BETHAN PRICE

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SCHOOL OF SPORT

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COHESION AND PERFORMANCE IN WOMEN’S FOOTBALL
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Abstract

The purpose of the current study was to examine the relationship between cohesion and performance in a female university football team. Individual perceptions evaluated the cohesiveness of the team in relation to performance.

Three participants were involved in the present study, all of which have been involved with the club for a year or more. Qualitative data collection was employed to gain a detailed insight into the cohesion-performance relationship, and the factors that emerge that can hinder or enhance team performance. Performance measures were collected following a period of six competitive games.

The results indicated that the team’s cohesion was influenced by the score line which in turn affected the team’s morale and furthermore cohesion. Greater task cohesion was reported as the team’s goals grew closer and the increased pressure to perform towards the end of the playing season. Social cohesion played a significant part in the team’s overall unity with many friendships emerging from social activities and the likeability between team members. However, social cohesion was prevalent throughout the six game period and did not differentiate in particular between games. The results demonstrated that increased cohesion influenced performance positively, however conflict amongst team members effected the team in a negative manner. There was also evidence that suggested that an irregular playing team contributed towards’ the teams overall unity.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
Introduction

Assessing increased group performance has played a significant part in past research (Beal, Cohen, Burke, McLendon, 2003). In order to examine how performance enhancement can take place, research has pursued the concept of cohesion and the factors that surround this construct (i.e Williams and Widmeyer, 1991; Mullen and Copper, 1994; Carron, Bray and Eys, 2002; Carron, Colman, Wheeler and Stevens, 2002) in evaluating the link between theoretical and practical dimensions.

Cohesion has been identified as a small group variable that has undergone a vast amount of investigation in sport (Williams and Widmeyer, 1991). Cohesion refers to the bonds that are present in groups that represent both social and task related strengths that derive from its members (Carron, Hausenblas and Eys, 2005), and furthermore, developing and maintaining the groups unity. Cohesion is a contributing factor in affecting performance, however, there has been difficulty in terms of defining cohesion within sport psychology, thus implying it is a complex construct to measure due to its multidimensional structure. Early research by Campbell and Fiske (1959) suggested that researchers require several measures to assess cohesion in sport teams due to a number of attempts at defining and demonstrating cohesion.

Cohesion is a multidimensional construct due to the many factors that influence the dynamics of groups’ and the reasons why certain individuals are inclined to bond together (Carron et al., 2005). A common goal or a set of objectives is what is likely to attract individuals to a certain group, thus creating cohesion with members that have shared interests or values. Sport teams are developed through cohesion and self-efficacy that is produced through a dynamic process (Carron et al., 2005).
The literature suggests that the association between cohesion seems to be beneficial for performance, with many studies highlighting the advantages of possessing greater team cohesion and the positive impact upon performance (Tzeiner, Nicola and Rizac, 2003; Carron et al., 2002). Nonetheless, there are also factors that emerge from the cohesion research that demonstrates that cohesion can also be detrimental towards maintaining group unity, and moreover performance. These factors must be considered whilst implementing strategies to enhance team performance, and as previously highlighted by Beal, Cohen, Burke and McLendon (2003).

Due to numerous studies focusing on the importance of the cohesion-performance relationship (i.e. Carron et al., 2002b) and furthermore individual perceptions of team performance, it has become apparent that further research is required to gain further insight into this relationship. Therefore the current study aims to examine individual perceptions of cohesion and its direct affect on performance. Cohesion will be addressed to start, by assessing the current perceptions of cohesion within a sporting team, followed by a critical evaluation of the relationship between cohesion and performance.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY
Methodology

Introduction

A longitudinal and qualitative research approach was employed in the current study. In order to explore cohesion over time in a competitive environment, qualitative measures provided an in-depth insight into its relationship to performance. (Williams and Widmeyer, 1991; Carron et al., 2002b).

Participants

The participants were three female football players aged between 19 and 21 (mean age of 19.6) and a standard deviation of 0.58 who were regular first team players of a university football team (i.e UWIC). The participants competed in the Women’s South Premier League (BUCS) and had been involved in the club for a year or more.

Instrumentation

To ensure the aims of the current study were appropriately addressed, qualitative data collection was used. A qualitative approach was utilised to demonstrate natural occurrences and to identify social issues that arise (Silverman, 2006). Furthermore, qualitative research identifies findings by demonstrating how and what data suggests. Previous research has utilised the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) (Widmeyer, et al., 1985) that has provided useful results from a quantitative perspective. It was therefore decided that the interview guides for the current study would be based on the GEQ (Widmeyer et al., 1985). The questionnaire itself is divided into two sections (a) individual involvement (b) perceptions of the team as a whole and consists of 18 items that vary from strongly agree to strongly disagree. However, the questionnaire does not represent participants thoughts, feelings and emotions which is a strength of qualitative research (Patton, 1990). Therefore
qualitative research allows for honest and rich information that is flexible in terms of data collection (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

*Interview Guide*

Interviews according to Patton (1990, p.278) “allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective”. In addition, interviews demonstrate the ability to convey intentions, feelings and even expressions. In comparison, quantitative data does not indicate what the results mean and is dependent on the outcome (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Therefore interviewing techniques were employed in current study which allowed subjects to elaborate further into the cohesion-performance relationship by critically demonstrating their perceptions on the team’s unity and performance. The GEQ (1985) has demonstrated a level of validity in the literature and provides a sound framework for the interview guide in the current study.

