



## Impact of claimed self-handicapping on cohesion and perceived collective efficacy in basketball

Guillaume Coudevylle, Stéphane Sinnapah, Elodie Cairo, Cédric Charles-Charlery, Olivier Hue, Christophe Gernigon

### ► To cite this version:

Guillaume Coudevylle, Stéphane Sinnapah, Elodie Cairo, Cédric Charles-Charlery, Olivier Hue, et al.. Impact of claimed self-handicapping on cohesion and perceived collective efficacy in basketball. International Journal of Sport Psychology, 2018. hal-01941973

**HAL Id: hal-01941973**

**<https://hal.science/hal-01941973>**

Submitted on 2 Dec 2018

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Running head: SELF-HANDICAP, COHESION AND PERCEIVED COLLECTIVE  
EFFICACY

## Impact of Claimed Self-Handicapping on Cohesion and Perceived Collective Efficacy in Basketball

Guillaume R. Coudevylle<sup>1</sup>, Stéphane Sinnapah<sup>1</sup>, Elodie Cairo<sup>1</sup>, Cédric Charles-Charlery<sup>1</sup>,  
Olivier Hue<sup>1</sup> and Christophe Gernigon<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of French West Indies, France; <sup>2</sup>University of Montpellier 1, France

### Author Note

<sup>1</sup> University of French West Indies, Department of Sport Sciences, Laboratory ACTES (EA 3596), Pointe-à-Pitre, France.

<sup>2</sup> Montpellier University, Department of Sport Sciences, Laboratoire Epsilon EA Dynamique des Capacités Humaines et des Conduites de Santé, Montpellier, France.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Guillaume Coudevylle, Phd, University of French West Indies, Department of Sport Sciences, Laboratory ACTES (EA 3596), Campus Fouillole, BP 250, Pointe-à-Pitre, 97 159, Guadeloupe, France.

☎: (+590) (0) 6 90 28 35 71 / (+590) (0) 5 90 48 31 73

✉ : guillaume.coudevylle@univ-antilles.fr / guillaumecoudevylle@hotmail.com

# Abstract

This study examined whether claimed self-handicapping influences cohesion and perceived collective efficacy of teammates during a basketball game. Sport sciences students were asked to imagine they were part of a basketball team viewed on an edited video clip of a real game. At the beginning of the first two quarters, virtual teammates declared either self-handicaps (SH) or made neutral statements, depending on the experimental session. After each of these video sequences, the participants were asked to answer questions designed to measure their perceptions of cohesion and collective efficacy. The results indicated that both types of cohesion and perceived collective efficacy were reduced by claimed self-handicapping from the other members of the team. These findings, observed using hypothetical situation, suggest that claimed self-handicapping can significantly harm the process of building team cohesion.

*Keywords:* excuse, task cohesion, social cohesion, psychological state, self-protection, performance

## Impact of Claimed Self-Handicapping on Cohesion and Perceived Collective Efficacy in Basketball

The starting five players of a basketball team may complain about various problems and symptoms during the warm-up session before a major game. How do these complaints affect other team members' perceived cohesion and perceived collective efficacy (PCE)? This anecdotal instance illustrates the notion of self-handicapping, first presented by Berglas and Jones (1978). On the one hand, behavioral self-handicapping refers to the actions of people who construct impediments that augment non-ability attributions for possible failure. On the other hand, self-reported handicap or claimed self-handicapping refers to people who claimed the presence of physical or psychological conditions when they believed that those conditions might explain poor performance on an important task (Leary & Shepperd, 1986). Self-handicap users artificially convey a positive image through self-protection and/or self-enhancement (Kolditz & Arkin, 1982). The consequences are significant in the way how others' opinions are handled. Self-handicaps (SH) are used to justify failure in advance through excuses that deflect attention from a lack of competence. Self-handicapping individuals can thus protect themselves in case of failure or enhance themselves in case of success for having succeeded in spite of the impediment (see Tice, 1991). Such opinion manipulation logically has an effect on the user's cohesion and PCE after performing, but what are the consequences for their teammates? Although many studies have focused on claimed self-handicapping (see Coudevylle, Famose, Martin Ginis, & Gernigon, 2015), very few (see Prapavessis, Grove, & Eklund, 2004) have examined how it affects observers (e.g., peers, coaches, supporters). One study showed that self-handicappers may be perceived as cheating, inefficient and selfish, which can lead to conflictual relationships with others and the perception of inability (Schlenker, Pontari, & Christopher, 2001). Behavioral self-handicapping may have similar effects. Indeed, Levesque, Lowe, and Mendenhall (2001)

showed that behavioral self-handicapping makes the users appear less competent, less responsible and less sociable than non-users. These overall results led us to hypothesize that claimed SH decrease group cohesion (i.e., both task and social cohesion) and PCE in a team.

