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8   Pulling the Group Together: The Role of the Social Identity Approach

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27   FINAL VERSION

1   **Introduction**

2   How do coaches successfully pull a group together? This chapter focuses on the role

3 and importance of creating and maintaining social identities for group functioning and

4 performance. Research documenting the role and importance of social identities has increased

5 considerably over recent years, with over 200 research articles published across a variety of

6 psychological domains in 2012 alone (Haslam, 2014). Given the wealth of empirical studies

7 available, we have chosen to focus on key research articles within our review of social

8 identity literature to highlight the role and importance of social identities in coaching

9 contexts. Ultimately, social identity researchers recognise that groups are dynamic and have

10 the capacity to change individuals which means that groups and organisations are much more

11 than an aggregation of their individual parts (Haslam, 2004). Therefore, the key to

12 successfully pulling a group together from a social identity perspective lies in the

13 understanding and promotion of a shared sense of social identity among group members. For

14 a coach to understand their role in optimising group functioning and performance, the social

15 identity approach to leadership (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011) contains four principles

16 that can be implemented within coaching practice. This chapter will also explore each

17 principle of social identity leadership for a coaching audience.

18   **Key terms**

19   According to the social identity approach, individuals can define themselves in terms

20 of personal or social identities (Haslam, 2004). A personal identity reflects the unique

21 attributes and characteristics that define an individual (Fransen et al, 2015). On the other

22 hand, a social identity represents the sense of belongingness and emotional significance an

23 individual feels towards a particular group (Slater, Evans, & Barker, 2013). In sport, an

24 athlete may develop or maintain a social identity with a team (e.g., the England soccer team)

25 and/or an organisation (e.g., United Kingdom [UK] Sport). To illustrate the distinction

between personal and social identities consider the case of Mark—a cricket batsman. Mark is creative, extroverted, and energetic as an individual which are characteristics that define Mark as a person ("I am Mark, a creative, extroverted, and energetic individual"). Mark also belongs to a cricket team with other athletes that share the same goals and interests (e.g., to win cricket matches). Mark's membership to a cricket team additionally defines Mark as a person. A social identity should not be confused with the term cohesion—a predominant group-level psychological factor—which represents the tendency of individuals to stick together and remain united when pursuing goals and objectives (Carron, 1982). Although social identity and cohesion are significantly and positively related (Evans, Coffee, Barker, Allen, & Haslam, 2015a), social identity reflects the psychological significance of groups to individuals whilst cohesion represents a group-oriented behaviour. The notion that individuals with a strong sense of social identity share goals and interests highlights that social identities are meaningful to individuals. The meaning (or reason) individuals attach to their social identity is commonly termed as the content of social identity (Turner, 1985). Arguably, the most common contents of social identity prevalent in elite sport centre around achievement or excellent performance (Evans, Slater, Turner, & Barker, 2013; Slater, Barker, Coffee & Jones, 2015).

Given the importance of social identities for group functioning and performance, the social identity approach to leadership provides coaches with four main principles that make for effective leadership. The first principle of social identity leadership suggests that leaders should be an in-group prototype. An in-group represents a group that an individual has formed a social identity with whereas an out-group signifies a group that an individual has not formed a social identity with. Being in-group prototypical therefore means that coaches should aim to represent the values of the group to which they belong. The second principle purports that leaders should be an in-group champion. Being an in-group champion means

1   that coaches should be solely motivated to further the collective interests of the group to

2   which they belong. The third principle explains that leaders should be entrepreneurs of social

3   identity. In other words, coaches should seek to construct meaningful in-group values that

4   mobilise collective action. Finally, the fourth principle suggests that leaders should be

5   embedders of social identity. Being an embedder of social identity means that coaches should

6   aim to make in-group values a reality.

7   From this point, this chapter will: (a) review research on the role and importance of

8   social identities, the content of social identities, and social identity leadership; (b) suggest

9   future research; and (c) outline applied recommendations for coaches aiming to pull groups

10   together through the harnessing of social identities.