Open ended questions were utilised in order to allow the participants to portray their perspective without inflicting answers or a particular response (Patton, 1990). In relation to this study, perceptions of individual and team performance were examined but irrespective of the result, but the results were recorded for future comparison. The process of qualitative data collecting lies in the ability of the interviewer conducting the analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Therefore, the same interview guides were used for every participant which ensured a level of consistency, although further probing was required at times. In order to ensure consistent responses probing provided a detailed insight into the nature of cohesion and the affect on performance (Patton, 2002). As a current member of the team, the author was able to contextualize each question and respective answer whilst maintaining a level of integrity to avoid bias. Interview guides were adjusted accordingly over the six game period in order to gain the required information following all six games. A scale of one to ten
recorded individual perceptions of individual and team performance. The interview guides can be found in Appendix A. The first interview guide (early season) consisted of five sections. In order for participants to get into the flow of the interview, general responses were gained in section one and two that compromised of the participants playing career as well as their experiences, and their understanding of cohesion. The two sections that followed (section three and four) were based on the GEQ (Widmeyer et al., 1985) which were (a) individual involvement and (b) perceptions of the team as a whole. Performance responses were obtained in the final section, and both individual and team performance measures were recorded on a ten point scale. Interview guides following the third (mid season) and sixth game (late season) replicated interview one, however, questions were adjusted in relation to the games played.

Procedure and Data Analysis

The first team coach of a female university football team was approached to gain permission for players to take part in this study. Once permission was granted, three regular players were selected at random and were informed of the nature of the study. Their involvement in the study was voluntary and they were informed of their rights to confidentiality and withdrawal at any stage without penalty. To ensure confidentiality is upheld throughout the present study, an informed consent was completed by every participant, additionally participant names’ were changed to pseudonyms.

The interviews were conducted over a period of six competitive BUCS fixtures from early season. The first interview was following the first game of the season (early season) while the second interview followed the third game (mid season) the final interview was performed after the sixth game of the season (late season). The interviews were conduct at a convenient
time and date in a comfortable and relaxed environment and away from any distractions. Duration of interviews varied between 20 and 35 minutes. A Dictaphone was used to record information accurately and efficiently.

A pilot study was completed prior to the first interview that enabled amendments to a number of questions in order to allow the author to become accustomed to the interview technique and guide. Upon completion, data obtained was transcribed and checked by the interviewees (Appendix B). Upon doing so, interviewees could verify that the data gathered was their own, which demonstrated optimal trustworthiness between the participants and the researcher. This, as Elliot, Fischer and Rennie (1999) reported contributes towards the credibility of the research process. The data and personal contact details were stored in a safe place and were accessible to myself and my supervisor only. It is important that information should not be passed onto another source to ensure that information is not biased or inflicted in any way (Patton, 1990). Subsequent to collection, the data were transcribed and appropriate means of content and data analysis were employed. The data were analysed inductively based on deductive findings. According to Tesch (1990) cited in Gustafsson, Hassmen, Kentta, and Johansson. (2008) inductive analysis is a part of text that contains the required information of an idea or subject in relation to the nature of a study.

Data analysis and interpretation refers to searching for patterns of what people have said (Patton, 1990). In order to explore and analyse the data accurately in relation to the research question, grounded theory codified the relevant data (Hardy and Bryman, 2004). Therefore enabling the researcher to recognise and draw attention to key themes that arises from the transcribed interviews (Burns, 2000). Key themes were identified and compared between participants and between phases (early, mid, late). Coding transcribed interviews was an
ongoing process throughout the current study and as Hardy and Bryman (2004) suggested that reducing collected information is crucial whilst analysing data to ensure that data is not overloaded. Taking this into account, the emergent themes of the cohesion-performance relationship will be addressed in the results and discussion that will follow. To conclude limitations of the current study will be reported and in addition recommendations for future researchers.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine cohesion in a female university football team and discuss its direct affect on performance over a period of six competitive games. The data obtained from the interview process was collected over three time phases and aimed to gain an insight into individual perceptions of cohesion within the team, and its development. Furthermore perceived individual and team performance measures were collected. Due to the vast amount of information gained from the interview process, in order to discuss the information accordingly and in synchrony with the interview guides, two key themes will be discussed. Firstly, an overview of cohesion will be provided of the six game period and how it differed from early season to later on in the season. The second theme will focus on the cohesion-performance relationship, whilst referring to both task and social factors. A brief summary will follow that highlights the overall findings of the current study. In addition, strengths and limitations will be identified and future recommendations into the cohesion-performance relationship.

Cohesion

In order to assess the cohesion performance relationship over the six game period, it was important to evaluate the current perceptions of cohesion within the team. Carron et al., (2002b) stated that greater cohesion is associated with interactive sports compared to coactive sport, and furthermore Carron and Brawley (2000) reported that cohesion varies in sport teams in relation to the conceptual model of cohesion. The athletes’ involved in this study highlighted that their involvement with the team was due to individual attraction to the tasks which was initially to play football. It was suggested by the athletes’ that team cohesion is important in team sports and can contribute towards team success, Jess commented “A good team bond, a good team spirit, they’re likely to win”, similarly Sophie suggested “I think the
better the team get on the less likely things, like outside of football will affect the game”. Conversely Claire noted that cohesion can also be detrimental, she stated “I think there can be obviously negative effects sometimes if you don’t have cohesion”. This statement contradicts both Jess and Sophie’s perceptions, however as reported by Carron et al., (2005) there are antecedents that can impact negatively on cohesion.

The athletes commented that their involvement in football was primarily due to individual attraction to football with personal goals impacting on team goals. Jess explained “football has always attracted me you know and after last year when we won BUSA, the goal this year is to win again”. Additionally, Sophie cited “I guess that each person’s individual goals will lead to a group goal, achieving their goal as a whole”. However, in contrast Claire clarified “I’d like to perform and set my own goals and reach them”. In light of task goals, Williams and Widmeyer (1991) suggested that increased cohesiveness is due to members sharing team goals. In this study it is evident that the team members possess the same goals’ which in this case was to win the Championship, and additionally to improve personal goals in order to contribute towards the team’s overall performance.

