Besides the one rookie player who honestly admitted that he was 'getting there', the rest of the players confessed that they are having the time of their lives. Just to illustrate that understatement of how much fun they said they were having, some of the comments that were made were:

"...for me there is no better team I would love to be involved with than this team..."

"...there is nothing greater than love, and I guess that is where I am now with you guys..."

"...I would rather play with this team than having sex..."

"...this is for real man..."

3.2.1.11 Conclusion

Overall, the results obtained through ‘assessment one’ were satisfying. The enthusiasm of the team in taking part in this research project was undeniably translated in the way the questionnaire was taken and the interview approached. Since the focus group interview schedule was partly based on the results of the GEQ (along with the literature and research findings), there were evident similarities in the participants’ accounts made in the GEQ and in the ones made in the focus group interview. In fact, the themes generated in the focus group interview transcripts were parallel to the results obtained from the GEQ. The difference between the focus group and the GEQ was the fact that the GEQ assessed cohesion alone, in all its forms, whereas the focus group focused on the various issues that surround and affect cohesion (e.g., complacency, sacrifice behaviour). This provided strong confidence in the validity of the results obtained in assessment one, and allowed for the careful design of an accurate programme tailored to the specific needs of the team. The GEQ scores were average, and the themes generated in the focus group somewhat supported the average scoring of the GEQ in that the issues that the participants considered as missing from their team are elements that positively influence team cohesion (e.g., team roles, goal setting, sacrifice behaviour). In other words, if the issues discussed during the focus group are adequately addressed by the programme, one could assume that perceptions of team cohesion as well as the scoring of the GEQ would change accordingly.

3.2 Activities in the programme

The activities of the programme will be presented in detail in this section. Some activities, namely the classroom meetings, the social gatherings, the weekly meetings, and the team building exercises have all been considerably inspired by Carron and Spink's (1993) model as well as other prominent authors (Carron et al., 2007; Sugarman, 1999; Yukelson, 1997). The other activities, such as the intensive training camp and the trips for away games were not initially planned to be incorporated in the programme. However, due to their powerful ability to develop cohesion, they have been added to the content of the programme. The nature of each exercise or activity will be outlined, including the process as well as all the results of each exercise. Each activity will be presented separately, and a discussion paragraph will conclude each activity outline.

3.2.1 Classroom meeting #01

The first classroom meeting had three main focus areas, namely, 1) to assess the team's weaknesses and strengths in order to get an idea of where the team stands in various aspects of sports, 2) to bring change to the team environment by working on its team distinctiveness as proposed by Carron and Spink (1993) and 3) to further the bettering of communication between the players by engaging them in exercises that require a great deal of open communication.

Team Performance Profiling (Carron et al., 2007): As presented in the literature chapter, this exercise enables the participants to identify their team's weaknesses and strengths. It started out with each member writing down what they considered as the ten most important characteristics

of basketball. After a brainstorming session, the team would come up with the ten characteristics that were deemed most important by the team. They were then asked to rate each of the ten characteristics they have written down in terms of importance and relevance to the game of basketball (see Ideal score in Table 2). Next, they were asked to rate their team's current state with regard to the characteristics they have identified (see Current score in Table 2). A discrepancy score (see Table 2) was then calculated and high discrepancy scores (>2) would indicate areas of improvement. The TPP table that the team drafted is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 2

Team Performance Profiling results

Team characteristic	Ideal Score	Current Score	Discrepancy score
Dedication	10	6	4
Skills	9	7	2
Strength	7	7	0
Intelligence	9	4	5
Emotional stability	7	5	2
Preparation	10	5	5
Mental toughness	10	7	3
Commitment	10	7	3
Heart	10	8	2

Positive attitude	7	5	2
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The TPP provided the guidelines that informed the goal-setting activity that was carried out later in the programme. Moreover, it gave the team members a clear idea of where they stood at the time.

The team keenly approached this exercise. There were a very large number of characteristics that the players brought to the brainstorming session. However, it must be said that a lot of the characteristics were concerned with basketball techniques and tactics, and not really about the mental or social aspect of the sport. Nonetheless, the team reached a consensus as to what the most important characteristics were, and they encompassed all aspects of the sport (i.e., mental, technical, emotional, etc.). The consensus was rapidly reached because there seemed to be a great understanding among the team members concerning what is important in their sport. It was great to see that the players could communicate openly and respectfully during this exercise, in fact, everyone had a chance to voice their opinion. This might be a very important factor because it ensures that all the team members have actively taken part in the drafting of the team's performance profile. Moreover, players could relate more to the team, since their characteristics match the team's characteristics. However, it must be said that the facilitation of the exercise required some experience and knowledge of classroom dynamics. Fortunately, I have had the chance to be a tutor for the past two years so it was that much easier to run the exercise. Yukelson (1997) argued that the essential part of successful team building interventions is the initial assessment of the team's needs. The TPP was a great exercise to address the important issue, which is why it was conducted before any other exercise in the programme.

Group name: the following activity involved creating a group name that would contribute to the team's distinctiveness. This was done by asking the players to jot down adjectives that qualified the way the team was perceived by others as well as how the team members wished to be perceived by others. After individual presentation of the adjectives to the team, a brainstorming session was held in order to identify the adjectives that the team judged most accurate. The qualifying adjectives that the team came up with were: fear (as threatening), strong, good looking, tall, aggressive, proud, classy, sexy, cocky, crazy, confident, intelligent, scholars, competitive, drunkards, jovial, and jubilant. After a brainstorming session to find a name that would encompass all the adjectives listed above, they produced a short-list of names, and they were: Assassins, Panthers, Jaguars, Mustangs, and Stallions. After discussing various factors, including the fact that their University's athletic emblem was a horse or that very few teams in the world carry that name, the team decided that their name was going to be the 'Rhodes Stallions'. The brainstorming of ideas was vital as it was necessary to ensure that each and every member of the team perceived themselves as possessing one or more of the characteristics outlined above. In fact, it was necessary that they could personally relate to being a "Stallion".

This exercise created a great deal of excitement and entertainment. In fact, the players found it very amusing to find words that would qualify themselves and their team. The brainstorming session to find a short-list of names was also marked by a great deal of enthusiasm, when each potential name was analysed to the bone by all team members. The debates were a great opportunity to hone communication skills, because everyone had something to say, and everyone had to be heard and taken into account. The players were new to the whole psychological aspect of sport, and this exercise greatly contributed to having them "buying into" the programme. In

fact, this exercise made the team perceive the programme as a fun and worthwhile project. It is vital to ensure that the participants stay eager to take part in the programme, and this was definitely a great way to do so. As a facilitator of the exercise and leader of the project, it produces a great feeling of adequacy to receive a positive and exhilarated response from the participants. The majority of the team building literature (Carron & Spink, 1993; Sugarman, 1999; Yukelson, 1997) argued in favour of the positive impacts that having a team name can have on a team. In a collegiate environment where sport is all about passion and love, it was deemed relevant to incorporate issues pertinent to a team's distinctiveness in the programme (Carron & Spink, 1993), as it may provide players with the special feature that would make them feel like they belong.

Team mission statement: the team's next activity, yet as part of the distinctiveness building, was to generate a team mission statement that would reflect on the attitudes, focus, and image that the team wants to project and that would become the yardstick for the things the team would do (Sugarman, 1999). The team discussed various issues and brainstormed ideas, such as the characteristics of the stallion as an animal (particular attention was paid to the rearing stallion) or the nature of the relationships they expected in their team. The team reached a consensus and decided that their team mission statement was going to be 'As brothers, we rise'.

The participants mentioned that they needed to become more than teammates and be more like family, like brothers. That way, they would always be there for each other, regardless of the situation, they could always count on their teammates. They also mentioned that their goal in sport, and in life for that matter, was to strive for excellence and rise to the top. Keeping in mind

the image of the rearing stallion, pointing to the sky, 'As brothers, we rise' just seemed perfect. Having a mission statement that carries so much symbolic meaning can have the potential to produce a powerful effect on the players. In fact, if the players live by their mission statement, the mission could become more of a culture that would instinctively unite the team members. However, one could argue that, like culture, it may require more time than a season allows to actually getting all the team members to live by such a mission statement. In fact, there needs to be a change in people's attitudes first, they need to personally adopt the mission in its wholeness, before the team or club can fully carry such a mission statement.

Circle of trust: this team building exercise was carried out as a way to promote open communication between the players. It is an exercise that was taken from organizational team building practices. It involves sitting in a circle, and each player is asked to say one thing they appreciate about the two players sitting by their side. Positive things were said about the team members' personalities and behaviours.

This exercise is great in giving players opportunity to heighten the spirit and enhance the self-esteem of their teammates. Being told positive things about yourself and especially the feeling of being appreciated for who you are can always have a tremendously positive effect on your morale. Moreover, being acknowledged by the team members can increase trust levels among players, and strengthen the bond between them. As the bond gets stronger, the team becomes a more cohesive unit (Sugarman, 1999). It generally contributes to bettering the communication within the team, and as advanced by Carron and Spink (1993), communication is a vitally essential part to improving cohesiveness within a team, as it allows for team members to share

opinions and accept each other's differences. Although every activity in the programme required some level of communication, considering the importance that is attached to effective communication, it was deemed important to incorporate activities that specifically targeted the enhancement of communication.

3.2.2 Classroom meeting #02

Carron and Spink (1993) advanced that in developing team cohesion, it was vitally important to bring change to a team's structure. A team structure has to do with the roles and responsibilities on the team, the team norms, and leadership (see Literature chapter for details). Thus, the second classroom meeting's focal points were to improve the team structure via setting team goals, developing team norms, and selecting team leaders in the person of team captains. The activities performed in the session were all supported by the results in the GEQ, by the participants' accounts in the focus group, and by the literature on team building (Carron & Spink, 1993; Miller, 1997; Sugarman, 1999). The participants' GEQ scores (especially the low Group-Integration Task score in the first GEQ) along with the first focus group's accounts concerning the need to have roles and responsibilities clarified were all supported by the literature which stated that the team's structure (team norms, team roles, and leadership) needs to be addressed in almost any team building intervention (Carron & Spink, 1993). All these reasons made it essential for this programme to involve the following activities.

