

Effect of motivational climate on sportpersonship among competitive youth male and female football players

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of perceived motivational climate and gender on sportpersonship behavior of competitive youth football players. Participants were 512 boy and 202 girl Norwegian youth football players (12–14 years old) competing in an international football tournament. A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ (gender, mastery climate high and low, performance climate high and low) MANOVA produced no multivariate or interaction effects, but main effects for gender, performance climate, and mastery climate did emerge. *Post hoc* analyses of the simple main effects found that boys and girls were different in sportpersonship, but only in that boys were more sportpersonlike than girls on one of the four sportpersonship dimensions. Players perceiving a high mastery climate endorsed sportpersonship more than those players perceiv-

ing a low mastery climate, and players perceiving a high performance climate were less likely to endorse sportpersonship than players perceiving a low performance climate. Canonical correlation analysis revealed that a strong mastery climate was positively associated with commitment, respect for social conventions, and respect for rules and officials. A strong performance climate was negatively associated with respect and concern for social conventions and respect for rules and officials, while a positive association emerged for respect and concern for the opponent. The results of our study suggest that both boys and girls may well perceive the coach emphasizing similar criteria of success and failure and thereby a similar culture of sportpersonship, while in general a strong mastery climate leads to a higher sportpersonship orientation.

The “sport builds character” notion has been a steadfast belief among sport advocates. Key assumptions of this notion are that competitive sport nurtures societal values such as hard work and cooperation, providing a context where virtues such as teamwork, team loyalty, and persevering over adversity flourish (e.g., Bredemeier, 1999). Several studies have concluded that a competitive youth sport context may be beneficial to psychosocial and moral development by allowing children to create and refine peer status, develop self-worth, exhibit moral behavior, and influence peer acceptance (Evans & Roberts, 1987; Fox, 1988; Roberts & Treasure, 1995). However, evidence exists which indicates that competitive sport may have a negative influence on character development (Coakley, 1990). Competition may produce moral problems (Orlick, 1978), reduce pro-social behavior (Kleiber & Roberts, 1981), and may likely support antisocial behavior (Kohn, 1986). And, needless to say, instances of cheating in sport are reported in the media on a constant basis. Clearly, much is yet to be learned about the effects of competition on character development within the sport experience.

Of all the character virtues that sport participation is believed to foster, sportpersonship has perhaps been the most cited (Shields & Bredemeier, 1995). Shields and Bredemeier have described sportpersonship as the coordination of one’s play impulse with one’s competitive impulse with respect to moral goals. Nevertheless, the lack of a clear and concise definition has likely been attributed to an over-reliance on several broad-based theoretical approaches in order to better understand the function of sportpersonship. Recently, Vallerand et al. (1996, 1997) developed an operational definition of sportpersonship, which incorporates five distinct components: (1) full commitment toward sport participation, (2) respect for social conventions, (3) respect and concern for the rules and officials, (4) respect and concern for one’s opponent, and lastly (5) negative approach toward sportpersonship. This concept is based on the premise that a meaningful definition of sportpersonship should encompass several dimensions, which together represent the nature of sportpersonship as perceived by athletes themselves (Vallerand et al., 1996). However, sport social scientists have underscored that one’s motivation in competitive sport should be considered when

investigating the complex dynamics of sportsperson-like, moral functioning behavior in such an arena (see Shields et al., 2002).

Achievement goals and moral behavior

A growing emphasis in sport psychology research has been to utilize an achievement goal approach in investigating sportspersonship and moral functioning in sport (e.g., Duda, 1989, 1992; Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001; Stephens, 2001; Treasure et al., 2001). Within achievement contexts (e.g., competitive sport), Nicholls (1984, 1989) argued that two major states of achievement involvement are assumed to operate such that one is either in a state of task involvement or in a state of ego involvement. Whether one adopts a state of ego involvement or task involvement is believed to be due to a combination of dispositional and situational factors in relation to one's beliefs about the causes of success and failure. Specifically, an individual who is task involved is thought to utilize self-referenced criteria of success and failure, thereby feeling a sense of accomplishment in the mastering or learning of a task. Conversely, an individual who is ego involved is thought to utilize normative references of success and failure, thus feeling successful when displaying higher ability than others, and receiving awards or public recognition for displayed ability.

There are two means by which one becomes ego or task involved. One is through being disposed to be ego or task oriented, an individual difference variable, and the other is responding to perceived environmental cues. In terms of disposition, it is argued that individuals are predisposed to be task and/or ego oriented when in an achievement context (Nicholls, 1984, 1989). One who is task oriented tends to elicit a self-referenced perspective of success, where learning and mastering of a task are important outcomes. On the other hand, one who is ego oriented has a tendency to perceive success in normative ways, thus viewing winning and defeating others as the important criteria of success.