#### **Claimed Self-handicapping: A Factor of Decreased Group Cohesion**

Carron, Brawley, and Widmeyer (1998, p. 213) defined cohesion as “a dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for people to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of members affective needs.” Cohesion thus comprises both task cohesion and social cohesion. These authors also distinguished between members’ perceptions of the group as a totality and their perceptions of the personal attractiveness of the group. Very few studies have examined the relationship between self-handicapping and cohesion in sports teams (see Carron, Burke, & Prapavessis, 2004), finding that team cohesion is likely to have an impact on the use of self-handicapping strategies. Athletes with a high tendency toward self-handicapping often claim more SH when they perceive the team’s cohesion as strong (Carron, Prapavessis, & Grove, 1994). These athletes worry about how their partners will judge them. Several studies have therefore demonstrated the impact of self-handicapping strategies on parameters that could reasonably be thought to impact cohesion.

Regarding the links between self-handicapping and social cohesion, Schlenker et al. (2001) showed that self-handicappers can be perceived as deceitful and self-centered. These authors described deceit as undermining the ability of members of society to rely on one another. Therefore, by deceiving others (such as teammates), self-handicappers could compromise “the satisfaction of members’ affective needs” (Carron et al., 1998) and thus the social cohesion of a group. Furthermore, the main characteristic of self-centeredness is a focus on personal interest. This too can affect group social cohesion, which implies that all individual members are focused on the collective interest. Moreover, SH users are also less

1 sociable than non-users (Levesque et al., 2001). Given that sociability is the ability to create  
2 ties and that cohesion is the tendency to stand united, we can assume that self-handicapping  
3 reduces social cohesion by affecting perceived sociability.

4       Regarding the links between self-handicapping and task cohesion, Carron et al. (1994)  
5 found that the self-handicapping trait of making excuses was negatively correlated with  
6 perceptions of the group's task cohesiveness. Even if the correlation does not make to know  
7 which of the two variables influences the other or whether the two influence each other, it  
8 makes sense to assume that, by sending a message of poor commitment, SH users endanger  
9 the task cohesion. In addition, Luginbhul and Palmer (1991) showed that self-handicapping  
10 decreases negative assessments of the user's competence but nevertheless increases negative  
11 assessments of his or her personal traits (e.g., lack of motivation and commitment), and  
12 overall self-handicappers appear to others to be less motivated than non-self-handicappers.  
13 Motivation is built in particular on how an individual sets and reaches goals (Weinberg,  
14 Burton, Yukelson, & Weigand, 2000), and task cohesion reflects a group's tendency to  
15 pursue the group goal, objectives, and collective performance (Buton, Fontayne, Heuze,  
16 Bosselut, & Raimbault, 2007). Thus, an individual with low motivation might weaken group  
17 cohesion, and more specifically, the task cohesion. Finally, Schlenker et al. (2001) showed  
18 that self-handicappers can also be perceived as ineffective. Being perceived as ineffective can  
19 hinder the pursuit of collective objectives that precisely require a certain level of  
20 effectiveness from each member of a group. Consequently, we can suppose that the use of SH  
21 decreases the degree of task cohesion.

22       Ultimately, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that self-handicapping decreases both  
23 social and task cohesion by provoking in the observers a certain image of its claimers. On the  
24 one hand, the deceitful, the self-centered, and the less sociable image of a self-handicapper

could damage social cohesion. On the other hand, the lack of motivation, a poor commitment, and effectiveness could damage task cohesion.

### **Claimed Self-handicapping: A Factor of Decreased PCE**

Bandura (1997, p. 477) defined PCE as “a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments.” Two approaches are used to measure and evaluate PCE: first, assessing aggregate members’ appraisals of their personal capabilities for the functions they perform in the group and, second, assessing aggregate members' appraisals of their group capabilities as a whole. Although the links between self-handicapping and PCE have never been demonstrated, studies have shown connections with self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a person’s belief in his or her capacity to organize and implement all the necessary acts to perform a task (Bandura, 1997). The negative connection between claimed SH and self-efficacy has been reported (Coudeville, Gernigon, & Martin Ginis, 2011; Martin & Brawley, 2002; Ryska, Yin, & Cooley, 1998). Given the close links between self-efficacy and PCE, it is possible that the negative links between SH and self-efficacy are also present between SH and PCE. Furthermore, claiming to feel anxious, for example, can serve as an excuse but can also be perceived as a weakness, especially if the anxiety is chronic (Schlenker et al., 2001). Indeed, by making excuses, the person is presenting himself or herself as ineffective and useless, and therefore negatively impacts PCE. Finally, Levesque and collaborators (2001) showed that behavioral SH users are seen as less competent and less likely to succeed than non-users. Thus, as self-efficacy is affected by the use of SH, we expect that the characteristics of PCE might also be affected.