11   **Review of the Literature**

12   **The social identity approach**

13   The social identity approach is a psychological framework incorporating several

14   predictions about cognition, emotion, and behaviour that are communicated through two

15   theories: social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorisation theory

16   (Turner, 1999). Ultimately, the social identity approach recognises that the psychology and

17   behaviour of group members is not simply determined by the ability of individuals to think,

18   feel, and act as individuals (as "I" or "me"). The psychology and behaviour of group

19   members is also influenced by the capacity of individuals to define themselves as belonging

20   to meaningful social groups (as "we" or "us"; Fransen et al., 2015). Initially, the social

21   identity approach stipulates that an individual will be inclined to categorise themselves as a

22   member of a group (i.e., self-categorisation) when the differences between themselves (e.g.,

23   cricketers) and members of one group (e.g., a cricket team A) are smaller than the differences

24   between themselves and members of other groups (e.g., other cricket teams) within a

25   particular context (e.g., a league). This process is commonly known as comparative fit

1   (Turner, 1999). An individual will also be inclined to categorise themselves as a member of a

2   group when their beliefs about in-group values (e.g., to win) are consistent with actual in-

3   group values. This process is commonly known as normative fit (Turner, 1999). Self-

4   categorisation then initiates a process of depersonalisation where individuals view themselves

5   and other in-group members as interchangeable representatives of the attributes and qualities

6   associated with their group (Hornsey, Dwyer, Oei, & Dingle, 2009). Depersonalisation means

7   that individuals do not view themselves and other in-group members as a collection of

8   idiosyncratic individuals. Depersonalisation causes individuals to define themselves and

9   others as belonging to a collective entity (e.g., *we* are a cricket team) rather than being

10   defined through more personal forms of identity. At the point of depersonalisation, an

11   individual has formed a social identity with their respective group. Depersonalisation then

12   triggers a final process known as self-stereotyping where in-group members adopt forms of

13   attitude and behaviour prescribed by in-group values (Turner, 1999). So, self-stereotyping

14   would suggest that athletes will exert high levels of effort when being hard-working as a

15   group is a valued component of social identity. The main implication of self-stereotyping is

16   that in-group members will bring their attitude and behaviour into conformity with their in-

17   group prototype whilst generating positive attitudinal consensus and behavioural uniformity

18   (Hogg, 1992). Based on the social identity approach, the development of a social identity

19   would appear to be an important pre-requisite for group-oriented thinking and behaviour (see

20   Figure 18.1).

21   **The importance of social identities**

22   A critical mass of research across psychological domains has demonstrated that a

23   strong sense of social identity significantly predicts a range of outcomes including morale,

24   self-esteem, burnout, stress, satisfaction, and commitment (Haslam, Jetten, & Waghorn,

25   2009; Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005; Haslam et al., 2006). One

1   explanation for the positive effects of social identity on stress-related outcomes (e.g., self-

2   esteem) suggests that social support emanating from a shared sense of social identity buffers

3   against stressful experiences. Haslam (2004) suggested that a social identity serves as a basis

4   for individuals to receive and benefit from support that fellow in-group members can provide.

5   Indeed, Haslam et al. (2005) demonstrated that social support mediated the relationship

6   between social identity and stress whilst social identity influenced the perception of how

7   stressful different modes of work are for individuals. Applied to Lazarus' Cognitive-

8   Motivational-Relational Theory (CMRT; Lazarus, 2000), a strong sense of social identity

9   would appear to be a resource that would increase the coping potential of in-group members

10   when appraising encounters with the environment. Emerging research within sport also

11   supports the notion that social identities are important determinants of group-level outcomes.

12   In a longitudinal study, Evans et al. (2015a) measured social identity, cohesion, collective

13   efficacy, and team performance at the start, middle, and end of a season in all eight rugby

14   league teams competing within one Rugby League Premier Division. Using multilevel

15   modelling procedures, data indicated that higher levels of social identity (between-athletes)

16   were associated with higher levels of cohesion, collective efficacy, and team performance.