The team captains: to enhance the team structure, leadership issues needed to be addressed (Carron & Spink, 1993). The role of leaders is vital in developing team cohesion (Curtner-Smith

et al., 1999; Westre & Weiss, 1991). Team captains are the selected leaders of a team. The team captains were selected with the method that was deemed the most fair by the team. The whole team had to nominate players whom they felt would well suit the captaincy role. The common practice in basketball is to have two team captains. Thus, the participants were asked to nominate players, and they nominated two of them, which made voting unnecessary, because they were two nominees for two positions. The team captains are both seniors, and they are both 'star players' on the team. The team captains were the selected leaders of the team, and their guidance was deemed critical for the well-being of the basketball team, both on and off the court.

The team selected their team captains rather quickly; in fact, it was like there was no doubt in everybody's mind as to who the captains should be. The level of understanding and acceptance on the team was surprisingly high at the time. In sport teams, there are often problems in finding team captains, because a lot of players think they can take up the role, and when they fail, some resentment and animosity starts to build up. But that was not the case for this team. As coaches, it is vital to have team captains by our sides, because they somewhat constitute the bridge between the players and the coach. In fact, sometimes the coach may not be aware of internal disruptions, and it is the captain's duty to ensure that the communication channels between the players and the coach is perfectly effective. Although some coaches do not agree that captains need to be some of the team's "star" players, but only seniors, my experience has taught me that being the most talented player gives one that much more credibility in the eyes of the team members. Westre and Weiss (1991) indeed argued that in sport teams, leaders who lead by example are usually the most successful ones.

Team norms: Research has shown that athletes gave greatest effort when they were on teams that possessed stronger norms for social interactions and higher team social cohesion (Loughead & Hardy, 2006). Moreover, Carron and Spink (1993) argued that team norms, as part of the team structure, are an essential element to team building venture. And last, the results from the first administration of the GEQ as well as the first focus group indicated the necessity to establish norms that would act as a yardstick for the team's behaviour. It was therefore deemed important to address the issue of team norms in the Rhodes University basketball team and run an exercise to generate team norms. For the purpose of this exercise (see Literature chapter for details), the team was divided into small heterogeneous groups. There were no particular criteria for the allocation of people into groups, as it was made conveniently according to where the participants were seated. Each group's task was to draw the profile of their image of an ideal player, in terms of behaviour, personality, and body structure across various situations (e.g., practice, competition, everyday life etc.). After a certain period of time, a designated spokesperson for each group presented their ideal player profile to the rest of the team. Once each spokesperson has presented their ideal player profile, the team had a brainstorming session to reach a consensus as to what the team's ideal player profile was to be. Once drafted, the team ideal player profile would then be used to set the standards by which the team members would generally judge one another. The profile is presented in Table 3:

Table 3

Team ideal player profile

Ideal player profile

Self-confident (i.e., trust in own abilities)
Good attributes
Excellent athlete
Strong leader (i.e., able to influence teammates towards achieving group's purposes)
Disciplined (i.e., punctual for practice, games, etc; sane lifestyle)
Physical dexterity
Passionate
Team player
Good sense of humour
Mentally tough (i.e., able to timely overcome adversity and control mind matters)
Finesse
2 meters tall
95 kg
Good aggression (i.e., plays with intensity and controlled roughness)
Composed
Motivator (i.e., able to put and maintain intensity in practice, competition etc.)
Sound decision-making (i.e., performs the right thing at the right time)
Experience (i.e., has played competitively for at least 5 years)
Good listener
Set priorities
Excellent basketball skills (i.e., excellent shooting, passing, rebounding, dribbling etc.)

The players did not have much difficulty drafting their ideal player profile. The brainstorming session was particularly productive and a list was quickly put forward. The only concern at the time was that the list might have been a little too unrealistic in that most players were far from matching with the ideal profile. However, the team accepted that to achieve greatness, there was a price to pay, and besides the physical attributes on the list, all team members were expected to do their best to come as close to the list's standards as possible. So for example, little attention was paid to the height of the ideal profile, but players were expected to develop mental skills and become mentally tough, or they were required to be disciplined, like the ideal player would be. Therefore, the difficulty was in the monitoring of how the players abided by the standards. It required a great deal of effort and dedication from a coach point of view to ensure that all the players tried their best to behave as similarly to the ideal player as possible. The team norms were of great importance in order to help the players to assess their behaviour or performance. Moreover, it created a sense of consistency among the team, and according to Sugarman (1999), continuity and consistency of practice can positively influence a team's cohesiveness level. As mentioned by one senior on the team during the first focus group, and from my own experience as a former player, there were no established norms in the previous years' teams, in that things were done implicitly. That was probably why the personal turnover in these teams was so high, I remember players leaving in the middle of the season. One particular incident can actually illustrate this point perfectly, it was at last year's national championship, the team had lost a game that would have sent them to the semi-final, and they were left with ranking games to fight for the 5th place, 6th place and so on. The one team member decided that there was no point in staying so he left and went home. The whole team was upset, but nothing was there for us to

actually confront and judge him, so he left. It could have been avoided if players knew they were living by explicit team norms, and could judge another according to accepted team standards.

Team roles: The players expressed their opinion concerning role awareness when they mentioned in the first focus group that it would help that they were acquainted with their specific responsibilities on the team. That is supported by research findings, in fact, as Eys and Carron (2001) suggested, teams should spend considerable efforts establishing standards of expectations and having clearly defined roles in attempts of fostering higher levels of cohesiveness. In order to assign team roles, Eys et al.'s (2004) hot seat technique was used (see Methodology chapter for details). Individual players were asked to draw a list of what they thought their responsibilities were on the team. Next, each player was asked to present the list of their perceived roles to the team, and while they are presenting, the team amended, disputed, or expanded what was said by the player. The final list of roles for each individual was made at the coach's discretion (Table 4). The list of the team roles is presented in Table 4 (note that for ethical reasons, instead of putting player's names and roles on the table, the roles are presented in terms of the player's position):

Table 4

Team roles

Player's position	Roles
Guard	Fast-break; shooting; leader; motivator; control game; experience defence

Guard	Play-maker; drive; passing; lead fast-breaks; entertain the bench
Guard	Fast-break; duty-man; 3-point shooting; “the kid”
Guard	Drive; finisher; fast-break; get fouls; shooting; steals
Guard	Entertain bench; motivator; support; 6-th man; drive
Forward	Inside-scoring; rebounds; shooting; defence; control game
Forward	Defence; rebounds; blocks; duty-man; “garbage-points”
Forward	Defence; rebounds; put-backs; blocks; leader
Centre	Offensive rebounds; inside scoring; passing; intimidation
Centre	Collect rebounds; lead from the court; score baskets; help build relationships; offense
Centre	Offensive rebounder; inside scoring; defensive rebounds; blocking

The list of roles represents the roles that the players had on the court. At the end of the team role identification exercise, each player was given roles that first of all matched their athletic and playing styles, but that also matched their personality. Some players are naturally inclined to be more defence-minded than others, or some players just have more stamina than others, and it was thus crucial to assign the correct roles to the correct people. When players were given roles that they thought were the right ones for them, they were more motivated to work at their best in order to do their part of the job. The roles were devised like a musical orchestra, where each player had a role to play in order to produce a fine piece of work. And without the total coordination of actions, performance would suffer the consequences. It required a lot of work and experience to carefully study each player's characteristics in order to assign him the right roles. It is for that reason that the coach continually consulted the team senior players as well as the team captains in order to come up with the most accurate decisions. The other challenge was the constant need to provide feedback to the players with regard to their performance. The players needed to be told at all times if they were doing their job properly and, if they were not, necessary guidance was needed for them to get back on track. For that reason, one could argue that being the coach of the team and the practitioner simultaneously is better for this project. In fact, the dual role gives the coach/practitioner the possibility to have a hands-on attitude towards the designing, implementing, and monitoring of the programme's activities. Although it is labour-intensive and time-consuming, if done properly, the chances of having the programme properly carried out is greatly maximized. In other instances of cohesion building programmes where the coach and the practitioner are two different people, both parties should be encouraged to work together harmoniously and effectively, so as to get the most out of the programme.

However, this is often extremely difficult because the coach and the practitioner have different priorities that often clash with one another (Yukelson, 1997).

3.2.3 Classroom meeting #03

The focus of the third and last classroom session was sacrifice behaviour and team goal setting, as part of the attempt to instigate improvements in the team processes and positively influence cohesion (Carron and Spink, 1993).

Team goal-setting: Carron et al. (2007) suggested that the Team Performance Profiling is a useful way to start a goal-setting activity, in that it allows for coaches to establish the areas where improvement is needed and turn those areas into team goals, and since it is the product of all team members' opinions, they are ensured to match individual goals. The participants/players were given print-outs of the results of the assessment one as well as the Team Performance Profiling in order to provide them with a sound knowledge of their team's weaknesses and strengths. That way, they were able to carry out the team goal-setting exercise fully informed and aware of where their team stands. Before the exercise, the team was briefed on goal-setting theory. They were presented with examples of the different types of goals (i.e., process goals and performance goals) as well as the purpose of short-term and long-term goals (Sugarman, 1999). After the briefing, the team was divided into heterogeneous groups of 3 to 4 members (in terms of seniority, position, and/or skills) and each group was asked to draft a list of time-bound, realistic, specific, and measurable short-term and long-term goals. They were allowed to come up with as many performance indices as they wished. After a certain period of time, the team was brought back together to discuss all the groups' propositions to then reach a consensus for a

total of eleven goals. The list of goals drafted by the team is summarized in Table 5 below. As far as individual goals are concerned, each individual player had the task to set his personal goals, both long-term and short-term. Obviously these goals would be in accordance with the team goals, which Sugarman (1999) stressed as a key factor to the success of team goal-setting.

Table 5

Team goals

Short-term / Long-term	Goal
Long-term	Win Provincial League with no losses
Long-term	Finish in the Top 3 at National Championships
Short-term	Improve team chemistry
Short-term	Improve composure
Short-term	Self-acknowledgement
Short-term	Persistence
Short-term	Improve fitness
Short-term	Assertiveness i.e., determination
Short-term	Improve constructive communication
Short-term	Get together outside of basketball at least once every two weekends

Without the careful preparation that was done before performing this activity, its success would have been jeopardized. The preparation phase was marked by the editing of summaries of the results of the first assessment (both GEQ and focus group) as well as the summary of the outcome of the Team Performance Profiling. These documents significantly assisted in ensuring that the goal setting exercise was powerful and accurate. The most important task after setting the goals is to monitor if the players duly make the necessary efforts to achieve them. In this project, being the coach was once again very helpful as practices and game performances were used to monitor and assess the achievement of set goals. Short-term goals were constantly assessed during practices and goals and the outcome of games was used to assess the long-term goals. The awareness of the team goals gave the players the opportunity to set themselves individual goals that would help them be more helpful in achieving the team goals. However, the onus was on them to approach the coach in order to receive feedback regarding their individual endeavours. In at least three studies, having a team goal and team participation in a team goal have been shown to enhance team cohesion, especially task cohesion of athletic teams (Brawley et al., 1992; Widmeyer, Silva & Hardy, 1992; Widmeyer & Williams, 1991). Furthermore, overall research on team sport demonstrates a positive relationship between group cohesion and performance (Carron & Chelladurai, 1981; Hardy et al., 2005; Widmeyer et al., 2003; Yukelson, 1997). The Rhodes Stallions recently reached one of the two long-term goals they set in finishing third at this year's National Championships. Hence, one could argue that the Rhodes basketball team exemplifies the theory mentioned above in that the team set a clear goal, which enhanced team task cohesion, and because cohesion is positively related to performance, it helped them perform at a level where they could achieve their goal.