Given the supposed links between claimed SH, on the one hand, and cohesion and PCE, on the other hand, the aim of this study was to examine whether the claimed SH used by members of a basketball team would have an impact on the cohesion and PCE of the other

members. We predicted that claimed self-handicapping would decrease the cohesion (i.e., task and social) and PCE of the other teammates.

## Method

### Participants

One hundred and eighty-four persons ( $M_{\text{age}} = 19.3$  years; age range: 18–20 years, 128 men and 56 women) accepted to participate in the study after reading and signing an informed consent form. They were recruited during a regularly scheduled class at the University of Antilles (in the French West Indies) with first year physical education students who practice at least ten hours of sport per week all through the university year. The participants were asked to imagine that they were part of a basketball team presented through a video montage of a real game, and they were asked to answer a series of questions after watching. In accordance with previous studies (e.g., Carron et al., 1994; Hausenblas & Carron, 1996), they rated two statements before the beginning of the experiment to assess how much the game mattered to them (“It is important for me to win the game”; “It is important for me to display a great game”) on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (“Not at all important”) to 7 (“Completely important”). After the experiment, the participants were asked whether they had been truly immersed in the virtual situation (“Did you manage to feel as if you were part of the team in white jersey and shorts”) on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (“Not at all agree”) to 7 (“Completely agree”). They were finally asked to determine whether they had been sincere in completing the questionnaire (“Do you think you answered the questionnaire as sincerely as possible?”). They were asked to reply by “Yes” or “No”. Ultimately, the participants who responded with less than 4 on one of the first three items or “No” to the last question ( $n = 37$ ; 26 men and 11 women) were excluded from the analysis (31 participants did not manage to feel that they were partners, five more



admitted they were not sincere, one declared that winning did not matter, and none declared that it did not matter to have a great game).

### **Experimental Support**

A video clip from a real basketball game was prepared as the experimental support. The game was chosen so that the competition level and ages of the players from both teams were representative of the plausible competition level and ages of the participants. The video was edited by cutting sequences of the game to serve two functions. First, we wanted a version shorter than the real game that provided a controlled scenario (i.e., presentation of the game and the team regarding the championship, the team warm-up sessions, individual presentation of the players, neutral game sessions, time-outs and player gatherings that allowed us to include both claimed SH and neutral statements, and end of game). Then, neutral sequences of the game were inserted, defined as those that did not involve a disruption in the balance of power. These neutral sequences therefore did not include shots or shot attempts, smashes or offensive rebounds or dramatic events, in order to avoid biased answers to questions concerning the participants' cohesion and PCE. Specifically, these sequences included passes, dribbles and screens outside the area in front of the basket of the team that had the ball. Each sequence lasted 15 or 16 seconds and the score was systematically concealed. To ensure unbiased sequences, two experts observed ten game sequences. The first expert was an internationally ranked expert and is now the manager of the regional team. The second was in charge of training for the university basketball team. For each sequence, the experts were asked the following question, "In your opinion, to what extent is the game sequence you have just watched neutral?" Each expert was asked which team seemed superior to the other in terms of power balance ("the team in white 3 – 2 – 1 – 0 – 1 – 2 – 3 the team in color"). Both experts indicated the score "0" for four sequences out of the initial ten. For the needs of the experimental support, only three of the four sequences

were needed and thus were randomly selected, placed in the video clip and presented in a PowerPoint-type slideshow. This allowed us to test our experimental variables with the utmost methodological thoroughness.

The obstacles used as claimed SH which popped up in rectangular bubbles were the three most frequently claimed SH in a previous study of the same population of physical education students (Coudeville, Sinnapah, Charles-Charlery, Baillot, & Hue, 2015): “I don’t feel great. I’m feeling sick”; “Uh... me, I feel tired”; “Me, I’m warning you... My back is aching.”

### **Experimental Conditions**

The participants were asked to picture themselves as teammates. They were randomly placed in one of two groups (paired samples). Each group completed a questionnaire on their cohesion and PCE after viewing sequences where partners claimed excuses (e.g., “My back is aching”) and neutrality (e.g., “Nothing to report coach”). The video clip started on the coach saying: “well how are you, guys?” Thus, a group of 61 participants completed the questionnaire after viewing a sequence where teammates first made neutral claims. Then, these participants completed the questionnaire after viewing sequence where teammates claimed SH. The second group of 86 participants performed the test in reverse order. They completed the questionnaire after viewing the sequence with claimed SH. Then, they completed the questionnaire after viewing the sequence with teammates making neutral claims. The participants were tested under almost the same climatic conditions as those found in a basketball game played in a gymnasium. The ambient temperature was an average 29°C ( $SD = \pm 0.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) and humidity was 62.2°C % ( $SD = \pm 3.8\%$ ). The experiment was conducted over 20 sessions lasting 45 minutes each in a silent room with nine to ten participants and the experimenter.