Social interaction within the team was a significant part of the team’s lifestyle. There is evidence to support this notion when the participants suggested that social attraction with the group was appealing, with many social activities taking place away from football. Jess described “Big part of football is the social side of it as well so if you can make friends and get on it helps both on and off the pitch”, in addition Claire noted “we try to get everyone out, obviously this year there’s a lot more people so it’s harder to do things”. In relation to the group size, Carron (1990) suggested that it is difficult to develop stronger relationships in larger groups. However, Sophie reported “we have social events every week, well,
sometimes two or three times a week”. A clear social interaction is displayed within the team, with all three participants commenting on the regularity of social activities that produces friendships amongst team members, and the attempt to get all members involved with social activities in spite of the group size. To support this, Tzeiner et al., (2003) suggested that social cohesion seems approving when the team is successful in games. Moreover, greater interaction within the team is associated with shared team goals which in this study is reaching knockout stages which is goal oriented. Furthermore Tzeiner et al., (2003) reported that greater social interaction contributes towards openness among team members, positive feedback and a friendly atmosphere.

However, social attraction does not attribute towards openness between the team and the coach from Claire’s perspective, “whatever the players say, they’re obviously not going to say it to the coach”. In contrast Sophie illustrated “I think most of the players on the team would be honest, yes and open about performances”, and Jess added “because she is like a friend as well as a coach”. Thus implying that the interaction between athletes and the coach varies between individuals, it may be pending on how long participants have been involved in the club, for example Jess and Sophie seem happy to speak openly with the coach as suggested by Tzeiner et al., (2003), whereas Claire was not.

Over the six game period cohesion seemed to vary in relation to the team’s success. The participants commented that the team had achieved outstanding success in the previous season which impacted positively on individual goals with participants seeking to improve personal fitness in order to contribute towards the teams overall ability to reach knockout stages in the Championship. In terms of cohesion following each game, the team’s cohesion seem to be relatively positive when the team was performing well, although when the team
was underperforming or losing the team’s cohesion seemed to change from being positive to negative. The review of literature has not supported team morale contributing performance, which may require consideration for future researchers. The perceptions of the team’s social interaction seemed to remain consistent throughout the six game period with no adverse effects of performance effecting the teams unity off the playing field. Jess suggested in terms of the group’s overall social attraction “I think a lot of the girls prefer the social side to the actual football sometimes, even though they do like the football”.

The cohesion-performance relationship

In relation to team performance, the participants highlighted that the results did not accurately represent overall team performance in every game and were relatively inconsistent, with two loses, one draw and three winning games over the six game period. Subsequently, many issues evolved from the three time phases that hindered team cohesion and furthermore team performance. In relation to the first time phase following a loss, the common problem emerged from the team’s playing style that affected team cohesion and performance. In terms of individual performance, both Jess and Claire indicated a performance rating of seven, whereas Sophie ranked her performance as a low three. Whereas team performance the general rating was four in the first half and eight in the second half, which as all three athletes commented increased in the second half of the game due to a change in playing style by the coach (from a 4-3-3 formation to a 4-4-2 formation), illustrated by Jess:

“Everyone just started biting people’s heads off which wasn’t good, because we wasn’t doing as well as we usually do because it was a big, big shock having to be losing first half. The second half then, after we’d had a little huddle and a change of formation we all came together much better and I think we played much better as a team”.

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Claire also supported this underperformance due to the formation “As soon as we went to 4-4-2 everyone worked together”. And Sophie commented “something useful came from our poor performance which was the formation”. According to Annelies et al. (2001) positive performances of university students is a result of cooperation among students and doing as they’re told by their supervisor. This was evident in this game, due to increased performance following a technical change of formation by the coach at half time. There is also evidence that suggests the team is socially cohesive when the team has a ‘huddle’ at half time that improved performance which suggests that the team is also socially close.

In terms of cohesion following the first game, the general belief was that team cohesion is largely influenced by the result of the game, which is suggested that players causing conflict amongst the team when the team is underperforming, which in turn contradicts the atmosphere when the team is performing well. Although, saying this, Claire believed that the playing style effected performance, however there were no suggestions that there was conflict amongst team members following the first game. This may be due to the difference in opinion of players in different playing positions.

“Everyone was being quite positive. Usually… well sometimes there’ll be a bit of shouting going on… but we were losing and we weren’t playing well and I didn’t hear anything so everyone was trying to get everyone up and trying to play”.

In contrast, Sophie suggested that “our performance was showing that we were letting the other team get to us”. This statement illustrates that individual productivity may influence individual perceptions of the team performance, due to Sophie suggesting that “other players on the team who played just as bad, with just as bad a touch as mine on that day”. Thus demonstrating that individual performance influences the team underperforming which is supported by Annelies et al., (2001) who suggested a team member that is very conscious of
underperforming will impact negatively on the team’s performance due to a decrease in overall team performance.

Following the first game it is evident that the team’s performance was largely influenced by the input of the coach. The athletes reported that team performance was relative to the result of the game which was the score line. However, the general feeling among the team differs when the team is winning compared to losing as suggested by Jess “I think when we’re winning people change to be on a high, cheering each other on, but when we’re losing, because we’re not used losing I think it makes hell of a difference”. This comment suggests that score line attributes towards team morale which in turn effects cohesion. The participants seem to be influenced by the score, however as suggested in Tzeiner et al.,’s (2003) study performance is recorded in terms of absolute wins and losses which may not reflect overall performance. Therefore increased performance was recorded, however the score line did not reflect improved performance.

The second interview following a win and a loss produced mixed feelings in terms of cohesion and performance. In terms of team social cohesion, the athletes reported no differences in terms of social activities compared to the first interview, and social attraction to the group was a common attraction to Jess and Sophie. In addition individual attraction to the task was prevalent amongst all three participants. In relation to individual performance Jess following the second game commented “I was in a bad mood in the morning”, which resulted in a poor performance, for example when she made mistakes during the game she punished herself for it. Terry et al., (2000) supported mood occurrence can influence cohesiveness, improved mood is suggested to enhance perceptions of cohesion within a group, and moreover performance. However, mood occurrence in Jess’s instance negatively
impacted on performance which supports Carron et al., (2005) who highlighted that antecedents of cohesion, and in this instance personal factors can negatively influence performance. Although, Jess commented positively on her performance in the third game by stating “I worked hard”. This therefore led to an increase in performance being reported between the second and third games. These two perceptions are interesting findings and have not been supported in the research in the current study. Jess commented that her perceived performance was poor in the second game following a winning result, whereas her improved performance in the third game resulted in the team losing the game. Therefore is it accurate to account that individual perceptions may not directly influence overall team performance. Which may inevitable influence the individual perceptions representing team cohesion.