Sacrifice behaviour: In their conceptual model for team building, Carron and Spink (1993) stressed the importance of player sacrifices as part of the team processes that can have strong effects on a team's cohesiveness. Similarly, Maxwell (2001) proposed the Law of the price tag as a warrant of a team's success. The Law of the price tag holds that a team fails to reach its potential when it fails to pay the price, in other words, make the sacrifices. At the beginning of the session on sacrifice, the players were given a presentation on sacrifice behaviour (see Literature chapter for details). After the presentation, once they have acquired a sound understanding of sacrifice behaviour, the players were asked to draft of list of realistic and measurable sacrifices they thought to be important for the benefit of their team. After drafting individual lists, the team brainstormed ideas and came to an agreement as to which sacrifices each player should make for the team. The sacrifice list was monitored throughout the programme implementation. The sacrifices are presented in Table 6:

Table 6

List of team sacrifices

Sacrifices to be made
I will play for the success of the team, even if it means shining less as an individual
I will refrain from partying the night before games
I will spend time working out on my own outside of team practice sessions
I will provide unconditional support for my teammates to the best of my abilities
I will party with my teammates at least once every second weekend
I will set my priorities and ensure that basketball is one of my top priorities

The exercise on sacrifice behaviour was marked by a rather tensed atmosphere. In fact, the players seemed reluctant to think about the sacrifices they needed to make. The thing was that they knew they already made sacrifices, so thinking about new ones gave them the impression that they would have to make even more sacrifices than they were already making. In order to address this misunderstanding, they were told that they could list the sacrifices they were already making and bring those to the brainstorming session. Discussing each other's sacrifices rapidly turned the hostile atmosphere into a safe environment where the players could open up and realize that sacrifices are needed to achieve greatness. This exercise finished on a very positive note in that it allowed the players to have their sacrifices acknowledged by the team. And the comforting feeling of not going unnoticed brought something positive to the players. The difficult task in asking players to make sacrifices is to convince them that they are necessary. But the level of maturity and intelligence among the team members made this task rather simple, because they already knew that success comes with sacrifices. Individual sacrifices are to increased individual performance what team goals are to increased team performance (Carron & Spink, 1993). In other words, if teams need to set team goals to perform better, then individual players need to make sacrifices to perform better. The important issue is that a team's performance is always contingent with its individual members' performance (Bray & Whaley, 2001). Moreover, Prapavessis and Carron (1997a) found that athletes who perceive their team as being more cohesive are more ready to make sacrifices for the sake of their team. For all these reasons, an activity that addressed the issue of sacrifice behaviour was deemed important to the overall improvement of the team's performance, and was thus incorporated in the programme.

3.2.4 Social gatherings

One of the main issues that the participants expressed during the first assessment (both the GEQ and the focus group) is that they thought that they would highly benefit from knowing their teammates outside of basketball in order to create personal relationships. In fact, they have mentioned that their idea of cohesion would primarily stem from the players becoming closer friends on an everyday life basis. This is supported by Carron and Spink (1993) affirmation that togetherness in teams is an essential factor to better social cohesion in teams. For these reasons, the programme started with a get-together at the coach's apartment. Moreover, in order to maintain the high level of enthusiasm among the participant pertaining to their participation in the programme, having them to have fun, learn to know each other on a personal level, and generally be good friends, it was reckoned adequate to set off the programme with a social gathering. The gathering took the form of a party, with drinks and snacks, and it was a real success, in fact, as of today, the memories of that night are still spoken about by the players. Members of a group must have a reason for working together, and they need to be interdependent, that is, to recognize their need for each others' experiences, abilities, and commitment in order to accomplish group goals (Shaw, 1981). In this team, the participants judged that that reason would be brotherhood. Note that the social gatherings' objectives were to instigate change in the team's environment by improving team togetherness and to ameliorate the team's processes by creating open communication channels between the players so that they could engage in discussions that were not necessarily, but could have been, basketball related. Social gatherings were held as often as possible, but due to time and/or financial constraints, as

well as other players' personal reasons, they could only be held at most every second weekend. They took the form of parties, dinner, and/or watching games on television. The parties were usually held either at the coach's apartment, and it involved student-like party activities (e.g., music, beverages, barbeques, etc.). The team also got together regularly to watch the NBA (American basketball league) season on television. The players would usually do so at one player's apartment, or at a local bar.

The social get-togethers seemed to be the participants' favourite feature of the programme. That is easy to understand considering their age and the fact that they are college students. It was highly interesting to notice the changes in the intensity of the players' relationships from week to week and it is evident that getting together to play games, eat, talk about life, drink, watch television played a major role in bringing about those changes. Within a few weeks, players became more than simple teammates. Of course one has to take into account that the presence of the six senior players on the team made the process of becoming closer friends easier for the team. In fact, the mere fact that close friendships already existed among the senior players strongly inspired the rest of the team to also build close friendships. However, it would be inaccurate to assert that the players would not have built closer relationships without the get-togethers, but say, through coming to practice alone. Although relationships might have become stronger despite the social gatherings, what they really did was speeding up the friendship-building process. It is difficult to even imagine that the programme could have had a positive impact on the team's social cohesion without these social events. However, organizing the social events was no easy task. Players needed to be notified in advance so they could manage their time and avoid jeopardizing their other commitments (academics, work, etc.). This required a lot

of planning on the coach's side. Moreover, a lot of difficulty was caused by the fact that very limited funds were available to the coach/researcher to organize these social events. It goes without saying that with more resources, the success of the social events would have been considerably increased. All in all, the fact remains that the contribution of the social gatherings in increasing the team's cohesion level, especially social cohesion was extremely valuable.

3.2.5 Team meetings

The team meetings were held once a week, usually at the beginning of the week, and they were held in a player's flat in close proximity to the gym or sometimes in a quiet corner of the gym. Having periodic meetings is a good way to check if everything is going well within the team (Sugarman, 1999). The participants were given the opportunity to talk about any matter they wished to bring to the team. The casual, relaxed, yet respectful atmosphere of the meetings allowed for the improvement of communication between the team members. Some of the topics that were brought up during these meetings included various personal concerns such as the availability of packed meals for those who lived in dorms and missed the dorm meals. The participants were really given the opportunity to voice their opinion and talk any matter they deemed important to the team.

These meetings did not really obtain a positive response from the players. That is probably due to the meetings being held before or shortly after athletic practices. Either way, the players would not really be focused during the meetings because they were either eager to practice or eager to go home after practice. As a result, issues were brought up, but they were only discussed

on a surface level. Fortunately, it was seldom that the participants would bring up matters that required deep analysis and lengthy conversations. In fact, the meetings mostly created a stage for minor issues to be rapidly talked about or dealt with. However, it still would have been better if the meetings were scheduled at different times. At the same time, that would have been difficult because more time would have been required from the participants, which may have caused negative attitudes towards the programme in that players may come to think it is too demanding. The participants get very little, if anything, out of sports from their University, besides personal fulfilment; hence it is delicate to ask them for excessive time or effort for a sport-related activity. In an institution where sport is still very much considered as mere leisure, it is difficult for students to allocate excessive amounts of their studying time, or social life in sport and its various surrounding activities.

3.2.6 Team-building activities during athletic practice

Team-building activities (see Methodology chapter for details) were repetitively carried out during athletic practice sessions. These team-building activities were borrowed from the organizational context, and their relevance to the sporting context was surprisingly high. The various activities encouraged the participants to develop skills that are beneficial to building better teams, such as communication and problem-solving. In the exercise that was used the most, “All aboard”, the team had to find ways to fit in a delineated space on the floor. As the space was made smaller and smaller by the coach, the team had to collectively find ways to fit in

the space. The amount of talking, cooperation, and collective problem-solving that the team engaged in was very positive.

The team-building activities (see Methodology chapter for details) were greatly appreciated by the players. They found them rather entertaining and enthusiastically carried them out. The amount of interaction, collective problem-solving, cooperation, collaboration, communication, teamwork, and listening was highly valued by the players. These activities allowed performing collective tasks that were not at all basketball related but that had a high team building potential. Moreover, they were a nice way to break from the strenuous basketball drills for a few minutes. From a coach as well as researcher point of view, it is worthy to note that the success of these small activities often resided in their timing. In fact, it was necessary to know when the players would prefer performing them, for instance, having them during scrimmages would not be best because players do not want to take up from their playing time. For that reason, it may yet again be adequate to support that having a sound knowledge of basketball general dynamics (e.g., coach) can help in the implementation of the activities. These activities were beneficial to the programme in that they prevented the players from thinking of the cohesion building programme and the athletic aspect of the sport as two separate tasks. In fact, putting team building tasks in their athletic practices showed them that cohesion and athletic exercises are two complementary parts of the sport.

3.2.7 Team logo and team jersey

As part of the bettering of the team environment, more specifically team distinctiveness (Carron & Spink, 1993), the team designed its team logo and a customized/personalized jersey to replace the jersey that was donated by the league sponsor. The team discussed various designs for their new uniforms, and after a couple of weeks, they came up with a rather stylish design. Computer software was used to design the logo. The coach designed a number of logos and had the team decide which one they fancied the most. Figure 6 shows the team logo that was retained:

Figure 6. The Rhodes Stallions team logo.



The new uniform created a great deal of excitement among the team members. The problem was that they did not particularly fancy the uniforms donated to them by the league's sponsor. So it was comprehensible that they would respond very well to the idea of having a new uniform that was designed by them and that had their names printed at the back. The players paid for their own uniforms, but it looked like they did not have a problem with that, because they would get to keep the kit. As for the logo, its success only lasted for a couple of weeks. In fact, the players really liked the idea of having a logo, and look all professional. But due to a lack of funds, the project of having team t-shirts done with the logo on it could not be achieved. Once again, one could state that with more resources, the programme could have been carried out to a fuller extent, and its outcome may have been even more positive.