### **Procedure**

Please insert Figure 1 near here

*“Imagine... You are part of the team with white shorts (on the right half of the screen). Two years ago, you were recruited for this team. Since then, you’ve regularly been among the five starting players. This is a play-off that will decide the champion. The two teams are tied: two wins each. So this is a decisive game. You are in the middle of a warm-up session with your team.”*

In addition, the following slide invited the participants to answer two pre-experiment questions to determine how critical the game was to them (i.e., “It is important for me to win the game”; “It is important for me to play a great game”). The slideshow went on with the individual presentation of the players of the opponent team, then a neutral game sequence in the first quarter. The next slide indicated: “The first quarter is over; the second quarter is about to start... the team is gathering on the court... be attentive” and announced the video

clip showing the great university players gathered together and each one making a claim (self-handicapping vs. neutral), which popped up in rectangular bubbles every 4 seconds.

*Coach: Well, how are you, guys?*

*Player 1: I don't feel great. I'm feeling sick.*

*Player 2: Uh... me, I feel tired.*

*Player 3: I'm warning you... My back is aching.*

*Coach: Well, how are you, guys?*

*Player 1: Nothing to report, coach.*

*Player 2: Nothing to report either.*

*Player 3: Nothing to report, coach.*

Following this, the participants were asked to complete the questionnaire related to their cohesion and PCE. When the last participant had finished, the experimenter proceeded to the video clip again, showing a second neutral game sequence corresponding to the second quarter. The next slide read: "The second quarter is over; the third quarter is about to start... The team is gathering... be careful" and then, the slide announced the video footage showing the good university players gathering and making the claims (self-handicapping vs. neutral), inserted as previously. In order to increase their impact, we purposefully chose sequences of gathering where three players among the starting five players used such claims. Following this, the next slide requested the participants to again complete the questionnaire about their cohesion and PCE. When the last participants had finished, the experimenter started the video clip again, showing the third neutral sequence corresponding to the third quarter. The next slide asked the participants two post-experiment questions. The first was meant to check whether they had managed to get into the virtual situation. The second asked how sincerely they had completed the questionnaire. We devoted the very last video sequence to indicate the end of the experiment and thank the participants for collaborating. A week after the last session, the experimenter came back to the participants to talk about the issues related to self-handicapping and how the cohesion and PCE of teammates is likely to be influenced. The protocol of the present study was ethically approved by the scientific committee of the university where this study was carried out.

## 1   **Measures**

2           **Cohesion.** Perceived cohesion was measured with a version of the Group Atmosphere  
3   Questionnaire (QAG-a) by Buton et al. (2007). This questionnaire is the French version of the  
4   “Group Environment Questionnaire” from Carron and collaborators (1985). This shorter  
5   analog form of the QAG was composed of eight items dealing with the concept of cohesion.  
6   The internal consistency was good for both social cohesion ( $\alpha = .74$ ) and task cohesion ( $\alpha =$   
7    $.73$ ). Four items focus on social cohesion and four others focus on task cohesion. For  
8   example, questions like “Members of my team do not stick together outside practices and  
9   games” and “Our team is united in trying to reach its performance goals” assess social and  
10   task cohesion, respectively. The participants were asked to answer each of these questions on  
11   a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (“Do not agree at all”) to 7 (“Totally agree”). The  
12   participants’ responses on each scale were averaged to yield a scale score for task cohesion  
13   and social cohesion.

14           **Perceived collective efficacy.** PCE resides in the minds of members as beliefs in their  
15   group’s capability (Bandura, 2006). The participants answered to the sentence following:  
16   “You would rate the capacity of your team as a whole to display an effective game as...”.  
17   They were requested to rate their level of confidence on a scale from 0% (“Very low”) to  
18   100% (“Very high”) with demarcations every 10% (see Bandura, 2006).