17   Higher levels of social identity (within-athletes) were also associated with higher levels of

18   collective efficacy. Data appear logical when considering social identity theory. The main

19   premise of social identity theory suggests that individuals will form social identities with

20   groups that make a positive contribution to self-esteem (Haslam, 2004). Accordingly,

21   individuals will feel inclined to behave in the best interests of their group (rather than their

22   own personal interests) because individuals strive to see their group as different to (and better

23   than) other groups to experience positive self-esteem (Haslam, 2004). In other words,

24   individuals will strive to achieve in-group distinctiveness when a social identity has been

25   formed. Social identities therefore motivate individuals towards group-level outcomes

1 because the fate of the group will decide the psychological fate of individuals who have

2 undergone processes of self-categorisation, depersonalisation, and self-stereotyping (van

3 Knippenberg, 2000).

4 **The content of social identities**

5 The potential for social identity content to influence cognition and behaviour was

6 highlighted in the process of self-stereotyping explained earlier (Turner, 1999). That is, once

7 individuals have depersonalised the perception of themselves, in-group members take on

8 forms of attitude and behaviour associated with their social identity. Livingstone and Haslam

9 (2008) provided support for the effects of social identity content upon the cognition and

10 behaviour of in-group members. Data revealed that Catholic and Protestant religious groups

11 only acted antagonistically towards each other when the content of their religious identity

12 was focussed on being hostile and conflictual to opposing religious groups. The potential for

13 social identity content to influence athletes was exemplified during the London 2012

14 Paralympic Games. During the final lap of the women's H1-3 hand-cycling road race,

15 TeamGB athletes Karen Darke and Rachel Morris were set to contest a sprint finish for the

16 bronze medal position. Fifty metres from the finish-line, Darke and Morris held hands and

17 crossed the finish-line together in an attempt to finish equal third. From a social identity

18 perspective, the behaviour of Darke and Morris could have been attributable to the strong

19 sense of shared identity experienced between two team-mates. Additional comments from

20 Darke suggested that both athletes felt it wrong for one to cross the finish-line without the

21 other because both athletes had worked equally hard together preparing for the race (BBC

22 Sport, 2012). Ultimately, a TeamGB hand-cycling identity focussed strongly on excellent

23 interpersonal relationships and respect between team-mates appeared to encourage thoughts

24 and actions aligned to the content of Darke and Morris' social identity. Nevertheless,

25 preliminary research by Evans et al. (2015a) generally revealed that two components of social

1   identity content pertinent to sport (i.e., achieving excellent results and exhibiting excellent

2   friendships) failed to significantly predict ratings of cohesion and collective efficacy.

3   However, correlational analyses did reveal that the relationship between league position and a

4   social identity content focussed on exhibiting excellent friendships was moderately high,

5   significant, and positive over time. The authors argued that perhaps athletes changed the

6   meaning attached to their social identity over time (a strategy known as social creativity) in

7   response to threatened social identity content which prevented significant effects from

8   emerging.

9   **The effects of threat to social identity content**

10   From a social identity perspective, threat arises when a situation or event causes an in-

11   group to be negatively distinguished from another group. Examples of negatively

12   distinguished in-groups include in-groups that are low in status compared to another group

13   (e.g., a poorer performing in-group vs. a high performing out-group) or in-groups that have

14   received negative evaluation on a specific factor (e.g., "we have performed poorly"). Across

15   two experimental studies, Evans, Coffee, Barker, and Haslam (2015b) explored: (a) the

16   effects of threatening social identity content on social identity-related variables and (b) the

17   role of social identity content during episodes of relevant content threat. Following a

18   sustained period of threat to results content only, data revealed that members of a results

19   content condition (where social identities were focussed on achieving excellent results)

20   reported significantly lower social identity and in-group prototypicality than members of a

21   support content condition (where social identities were focussed on being supportive of one

22   another). Post threat, members of the results content condition also reported significantly

23   higher out-group prototypicality and expressed a significantly stronger desire to move to

24   another group (a strategy known as social mobility). Accordingly, in experiment two,

25   participants were assigned to dual content conditions (where social identities were focussed

1   on achieving excellent results and being supportive of one another). In condition one, results

2   content was threatened through false performance feedback that suggested repeated failure on

3   five performance trials. In condition two, support content was threatened through false

4   supportive feedback that suggested poor willingness to support in-group members across all

5   trials. Members of both conditions reported higher social identity and in-group prototypicality

6   (post threat) than members of the results content condition in experiment one. Members of

7   both conditions also reported lower out-group prototypicality and social mobility (post threat)

8   than members of the results content condition in experiment one. Interestingly, members of

9   both dual content conditions showed evidence of social creativity in response to social

10   identity content threat. Specifically, members of each condition significantly reduced the

11   emphasis placed on the threatened aspect of their social identity content whilst maintaining

12   the focus placed on the unthreatened aspect of their social identity content. These

13   experimental findings suggest that broadening the repository of social identity content within

14   groups may protect important social identity processes and group-oriented behaviour when an

15   aspect of social identity content is threatened. For example, groups that value achieving

16   excellent results and supporting one another as a group are likely to be protected when the

17   group experiences a period of poor form. Drawing on social identity theory, having

18   unthreatened elements of social identity content available would mean that social identities

19   contribute to the achievement of positive self-esteem (Haslam, 2004).