However, Claire suggested that the team had not performed well from the beginning of the season “we haven’t done very good from the beginning”. Which supports… that early season cohesion may differ from late season cohesion. Additionally the team seems to be inconsistent, with a few different players starting in each game which in turn attributes towards the team’s perceived unity as illustrated by Claire “We don’t know who’s going to play every week. They can train one week and they’re not playing and they don’t know what we’ve done the week before”, and Jess commented “sometimes without a consistent team it’s hard to adjust to different people’s playing style”.

In terms of the team’s overall cohesion, Jess stated that “on match days we stay altogether and that increases the cohesion and we all want to win again because we’ve all been down, you know”. Dion (2000) identified in Bollen and Hoyle’s (1990) study that group cohesion represents individual perceptions of group roles through shared morale and a sense of
belonging. Thus, suggesting that the athletes in the present study were able to maintain unity during games due to both shared goals and high morale between its members.

However, the team’s perceived cohesion did not correspond with the team’s overall performance, with all three athletes believing their performance signified the overall performance in the second game which was a win, whereas performance suffered and did not signify the overall result in the third game which was a loss. Claire commented “we played well in the game after the last interview but the game after that we didn’t play very well”, Sophie explained “it wasn’t as bad a performance as the first game”. Jess also suggested on the team’s morale following the second and third game “I just think people are getting fluctuating thoughts with highs and lows”.

The last interview was conducted following a draw and two winning games. In terms of team cohesion, the fourth game compromised of all three athletes citing the lack of cohesion within the team when one of the players was negatively affecting the team’s performance, illustrated by Sophie.

“If you take the performance in the first half, the team cohesion wasn’t there, there was arguments between a couple of the players and umm… that related us going 3-0 down, umm or 3-1 down, I can’t remember how it was. Umm… but yeh as soon as that problem was taken away which was in fact the player leaving the pitch, umm… the team cohesion came back together again and we focused as a team and um we had an improved performance”.

And furthermore supported by Claire “the cohesion in the team was not good in that game, and it showed with the result of leaving them win”. As suggested, the result of the game did represent the team’s overall performance due to a poor first half performance. Arguably, the athletes’ perceptions of conflict between team members impacted negatively on cohesion and
the overall team performance. Holt and Sparkes (2001) and Prapavessis and Carron (1997) reported that a selfish individual can negatively impact cohesion of a team, although when the player is removed from a situation the cohesiveness within the team can be renewed. All the athletes have highlighted that one player can affect the team morale which strengthens the reliability of this statement. Conversely, Brawley, Carron and Widmeyer (1988) emphasised that teams that perceive greater cohesiveness is less likely to be susceptible to threats, however this is not prevalent in this case with one player contributing towards a decreased performance and reduced unity between team members. This conflict between players may be due to the group size being larger, as Carron (1990) suggested that in large groups it is more difficult to develop stronger relationships. Therefore this game showed that a reduced cohesion within the team negatively influenced the score line, and the result did represent overall performance.

The fifth and sixth games of the season following a month in absence of football, saw an increase in task cohesion due to the need to win the forthcoming games in order to reach qualifying rounds. Carron et al., (2005, p.242) stated that “cohesion influences performance success”, and in return successful performances can impact cohesion. This suggests that cohesion does affect performance and can be positively influenced. Following on from a previous poor performance and conflict between team members, the requirement to win games in order to qualify for knockout stages illustrates that task cohesion impacted positively on performance with every athlete reporting the importance of winning games. This was demonstrated by Sophie “I guess we’ve had a break over Christmas from each other, so umm… things have settled a bit, so any arguments and things have probably been forgotten”. Additionally, Claire commented “we just seem to be in training a lot livelier than we were before”, and Jess explained “I think the more people are getting ‘Oh my God’ if we
lose we’re out, I think they’ve pulled themselves together and we’ve had a couple of good performances”. Prapavessis and Carron (1996) explained that prior to competition, increased task cohesion can be linked to lower levels of cognitive anxiety. This may support the notion that increased pressure to win games can positively impact cohesiveness due to the emphasis on achieving greater task goals in order to perform.

According to Tzeiner et al., (2003) a positive relationship emerged between team cohesion and performance due to a shared goal. Similarly Carron et al., (2002b) demonstrated that both task and social cohesion attribute towards performance, however greater task cohesion is associated with shared team goals. In terms of the team performance, as suggested by the participants the cohesion re-kindled after the Christmas period. Additionally, Widmeyer et al., (1985) indicated that females possess greater levels of task cohesion in comparison to males. With less time and increased pressure to achieve goals, athletes seem to have an increased and livelier team morale in training. Carron et al., (2002a) explained that there is a strong relationship between cohesion and success which Jess illustrates:

“I hadn’t seen the girls in ages and I was glad to see everyone, so again I think the team bonded again straight away and everyone was having a laugh before the game and everyone was you know getting settled in again, back together… bonding. I think the cohesion in the team is brilliant, which then again it just shows with good team cohesion we can win games”.

Performance in the fourth, and the fifth and sixth games following the third interview corresponds with the athletes perceptions of the team’s performance. In other words when the athletes believe the team cohesion is low the team’s performance suffers, whereas when the cohesiveness is greater, the perceptions of the team’s cohesion influences positively on the team’s performance.
There was also evidence that Sophie suggested the team’s high morale in a winning environment influences individual performance positively. “We’ve had a good morale, and that’s kind of boosted me when we’ve been low”. Which contradicts her views on poor team performance following the first game. When she believed her individual performance impacted negatively on team performance. Here, she demonstrated that her poor individual performance increased her confidence to perform well. Carron and Ball (1978) supported this improved performance by identifying that an increase in performance can strengthen an individual’s cohesion.