In competitive sport, the majority of empirical evidence to date has identified a link between athletes' ego orientation and low moral functioning, cheating behavior. In the first study to examine the relationship of achievement goals to cheating in sport, Duda et al. (1991) found that male and female high-school basketball players high in ego orientation were likely to subscribe to unsportspersonlike, aggressive behavior and also perceived such behavior as legitimate. Furthermore, a high ego/low task orientation was positively associated with cheating and unsportspersonlike behavior (Duda et al., 1991). Dunn & Dunn (1999) also found that players high

in ego orientation were more likely to aggress and subscribe to unsportspersonlike behavior than players low in ego orientation in their investigation of youth male ice hockey players. Similar findings were forwarded by Lemyre et al. (2002), in that Norwegian youth male football players with a high ego/low task orientation were low in sportspersonship. Further, Kavussanu & Roberts (2001) reported that among collegiate basketball players, ego orientation was associated with both judging aggressive, cheating behavior as appropriate as well as intending to use such behavior if winning was at stake.

Inasmuch as individual disposition has been utilized to investigate sportspersonship and moral functioning in competitive sport (e.g., Duda et al., 1991; Nicholls, 1992; Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001; Treasure et al., 2001), so has individual interpretation of situational cues (e.g., Guivernau & Duda, 1998; Kavussanu et al., 2002). As the second means by which one becomes task or ego involved (Nicholls, 1989), the motivational climate (Ames, 1992a) refers to the situational cues influencing individual perceptions of what constitutes success and failure. Ames and colleagues (Ames, 1992a; Ames & Archer, 1988) have argued that two climates are extant and have labeled these task- and ego-involving situational percepts as mastery and performance motivational climates, respectively. A perceived mastery motivational climate refers to a setting in which learning and skill development are salient and valued, and the prospect of outperforming others is not of direct interest to the individual. However, when normative references of success and failure are reinforced, then a perceived performance motivational climate is salient.

Within achievement contexts, adult authority figures arguably have considerable influence over what constitutes success and failure (Ames & Archer, 1988; Ames, 1992b; Treasure, 2001). For example, in sport the coach presents what his or her personal criteria of success and failure are to the athletes by emphasizing these through the motivational climate. Specifically, athletes who see their coach equating success to working hard, team-work and cooperation, and skill mastery and progress perceive a mastery motivational climate. In contrast, athletes who play for a coach who stresses winning and outperforming the opponent and their own teammates as important for success perceive a performance motivational climate. From a theoretical standpoint, Nicholls (1989) forwarded that in reference to ego-involved individuals, such a preoccupation with winning may likely be associated with a lack of concern regarding justice and fairness.

If the coach stresses such a win or lose environment, it is argued that cheating and unsportspersonlike behavior may likely occur (e.g., Bredemeier,

1999; Roberts, 2001). For example, in their examination of aggression tendencies among youth girl football players, Stephens & Bredemeier (1996) concluded that those girls who perceived their coach as emphasizing ego involvement and normative criteria of success reported that they were likely to aggress in order to avoid losing. In a similar study, Stephens (2001) identified that among beginning and advanced skill-level youth girl basketball players, players at both skill levels endorsed aggressive behavior if they perceived the coach advocating such behavior. It appears that coaches, by the values they perceivably portray, may likely influence their players' acceptance and display of low moral behavior.

A relatively new research direction is the investigation of the relationship between perceived motivational climate and moral functioning, sportspersonship, and aggression (e.g., Miller et al., 2001; Ommundsen et al., in press; Treasure & Roberts, in review). In one recent study, Treasure & Roberts (in review) found that youth American male elite soccer players positively associated sportspersonship to a mastery-oriented climate, while negatively to a performance-oriented climate. Among male youth Norwegian football players, Ommundsen et al. (in press) revealed an interaction through quadrant analysis where players perceiving a predominately mastery oriented climate endorsed sportspersonlike behavior and reported more mature levels of moral functioning, while players perceiving a predominately performance motivational climate reported low sportspersonship and less mature moral functioning. Based on these findings, an apparent positive relationship between a perceived mastery oriented climate and sportspersonship as well as mature moral functioning has been identified, while a negative relationship has been found between perceptions of a performance oriented climate and sportspersonship. Yet a recent study, however, reported different findings: Kavussanu et al. (2002) did not find a significant path between a perceived performance climate and low moral functioning among collegiate-level basketball players. Therefore, one purpose of the present study was to further examine the relationship between perceived mastery and performance climate perceptions and sportspersonship.