## 19   **Analysis**

20           We first used successive 2 X 2 mixed designed ANOVAs (Cohesion X Sex) to  
21   examine the effect of sex on the difference of each of the three dependant variables (DVs)  
22   (i.e., task cohesion, social cohesion and PCE) from the control condition to the SH condition,  
23   as the team on the video footage was male. We then explored the effect of SH claims on the  
24   three DVs taken as a whole with a one-way MANOVA, self-handicapping being considered  
25   as a repetition factor. Sphericity was explored by a Mauchly test. Then, we conducted one-

way ANOVAs with repeated measures to explore the univariate effects of SH claiming on each of the DVs. The effect sizes were calculated as partial eta squared. We then determined the percentages of participants whose DV values were reduced, unchanged or increased by SH. This categorization of participants for social and task cohesion was retained as a group factor for the subsequent analyses: two successive two-way ANOVAs with SH as the factor of repetition and PCE as the DV. The first included social cohesion and the second included task cohesion as the group factor.

Box's M Test with an alpha risk of .005 was conducted to explore the equality of covariance between the groups for the ANOVAs. The alpha risk retained for all the other analyses were .05. Data were checked for outlying values defined as values differing by more than two standard deviations from the mean. All the analyses were performed on IBM SPSS Statistics software.

### Results

Two-by-two mixed ANOVAs (Cohesion  $\times$  Sex) with sex as the IV and the difference of each of the three DV from the control condition to the SH condition did not reveal any effect of sex on the impacts of SH claiming on task cohesion, social cohesion and PCE [ $F(1, 145) = 0.01, p = .98, F(1, 145) = 0.00, p = .96, F(1, 145) = 0.00, p = .96$  respectively]. As these ANOVAs were not significant, the data from both sexes were collapsed for all subsequent analyses.

The one-way MANOVA revealed a significant effect of SH claiming on the cohesion and PCE taken as a whole  $F(3,144) = 69.02, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .59$ . The univariate one-way ANOVAs with SH claiming as the repetition factor revealed a significant effect of SH on each of the DVs ( $p < .001$ ). The associated effect sizes are presented in Table 1.

---

Please insert Table 1 near here

---

The proportions of participants whose task cohesion, social cohesion, and PCE were reduced, unchanged or increased are presented in Table 2. The chi-squared analyses revealed that the impact of SH on collective efficacy was moderated by its impact on task cohesion (Collective Efficacy  $\times$  Task Cohesion:  $X^2(4, n = 147) = 11.50, p < .05, V = .31$ ; Collective Efficacy  $\times$  Social Cohesion:  $X^2(4, n = 147) = 5.02, p = .28$ ).

---

Please insert Table 2 near here

---

The first two-way ANOVA, with SH and task cohesion impact group as IVs, revealed a simple effect of claimed SH [ $F(1,144) = 17.81, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.11$ ] but failed to evidence any simple effect of task cohesion [ $F(2, 144) = 1.77, p = .17, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ] on PCE. The second one, with SH and social cohesion impact group confirmed the simple effect of claimed SH [ $F(1,144) = 113.97, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.44$ ] on PCE and also failed to evidence any simple effect of social cohesion [ $F(2, 144) = 2.13, p = .122, \eta_p^2 = 0.03$ ].

The interaction effect of SH  $\times$  Social Cohesion was not significant [ $F(2, 144) = 0.96, p = .38, \eta_p^2 = 0.01$ ], contrary to the interaction effect of SH  $\times$  Task Cohesion [ $F(2, 144) = 5.69, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = 0.07$ ]. The means of PCE by SH condition and task cohesion impact group are presented in Figure 2.

---

Please insert Figures 2 near here

---

## Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to determine whether players' claimed SH had an impact on their teammates' cohesion and PCE during a basketball game situation presented through a video clip. On the whole, the hypotheses were validated by the results.

#### **Claimed Self-handicapping: A Factor of Decreased Group Cohesion**

The hypothesis that SH claims decrease both the social and task cohesion of teammates was validated. The results for social cohesion were in line with those of previous studies (Levesque et al., 2001; Luginbuhl & Palmer, 1991; Schlenker et al., 2001). The observers' perception of SH users as misleading, self-centered and inefficient (Schlenker et al., 2001), less responsible and less sociable (Levesques et al., 2001) may have contributed to this impact of SH claims on team social cohesion. Observers also tend to perceive SH users as egocentric by (Schlenker et al., 2001) and are reluctant to collaborate with them (Luginhbul & Palmer, 1991). This perception may also have contributed to the impact of SH claims on task cohesion that our results document. If the available literature evidences cohesion to be a factor of SH use (Carron et al., 1994; Carron et al., 2004), the present study showed that this cohesion and PCE were also negatively influenced by SH use. The relationship between self-handicapping and cohesion therefore seems to be bilateral. This is an important and novel finding that should interest researchers and practitioners.