20   **The social identity approach to leadership**

21   The social identity approach to leadership has attracted growing research attention

22   due to its appreciation of contextual influences and group dynamics within leadership.

23   Essentially, the social identity approach to leadership proposes four principles that coaches

24   can work through to harness social identities within groups (see Figure 18.2).

1   **Leader as in-group prototypes.** The first principle of social identity leadership

2   suggests that coaches should be in-group prototypes. Coaches who are in-group prototypical

3   are more likely to be categorised as in-group members through the principles of comparative

4   and normative fit. For instance, coaches are more likely to be categorised as an in-group

5   member when their beliefs about in-group values are consistent with the actual values of their

6   in-group (i.e., normative fit). Slater, Coffee, Barker, and Evans (2014) described how being

7   in-group prototypical as a leader is akin to person-centred counselling procedures (Rogers,

8   1980) used by counsellors during applied practice to develop strong working alliances with

9   clients. During person-centred counselling, effective working alliances are created when

10   counsellors show key counselling skills (e.g., empathy) to their clients (Slater et al., 2014).

11   Being in-group prototypical as a coach also relates to being co-oriented (i.e., when athletes'

12   and coaches' thoughts are interconnected) within the 3C+1 model for building an effective

13   coach-athlete relationship (Jowett, 2007). An example of a leader in sport who can be

14   considered highly prototypical of their in-group is Sir David Brailsford. Throughout the

15   London 2012 Olympic Games, Brailsford was motivated towards achieving cycling success

16   for TeamGB cyclists (e.g., through the use of key performance indicators) which

17   encapsulated the motivation of TeamGB to achieve their best medal haul at an Olympic

18   Games (Slater et al., 2013). Research has found that being in-group prototypical as a leader

19   benefits a host of outcomes including gaining trust, support, and the ability to influence in-

20   group members (for a review, see van Knippenberg, 2011). Understanding in-group values as

21   a coach is therefore imperative. Consider Alex Ferguson. When arriving at Manchester

22   United football club in 1986, Ferguson spent considerable time understanding the values of

23   Manchester United before implementing managerial activities (Bolton & Thompson, 2015).

24   Research also suggests that understanding in-group values is critical for mobilising in-group

25   members towards collective action. In the BBC prison experiment conducted by Reicher and

1   Haslam (2006), volunteers were randomly assigned to the role of prisoner or guard within a

2   mock prison. On the sixth day of the experiment, a new prisoner (who had a background

3   working as a trade union official) was introduced into the prison regime to encourage

4   collective action and develop an equal set of relations between prisoners and guards. Before

5   articulating a shared vision for prisoners and guards, the new prisoner spent time reflecting

6   on the current prison regime (e.g., with prisoners) to understand the prison regime. The

7   ability to reflect on in-group values is therefore critical to becoming in-group prototypical as

8   a coach.

9   **Leaders as in-group champions.** The second principle of social identity leadership

10   suggests that coaches should be in-group champions. Using the social identity approach,

11   coaches who enhance the interests of their group will help their group achieve positive

12   distinctiveness in comparison to other groups which means in-group members will be more

13   likely to experience positive self-esteem (Haslam, 2004). Research has demonstrated that

14   leaders must carefully consider context when attempting to enhance in-group interests. For

15   example, Platow, Nolan, and Anderson (2003) asked Australian citizens to rate their support

16   for leaders who either favoured their in-group over out-groups or treated all groups equally

17   during the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games (a context that promotes inclusivity and fairness).

18   Data indicated that in the context of the Olympics, leaders who favoured their in-group over

19   other groups were endorsed less than leaders who treated all groups equally. Platow et al.