The second purpose was to investigate for possible gender differences in relation to perceived motivational climate and sportspersonship. In recent literature (e.g., Duda et al., 1991; Shields et al., 1995; Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001), gender differences have emerged with the general findings being that males are more likely to aggress, are less sportspersonlike, and are lower in moral functioning than females. For example, Duda et al. (1991)

identified significant gender differences over goal orientation, sportspersonship, and legitimizing the use of aggression in order to win. Male basketball players reported lower task orientation, higher ego orientation, and were less sportspersonlike and condoned aggressive behavior more than the female players. Kavussanu & Roberts (2001) also found strong gender differences in their study of collegiate basketball players as the male athletes reported lower task orientation, higher ego orientation, less mature levels of moral functioning, greater endorsement of unsportspersonlike behavior, and a stronger likelihood of legitimizing injurious acts in basketball than the female athletes. In an investigation of Norwegian youth football players, Lemyre et al. (2001) found significant gender differences in goal orientation and sportspersonship utilizing quadrant analysis. Specifically, they found that girls were higher in task orientation, lower in ego orientation, and globally higher in sportspersonship than the boys, and a high task/low ego goal orientation profile for the girls was positively associated with sportspersonship whereas a low task/high ego goal orientation was negatively associated with sportspersonship. Moreover, differences among male and female players over moral atmosphere perceptions and aggression in youth soccer have been identified, with boys perceiving their teammates as more likely to cheat in order to win than girls (Guivernau & Duda, 2002).

Bredemeier and colleagues (e.g., Bredemeier, 1985, 1994; Bredemeier & Shields, 1986; Bredemeier et al., 1987) have found several instances of gender differences across such moral issues as moral reasoning and aggression in sport. Specifically, Bredemeier & Shields (1986) found strong differences in moral reasoning maturity among male and female high-school and collegiate athletes, with the females more mature in moral reasoning than the males across the two athletic participation levels. In an investigation of moral reasoning and action tendencies of boys and girls, Bredemeier (1994) found boys to be more aggressive than girls, although no gender differences emerged with respect to moral reasoning maturity. Moreover, Shields et al. (1995) reported that among high-school and collegiate male baseball players and female softball players, males were significantly more likely to cheat and aggress than the females. Interestingly, however, Tucker & Parks (2001) found no differences among collegiate male and female athletes regarding legitimacy issues of aggressive behavior in contact sports (i.e., soccer), suggesting that gender differences over moral behavior in sport may not be as prevalent as previous research has indicated.

Achievement goal theorists (Ames, 1992b; Nicholls, 1989) describe environmental cues as

important factors influencing individual behavior where achievement is valued. However, few studies have investigated the role of the motivational climate on sportspersonship using the Vallerand et al. (1996) definition. Therefore, an aim of the present study was to extend previous research (Miller et al., 2000; Ommundsen et al., in press) by investigating the influence of the perceived motivational climate and gender on sportspersonship in competitive youth football. The following hypotheses were forwarded: (a) players perceiving a mastery motivational climate would report higher sportspersonship (i.e., higher respect for commitment to sport, higher respect for the social conventions of sport, higher respect for the opponents, and higher respect for the rules and officials) than players perceiving a performance motivational climate, and (b) gender differences would emerge, in that boys would perceive a higher performance motivational climate, a lower mastery motivational climate, and would be lower in sportspersonship than the girls.

Materials and methods

Participants

Boy ($n = 512$) and girl ($n = 202$) Norwegian youth football players whose teams were enrolled in the Norway Cup International Football Tournament participated in this study. All participants were between the ages of 12 and 14 years. Parental consent for participation in the present study was obtained during tournament registration.

Procedures

Participants responded to questionnaires on site at the Norway Cup Competition in a classroom environment at the school where they resided during the competition. Teams were not given the questionnaires until they had played at least two games in the competition. The questionnaire was designed to investigate perceptions of the motivational climate of their team and their responses to sportspersonship issues within competitive football.