3.2.8 Trips

The Rhodes Stallions are playing in the Eastern Cape provincial league, thus, they often travel to neighbouring cities for away games. There are away games approximately every second weekend and the full team often spend the whole day, sometimes even entire weekends together in other cities surrounding Grahamstown. The amount of interaction and proximity that players experience during these trips often turns out to be team building experiences for the group. In fact, the players do activities such as dining or sight-seeing which bring them closer to one another and allow them to build stronger personal relationships. In terms of theory, trips, like social gatherings, are a good way to enhance the team's environment, especially togetherness and communication (Carron & Spink, 1993). Being stuck together in a bus for a couple of hours or in dining together provides ample opportunities to talk about anything and everything, simply for the sake of knowing more about each other.

It is undisputed that the away games' journeys have a powerful way of instigating team spirit. A lot like the social events, these journeys allow the participants to interact on a more personal and social level. However, because the destination is mostly Port Elizabeth, the monotony of the weekly trips somewhat decreased the excitement associated with the journeys. Players tend to kill time on the bus by sleeping, in order to feel less of the "pain". But in general, these journeys have a valuable way of contributing to the team's bonding process.

3.2.9 Nationals training camp and National Championship tournament

3.2.9.1 Training camp

The training camp that took place in the week before the National Championship tournament was a tremendous opportunity to hold an intensive phase for the programme. In fact, the players were in a closed-camp, which means that they were living in the same house for the whole preparation week. During that week, basketball/athletic training, psychological training (i.e., mental preparation), and cohesion-building constituted the team's daily routine. The cohesion-building activities involved recapitulating everything that was done in the classroom sessions that were held before the camp. This entailed reviewing team norms, team roles, discussing various leadership issues, and monitoring the team goals. But one of the best parts of the camp was the fact that all the players were living together. This really brought the team members together not only as athlete, but also as people. The organization that took place reinforced the team structure (Carron & Spink, 1993), as various roles were assigned to various players, not only on the court, but also outside of basketball. In fact, together, they had to think about financial issues, about what to eat, or where to sleep. They had to organize themselves to establish a cooking roster, a cleaning roster, and a shopping roster. Moreover, in order to maintain a liveable environment, a normative behaviour was naturally imposed on the players. For instance, it was made the norm to wake up in the morning and make up the beds and tidy up the flat before leaving the house. This sort of situations really set team norms that informed the acceptable behaviours in the team. The team processes (Carron & Spink, 1993) were also enhanced when the players engaged in relatively high sacrifice behaviour. For instance, the players were sleeping on mattresses at floor level next to one another for the entire duration of the camp, or the fact they had to constantly put their money in the communal pot to purchase food, leaving them to only eat foods they were given to eat. Besides sacrifice behaviour, team process was greatly enhanced by the creation of

rich communication channels between the team members. In fact, the players were naturally bound to talk to one another, simply because they only had their teammates to talk to for a week. The team environment (Carron & Spink, 1993) was definitely enhanced during the intensive camp. In terms of distinctiveness, it was the various anecdotes, jokes, and stories, formation of nicknames, and amusing incidents that created a sense of uniqueness within the group. The social aspect of cohesion was a critical issue raised in the assessment part, and this camp really provided means to address these issues. Close relationships, trust, brotherhood was definitely achieved during that camp.

3.2.9.2 Tournament

The tournament was another opportunity for the players to make the bond that existed in the team even stronger. Being in a foreign city for a whole week and competing against the best teams in the country, the team was put to test in many ways. First, the team's unity and bond was put to a test because the players were in an environment where they needed maximum support from one another. They were away from their friends, acquaintances, and anybody they knew so all the people they could turn to was their teammates. Second, their athletic skills were put to a test because they competed against the best teams in the country. The tournament ended on a very positive note, with the team clinching the bronze medal. The team only lost two games out of nine played.

The camp in particular was a much unexpected factor that positively affected the team's cohesion. It was unexpected in that it was not planned as part of the programme, but its contribution was of undeniable value. The camp was like an intensive version of the whole

programme, in fact, all the activities that were done separately in the programme were congested into a week long journey. The classroom activities were revisited; social events were happening constantly, trips happened three times a day, and practices three times a day. During that week, the coach felt that it was important to introduce the team to some mental preparation concepts and techniques, in order to maximize their overall preparation. The coach, in the person of the researcher possesses basic experience in the field, but enough to help out a team that has never been exposed to mental preparation. This incorporation of mental preparation in the camp was greatly appreciated by the players, as they rapidly realized its power. The camp was positive, but it would not have been possible to make it that way without all the sacrifices made by all the team members. And the outcome of the tournament was the reward that made it all worthwhile for every team member, including the coach.

3.3 Evaluation

3.3.1 Second administration of GEQ

At the end of the programme, as part of the second assessment, the GEQ was administered to the players for the second time. The questionnaire was administered in yet again a secluded place, away from potential disruptions that may have affected the filling in of the questionnaire. The results of the second GEQ administration are outlined and graphically depicted in Table 7 and Figure 7:

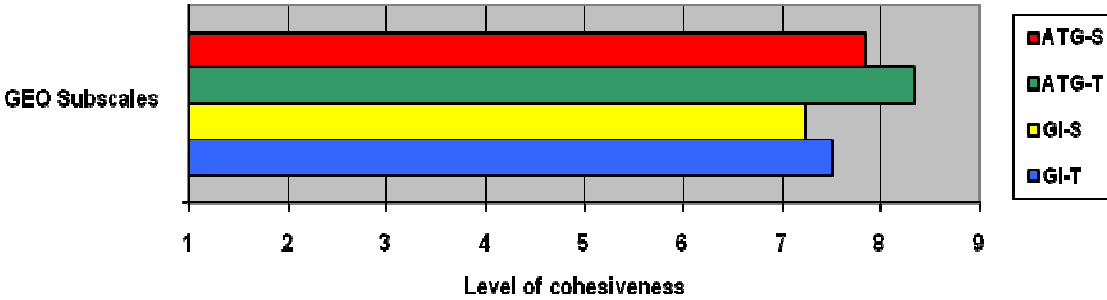
Table 7

GEQ scores for assessment two of the whole team's mean score for each GEQ subscale

Manifestation	Definition	Score
Group Integration- Task (GI-T)	Individual team member's feelings about similarity, closeness, and bonding within the team as a whole around the group's tasks. Individual's perception of task unity	7.52
Group Integration- Social (GI-S)	Individual team member's feelings about the similarity, closeness, and bonding within the team as a whole around the group as a social unit. Individual's perceptions of social unity within the group as a whole	7.25
Individual Attractions to the Group- Task (ATG-T)	Individual team member's feelings about his or her personal involvement with the group's task, productivity, and goals and	8.34

	<p>objectives.</p> <p>Attractiveness of the group's task, productivity, and goals for the individual personally</p>	
Individual Attractions to the Group- Social (ATG-S)	<p>Individual team member's feelings about his or her personal acceptance and social interactions with the team as social unit.</p> <p>Attractiveness of the group as a social unit and social interaction and friendship opportunities available for the individual personally.</p>	7.85

Figure 7. GEQ assessment two results.



Overall, the scores obtained through the second administration of the GEQ were satisfying, in that they were higher than the GEQ scores obtained in assessment one. In fact, the scores in this assessment two were relatively high in comparison with assessment one's scores, ranging from 7.25 (GI-T) to 8.34 (ATG-T).

3.3.2 Analysis of the two GEQ administrations with the Student's t-test Applied to Difference scores

The study was concerned with the effect of a cohesion-building programme on the level of cohesiveness within a collegiate basketball team. The team's level of cohesion was measured before and after the completion of the programme through the use of the GEQ. In order to remain faithful to the phenomenon under investigation (cohesion) and to ensure that all various aspects of the multidimensional concept were explored, each of the four subscales of the GEQ was treated separately. The GEQ scores for all four subscales are given in Table 8. The row of difference was obtained by subtracting the Before score from the After score, so that a positive difference represents an increase in cohesiveness levels.

Table 8

Raw statistical data from GEQ assessments

ATG-S	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Mean	Std. Dev.
Before	6.8	7	2	5	6.4	4.4	3.6	3.2	2.2	5	5.2	4.618181818	1.733100217
After	8.2	7.8	6.4	5.6	9	7.6	8.2	8	8.4	8.2	9	7.854545455	1.027972409
Difference	1.4	0.8	4.4	0.6	2.6	3.2	4.6	4.8	6.2	3.2	3.8	3.236363636	1.772722611

ATG-T	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Mean	Std. Dev.
Before	7	3.8	3.75	5.5	6.5	5.5	3	5.75	5	6.25	3	5	1.414213562
After	9	7.3	8.75	7.3	8.75	8.25	9	9	7.75	8.75	8	8.340909091	0.682575337
Difference	2	3.5	5	1.8	2.25	2.75	6	3.25	2.75	2.5	5	3.340909091	1.397644122
GI-S	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Mean	Std. Dev.
Before	4	5	3.5	4	3.25	5	5	2.75	3	4.5	3.5	3.954545455	0.827784557
After	6.25	7.3	6	5.3	7.5	6.75	7.75	8.25	8.5	7.5	8.75	7.25	1.095445115
Difference	2.25	2.3	2.5	1.3	4.25	1.75	2.75	5.5	5.5	3	5.25	3.295454545	1.55651125
GI-T	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Mean	Std. Dev.
Before	6	5.2	4.4	4.6	4.6	5.2	3.8	4	4.4	4.8	3.8	4.618181818	0.66606033
After	6.8	6.8	7.6	7.8	9	7.6	7.4	8	8	6.4	7.4	7.527272727	0.711464559
Difference	0.8	1.6	3.2	3.2	4.4	2.4	3.6	4	3.6	1.6	3.6	2.909090909	1.146694855

The means of the Before and After treatment, as well the difference means for each of the four GEQ subscales are also depicted in Table 8. And the t scores for the four GEQ subscales are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9

t-scores for the four GEQ subscales

GEQ subscales	t-scores
ATG-S	6.06
ATG-T	7.94

GI-S	7.03
GI-T	8.42

In this study, the task is to test the Null hypothesis that the means are equal under the two GEQ measurements. And because we are dealing with related observations, we shall work with the difference scores and test $H_0: \mu_D = 0$. Using a two-tailed test at the .05 level of significance, the alternative hypothesis is $H_1: \mu_D \neq 0$.