20   confirmed that the thoughts and actions within a coach's interest will be dependent on how

21   in-group members define their social identity. Similarly, Slater et al. (2015) found that

22   TeamGB's vision for achieving excellent performance at the London 2012 Olympic Games

23   dictated decisions made around optimising peak performance (e.g., choice of team kit).

24   Recent research by Slater, Coffee, Barker, Haslam, and Steffens (under review)

25   examined how leaders may best champion in-group interests in relation to the concept of

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1   power. Using an experimental design, participants were led by either a power through leader

2   or a power over leader. The power through leader sought to engage with the group to

3   understand their social identity content and propose a vision that encompassed the group's

4   shared social identity. The power over leader sought to exert power in a top-down manner by

5   outlining to the group what their social identity content was going to be. Slater et al. (under

6   review) found that members of the power through condition reported significantly higher

7   levels of shared social identity, trust in the leader, and mobilised effort (assessed via time

8   spent on a practice task) compared to members of the power over condition. Data suggests

9   that coaches who lead in a manner that works with and through (rather than against and over)

10   their group will increase the effectiveness of their leadership practice.

11   **Leaders as entrepreneurs of social identity.** The third principle of social identity

12   leadership implies that coaches should be entrepreneurs of social identities. As self-

13   categorisation theory suggests, in-group functioning is determined by in-group values.

14   Coaches may therefore aim for in-group members to take on in-group values that align with

15   the coach's vision (Slater et al., 2014). Recent evidence (Slater et al., under review) has

16   outlined the importance of coaches creating shared values rather than creating values

17   independently. Across four experimental conditions, athletes' social identity content was

18   either identical or dissimilar to the social identity content of a sports coach. Members of two

19   shared content conditions reported significantly higher social identity with the team and

20   coach, trust in their leader, and intentional mobilisation (assessed by hours dedicated to an

21   additional task set by the coach) compared to members of two unshared content conditions.

22   Overall, creating shared values underpins the development of a shared social identity whilst

23   the specific content of social identity that is shared may be less important that the act of

24   sharing content itself.

1   Creating shared values requires time and involves change. Although group members

2   can be resistant to change (Bovey & Hede, 2001), leaders have been shown to instigate a

3   change in group values through various social identity-related methodologies. For example,

4   in the BBC prison experiment, the prisoner introduced on day six encouraged prisoners and

5   guards to view themselves under a new set of values whilst belonging to one group (i.e., a

6   prison group vs. prisoner and guard groups). The new prisoner instigated a change in group

7   values and the conceptualisation of social identity by drawing on participant clothing and

8   using collective language to emphasise a new shared social identity. Reicher and Haslam

9   (2006) suggested that creating newly formed social identities enabled the new prisoner to

10   gain support and mobilise the prison group towards its vision. Steffens and Haslam (2013)

11   provided further evidence that using collective language can mobilise in-group members

12   towards a newly articulated vision. Successful Australian Prime Ministerial candidates were

13   found to use more collective pronouns in comparison to their unsuccessful counterparts

14   across 43 election campaigns. Those successful candidates used collective language every 79

15   words compared to every 136 words for unsuccessful candidates. For coaches, it seems

16   imperative to be mindful of rhetoric used; 'together, *we* will achieve great things' triumphs

17   over '*I* will lead you to great things'.

18   **Leaders as embedders of social identity.** The fourth principle of social identity

19   leadership suggests that coaches should be embedders of social identity. A good example of a

20   leader embedding social identities is Sir David Brailsford. Leading up to the London 2012

21   Olympic Games, Brailsford talked about how the values of TeamGB cycling were focussed

22   on being creative in achieving success (Slater et al., 2013). Brailsford sought innovation for

23   TeamGB by recruiting expert professionals (e.g., bike technicians) and acquiring information

24   that would assist TeamGB in making their vision a reality. For example, Brailsford consulted

25   surgeons about washing hands thoroughly to reduce illness whilst learning about improving

13

1 the sleeping behaviour of athletes. Evans, Edwards, and Slater (2015c) corroborated the

2 principle of embedding social identities as a leader by randomly assigning 74 members of

3 team sports to one of two conditions. Participants in both conditions were given the same

4 scenario of belonging to a sports team, having a strong connection with a coach, and sharing

5 in-group values based around being innovative as a team. In condition one, the coach was

6 described as helping the in-group realise its vision (a leader embedder) by seeking innovation

7 for the team. In condition two, the coach was described as a leader non-embedder by not

8 helping the in-group realise its vision. After reading their vignette, participants in the leader

9 embedder condition reported significantly higher leader prototypicality, trust in their leader,

10 leader influence, mobilisation, and expected realisation of in-group vision in comparison to

11 participants in the leader non-embedder condition.

