Introduction

- Psychological climate (PC) is an individual’s perception of the safety and meaningfulness of the psychological environment (Brown & Leigh, 1996; see Figure 1)
  - Related to effort in sport (Spink et al., 2013) and exercise settings (Hamamoto et al., 2015)
  - In the sport and exercise setting, little to no research has examined the antecedents of PC
    - Environmental, leadership, team and personal factors have been suggested to be antecedents of a different group construct - cohesion (Caron, 1982)
    - Differences in cohesion by class type have been identified (aerobic versus martial arts; Akpinar, Kirazci, & Agç, 2011)
  - Differences in cohesion have been identified by gender in some instances (Eys et al., 2015) but not in others (Akpinar et al., 2011)
  - In the organizational setting, gender has been identified as important to consider when examining climate (Woolley, Caza & Levy, 2011)
    - One might wonder if PC in exercise classes might differ by gender and by class types

Methods

Participants
- University students enrolled in a sixteen-week group-based activity course (n=396; 269 females and 127 males)
  - Age: 18-46 (M=21.45, SD=3.41)
  - Ethnicity: Hispanic (n=153, 38.6%), Asian/Pacific Islander (n=112, 28.3%), Caucasian (n=78, 19.9%), Multi-racial (n=29, 7.3%)

Procedures
- Midway through the semester, participants completed a questionnaire during class time
- Classes were categorized
  - Aerobic classes (n=7): Aerobics and Cardio Kickboxing
  - Resistance Training (n=7): Physical Conditioning and Resistance Training

Measure
- PC was measured by a 21-item questionnaire (Spink et al., 2013)
  - 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree)

Analysis
- (2Gender) x (2Class Type) Factorial MANOVA
- DVs: 5 PC Subscales

Results

- There was a significant difference in PC for class type ($\lambda=0.953$, $p=.002$, $\eta^2=.047$)
- Neither the interaction ($\lambda=0.993$, $p=.726$, $\eta^2=.007$) nor the gender main effect was significant ($\lambda=0.975$, $p=.075$, $\eta^2=.025$)

Discussion

- This study examined the differences of gender and class type on psychological climate in group-based exercise classes
  - PC varied by class type → specifically psychological meaningfulness differed
  - Psychological meaningfulness (both challenge and contribution) was higher in aerobic classes than resistance training classes
    - Both classes led by leader but in resistance training classes work more individually
    - More interaction in aerobic classes may have created opportunities for individual involvement and/or their contributions recognized by the leader and or others (Kahn, 1990)
  - It might not be surprising that the effects for gender did not emerge given the mixed findings in the literature (Akpinar et al., 2011; Eys et al., 2015)
    - Gender diversity or the composition of the classes might be more informative than just the recipient’s gender (Kruisselbrink et al., 2004)

Limitations

- Resistance training classes may not be representative of resistance training outside of the class setting (i.e., a typical gym)
- Hierarchical nature of the data (participants nested within classes) not considered

Future Directions

- Examine other possible antecedents including leadership (e.g., leadership style) and class factors (e.g., gender diversity)
- Explore how to change or manipulate psychological climate in an exercise environment