There are 11 difference scores in this study, so the degrees of freedom will be $N - 1$ *df*, or 10. From the Table 9 (Percentage point of t distribution Table, put in Appendix), it is found that for a two-tailed test at .05 level of significance, $t_{.05(10)} = \pm 2.228$. Our obtained t values, as depicted in Table 8, of t (ATG-S) (6.06), t (ATG-T) (7.94), t (GI-S) (7.03), and t (GI-T) (8.42) exceed 2.228, so the Null hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that the difference scores were not samples from a population of difference scores where $\mu_D = 0$. It can be therefore concluded that the subjects perceived a significantly higher level of cohesiveness after the intervention programme than before it.

Although one would presume that the programme was successful, one should keep in mind that the increase in cohesiveness levels may be associated with normal growth. In fact, it can always be possible that cohesiveness levels naturally increases as the season unfolds. Regression towards the mean is a problem that researchers often encounter with experimental designs (Howell, 2008). The principle suggests that when measurements are conducted twice on the same sample, individuals far from the mean on the first set will tend to be closer to the mean on the second set, and the farther from the mean on the first measurement, the stronger the effect. In

this research project, one could argue that because the results of the first GEQ were considerably lower than the results from the second administration, the scores naturally increased, and the programme had no effect on the change in scores. However, the results obtained in the focus groups supported the increase of the GEQ scores. In fact, in the first focus group, results showed that the participants perceived cohesion as relatively low, but after the programme, the participants reported in the second focus group that cohesion has definitely increased and they felt their team was a fully cohesive unit. Furthermore, this project was situated in the action research paradigm, and had as primary objective the betterment of a particular community (i.e., the team members). The participants mentioned in the second focus group that the programme was powerful in that it helped achieve things they would not have otherwise. For all these reasons, one could say that the effects of regression, despite being potentially risky, were of trivial significance to this research project. Moreover, this concern shall be addressed by the data collected through the focus group discussion. Indeed, the focus group conducted in parallel with the GEQ assessment allows for the deeper investigation that may be unanswered if the GEQ was to be used on its own. Nonetheless, as far as the GEQ is concerned, the fact remains that, for whatever reasons, the level of perceived cohesion within the team has significantly increased after the programme intervention.

3.3.3 Second Focus Group Interview

The second focus group interview was conducted subsequent to the second administration and scoring of the GEQ. First, the content of the interview schedule was informed by the results derived from the second GEQ. Second, it was informed by the content of the results of the first

focus group interview, so as to ensure the consistency in the study, and to enable the researcher to identify possible variations between the two interviews. Third, the interview schedule was informed by the programme's activities and results, in order to gather rich data concerning the participant's perceptions of the programme. The interview setting was yet again carefully chosen and maximum efforts were made to make the participants comfortable, as this is crucial for establishing good rapport with participants. Once conducted, the interview was transcribed and analysed through interpretive analysis, and sixteen themes emerged from the analysis. Each theme will be presented in a separate paragraph, including an exploration of the possible variations that occurred since the first focus group as well a discussion around the theme.

3.3.3.1 Desire to know teammates outside of basketball

The participant's concern about the necessity to acquaint with each other on a more personal basis was yet again the first theme that emerged out of interview. There was a unanimous consent that relationships have greatly evolved since the first focus group. One player summed up the team's opinion on the matter, when he stated that:

“...we have come a long way, and this team is now more than a team, it is family...”

However, other players confessed that although the team has become a much tighter unit, individual participants have only managed to really build strong relationships with but a few individuals in the team. There was not a single player who admitted having built close relationships with all the team members. Most comments resembled the following statements made by one of the participants:

“...yes I have built really close relationships with some of the guys, to the point where I actually feel a bond that means a lot, but not with all the guys though...”

The one senior player responded to such arguments by saying that every team, regardless of the level of chemistry, has one element who struggles to fit in. There was another issue the team raised that was somehow intriguing; they said that because of the lack of support and incentives that the players get from the University’s Sport Administration, despite their outstanding performance, the team is slowly eroding, and relationships tend to suffer from the lack of commitment caused thereof.

It is clear that the relationships have positively evolved since the first focus group and the onset of the programme. In the first focus group, the participants expressed their wish to build intimate relationships with their teammates, because they thought that knowing their teammates off-the-court would have a positive effect on the on-court basketball related relationships. At the completion of the programme, the players made it clear in the second focus group that they all have built intimate relationships with most of their teammates. It is understandable that one player could only manage to build intimate relationships with a few teammates. In fact, despite the cohesion-building programme, personalities and individual affinities remain important factors in the building of close relationships between people. The fact remains that the team is now perceived as a family by its members, and despite the fact that some individuals get along better with some individuals rather than others; the team is now a cohesive unit. The participants also stated in the first interview that knowing their teammates off-the-court would help achieve

higher task cohesion, that is, on-court chemistry. Being the coach of the team, it is hard not to notice the changes that occurred in terms of understanding on the court. Players have learnt to “read” each other and play together with harmony. From that, it could be argued that the participants were right when they said that they would be more coordinated on the court if they got to know one another more in everyday life. Gill (2000) made a supporting point to this argument by stating that when teams come together, social unity usually plays a very important role in ensuring that the players integrate the team successfully. However, with more time spent together on the team and more personal relationship established, players start to feel the need for more task cohesion to ensure that team objectives are met.

3.3.3.2 Talking about cohesion

The next theme that emerged in the interview was on cohesion. There was a general agreement among the team members that despite the higher level of cohesiveness that was achieved since the onset of the programme, there was still a margin to improve. It was said that team cohesion could improve in that task cohesion is now much better, but social cohesion could still be enhanced. The one player commented on this issue and stated that:

“...I would say that on the court, we have reached that stage where we totally understand each other, we definitely play like a well-oiled engine, but I still feel that outside of basketball, it could be even stronger...”

Another team member responded by emphasizing that it may be the lifestyle differences that make it difficult for the players to interact fully outside of practice times. It was evident that most

of the senior players and some rookies argued that the level of bonding on the team is perfect.

Indeed, the one rookie commented:

“...bonding? Perfect is the word...”

But some team members also stated that regardless of the high level of chemistry that exists within the team as a whole, there are still clusters in the team. The clusters are not independent units that exist in the team, but they are more based on personal affinities among various team members. As one member said:

“...I think there are still some clusters in the team, but that’s just because some guys get along more with other, maybe because they find the same things to be funny, but I don’t think that is a problem, I am just saying...”

It was strongly emphasized in the first focus group that building cohesion was not a “quick-fix” task. The team members were aware that it often takes team a whole season or more to achieve complete team cohesion. However, as they have expressed in the second interview, the team has reached a significantly higher cohesiveness level. Task cohesion was perceived to be very high. Social cohesion was also perceived high, but like all types of relationships involving human beings, there is no ceiling to how much one person can know another. Moreover, as stated before, the individual differences that exist between people, due to their personalities or individual inclinations, are bound to be found within the team. It is comprehensible that clusters were created, but it is essential to manage them well and ensure that the team as a whole always

keeps the big picture in mind. The programme has laid the bases for the team members to build relationships, but it could never coerce people into relationships they would not naturally get into.

3.3.3.3 Roles and responsibilities

The next theme was about the players' roles on the team. Every team member agreed that they were now totally aware of their role on the team, and what they were expected to do for the team. Moreover, they have all said that it was vitally helpful to be told what the individual roles were, as it gave them a sense of direction which makes playing a much easier task.

In the first focus group, the participants were not aware of what was expected of them. In fact, they emphasized that it would be very helpful to be told what their responsibilities were on the team. It is easy to understand the importance that the players attached to role awareness. As the coach of the team, it was evident that after telling each and every player when, how, and what they were supposed to do, the level of coordination drastically improved. The team suddenly turned into a symphony where each instrument contributed to the performance of the task. However, the challenge was in the need to constantly provide feedback to the players. But as they said in the second focus group, the amount of feedback was sound. The one senior player stated that:

“...coach is clear to everyone, and he listens to our questions, we know exactly where we stand...”

The body of literature suggests that when role ambiguity is low (i.e., players are aware of their roles), perceptions of cohesion are high because there is no conflict between players with regard to individual responsibilities (Eys & Carron, 2001). As part of the programme's activities was the elucidation of individual roles (see Methodology Chapter), and for that reason, part of the perceived increase in team cohesion by the participants may be attributed to the programme.

3.3.3.4 Feelings of adequacy

The feeling of adequacy was the next theme that came out of the interview. In fact, every team member expressed that they believed they were making an impact on the team's performance, and almost every player had no doubts concerning their worth in the team. The couple of players who confessed that they still feel doubtful about their worth at times said that it was because their roles were not as noticeable as the roles of other teammates. The one player said:

“...sometimes I have doubt in my game, especially when it is a very offensive game, I am not really needed because my job is to defend...”

In the first focus group, the participants expressed their concern about the amount of pressure that was put on their shoulders by the coach. In fact, at the time, they said that the high standards and the high expectations of the coach were overwhelmingly demeaning and gave them doubts about their worth as athletes. However, in the second focus group, every player seemed to believe that their input in the team was of considerable value to the team. The players' self-beliefs have increased from the first to the second focus group. One can argue that the amount of

feedback, as well as development of trust relationships could have greatly contributed to the bettering of the players' morale and self-esteem. In fact, by knowing what they were supposed to do, they have acquired a sense of purpose. And when paired with the support of their teammates, this sense of purpose gave them a reason to believe that they were needed on the team. From the first to the second focus group, feelings of inadequacy became feelings of adequacy (e.g., increased self-belief, increased self-esteem). This could be linked to the notion of collective efficacy. Zaccaro et al. (1995) defined collective efficacy as a sense of collective ability shared among individuals when allocating, coordinating, and integrating their resources in a successful concerted response to specific situational demands. Paskevich et al. (2006) found that collective efficacy tends to become stronger as cohesiveness increases within a team. It could thus be deduced that the increased feeling of shared competence induced by the higher level of cohesiveness has given individual players the confidence in their contribution to their team's collective efficacy.

3.3.3.5 Leadership

The team members unanimously stated that the team had good leaders. Moreover, they advanced that the good thing about the team's leadership style is that it was shared among certain individuals on the team. The one player commented on this and said that:

“...yes, it (leadership) is shared in every way, it is a management by consensus generally, and I never feel aggrieved by decisions...”