12   In a second experiment, Evans et al. (2015c) explored whether social identity

13 processes change in response to either becoming a leader embedder or failing to sustain a

14 leader embedder approach in a real-world setting. Across two conditions, soccer athletes were

15 introduced to a soccer coach (week one), made aware of shared in-group values (week two),

16 and completed four soccer activities over four separate weeks (week three to week six). After

17 each activity, athletes completed a series of measures including mobilisation, realisation of

18 vision, trust, influence, and conflict. In condition one, the coach embedded social identities

19 during week three and week four by delivering soccer activities aligned to in-group values.

20 The coach failed to embed social identities in week five and week six by delivering soccer

21 activities inconsistent with in-group values. Alternatively, in condition two, the coach failed

22 to embed social identities in week three and week four before embedding social identities in

23 week five and week six. Data indicated that ratings of social identification and identity with

24 the coach within each condition at baseline were significantly different from zero.

25 Perceptions of the coach as a leader embedder were lower when the coach delivered soccer

1   activities inconsistent with in-group values. When the coach delivered soccer activities

2   aligned to in-group values, athletes reported higher mobilisation, trust in their leader,

3   anticipated realisation of vision, and ability of their leader to influence the group. Athletes

4   also reported lower levels of conflict with their leader when the coach delivered soccer

5   activities aligned to in-group values. Overall, Evans et al. (2015c) demonstrated that coaches

6   can improve social identity-related processes by becoming an identity embedder. Data also

7   documented that failing to sustain an identity embedder approach will harm social identity-

8   related processes. Therefore, the sustainability of effective leadership seems to rest in a

9   coach's proactive capacity to embed what matters most to their group into reality.

Implications for Future Research

11   Whilst social identity research in sport is beginning to emerge (e.g., Evans et al.,

12   2015a), continuing to investigate the principles of the social identity approach in sport would

13   benefit coaching practice. Current social identity research in sport has focussed on exploring

14   the relationships between two aspects of social identity content (i.e., results and friendships

15   content) pertinent to sport (see Evans et al., 2015a). Future researchers could adopt

16   qualitative methodologies to explore the various forms of social identity content that exist

17   within sport. Accordingly, the relationships between aspects of social identity content (above

18   and beyond results and friendships content) and a wider set of outcome variables (e.g.,

19   resilience, achievement goal orientation) could be examined. Current applied research in

20   sport has documented the effects of two forms of Personal-Disclosure Mutual-Sharing

21   (PDMS: relationship-oriented and mastery-oriented) on social identities and aspects of social

22   identity content amongst athletes. Future researchers could also demonstrate the effectiveness

23   of alternative forms of PDMS (e.g., coping-oriented PDMS) or other group-based

24   interventions in manipulating social identities and aspects of social identity content beyond

25   those prescribed in current literature. It also remains to be seen whether PDMS (or other

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1   group-based interventions) can manipulate the social identities and social identity content of

2   other group members (e.g., coaches, parents, key stakeholders) within an athlete's support

3   network. Increasing the volume of applied social identity research would help to close the

4   chasm that currently exists between social identity theorists and applied practitioners (Haslam

5   et al., 2014) which can potentially explain the difficulties researchers and practitioners have

6   faced when attempting to apply the social identity approach to psychology and performance.

7   The majority of research studies exploring the four principles of social identity

8   leadership within sport have adopted experimental research designs. To increase the external

9   validity of research findings, future researchers could draw on real-life sporting groups when

10   testing the four principles of social identity leadership. For coaches, having a structured

11   intervention procedure or programme of workshops to base their social identity leadership

12   practice around would also be useful. Existing research into the four principles of social

13   identity leadership has had the propensity to focus on testing differences between

14   experimental conditions that are faced with a specific type of leader. Future research could

15   examine the importance of incorporating the four principles of social identity leadership into

16   coaching practice within specific scenarios. For example, researchers could explore whether

17   implementing the social identity approach to leadership can protect social identity processes

18   (e.g., social mobility) during times of organisational change (e.g., a change in organisational

19   strategy). Perhaps most importantly, however, social identity research in sport would benefit

20   from the development of sport-specific measures of social identity, social identity content,

21   and social identity leadership to assist researchers in their endeavours to advance current

22   research findings.