All the athletes in the final interview conveyed that the team’s performance in the fifth and sixth games signified an outstanding team performance with a mean performance score of 7.3 overall. Which emphasises that greater team cohesion due to shared goals impacts positively on performance. Additionally, in relation to the six game series, cohesion seemed to fluctuate between games, with factors influencing the cohesiveness between team members that negatively influenced cohesion and performance.

General summary

The current study has critically evaluated the cohesion-performance relationship in an all female football university team, and it is evident that cohesion can enhance team performance. Subsequently, factors emerged that were detrimental towards the team’s cohesion that impacted on both individual and team performance negatively, as suggested by Carron et al., (2005). One of which was task related and occurred in the first game, which was the team’s playing style. This was due to the coach selecting a playing style that caused problems on the playing field with players unaware of their duties. Although increased performance was perceived in the second half after a change of formation it was evident that
both the social unity and the team’s objective to win influenced the increased performance as suggested by Tzeiner et al., (2003). Due to the research question focusing on relative performance, rather than absolute performance, the athletes on the whole believed that the team performed well if they were winning. However increased performance did not represent the overall score in every game.

Another factor emerged from the final interview following the fourth game impacted negatively on performance which was conflict between team members. The general feeling was that conflict amongst members caused the team’s overall performance to reduce, furthermore individual performance impacted negatively on the teams perceived performance. Conflict between team members attributed towards the entire team’s morale which resulted in reduced performance. In turn, as soon as the problem was removed, the team’s cohesion was re-kindled which resulted in increased performance, as Holt and Sparkes (2001) and Prapavessis and Carron (1997) reported. In terms of task and social cohesion, both dimensions were present within the team throughout the six game time phase. Social cohesion was considered a big part of the team’s unity with many social activities taking place away from football on a regular basis that resulted in increased interaction between team members and the formation of friendships. For example during the first game, the team had a huddle at half time that suggested the closeness between team members. Moreover task cohesion was reported as a key attraction to the group with all three athletes primarily focusing on playing football and reaching team goals. Additionally, it was noted that task cohesion increased towards the end of the six game period with athletes suggesting that the pressure to perform well that would enable a winning result. This was supported by Williams and Widmeyer (1991) and Carron et al., (2002b).
In addition, individual performance seem to inflict on team performance, and vice versa. In other words, individual perceptions of poor team performance impacted negatively on team performance, as suggested by Sophie during the first game and by Jess during the second game. However, increased perceptions of individual performance seem to impact positively on performance as Sophie illustrated. This, in turn produced greater cohesion which Carron and Ball (1978) previously suggested.
REFERENCES
References


APPENDICES
Interview Guide

Participant:
Name: 
Age: 
Date: 

Section 1: Introduction (Not recorded)

Hello, I’m Bethan Price an Undergraduate student studying Sport and PE at the University of Wales Institute Cardiff. To start, I would like to thank you for taking part in this study. As you are probably aware from participating in the initial study, I am gathering research on cohesion and its relationship to team performance. The interviews will provide a further understanding of this relationship and the factors that emerge that can enhance or reduce team cohesiveness.

In relation to this interview, I am hoping to obtain information from four players within the same team and analyse how different individuals perceive team cohesion and a sense of belonging in a particular group, which in this instance is UWIC Women’s Football Club. These perceptions will be compared over a period of 6 competitive BUCS games and with the same four individuals, which are consistent members of UWIC’s first team.

The information gained from this interview will be used as data collection for my Undergraduate dissertation. I must emphasise that the source of any information will be kept confidential, however some direct quotes will be used. I am going to use a digital recorder to record the interview, which will allow me to retain accurate information after the interview is complete. The recordings will be used to transcribe information only
This interview is voluntary, therefore you have the right to withdraw without penalty at any time. There are no correct answers, nevertheless I would appreciate it if you could answer honestly which will provide an in depth understanding on this topic. If you have any questions or are unsure of any aspect of the interview, please don’t hesitate to ask so I can explain in more detail as best as I can.

The interview consists of five sections. The first section will ask general questions regarding your football involvement. Secondly, focus will be drawn to the concept of cohesion and how you define and interpret cohesion. The third and fourth section will use the Group Environment Questionnaire (Widmeyer, Brawley and Carron, 1985) to base questions on individual’s perceptions of individual involvement with the team and perceptions on the team as a whole. Lastly, the final section will discuss how cohesion affects the team’s overall performance. Performance measures will be considered in terms of relative performance rather than absolute performance. This means that performance should not be analysed in terms of the result of the game, for example winning or losing, but conversely in terms of how the team played.
Section 2: General

I am going to start by asking you a few general questions on your involvement playing football to get into the flow of the interview.

1) What attracted you to UWIC?
2) Would you recommend others to UWIC? Why or Why not?
3) Can you give me a brief description of your playing career to date?

Section 3: Cohesion

1) Could you explain to me your understanding of cohesion?
2) How would you define it?
3) Do you think it is important?
   Probe: Why?
4) Do you think cohesion is present in all sports?
   Probe: Why?
Section 4: Personal Involvement

This section of the interview will focus on your personal feelings about your personal involvement with UWIC Women’s Football first team.

1) Can you tell me about the social activities of the team?
Probe: What do you do?

2) Can you explain to me any targets or goals that you have?
Probe: Who decides on these targets?
   How are these targets met?

3) Can you describe your social aspects outside of the team?
Probe: Does this involve team members?
   Who organises this?
   Does this happen often?

4) Can you explain to me the way your team plays?
Probe: Formation and Style?
   How was this formation or style developed?
   Who decides this?
   How is this decided?
4) Can you tell me about your involvement with the team?
Probe: Can you give examples

5) Can you explain your role within the team?
Probe: Do you feel part of the team? Can you explain

Section 5: Perceptions of the team
This third section will ask questions on how you perceive the team as a whole. Please answer as fully as possible.

1) Does the team have any goals?
Probe: Can you tell me about them?
    How are these goals monitored and recorded?