On the same topic, a senior player said that:

“...all the senior players are given a leadership role, and we all have a leader (coach), not a dictator...”

The shared nature of leadership and the openness of the coach were perceived as a very positive feature of the team. In fact, the participants agreed that it eases the pressure on one individual and allows players to seek and find leadership and guidance with ease. On the other hand, some senior players have expressed their concern about the way leaders sometimes over-react, thus creating unnecessary pressure on the team. Moreover, it was said that more people skills would help improve the leadership of the team.

There have not really been major variations between the statements from the two focus group interviews. Leadership was always perceived as constructively shared between the coach and senior players. Because the team is a University team, meaning that there is no formal management team behind the athletic team, senior players took up various leadership roles. The team captain took the captaincy role, thereby ensuring that things run smoothly within the team and that the team is on the same page as the coach. The other captain took the administrator role, dealing with various “office-related” issues that affected the team. And a senior player took up the role of the treasurer, taking care of money matters when needed, such as managing the funds during the training camp before the Nationals. From a coach point of view, having adopted a shared and open leadership style was a very good decision. It allowed every team members to be given the right amount of attention. Also, players were very rarely aggrieved by decisions, which maximized the level of motivation and commitment to the team. This view is supported by

Yukelson (2001) when he stated that higher-status members of the teams (captains, highly skilled athletes, or senior athletes) should also be involved in the development and implementation of the team building intervention in order to increase the sense of commitment among other team members. In fact, if seniors “buy into” the programme, other players are more likely to adopt it. Since leadership behaviour and cohesion are positively related (Westre & Weiss, 1991), having established a sound leadership style in the team may have considerably contributed to the betterment of the team’s cohesiveness level. Furthermore, leadership is a very important aspect of team building, and as Carron and Spink (1993) emphasized, sound leadership is crucial in team building interventions in that it gives guidance to the team members as to what to do with and what to expect from the programme.

3.3.3.6 Emotions and peer support

In terms of emotions and the way they are flaunted on the team, there was a general consensus that they were positively displayed. The participants felt that communication was good, thus allowing individuals to express their emotions positively and constructively. Two senior players commented:

“...we don’t ever bring our teammates down by showing negative emotions...”

“...people don’t criticise each other but motivate to achieve better...”

The only concern that was raised by one senior player was the fact that sometimes the coach expresses emotions in a hard-line manner, and it is often misinterpreted by some members of the

team. As far as peer support is concerned, there was also a consensus that players trust each other on the team. Trust here refers to the belief that a teammate will reach out a hand whenever possible, regardless of the situation or circumstances. A player said that:

“...I feel that my teammates can count on me, and I can do the same...”

At the beginning of the season, as expressed by participants in the first focus group interview, the players could not really control their negative emotions and the consequent expression of disappointment. Having reached the stage where emotions are positively and constructively expressed is thus a major achievement for the team members. The fact that the coach sometimes expresses himself in a hard-line manner should not be an issue to the players. In fact, regardless of their age, level of expertise, or personal backgrounds, coaches inevitably lose control of their emotions from time to time, and it is simply part of the game. Players should keep a positive attitude regardless of the coach's ways. It may be relevant at this stage to make a self-introspection of my conduct as a coach. This can help the reader to contextualize the manner in which the programme is implemented. Moreover, as Rainer argued (1987), one's coaching style usually determines how one will teach skills and strategies, organize practices and competition methods, discipline athletes, and involve players in decision-making. Rainer (1987) proposed three coaching styles, namely authoritarian, cooperative, and casual. Under the authoritarian style, the coaching philosophy is win-centred, decision-making is all at the coach's discretion, the communication style is telling, and training structures are inflexible. The cooperative coaching style is athlete-centred, decision-making is shared, and communication involves telling, asking, and listening. Casual coaching styles are marked by a lack of emphasis and direction,

basically, this style has no style. My coaching style falls in between the authoritarian and the cooperative style, in that, depending on the situation, I can adopt a very strict way of doing things or I can be lenient about most matters. However, I am always organized and I provide as much guidance as possible. I try to lead by example, by walking the talk and putting all the necessary efforts into coaching the team. I set very high yet realistic standards, and I make sure that expectations are met. At the same time, I provide the players with all the necessary tools to achieve objectives and I do not condone any form of slacking. Love, respect, and discipline are the three words that can sum up my coaching philosophy. The team members now trust each other and they have learnt to know and understand each other. In fact, close relationships have been built, and the learning of how to positively express emotions was consequently acquired by the players. The reason behind individuals opening up and trusting some players and not some others would be the same as the reason advanced for the fact that some relationships are stronger than others. It is a matter of personality and individual affinities, like in everyday life or in any social circle one belongs to, some people are often perceived to be more trustworthy than others. And this only has to do with individual characteristics, not the other person's trustworthiness. The fact remains that emotions are now positively displayed, as expressed by the participants in the second interview. And since the overall results of studies conducted on the relationship between moods, emotions, and cohesion suggest that when the athletes perceive themselves as part of a cohesive team, they have the tendency to experience enhanced moods and positive emotions (Terry et al., 2000). As indicated by the second focus group, the participants experienced enhanced mood and positive emotions, which means that, considering Terry et al.'s (2000) research findings, the participants perceived themselves as being part of more cohesive unit after the programme implementation.

3.3.3.7 Complacency

The team faced their first defeat of the season at the National Championships where they ended up taking the bronze medal, and the team members unanimously agreed that there was something positive to that defeat. In fact, the participants argued that the defeat they faced helped them to assess the true potential of their team. Moreover, it provided the team with the willingness to improve that they are still to find in their unchallenging provincial league. The team captain made the following comment:

“...to a certain extent, it brought us back to earth, showed us where we really were in the country, and taught us a lot about ourselves (...) and it gives us a good incentive to improve and come back stronger...”

Despite the fact that every team member strives to play at the best of his abilities for the sake of the team, most players have expressed their discontentment concerning the fact that the level of the provincial league they compete in does not allow them to fully aspire to behave like professionals. The following comments illustrated that point:

“...like a professional team yes when we think about and set our minds to it, though we are laid back with weak teams...”

“...we behave like pros, but we tend to relax when playing average teams...”

This problem was evidently dangerous in that it had the potential to instil a bad habit in the team. In fact, if the team got too used to playing half-heartedly because of the weak opposition, it would have adopted an “average-performance” habit and hindered its growth. The problem was that the players were not motivated to play hard when they faced a weak opposition. Since goal-setting has been reported to positively influence an athlete’s intrinsic motivation levels (Burton et al., 1993), the solution to the complacency problem was clear, it was necessary to set team goals that were contingent to specific situational demands (e.g., beat a team with a 50 points margin in order to go to the beach after the game). Although these goals were not in the list of team goals devised during the team goal-setting activity, it is important for coaches to be responsive and develop the ability to set spontaneous goals that can better their team’s performance. The players were acquainted with the mechanisms of goal-setting in the programme’s activity, which made the setting of spontaneous goals rather simple and efficient. Without such knowledge of goal-setting, it would have been positively more difficult to expect the players to use this method efficiently.

In the first focus group, the participants said that the issue of complacency manifested itself in two ways, namely complacency vis-à-vis weak opposition and complacency within the team itself. The issue of complacency within the team itself has changed in that all players now strive to play their best whenever they are called upon to do so. In fact, some players expressed in the first interview that because of the presence of talented players on the team, they felt that they could hold back and not give their best to the team. Loughead and Hardy (2006) stated that athletes who perceived their team as a highly task cohesive unit displayed higher work outputs. That argument could explain the change in attitudes among the team members. At the beginning

of the season, the team's perception of task cohesion before the programme intervention was relatively low compared to after the intervention. For that reason, individual work outputs were low, which was noted as complacency, but as the perceptions of task cohesion increased, so did the individual work outputs. With regards to the complacency vis-à-vis weak opposition, the problem seems to be out of the control of the team members or the coach himself. It is simply a pity that the provincial league does not provide enough competition for a talented team like the Rhodes Stallions to grow and develop. It must be said, however, that there is also a lack of support from the University. In fact, if there was a genuine willingness to help the team become the country's best, more effort would be made with regard to incentives for players as well as support in organizing tours to more competitive provinces.

3.3.3.8 Intra-team competition

The participants agreed that the intra-team competition is fully productive. Players use each other as benchmarks for improvement and play hard against one another without ever resorting to bad behaviour. The following comments made by two team members illustrate this point:

“...it's harder when we play each other than when we play against any opposition...”

“...we don't ever see bad vibes in the team, we play hard and help each other play better...”

In the first focus group, the participants expressed their awareness of the danger of competition within a team. They mentioned that competition can be good only if the players have the right attitudes. It seems like players have adopted the right attitudes, because the statements in the

second interview show that they perceive the intra-team competition as fully productive in their team. It may be possible that having developed higher level of cohesiveness, the distinction between the “us” (our team) and “them” (the other teams) has become more apparent among the team members. For that reason, regardless of the amount of competition within the “us”, every team member always has the bigger picture in mind, which would be defeating “them”. In Tajfel’s (1981) social identity theory, the central assumption is that individuals are motivated to strive for a positive self-concept, especially a positive sense of social identity. And they develop the positive self-concept by evaluating themselves according to the group to which they belong. By positively evaluating the group to which they belong, they create an in-group bias, or the perception of the in-group (their team) as superior to out-groups (other teams). This is a psychological process (self-legitimization), because individuals think that if the group to which they belong is perceived as superior, they would consequently be perceived as superior. The in-group bias can sometimes have negative connotations (Franzoi, 2006) when the in-group bias and inter-group competition becomes stereotyping which can lead to prejudice. However, as Heuze et al. (2006) argued, in sport, the in-group bias is usually positive in that it gives the team and its member a stronger belief in collective efficacy that makes them confident and enhances their performance.

3.3.3.9 Sacrifices

The participants unanimously accepted the fact that one has to pay the price to get the results. The team members agreed that all the sacrifices they have made and are still making justify the ends. In fact, they have mentioned that clinching the third place at the National Championships was the result that made all the sacrifices worthwhile. This achievement is a first in the Rhodes

University men's basketball 1st team history. Besides coming third at the 2008 Nationals, the team won their first ever 2008 Team of the Year Award at the Rhodes University Sport Awards Dinner. One player made the following comment:

“...you know, knowing that you are the third best team in the country, and especially that the top two teams are professional teams, all the pain and the hate was more than worth it...”