23   **Implications for Applied Practice**

24   Primarily, research presented within the literature review suggests that it is important

25   for coaches to build and maintain a shared sense of social identity among group members to

1   encourage collective thinking and action (e.g., cohesion, collective efficacy) that may benefit

2   performance. To promote a shared sense of social identity, coaches could increase group

3   members' awareness of how their in-group is positively distinguished from other groups so

4   that group members can achieve positive distinctiveness through their in-group membership

5   (Haslam, 2004). For example, coaches could emphasise that their group is more creative,

6   more successful, or friendlier in comparison to rival out-groups.

7   Applied research is also beginning to emerge that suggests social identities can be

8   created or strengthened through group-based interventions. PDMS is a group-based

9   intervention that would enable coaches to create or strengthen social identities within groups.

10   PDMS sessions involve group members preparing and delivering previously unknown

11   information to other members of their group (Barker, Evans, Coffee, Slater, & McCarthy,

12   2014). Current literature has documented the effects of relationship-oriented PDMS (where

13   group members share information focussed on relationships) and mastery-oriented PDMS

14   (where group members share information based around best performances) on social identity.

15   Broadly, relationship-oriented PDMS activities have been found to increase the sense of

16   social identity from pre-intervention to post-intervention (Barker et al., 2014; Evans et al.,

17   2013). Mastery-oriented PDMS activities have been shown to maintain ratings of social

18   identity from pre-intervention to post-intervention (Barker et al.). As a coach, it would appear

19   fruitful to encourage greater understanding between group members through group-based

20   interventions (such as PDMS) to increase or maintain the emotional significance and sense of

21   belongingness athletes feel towards their group.

22   PDMS research has also shown that the type of information shared within PDMS

23   sessions can develop particular in-group values. For example, Evans et al. (2013) and Barker

24   et al. (2014) found that disclosing information based around relationships significantly

25   enhanced the value athletes placed upon friendships within their team (i.e., friendships

1   identity content). Barker et al. (2014) also documented that disclosing information centred

2   upon best performances significantly enhanced the value athletes placed on the results

3   achieved by their team (i.e., results identity content). Coaches could therefore ask athletes to

4   share information around a specific theme (e.g., best performances) when aiming to improve

5   certain performance-related outcomes (e.g., collective efficacy). Indeed, Barker et al. found

6   that a single-bout of mastery-oriented PDMS significantly enhanced collective efficacy

7   beliefs from pre-intervention to post-intervention. Additionally, encouraging athletes to share

8   information around a diverse set of themes (e.g., relationships, best performances, coping

9   with stressors) could enable coaches to develop groups with multiple contents of social

10   identity. As a coach, asking group members questions to generate discussion about in-group

11   values (e.g., "what type of group would *we* like to become?") would appear profitable to

12   begin moulding shared and meaningful social identities that empower group members

13   towards collective thinking and action.

14   To implement the four principles of social identity leadership into coaching practice,

15   Haslam et al. (2011) presented the 3Rs of social identity leadership (Reflection,

16   Representation, and Realisation). Reflection involves coaches taking an interest in the

17   group's identity and values through active listening, discussion, and observation. Reflecting

18   with group members is important so that coaches do not misinterpret social identities

19   resulting in the advancement of alien identities (Haslam, 2004). Representation involves

20   coaches making decisions and behaving in a manner consistent with the shared and multiple

21   characteristics of their group. For example, if a group is founded on its togetherness, a coach

22   should seek to represent that group by championing to importance of togetherness (e.g.,

23   organising inclusive group meetings). Realisation involves coaches organising opportunities

24   for their group to behave in line with the group's social identity content which enables group

25   members to progress towards their collective vision. For instance, support staff (e.g., sports

1   scientists) with a history of discovering modern-day innovation could be employed when in-

2   group values are focussed upon being innovative as a group. Slater, Evans, and Turner (2015)

3   suggest that a fourth 'R' (Reappraisal) may also be important to incorporate into leadership

4   practice. It has been postulated that social identity can enhance resource appraisals (e.g.,

5   perceptions of control) and/or reduce demand appraisals (e.g., uncertainty) through the social

6   support emanating from social identities. In turn, in-group members will approach stressful

7   situations in a challenge state (i.e., a positive appraisal state) rather than a threat state (i.e., a

8   negative appraisal state; see Slater et al., 2014).