#### **Claimed Self-handicapping: A Factor of Decreased PCE**

The hypothesis that claimed SH decreases the perception of collective efficacy was validated. These results are consistent with the reported decrease in observers' self-efficacy when SH are claimed by teammates who are consequently perceived as inefficient and useless (Schlenker et al., 2001) and with the perception of behavioral handicap users as less competent and less able to succeed (Levesque et al., 2001). Although some studies have shown the consequences of self-efficacy on claimed self-handicapping (Coudevylle et al.,



2011; Martin & Brawley, 2002; Ryska et al., 1998), the present study is the first to point out that these claims negatively impact the PCE.

Being verbal, claimed SH offer users an advantage because the excuses protect in the case of poor performance and/or enhance value in the case of achievement. They thereby avoid the negative consequences of behavioral SH (e.g., lacking preparatory effort). The present study shows that claimed self-handicapping nevertheless could have a negative impact on the other players' perceived team cohesion and PCE, and hence on the whole team. Moreover, as mentioned by Hip-Fabeck (2005), the results might have been even clearer with controllable obstacles like self-handicapping behaviors (e.g., refusing the warm-up before, attending a drinking party before the game).

Although we present evidence that SH decreases the two types of cohesion, it should be noted that the effect sizes revealed that the impact of SH on social cohesion was weak ( $\eta_p^2 = .10$ ), whereas its impact on task cohesion was strong ( $\eta_p^2 = .54$ ). SH thus affects task cohesion more than social cohesion. An illustration of this result is the following: claimed SH decreased task cohesion in 87.8% of our sample participants, whereas it decreased social cohesion in only 51.7% of them. Also, the chi-squared analyses revealed that the impact of SH on collective efficacy was moderated by its impact on task cohesion but not on social cohesion. These results taken together suggest that, although SH claiming by teammates decreases both task and social cohesion and collective efficacy in observers, the impact on collective efficacy is moderated by the SH effect on task cohesion. Figure 2 shows how having task cohesion reduced by SH increases the impact of SH on collective efficacy (collective efficacy confirmed by the significant SH  $\times$  Task cohesion interaction effect and revealed by the final two-way ANOVAs). The impact of claimed self-handicapping on collective efficacy reduced when its impact on perceived cohesion was low. These results are consistent with previous papers from Spink (1990) and Kozub and McDonnell (2000) who

1 reported that high task cohesion leads to high collective efficacy and that the positive  
2 relationship between cohesion and collective efficacy is stronger through task cohesion than  
3 through social cohesion.

4 Previous works (e.g., Elliot, Cury, Fryer, & Huguet, 2006; Coudeville, Martin Ginis,  
5 & Famose, 2008) evidenced the negative effect of behavioral SH strategies on performance  
6 but the present work brings support to the hypothesis that claimed self-handicapping could  
7 also be deleterious to performance. The results indeed indicate that SH claims reduced  
8 teammates' perceptions of social cohesion, task cohesion and PCE. This in turns points to the  
9 plausibility of the hypothesis that SH claiming has an effect on performance since a positive  
10 relationship of task cohesion with performance (Bergeles & Hatziharistos, 2003; Carron,  
11 Bray, & Eys, 2002; Zaccaro & Lowe, 1986) through collective efficacies (Zaccaro & McCoy,  
12 1988) has been documented.

13 Despite these contributions, some limitations should be noted. Having participants  
14 imagine a hypothetical situation with individuals they have never met is quite different from a  
15 real-world setting. It is therefore difficult to interpret our results or generalize them further.  
16 Future studies should verify the link of task cohesion between claimed self-handicapping and  
17 PCE and examine whether claimed self-handicapping impacts performance when task  
18 cohesion is controlled.

### 19 Conclusion

20 This study used a video montage of a game situation to determine whether the claimed  
21 SH of basketball players had an impact on the other players' cohesion and PCE. The results  
22 confirmed the hypotheses and showed that claimed self-handicapping lowered teammates'  
23 perceptions of social, task cohesion and PCE. Most studies on claimed self-handicapping  
24 have examined the effects of these excuses on their users (i.e., their self-impressions) but

1 very few have focused on the impact on observers. The present study confirms the two main  
2 hypotheses concerning the negative impact of these claims on partners' cohesion and PCE.

3       From an applied perspective, our results should be particularly useful to sports  
4 psychologists and coaches. Claimed self-handicapping can significantly harm the process of  
5 building team cohesion (athletic, artistic or professional) and the effort to sustain cohesion.  
6 The claims reduce the other players' feelings of PCE, which are essential for team  
7 performance. To deal with athletes who feel an absolute need to claim handicaps in order to  
8 protect or value themselves before or during competition, we encourage coaches and sports  
9 psychologists to carefully lead them toward a focus on collective and strategic concerns  
10 aimed at reaching a common goal. The very fact that some players have (self-) handicaps  
11 should prompt them to step up efforts to compensate for their supposed obstacles and  
12 contribute to the PCE in spite of their difficulties. These players should receive psychological  
13 support to help them recover enough self-confidence so that they do not feel the need to  
14 resort to such strategies.