Moreover, the players added that the team would never perform at the level it is performing at without all the sacrifices made by each and every team member. It was generally said that the team could not perform at the level it is at without its players' sacrifices.

In the first focus group, the general sentiment of the team was that it was necessary to get to know the teammates better so as to find reasons to make sacrifices for the team. In the second interview, the general sentiment of the team was that all the sacrifices each and every team member made was worthwhile, and that without it, the team would have never finished in the top three at the National Championships. Logically, one could assume from the two statements above that it is because people got to know each other better that they have made various sacrifices for their team. Nonetheless, the important thing to note is that without sacrifices, very little can be achieved. Thus, it is necessary to recognize the efforts and acknowledge the sacrifices made by the players. Sacrifices are somewhat abstract and players often make them almost instinctively (Holt & Sparkes, 2001), and for the team to reach its maximum potential, it was necessary to address the issue of sacrifices in the programme so as to develop a sense of awareness among the player as to what are the prices that need to be paid for glory. The

programme also allowed for the monitoring and rewarding of the sacrifices made, which Loughead and Hardy (2006) noted as vital to the efficiency of team building interventions. The type of reward was however yet again determined by the amount of resources at hand, which were relatively sparse.

3.3.3.10 Social gatherings and trips

The participants were of the same mind concerning the effect of the social gatherings on the team. They all mentioned that getting together and spending quality time outside of basketball made the players become like brothers who know each others personalities. The following comments made by a few players will illustrate this point:

“...they helped a lot as we got to learn about each other lives and ways...”

“...it showed people’s characters outside the court...”

“...a lot, knowing each other’s habits, craziness and all made us like brothers...”

However, some members still feel that the team does not get together enough outside of basketball. Trips for away games were also viewed by the participants as another activity that brings people together. In fact, the fact that the players spend lengthy periods of time on the bus and/or eating together at a restaurant actively engages people to interact on a personal and social level. The following comments on the topic were made by a rookie player:

“...the bus rides were so long that we got to talk about almost everything that was happening in our lives...”

“...so we got to know each other more on the bus and also eating at *****...”

There are no major variations between the first and second focus group in the way the participants felt about social gatherings. The many social gatherings that the team took part in during the implementation of the programme did their job in bringing people closer to one another. The participants indeed learnt a great deal about each other during those social events. Nevertheless, as one senior player said, the team cannot ever get enough of social gatherings. But in a project without funding and available resources, it is difficult to organize social events to satisfaction. The bus rides and the dining in restaurants during away games constituted powerful team building activities on their own. In fact, they greatly contributed to the enhancement of social cohesion, especially with the shortage of resources available to this project. In a university setting, where sport is non professional, the team togetherness (Carron & Spink, 1993) aspect of team building appeared to have received the most positive response from the participants. At their age and considering their student lifestyles, it is understandable that spending quality time together contributes greatly to improving team cohesiveness. The programme made all the realistic efforts to address this issue, but yet again, one can only work with the amount of resources available.

3.3.3.11 Team name

This theme was marked by a great deal of exhilaration within the team. The whole team agreed that coming up with a team name was the best decision this year. Moreover, the participants

stated that the name gives the team and its members a sense of identity, belongingness, and uniqueness. Some of the comments were:

“...definitely, we all fell like we belong, we are all Stallions...”

“...yes definitely 100%, the Stallions was the best decision we made...”

These comments fully corresponded to the literature. In fact, it is argued that having a team name considerably contributes to the team’s distinctiveness and greatly contributes to bringing strong cohesiveness within sport teams (Carron & Spink, 1993; Sugarman, 1999).

The extent to which the team name produced a sense of identity was not totally anticipated. In fact, it was only during the interview upon listening to the keen comments made about the significance of the team name that its value for the team was realized. Teams often give themselves names, but nobody really pays much attention to it. But in this project, it was totally different in that every player could relate to being a “Stallion”, most probably due to the formal set up under which the name was created. In fact, the nature of the exercise that was used to create the team name ensured that all players can identify with and relate to the team name, and that is certainly the reason why it engendered such great fervour. The social identity theory suggests that our social identity forms (what and where we are in social terms) a central aspect of our own self-definition (Franzoi, 2006). When a group possesses a strong and unique identity like the “Stallions”, its members perceive their in-group as ever powerful, simply because they want to enhance their self-esteem by associating themselves with the features of the mighty “Stallions”. The “Stallions” won the Team of the Year Award of 2008, they finished third at the

Nationals and they have won the Provincial League undefeated, it is comprehensible why its members strongly identify themselves to the group and evaluate and perceive their in-group as better than other out-groups. As suggested by the social identity (Tafjel, 1981), the team members enhance their self-esteem and self-concept that way.

3.3.3.12 Team mission statement

Another theme that emerged out of the interview was about the team mission statement created as part of the programme. The participants' few comments on this topic stated that it impacted how the players viewed their team in that it was perceived to be more than just a team. In fact, living by the mission statement "As brothers, we rise", it is difficult not to take the team like family. And as noted by a senior player, regarding the team as family makes the difference through hard times. His comments were:

"...it made us see the team in a different light, like it coerced us to be more than just a team, and because we adopted the mission statement, it helped us survive when times were hard (...) like at the Nationals, we were physically and mentally exhausted the whole week, but with each other's support, as brothers we rose..."

Sugarman (1999) argued that the team mission constitutes the yardstick for the things a team would do. In this project, the mission not only worked as a yardstick but it also gave the team a "culture" that established the unspoken normative behaviours. In other words, it was the force that involuntarily guided and directed the way the team members would live in the team. However, it seems that for a team to fully grasp the significance of a mission statement as

proposed by Sugarman (1999), it may take much longer than a season. And although a programme such as this one provides solid bases and accelerates the process of a team living by a mission statement, a lot has to do with changing or adjusting people's attitudes.

3.3.3.13 Team game kit

The participants in general mentioned that the new team kit that they have had made for this year has a considerable effect on team cohesion. They advanced that the kit unites the players, it makes them different from the rest of the world, and it makes them proud to play. On the topic, one player commented that:

“...the year '08 will be remembered, this will unite us forever...”

The team kits are personalized, thus, it can only be worn by this year's team, since players will keep their apparel at the end of the season. The idea is that next year's team would come up with their own uniforms, thereby working on their cohesiveness. That will arguably contribute to the team's sense of distinctiveness, which according to Carron and Spink (1993) is a factor that positively affects a team's cohesiveness. The sense of belonging brought by wearing the “Stallions” apparel arguably contributes to increasing cohesiveness levels.

3.3.3.14 Goal-setting

There was a consensus among the players that being aware of the team goals was very helpful, in that it gave players directions, a concrete vision, and a set of responsibilities essential for success. The team captain commented on this and said that:

“...knowing the team goals gave me something to work towards...”

The participants also stated that team goals are very important because they keep motivation levels high. In fact, regardless of how a game or tournament turns out to be, having clear goals in mind keep the team focused, as two players commented:

“...it keeps us focused, and even if we stumble, we can still get up and pursue the team goal (he was referring to the semi-final lost at the Nationals, but since the team goal was to finish in the top three, the team never looked down)...”

“...when playing average sides, different goals are set for us, so we follow the guide to get ourselves through...”

Moreover, the players admitted that being aware of the team goals enabled them to achieve their personal goals. In fact, most of them affirmed that it is easier to work individually on something when you know it is needed for the achievement of a bigger objective.

The fact that the players are fully aware of the team goals can play a major role in enhancing the team's cohesiveness level. More specifically, it is possible that if every team member is aware of the team goal as well as individual goals, task cohesion could improve. In fact, individual goals work like the pieces of a puzzle, and if well coordinated, the pieces can contribute to achieve the bigger picture. Being aware of the team goal therefore serves as a coordinating factor that

ensures that the team works together, which in turn may enhance task cohesion. That argument is somewhat supported by Widmeyer and Ducharme (1997) with their argument that participating in the development of group goals solidifies co-operation among group members because individual members learn to recognize the actions required by other members and themselves for group success as well as the ways each individual must depend on others, which further leads to the development of a cohesive unit. Having clear goals is very important for this team because it is competing in league that is far below its potential. In fact, if there are no challenging goals to be sought after, the team would rapidly lose motivation by competing in a league where it has too little challenge. Thus, one can argue that team goals are vitally important in that they directly influence task cohesion and motivation.

3.3.3.15 The training camp

The players commonly stated that the intensive week-long training camp played a major role in bringing people together. They said that having to live in the same house enabled them to learn a great deal about each other and thus become a tighter unit. Some players' comments were:

“...the camp really reinforced trust among the boys...”

“...it helped us work together better, and have more empathy for each other...”

“...we learnt all aspects of each other, good and bad...”

Moreover, it was also said that the camp made the players realize that they were different from one another, in terms of personality and backgrounds but that was even better because they accepted each other with their differences.

The training camp was of great value to the programme. In fact, in terms of building relationships and thus enhancing social cohesion, the camp embodied an intensive week-long social event. People got to know more about one another, so much that there was a point where people needed some time alone. Relationships were made stronger than ever, with the players depending on each other for all matters, down to survival matters such as eating and bathing. Task cohesion was similarly enhanced by the camp, because of the amount of practices (3 times a day) and blackboard strategy sessions. By the end of the camp, the players really got to learn what their teammates' strengths and weaknesses really were, which gave them a great sense of on-court understanding. However, it must be confessed that because of a lack of support from the University, in terms of infrastructures and resources, unnecessary pressure was put on the players. For instance, there were times where the team had to train on a court with no hoops, or they had to change plans because there was no bus to take the team to the gym. But nonetheless, the camp was a very positive bonus for both the team and the cohesion-building programme. The programme was a 3 months long and was used at the beginning of the season up until the Nationals (which takes place in mid-season). Although the preparation camp for the Nationals was not initially part of the programme, it may be beneficial to incorporate it as part of the programme, granting that the situational demands resemble those of this year. One of the objectives of the camp was to provide the team with all the skills to become more competitive at the Nationals, thus, if the programme was used in the under the same circumstances, the

integration of the camp in the programme would allow for more preparation and possibly a better outcome from the camp.

3.3.3.16 Impressions about the programme

The overall sentiment of the participants with the regard to the cohesion-building programme is that it was powerful. The participants said that without it, some elements would not have survived in the team. Moreover, it was stated that the programme somehow accelerated the natural developing of cohesion in teams. Some comments made by the participants were:

“...it has worked very well in terms of relationships and performance...”

“...the social events played a major role in making people build relationships faster...”