9   Despite the collective-oriented nature of the social identity approach, it is not always

10   the case that an inclusive approach to leadership is required. This approach was evident in the

11   2014 Ryder Cup golf tournament. European Ryder Cup captain, Paul McGinley, decided to

12   assign certain athletes to leadership roles. More senior golfers (e.g., Ian Poulter, Lee

13   Westwood, and Graeme McDowell) were to "blood the rookies" (i.e., those less experienced

14   European golfers) and socially support the rookies in their preparation and performance.

15   Turner, Slater, and Barker (2015) explained that McGinley's decision was effective because

16   "the selected players represented the team ideal and epitomised the values of team Europe. In

17   social identity terms, Poulter, Westwood, and McDowell are prototypical leaders" (p. 277).

18   Ultimately, McGinley's decision to assign more senior golfers to specific leadership roles

19   was particularly effective because this decision was made in the best interests of the team

20   (Turner et al, 2015).

21   In conclusion, this chapter has highlighted the importance of attending to social

22   identities as a coach when aiming to pull a group together. Social identities influence the way

23   group members think and behave so it makes sense for coaches to work on developing a

24   shared sense of social identity within groups. Social identities are also meaningful to group

25   members. When social identities incorporate multiple meanings they can protect groups when

1   faced with considerable strain. Coaches have a vital role to play in building and strengthening

2   the social identities of group members. Being prototypical, championing the in-group, being

3   an entrepreneur, and embedding in-group identities undoubtedly serve as a useful principles

4   that can assist coaches in their leadership activity.

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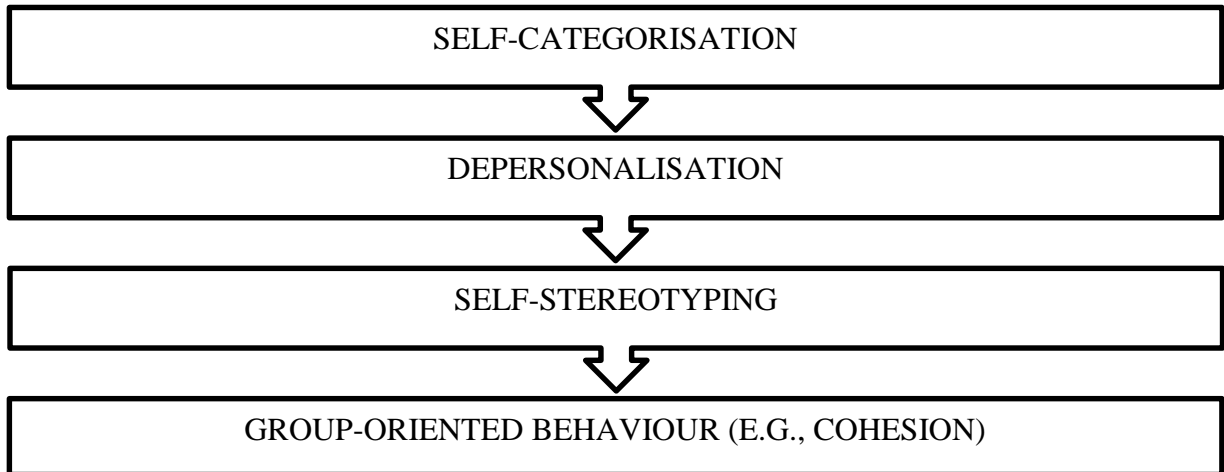
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1   **Figure Caption**

2   *Figure 18.1*. The development of social identities leading to group-oriented behaviour

3   through the processes of self-categorisation, depersonalisation, and self-stereotyping.

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SELF-CATEGORISATION

5
DEPERSONALISATION

6
SELF-STEREOTYPING

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8
GROUP-ORIENTED BEHAVIOUR (E.G., COHESION)

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1   *Figure 18.2*. A hierarchical model of actions and outcomes for social identity leadership in

2   sport. Taken from Slater et al. (2014).

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