### **Acknowledgments**

21 We are grateful to both expert to have ensured unbiased sequences and to the participants for  
22 their kind participation in the present study.

## References

- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: Freeman.
- Bandura, A. (2006). *Guide for constructing self-efficacy scales*. In F. Pajares & T. Urdan (Eds.), *Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents* (pp. 307–337). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Bergeles, N., & Hatziharistos, D. (2003). Interpersonal attraction as a measure of estimation of cohesiveness in elite volleyball teams. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 96, 81–91. doi:10.2466/pms.2003.96.1.81
- Berglas, S., & Jones, E. E. (1978). Drug choice as a self-handicapping strategy in response to non contingent success. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 36, 405–417. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.36.4.405
- Buton, F., Fontayne, P., Heuze, J.-F., Bosselut, G., & Raimbault, N. (2007). The QAG-a an analog version of the questionnaire sur l’ambiance du groupe for measuring the dynamic nature of group cohesion. *Small Group Research*, 38, 235–264. doi:10.1177/1046496407300476
- Carron, A. V., Brawley, L. R., & Widmeyer, W. N. (1998). The measurement of cohesiveness in sport groups. In J. L. Duda (Eds.), *Advances in sport and exercise psychology measurement* (pp. 213–226). Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.
- Carron, A. V., Bray, S. R., & Eys, M. A. (2002). Team cohesion and team success in sport. *Journal of Sport Sciences*, 20, 119–126. doi:10.1080/026404102317200828
- Carron, A. V., Burke, S. M., & Prapavessis, H. (2004). Self-presentation and group influence. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 16, 41–58. doi:10.1080/10413200490260044

- 1 Carron, A. V., Prapavessis, H., & Grove, J. R. (1994). Group effects and self-handicapping.  
2 *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 16, 246–257. doi:10.1123/jsep.16.3.246
- 3 Carron, A. V., Widmeyer, W. N., & Brawley, L. R. (1985). The development of an  
4 instrument to assess cohesion in sport teams: The Group Environment Questionnaire.  
5 *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 7, 244–266. doi:10.1123/jsp.7.3.244
- 6 Coudevylle, G. R., Gernigon, C., Martin Ginis, K. A., & Famose, J.-P. (2015). Les Stratégies  
7 d’auto-handicap : Fondements théoriques, déterminants et caractéristiques [Self-  
8 handicapping strategies: Theoretical foundations, determinants, and characteristics],  
9 *Psychologie française*, 60, 263–283. doi:10.1016/j.psfr.2014.04.002
- 10 Coudevylle, G. R., Sinnapah, S., Charles-Charlery, C., Baillot, M. & Hue, O. (2015). Impact  
11 of motivational climates on claimed self-handicapping strategies: Illustration in  
12 tropical environment. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 27, 1–14.  
13 doi:10.1080/10413200.2015.1014975
- 14 Coudevylle, G. R., Gernigon, C., & Martin Ginis, K. A. (2011). Self-esteem, self-confidence,  
15 anxiety and claimed self-handicapping: A mediational analysis. *Psychology of Sport*  
16 *and Exercise*, 12, 670–675. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2011.05.008
- 17 Coudevylle, G. R., Martin Ginis, K. A., & Famose, J.-P. (2008). Determinants of self-  
18 handicapping strategies in sport and their effects on athletic performance. *Social*  
19 *Behavior and Personality*, 36, 391–398. doi:10.2224/sbp.2008.36.3.391
- 20 Elliot, A. J., Cury, F., Fryer, J. W., & Huguet, P. (2006). Achievement goals, self-  
21 handicapping, and performance attainment: A mediational analysis. *Journal of Sport*  
22 *& Exercise Psychology*, 28, 344–361. doi:10.1123/jsep.28.3.344