2) What happens in a) the dressing room and b) training session following a game?
Probe: When you lose, win or draw?

3) Can you tell me how players feel about team formation and team selection?
Probe: How does this affect the team?

4) Can you tell me how the players and coach interpret how the game went?
Probe: Win, lose or draw?
5) Can you tell me about the level of openness among team members and the coach?

Probe: What affect does this have on the team?

How does this affect performance?

6) Can you explain the team’s responsibilities?

Probe: On and off the playing field?

Who is involved?

Section 6: Performance

This final section will be based on your game against Bath University on the 5th of November 2008. Please answer as honestly as possible. Performance in this section will be classified as relative performance i.e how the team performed overall rather than absolute performance that focuses on the result of the game.

1) On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest, how do you think you played?

Probe: What did you do well?

Do you feel you could improve on any aspect of your game?

Could you provide examples?
1) On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest, how do you think the team played overall?

Probe: Why do you say this?
Can you give examples?

2) On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest, how cohesive do you think the team was in your last game?

Probe: Why do you think this?

3) What affect does changing the players that start have on the team?

Probe: Why do you think this is?
APPENDIX B
Section 2: General

1) What attracted you to UWIC?

All my friends go to UWIC ... when I was in school ... and they also recommended this university for sport ...

2) Would you recommend others to come to UWIC?

Yes, definitely if they want to do Sport and PE. Maybe ...

3) Can you give me a brief description of your playing career to date?

I started off playing for a boys’ team when I was about seven, up in Cefn. Played there till I was old enough when I was about twelve. So I played for the Under 11s. Then I didn’t play for a year. Then I played for the first girls’ team which was in Bridgend. There wasn’t much of a league – we just had playing twice a week and had the odd game here and there. Then from then on, my coach left Bridgend to go back to Swansea. So I went to play for Swansea. Played there for two years. While I was there I got into the Welsh Under 16s team. Played there till I was up to nineteen. After that I went to play for Cardiff and I am still there now.

We’re going to onto the next section on ‘cohesion’.

Section 3: Cohesion

1) Could you explain to me your understanding of cohesion?

Cohesion in a team is, I think, is like, all the team together, bonding, getting on ... just get on within the team ...

2) How would you define it?

Togetherness, bonding

I’ve got a quote here from Carron (1998) and they define cohesion as: ‘A dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for the group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objective and for the satisfaction of members’ effective needs”. So it’s quite similar to what you said there.

3) Do you think that cohesion is important?

Yes, definitely important, I think, yes. If in a team a few players don’t like each other ... like a good team bond, a good team spirit, they’re likely to win .. not really for ... or something, it just comes ... football ... for example, it is serious, but not as if you’re going to win the World Cup or something. So I think a big part in football is the social side of it as well so if you can make friends and get on it helps both on and off the pitch.

4) Do you think that cohesion is present in all sports?

All team sports, yes. Like football which is a good sport to teach cohesion. Rugby, you always see the rugby boys out together. But sports like athletics, where it’s not really - because the only person you’ve probably ever gone with is your coach whereas, then
again they do get very close and help each other out.

Section 4
We’ll move onto the next section. This section will focus on your personal feelings about your personal involvement with UWIC womens’ football first team. So, can you tell me about the social activities of the team.

1) Since I’ve been here, it’s my second year now, we’ve had loads of social activities. The first one I went to I can’t really remember – oh yes, it was drink bowling. It was really good. We got into teams which is again to make sure you’re all getting on. But if there’s someone on the team you don’t like you probably have a bad night so everyone has got on that night. Then we’ve had pub crawls which is again divided into little teams which is good, a good laugh. Usually then on a Wednesday people go out every Wednesday together like they arrange it after a game or before a game. If we stay in we make sure we all celebrate it. We do a lot on the social side which is good.

2) Can you explain any targets or goals that you have personally?
Personal ones. I want to try to score every game but that’s gone out the window, but no personal goals, I set myself not to get any bookings, to keep my discipline well and obviously I want to win the league.

Who decides on your targets then?
My personal targets?
Yes.
I come up with my own personal targets which is reflected in my games. And then I obviously come to the coach and come to an agreement whether, yes OK, I need to work on my discipline or maybe I can pick something else and she says well, you know, that’s not really important, concentrate more on the first one, kind of thing. So I come to an agreement with the coach.

3) Can you describe your social aspects outside of the team?
If you mean the footballers – I obviously get on well with all the girls, I’ve known them all through football, so we’re all friends and if we ever go out, we go out together usually as a football team, be fair, I think a lot of my friends in UWIC are in the football team, you spend so much time with each other then they do become your best friends ... we go to the cinema, go on nights out, whatever. We’re all like a close team, to be fair.

Who organises the social aspects?
We have an events committee .. who decide what to do this week and arrange dates and send e-mails out to everyone on facebook and say, we’re going out on so-and-so, it’s someone’s birthday and the scene is .. so.. Shall we go out tonight. So as a group of girls we all do it together.
4) Can you explain to me the way your team plays.

We use two main formations which is 4-4-2 and 3-5-2, no sorry – 4-3-3. I think the majority of the team all prefer 4-4-2 because they’re all comfortable in our positions. We all know what we’re doing. We can read each others’ games through that. And then we play the 4-3-3, which, to be fair, none of us are much keen on it because of the fact that it lets so much space between different sections. It’s hard to get into the game. Like we played last week and the week before when we played Bath – it just didn’t work for us. We’re so used to playing in 4-4-2 formation. We all like that formation because we know what we’re doing and where the players run to. I think that suits us best, to be fair.

Who decides on the formation? How is it developed?
You start in training sessions practising different drills on the specific formations and then obviously the coach, then, if she thinks we done well in 4-4-2 we’ll probably play 4-4-2. And if we play well at 4-3-3 the previous week then likely she’ll keep the same formations. It depends on how we play in the formations, I think.

5) Can you tell me about your involvement with the team. Can you provide me with specific examples.