Measures

Perceived motivational climate

The Norwegian version (Roberts & Ommundsen, 1996) of the Perceived Motivational Climate in Sport Questionnaire (PMCSQ; Seifriz et al., 1992) was used to assess participants' perceptions of the motivational climate. The version of the PMCSQ utilized for the present study was a 20-item inventory that consisted of two subscales designed to measure mastery (nine items) and performance (11 items)-oriented motivational climates. The mastery-oriented subscale consists of items that placed emphasis on cooperation and effort (e.g., "Every player has an important assignment", "Trying hard is rewarded"). The performance-oriented subscale consisted of items emphasizing egocentricity and unequal treatment due to skill level (e.g., "Everyone wants to be the top scorer", "only the best players receive compliments and praise"). The stem

for each item is: "On my football team . . .". All responses were indicated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Previous studies using the PMCSQ have demonstrated satisfactory validity and internal consistency (e.g., Seifriz et al., 1992; Walling et al., 1993; Kavussanu & Roberts, 1996). The translated version of the scale has also demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability (Ommundsen et al., in press; Roberts & Ommundsen, 1996). A maximum likelihood factor analysis with a varimax rotation was utilized for the present study. The items loaded on the two proposed factors with eigenvalues greater than one and accounted for 53% of the variance. No items were excluded. Cronbach's α (1951) coefficients were 0.70 and 0.82 for mastery and performance climates, respectively.

Sportspersonship

An abbreviated Norwegian version (Lemyre et al., 2002) of the Multidimensional Sportspersonship Orientation Scale (MSOS; Vallerand et al., 1997) was used in the present study to assess sportspersonship orientation. The original MSOS is a 25-item inventory consisting of five subscales designed to conceptualize sportspersonship: respect for social conventions of sport (e.g., "I shake the opponent's hand after a game regardless if we have lost or won"); respect for rules and officials (e.g., "I respect the rules"); respect and concern for the opponent (e.g., "When an opponent gets hurt, I ask the official to stop the game so that he/she can be helped"); respect for one's commitment toward participation in sport (e.g., "It is very important for me to be at every practice"); and negative approach toward the practice of sport (e.g., "After competition, I make excuses for a poor performance"). Because of poor reliability and low internal consistency in previous studies using the MSOS (e.g., Lemyre et al., 2002; Ommundsen et al., in press), the negative approach toward the practice of sport subscale was not used in the present study. Three of the four subscales consisted of five items (i.e., commitment, social convention, and rules), while "respect and concern for the opponent" consisted of four items. All responses were indicated on a 5-point Likert scale anchored by "Does not correspond to me at all" (1), to "Corresponds exactly to me" (5).

A maximum likelihood factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on the responses to the abbreviated Norwegian version of the original MSOS. The items loaded on four factors with eigenvalues greater than one and accounted for 51% of the variance. Two of the four subscales loaded appropriately, namely "respect for one's full commitment towards sport" and "respect for the rules and the officials". The "respect for social conventions" subscale emerged as expected; however, it also included one item from the "respect and concern for the opponent" subscale, leaving an abbreviated, three-item "respect and concern for the opponent" subscale. Cronbach's α coefficients for the four subscales consisted of 0.73 for "commitment toward sport", 0.74 for "respect for the social conventions", 0.67 for "respect and concern for the opponent", and 0.72 for "respect for rules and officials". No items were excluded.

Results

Descriptive statistics

In general, participants perceived a fairly high mastery climate ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.56$) and a moderate performance climate ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.78$).

For sportspersonship, the participants indicated a high value for commitment ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.68$), a moderately high respect for social conventions ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.88$), moderate respect for one's opponent ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.94$), and moderately high with respect to rules and officials ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.77$).

The majority of participants were relatively experienced in playing organized football, with 75% reporting to have played in such an organized setting for 5 years or more. Breakdown by gender revealed that 84% of the boys and 51% of the girls had played 5 or more years of organized football. Also, 67% (72% boys, 55% girls) of the participants reported having played on the same team for at least 4 years. Lastly, 53% (50% boys, 60% girls) of the participants reported that they had played for the same coach for at least the past 2 years.

Motivational climate profile comparisons

Mastery and performance climates are assumed to be independent constructs in achievement contexts (e.g., Ames, 1992b; Treasure, 1997; Ommundsen et al., 1998; Ntoumanis & Biddle, 1999). This was supported in the present study by a correlation of -0.038 , $P > 0.05$ between the mastery and performance motivational climates. Therefore, the two climates were considered to be orthogonal. A median split method was utilized to identify motivational climate profile groups for both boys and girls separately. Participants with scores higher than 4.22 on the mastery climate subscale were considered high in mastery, while participants with scores lower than 4.22 were considered low in mastery. Participants with scores higher or lower than 2.55 were considered high and low in a performance climate, respectively.