- 1 Hausenblas, H. A., & Carron, A. V. (1996). Group cohesion and self-handicapping in female  
2 and male athletes. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 18, 132–143.  
3 doi:10.1123/jsep.18.2.132
- 4 Hip-Fabeck, I. (2005). The impact of self-handicapping strategies use on the impression  
5 formation. *Review of Psychology*, 12, 125–132.
- 6 Kolditz, T. A., & Arkin, R. M. (1982). An impression management interpretation of the self-  
7 handicapping strategy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 43, 492–502.  
8 doi:10.1037/0022-3514.43.3.492
- 9 Kosub, S. A., & McDonnell, J. F. (2000). Exploring the relationship between cohesion and  
10 collective efficacy in rugby teams. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 23, 120–129.
- 11 Leary, M. R., & Shepperd, J. A. (1986). Behavioral self-handicapping vs. self-reported  
12 handicaps: A conceptual note. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51,  
13 1265–1268. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.51.6.1265
- 14 Levesque, M. J., Lowe, C. A., & Mendenhall, C. (2001). Self-handicapping as a method of  
15 self-presentation: An analysis of costs and benefits. *Current Research in Social*  
16 *Psychology*, 6, 221–237.
- 17 Luginbuhl, J., & Palmer, R. (1991). Impression management aspects of self-handicapping:  
18 Positive and negative effects. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 655–  
19 662. doi:10.1177/0146167291176008
- 20 Martin, K. A., & Brawley, L. R. (2002). Self-handicapping in physical achievement settings:  
21 The contributions of self-esteem and self-efficacy. *Self and Identity*, 1, 337–351.  
22 doi:10.1080/15298860290106814
- 23 Paskevich, D. M., Brawley, L. R., Dorsch, K. D., & Widmeyer, W. N. (1999). Relationship  
24 between collective efficacy and team cohesion: Conceptual and measurement issues.  
25 *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3, 210–222. doi:10.1037/1089-

1 2699.3.3.210

2 Prapavessis, H., Grove, J. R., & Eklund, R. C. (2004). Self-presentational issues in

3 competition and sport. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 16, 19–40.

4 doi:10.1080/10413200490260035

5 Ryska, T. A., Yin, Z. N., & Cooley, D. (1998). Effects of trait and situational self-

6 handicapping on competitive anxiety among athletes. *Current Psychology*, 17, 48–56.

7 doi:10.1007/s12144-998-1020-9

8 Schlenker, B. R., Pontari, B. A., Christopher, A. N. (2001). Excuses and character: Personal

9 and social implications of excuses. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 1, 15–

10 32. doi:10.1207/S15327957PSPR0501\_2

11 Snyder, C. R., & Smith, T. W. (1982). Symptoms as self-handicapping strategies: The virtues

12 of old wine in a new bottle. In G. Weary (Eds.), *Integrations of Clinical and Social*

13 *Psychology* (pp. 104–127). New York: Oxford University Press.

14 Spink, K. S. (1990). Cohesion and collective efficacy of volleyball teams. *Journal of Sport &*

15 *Exercise Psychology*, 12, 301–311. doi:10.1123/jsep.12.3.301

16 Tice, D. M. (1991). Esteem protection or enhancement? Self-handicapping motives and

17 attributions differ by trait self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*,

18 60, 711–725. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.60.5.711

19 Weinberg, R., Burton, D., Yukelson, D., & Weigand, D. (2000). Perceived goal setting

20 practices of Olympic athletes: An exploratory investigation. *The Sport Psychologist*,

21 14, 279–295.

22 Zaccaro, S. J., & Lowe, C. (1988). Cohesiveness and performance in an additive task:

23 Evidence for multidimensionality. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 128, 547–58.

24 doi:10.1080/00224545.1988.9713774

- 1 Zaccaro, S. J., & McCoy, M. C. (1988). The effects of task and interpersonal cohesiveness on
- 2 performance of a disjunctive group task. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 18, 837–851.
- 3 doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.1988.tb01178.x



Table 1

*Means, standard deviations and effect size of psychological states after viewing claimed self-handicapping or neutral claims (n = 147)*

	<u>NC</u>		<u>CSH</u>		<u>Effect Size</u>
Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Task**	5.43	0.99	4.15	1.24	.54
Social*	4.84	0.98	4.51	1.13	.10
Efficacy**	0.70	0.19	0.46	0.22	.50

*Notes.* NC = neutral claims; CSH = claimed self-handicapping;

\* significant effect  $p < .01$

\*\* significant effect  $p < .001$

Table 2

*Proportions of the study participants (n = 147) whose task cohesion, social cohesion, collective achievement and collective efficacy were increased, unchanged or decreased in the SH condition (in %)*

Measure	Increased	Unchanged	Decreased
Task	6.8 (95%CI 2.7-10.9) (n = 10)	5.4 (95%CI 2.7-10.8) (n = 8)	87.8 (95%CI 82.5-93.1)(n = 129)
Social	34.7 (95%CI 27.0-42.4) (n = 51)	13.6 (95%CI 8.1- 19.1) (n = 20)	51.7 (95%CI 43.6-59.8) (n = 76)
Efficacy	6.8 (95%CI 2.7-10.9) (n = 10)	15.6 (95%CI 9.7-21.5) (n = 23)	77.6 (95%CI 69.8-83.4) (n = 114)