I think I’m well liked in the team. I tend to get on with everybody in the team, to be fair. I’m not shy, so. I think it’s a good thing, to be fair, because if you’re not shy with people, people will start talking to you as well as you talk to them. So through talking I’ve gained a lot of friends by not being one of the girls who just sits back and gets on with it. I think it is a good thing and it can be a bad thing again. Even if I go out with the girls, I do go out with them .. on a Wednesday, so I can’t make it but at important times we will go out and we all have fun and as I said, everyone gets on within the teams so it’s good, good cohesion.

So you feel quite involved with the team, you feel quite a part of the team?
Yes. When I first went there, none of the girls .. they mixed, they mixed in with you well and they did get involved which is a good thing. So you come to a team and you … straight away, which is really good.

6) Can you explain your role within the team. Do you feel a part of the team?

Yes, definitely part of the team. I think, especially in the position I play in midfield I think I’m one of the loudest in the team on the pitch and in talking. A lot of girls can be shy and not talk on the pitch. I think, I’m like the mouth of the team, I guess. I’m talking and everything like that which on a Wednesday I think it does like .. if someone else talks, for example, she doesn’t talk much, if I do the talking for her, she feels more relaxed and that. So I definitely feel part of the team.
Section 5
We’ll go on to section 5 now, ‘Perceptions of the Team’. I’m going to ask you questions about how you perceive the team as a whole.

1) So does the team have any goals?
I think our two main goals this season are again, to win the league. And the second one than is to become BUSA champions which is a biggie for us cos last year we won it and the feeling was just incredible. As a team it made us come together even more cos we wanted that at the start and we got it. So one of our goals last year was definitely achieved so we all want that feeling back to win the same goal.

So how are these goals monitored and recorded?
Eighteen of the players, mainly the first team, were selected to be in a focus group which involves keeping a log book of all the training, matches and nutritional food. You also had extra sessions. So you were monitored after every training session or before you were asked how you were feeling, how you did, what were your strengths and weaknesses. In the game then, we all set ourselves goals, like I mentioned earlier, I set myself a discipline goal and I’d say then if I felt I’d achieved my goal on marks of 1–10. Yes I did or No I didn’t and explain why I said that. So looking back at the beginning of the season I might have had a six or four on discipline then hopefully by the end of the season I’d have a ten. Keep monitoring your goals through use of the log books.

2) What happens in the dressing room and in the training session following a game?
Does it differ, depending on the results of a game?
The winning majority, we do. I think everyone can’t wait to go to the bar to get some food. That’s me, isn’t it. If we win, we’re all on a high, all praising each other up that we did well and what we found funny, something could be laughed at. When we do lose people are really disappointed. You can see the people who take it, not serious, but the people who don’t like losing, I don’t like losing, to be fair. We do get annoyed if you think, Oh God, we could have won then people are very disappointed and you can see it, the heads are down when you go back to the changing-rooms. There’s no laughing and joking, jit hits home, to be fair.

And after a training session?
I think our coach she’ll pick out the bad bits and tell us what we need to work on after the game. And then in the training session after the game when we go back to the training ground we’ll work on the stuff we need to work on. The girls then, if they’re not still down in the dumps whatever, you just pick yourself back up then and give 100% in training again. You work on the weaknesses of the game previous.

3) Can you tell me how team players feel about team formation and team selection.
The formation – I think when we do play a 4-3-3 right at the start you can see that they’re not with us then. They’ve gone ‘Oh God, it’s this formation again. We’re gonna lose’. I think they have a negative feeling from the start about the 4-3-3. But if you’ve got a 4-4-2 then they go into their comfort zone and they like it. So I think the formation of 4-4-2 does make a big difference before we even start to play because, as I said, we’re
comfortable with the 4-4-2 and we’re not comfortable with the 4-3-3 so it’s an automatic thumbs straight down with the formation if it’s like that. The team selection - I think, to be fair, a lot of the girls, they think .. some of them know they’re very good players, which they are and they think they can just walk into the team and don’t have to go to training. But then the poor girls who do go training ... want to get in that team they obviously work hard for it and I think it does make a difference. If you do go training then I think you should play a game. A lot of the girls work on their fitness week in week out or not start is a big thing with people – they obviously want to start every game and people in training, to be fair, they all do, the majority work hard to get their starting position. Because so many players now, there are about 45 signed on, there might be five people to one position which is a lot of competition. So team selection is based on the eleven best players. Some people don’t like it obviously and I know they say that if you train you should play but if you’re not the best player then obviously the best players are going to be selected which might be harsh sometimes but I think it needs to be done.

You say some people don’t like it do you think that affects the team. I think in some cases, yes. I’ve been in a situation where I’ve had a word with the coach. The coach didn’t like what I said and the whole team got involved then just because I had a word with her. People started arguing then. It does affect the team. If you have a little word saying ‘I don’t like the way you’re doing this blay-di-blah-di-blah .. say there’s an argument within a team between one player and the coach I think it does make a big issue within the team. If one player is down in the dumps the general thing is that it will drag the whole team down. But if everyone’s up on a high ..

So one person can have a negative effect on the...
... whole group, yes.

4)Can you tell me how the players and coach interpret how the game went. The players, to be fair, usually, ... I do expect the player to be ... if there’s ... if we don’t play well its better to say ‘Never mind, we’ll all do better next time’ rather than ‘Oh my God, you played crap this week’ because some of the players in our team are very low on confidence. The time you shout at someone, that’s it, they’re gone. That’s their head gone for ten minutes in big games. After then if you say to them maybe next time they play even if they haven’t got no confidence at all, they’re shattered as we say, the coach then. She won’t pick on anyone in particular. She won’t say, oh look, Bethan, you were awful, she’ll just say that as a team you done this, this and this good but on the other hand you done this, this and this bad, which is good. In a team, some people can take it and some people can’t.