“...this helps players to understand the concept of a team, and playing in a team...”

With the relatively small amount of time available for the preparation for the Nationals (approximately 3 months), the programme was used with the hope that it would speed up the natural process of cohesiveness development. As expressed by the players and as revealed by the results of the GEQ, it achieved that objective. This is very relieving and rewarding considering the amount of time and effort that was put in this project. The senior players mentioned in the focus group that it took teams from previous years an entire season or more to get to the point the team was at the completion of the programme. That shows the participants perceived the programme to be effective.

Some players advanced that it was very interesting in that it presented the team with issues that they would have never thought about but have such incredible effects on a team's well-being and performance. One player commented on this:

“...it's a good thing because we got to learn and focus about things that we thought were totally irrelevant to being a good basketball team...”

It is very rewarding and satisfying to know that the participants regard the programme as being positive and efficient. A programme that did not work would have been totally worthless. Nonetheless, there is more thinking that needs to be done as to the details of the programme, such as when is the best period to administer the programme. In fact, the timing of this programme was disrupted by the University's examination period, because it has to be paused for a whole month. However, the fact remains that the participants perceive the programme as a powerful instrument that can make the difference in a team's quest for glory.

3.4 Conclusion

The programme had an overall positive note to it. Firstly, statistical results showed that the level of cohesiveness within the team significantly increased after the programme intervention. Secondly, the players have expressed their belief in the efficiency of the programme. And thirdly, the increased level of performance suggests that the programme did its job in building better team cohesion and thereby positively influencing the performance level of the team. It is a rewarding achievement in that the participants were all new to sport psychology and the whole

mental side of sport. But it is the great level of enthusiasm of the team in taking part in the project contributed largely to its apparent success. In fact, from the beginning of the project, the participants showed very good support, and this was reflected throughout the programme's implementation. The participants performed all the activities with great interest and they never displayed negative attitudes towards it. One can hold that the attitude and approach brought by the researcher/coach into the project was vital for its success. In fact, from the onset, it was made clear that the programme was designed for the benefit of every single team member, and that it would involve all team members to the greatest extent. This was translated in practice by nearly all the decisions being reached through team consensus. The participants were never denied the right to voice an opinion or make a suggestion. Moreover, the concerns of the players were made the programme's first priority. In fact, the team members expressed their wish to establish close relationships in their quest for high cohesiveness, and the programme therefore dealt with social cohesion matters more closely. Another important conclusion that needs to be addressed here is the fact that being the coach of the team significantly simplified the implementation of the programme. First of all, because the coach was the researcher, in the eyes of the players, the programme was just another aspect of practice. This made the programme that much more credible for the participants. Also, it was deemed necessary to have a "hands-on" approach in order ensure that the programme is correctly implemented with the players. This also helps in monitoring the programme's activities, which was found to be crucial in order to maximize their success. The exercises in the programme were specifically chosen to address the various issues encountered in the GEQ and focus group assessment results, as well as the various issues that the literature (Carron & Spink, 1993; Sugarman, 1999; Yukelson, 1997) proposed as vital to team-building interventions. As far as difficulties are concerned, it is the planning of the programme

and its activities that turned out to be the most challenging. Every single aspect of the programme, from its design to its implementation and monitoring required careful planning and preparation. The planning must be done in so much detail that this often becomes the trickiest part of the research. Other minor difficulties arose along the way, mostly due to a lack of funds and resources to carry out the programme to perfect satisfaction. However, considering the scope of the research, alternatives were found to ensure that the programme was never in jeopardy. After all, as the players said, what counts is that the programme worked and accelerated the cohesion-building process in the team. The team members perceived their team to have become more cohesive, they have built close relationships with their teammates, and their performance is undeniably superior. The cohesion building programme seemed to have been the missing link to the chain of success. It can be said that with the help of the programme, “As brothers, they rose”.

Chapter 4: Limitations, strengths and recommendations

4.1 Limitations

A programme intervention in psychology often requires some form of counselling (Yukelson, 1997). This was somehow pertinent to this research project. Despite the fact that the study was on group cohesion, subjective issues were encountered during the programme. Occasionally, the issues that may have influenced the cohesiveness level within the team stemmed from personal problems such as lack of self-esteem or anxiety. Being aware of these issues brought clarity to the overall analysis of the problems at hand, but because these issues go beyond the scope of this research, they were disregarded, as more attention was granted to cohesion issues. It may have been useful to be a sport counsellor or qualified sport psychologist in implementing this programme. However, despite the lack of training, a sound knowledge and experience in the sport and its dynamics, as well as the extensive familiarization with the relevant literature contributed to the successful implementation of the programme.

The final limitation to this study was undeniably the complexity of the research design. In fact, the use of both the GEQ and focus groups to assess cohesion and evaluate the programme appeared to be rather demanding. It was demanding because even though the study essentially became two separate studies in one, everything had to be kept within one design. If this project was to be replicated, these subtle difficulties of the design need to be constantly borne in mind. These difficulties include ensuring that the GEQ and the focus groups are always dealt with separately yet in parallel, or constantly having to establish the link between the two during the writing up process.

4.2 Strengths

The team was composed with participants from many different demographical backgrounds. In terms of ethnicity, the participants were Africans, Asians, and Caucasians. In terms of social class, some players were from the lower-class, some from the middle-class, and a few others from the upper-class. As far as occupation is concerned, there were students and employed people on the team. In terms of nationality, some participants came from Europe, from North America, from Zimbabwe, and from South Africa. As far as age is concerned, the majority of the participants were between 18 and 23 years-old, with one member being 31 years-old. As a result, one can advance that an incontestable strength of the programme is that it transcended all many different demographical barriers. In a diverse rainbow nation like South Africa, a programme that can bring different people from different backgrounds in one united, cohesive, and successful team should received credit.

As previously mentioned, the Rhodes University men's basketball 1st team of 2008 has achieved more than any other basketball in the history of the University has achieved before. Talented players have always come and gone and the teams of the past had the same opportunities as the 2008 team, in terms of resources and facilities. But no basketball team at Rhodes has ever won a medal at the National Championships; won the Performance of the Year Award from the University's Sport Council, won the Provincial League, won the annual Triversity Tournament as well as every other invitational tournament they have taken part in, all that in the same year. The coach, as well as the programme must have had a major effect on this year's team, the

combination of the athletic training style, the talented and open-minded athletes (in terms of openness to sport psychology), and the cohesion-building programme seems to have made the distinction between a good Rhodes basketball team and the great Rhodes basketball team.

4.3 Recommendations

The issue that needs to be addressed first is concerned with the transferability of the programme. Now that the programme has been completed and emerged to be positive and powerful, it may be useful to recapitulate the various issues that may influence its transferability to other studies. First, the fact that the consultant/researcher was the coach is of great importance, in that as opposed to outside researchers, it was easier for the coach to gain access to the team. It would therefore be recommended to carefully consider entry issues before taking up a project similar to this one. Second, it is important to note that a sound knowledge of the sport, its context and its dynamics was a key to the success of this endeavour. It is important that the researcher becomes familiar with basketball and its many facets, as it definitely helps in understanding the subtle dynamics and attitudes vis-à-vis the programme. Third, it may be obvious to state that becoming familiar with all the literature on group dynamics, group cohesion, social psychology, and sport psychology in general, but its importance is too great to overlook. The complexity and thoroughness of the programme requires a sound knowledge of the theory surrounding group cohesion in sport and sport psychology in general. These three reasons suggest that the ideal situation for the replication of this programme would be for a coach to learn enough about group cohesion and sport psychology, which will enable him/her to run this programme successfully.

The action research cycle proposed by Cummings and Worley (2001) advances that action research projects start with 1) a reflection concerning the condition of the subject matter, followed by 2) a planning of possible solutions, then 3) actions to act upon the plans, 4) an observation of the effects of the action, and back to the reflexive process that will commence another cycle. This project has gone through one full cycle of the action research model. Should next year's team wish to go through the programme, they would have to reflect on this programme and start a new cycle. The ground work has been laid out for future teams to act upon the programme. In fact, the players from this year who will still be on the team will have the knowledge to guide the new team through another cohesion building programme adapted to its specific needs. Moreover, the players who would guide the team through the process of cohesion building are going to be able to take things from where this programme stopped, and address its shortcomings, and contribute towards the eventual development of a programme that could help any basketball team, or sport team for that matter. The players who will remain on the 2009 team will definitely be encouraged to continue with this programme, and I will be readily available to provide any kind of help or support to ensure that the programme works for the 2009 team too, because after all, it is all about the "purple blood".

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent form sample

<p style="text-align: center;">Rhodes University Department of Psychology</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Agreement</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Between student researcher and research participant</p>
--

I _____ agree to participate in the research project of _____ that aims at developing and evaluating a cohesion-building programme for the Rhodes University men's basketball first team.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting research as part of the requirements for a Master's Degree at Rhodes University.
2. The researcher is interested in cohesion-building and wishes to develop a programme that will enhance cohesion in a basketball team.

3. My participation will involve completing a cohesion inventory, as well as two 1 ½ hours long focus groups. The programme itself will involve activities that I have been introduced to, and I agree to take part in such activities.
4. I will be asked to answer questions of a personal nature but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.
5. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.
6. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time- however, I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
7. The report on the project will contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours. The nature of the confidentiality will be agreed upon with the researcher via a discussion.

Signed on:

Participants:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

Researcher:

Witness:

APPENDIX B

Individual roles list samples

Player 1

Roles	
On-court	Off-court
Control the defence	Responsible
Collect rebounds	Take care of money matters
Make put-backs	
Make blocks	
Team player	

Players 2

Roles	
On-court	Off-court
Drive	To entertain
Make decisive fouls	To warm the bench
Finish fast breaks	Know each player
Play-maker	The “kid”

APPENDIX C

Individual sacrifices list samples

Player 1

The sacrifices I make:

- On-court:

I don't shoot when there is someone open

I sacrifice my pride when I feel I sit on the bench too long

- At home:

Study time

Eating

Sleeping on Sundays

- Social life:

Seeing girls on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays

Drinking alcohol

Partying on Wednesday and Fridays

Player 2

The sacrifices I make:

- On-court:

I sacrifice my ego for other team mates

I sacrifice scoring in order for other team mates to do so

- Social life:

I sacrifice personal time for the team

I sacrifice spending time with friends

I sacrifice other social gatherings

I sacrifice getting to interact with new people

I re-arrange my whole day schedule

I re-arrange my study times

I re-arrange my rest time

I miss supper a lot