So they’re very different then how the players see ...
Yes. The coach needs to know their players. Generally, we know each other well enough so I know who I can shout at and who I can’t. Then the coach, same thing; she can’t just go out and, well she can, but she doesn’t, go and shout at someone because they get it wrong. She’ll talk to them and say, look, this time if you did this, next time maybe do this and it will work out better.
5) Can you tell me about the level of openness among team members and the coach. Some players feel a lot easier to go to the coach. I know if I had a problem I would go to her and she would help me out. She’s good like that to me. But some of the players, the quieter girls may not feel they can go to talk to Kerry. But I feel I could go and talk to her and probably the same for you but for some of the girls who are low on confidence or are quiet, maybe they don’t realise they can go to the coach. Because she is like a friend as well as a coach. I think it’s helpful when … some people might see it as a negative thing, but I think that at the end of the day it’s a good thing. If you’ve got a bad thing to say you can talk to her about how you feel, what’s gone wrong in the game. I’ve said before, look we need to work on this in training and to be fair she’s taken advice as well so we should take her advice so that’s good.

So you think it’s a positive thing then? Yes, definitely a positive thing.

6) Can you explain the team’s responsibilities on and off the playing field.

I think, I got a situation here with one of the rugby girls, I know it’s not football, but, she got into a bit of trouble which she shouldn’t have got in. And it ended up in her getting banned from playing rugby. So I think you need to, on a social level, to be presentable and behave basically. Because if you get into trouble it can affect both your playing and your studying. In America if you don’t perform in your study time, you don’t play football. I think everywhere, if you’re not well behaved, if you have a drink and you get in trouble it can affect your other team. On the field then, we’ve all got to know what we’re doing in the different positions and if you don’t perform to the best you can, Kerry will obviously say to you, ‘Look, you can do better next time. We’ll continue running through the roles, like – centre midfield, this is your responsibility – dum-dum-dum, winger – bam-bam-bam. Do that again for the 4-4-2. Obviously for the 4-3-3 the roles and the responsibilities are different so you have to go through and understand both of them.

Section 6: Performance

This is based on the game against Bath which was last week on 5th November 2008. Performance in this section will be classified as relative performance rather than absolute performance i.e. how the team performed overall that focuses on the result of the game.

1) On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how do you think you played – you as a player, personally?

7 probably. Like I said, I think I played ok, to be fair, with the tackling and with my goal, my discipline, I thought I was ok. I didn’t get booked, which is one of my goals. So goal-wise I think that’s pretty good. But I wouldn’t give myself higher than a 7 because of the shots I missed or the passing that went astray, for instance. I can’t really go any higher, or lower.
Do you think there are any aspects you think you could improve on?
Yes definitely. Shots on goal, getting them on target, making my face touch in front of goal again which will affect my shooting. So my shooting and maybe my passing.

2) On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest, how do you think the team played overall?
First half, I’d give us a 5 as a team. Second half it would go up to about a 7 or an 8. First half we were all over the shop, basically, playing a 4-3-3 formation. The girls just didn’t understand what we were doing, where they had to run on this pass, or, I think it was a bit scrappy, to be fair, we couldn’t string two passes together. That’s why I’ve rated it so low. Then second half then, we changed it to 4-4-2 we picked ourselves right back up and got right back into the game. I think towards the end of the half we must have had about ten shots on goal and the keeper pulled them all off, so to be fair, she kept their team in the game.

You said you picked up all together when you changed formations so as a team then you encouraged each other.
Yes, definitely. After the half then we all got into a group huddle and said, ‘Right girls, we need to sort it out, basically and, to be fair, I know all of the girls picked themselves up and all gave 100%. I think that’s where the difference is. Like I said, if we didn’t care for each other or we weren’t friends they might have got more than us but as we all want to win and we’re all friends we all listened to each other and listened to the advice given and picked ourselves up and played much better.

3) On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest, how cohesive do you think the team was in your last game?
I think the first half was a bit scrappy and I think the girls did start to get annoyed with each other and I’m the first to admit that I shout at the players, not in a nasty way, but some players do need, like, not a shouting at as such but telling ‘Do this better next time’. I think a lot do react to things like that. But first half when it was over, everyone just started biting people’s heads off which wasn’t good, because we wasn’t doing as well as we usually do because it was a big, big shock having to be losing first half. The second half then, after we’d had a little huddle and a change of formation we all come together much better and I think we played much better as a team. There was no individual performance which made the team better I think we pulled out a really good performance second half as a team which is, again ...

Do you think the result actually influences team cohesion?
Yes, definitely. I think when we’re winning people change to be on a high, cheering each other on, but when we’re losing, because we’re not so used to losing I think it makes a hell of a difference. People say ‘Oh, come on!’ and frustration starts coming out. You can see the tackles are flying in and people start shouting at each other and it’s not a good atmosphere to be in.
4) What effect do you think changing the players that start the match has on the team?
So that if the eleven players who usually start changes, does that affect the team?
I think if one of the regulars gets dropped people start thinking, Oh God, I need to pull my finger out now. To be fair, Kerry does say that there’s no one starting eleven. If you train and play well you’ll get a game. If you couldn’t care and dawdle around in training you will get dropped. I don’t think she is scared to drop some people because if you don’t pull your finger out, you won’t play in that situation, to be fair.

Does it affect the team as a whole then, performance-wise, if there are changes?
Yes definitely. People don’t really like it if they haven’t got a fixed place in the team. Ok, I think it’s good not to have ... I think it’s good to have that feeling but I know then, like if I know there are people after my position, I’m going to work my guts out in training to get that position. But if you get dropped, you get dropped. You’ve just got to pick yourself up then and next time you’ve got to train and when you do play you’ve got to play a lot better – it’s got to be better than that other person. It’s good to have that competition within different areas on the pitch because if you didn’t have any competition on the wing, for instance, you could think, you couldn’t be bothered when you go training, you’ve got that position anyway. It has a negative affect but whereas if you’ve got people fighting for your position you think ‘Right! I’ve got to be better than that person’ and it drives you to be better, I’d say.

So on an individual basis, then?
Yes, definitely.
Well thank you very much for doing this interview.