A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ (gender, mastery climate high and low, performance climate high and low) MANOVA was conducted to determine if there were significant differences between gender and the climate profile groups over the four sportspersonship dimensions. No significant multivariate interaction effect emerged, $F(4, 542) = 0.50$, $P > 0.74$. However, main effects emerged for gender $F(4, 542) = 4.89$, $P < 0.001$, performance climate $F(4, 542) = 3.59$, $P < 0.01$, and mastery climate $F(4, 542) = 19$, $P < 0.001$. We used univariate ANOVAs as *post hoc* analyses. The simple main effects for gender revealed that boys were different from girls in terms of sportspersonship, but only in that boys reported significantly higher commitment. The simple main effects for mastery climate revealed that a high mastery climate produced significantly higher sportspersonship over all four of the sportspersonship

Table 1. Gender and motivational climate differences

	Gender			
	Boys ($n = 512$)		Girls ($n = 202$)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Motivational climate</i>				
Mastery	4.17	0.56	4.15	0.57
Performance	2.69	0.79	2.41***	0.73
<i>Sportspersonship</i>				
Commitment	4.11	0.69	3.99*	0.64
Soc. conventions	3.50	0.90	3.64	0.83
Opponent	2.64	0.83	2.52	0.90
Rules/officials	3.56	0.78	3.64	0.76
Mastery motivational climate				
High ($n = 279$)		Low ($n = 177$)		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Sportspersonship</i>				
Commitment	4.34	0.55	3.70***	0.72
Soc. conventions	3.76	0.86	3.32***	0.86
Opponent	2.77	0.97	2.51**	0.94
Rules/officials	3.76	0.79	3.36***	0.76
Performance motivational climate				
High ($n = 222$)		Low ($n = 245$)		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Sportspersonship</i>				
Commitment	4.08	0.70	4.18	0.65
Soc. Conventions	3.45	0.91	3.71**	0.85
Opponent	2.66	1.00	2.62	0.93
Rules/officials	3.51	0.77	3.70*	0.81

* $P < 0.05$.
 ** $P < 0.01$.
 *** $P < 0.001$.

dimensions than did a low mastery climate. Examination of the performance climate simple main effects indicated that a low performance climate produced significantly higher sportspersonship than a high performance climate over respect for social conventions, and respect for the rules and officials. Gender and motivational climate main effects are presented in Table 1.

Relationship between perceived motivational climate and sportspersonship

Although a significant gender main effect did emerge from the MANOVA analysis, *post hoc* univariate analyses failed to identify meaningful gender differences. Specifically, the boys were higher by only 0.12 on the *commitment* subscale of sportspersonship, and calculation of the effect size (ES) revealed very little difference (ES = 0.04) based on the standard of 0.2

being a small ES (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Therefore, we included all participants in one canonical correlation analysis to further investigate the relationship between perceived motivational climate and sportspersonship. Performance and mastery climates were used as predictor variables, while the four sportspersonship indices served as criterion variables. Canonical loadings equal to or greater than 0.30 are considered to be meaningful and significant (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

A multivariate relationship emerged, Wilk's $\lambda = 0.84$, $F(8, 1410) = 16.61$, $P < 0.001$. Subsequent canonical correlation analysis indicated that two unique, meaningful solutions most effectively described and explained the relationships between the two variable sets. Function 1 (high mastery/low performance climate) had a canonical correlation of 0.38 ($R^2 = 0.15$), with a redundancy index of 41%, and function 2 (low mastery/high performance climate) had a canonical correlation of 0.14 ($R^2 = 0.02$) and a redundancy index of 13%. In the present study, a redundancy index of 10% or higher was considered meaningful and significant (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The strength of association between the two variable sets was examined by the calculation of the redundancy statistic, which is a statistical representation of the amount of variance in the set of criterion variables that is explained by the predictor variables. Therefore, the total redundancy statistic indicated that 54% of the total variance in sportspersonship was explained by perceived motivational climate.

Function 1 revealed that a high mastery/low performance climate was positively associated with three of the four sportspersonship indices; namely, one's commitment toward sport, respect and concern for social conventions, and respect and concern for rules and officials were all positively associated with function 1. Function 2 emerged with negative associations between a low mastery/high performance climate and respect and concern for social conventions as well as respect and concern for rules and officials. However, interestingly a positive association emerged for respect and concern for the opponent. Functions 1 and 2 are presented in Table 2.

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between perceived motivational climate and gender on sportspersonship in competitive youth football. It was hypothesized that players perceiving a mastery motivational climate would be higher in sportspersonship than those players perceiving a performance motivational climate. Furthermore, gender

Table 2. Canonical loading for perceived motivational climate and sportspersonship

	F1	F2
<i>Perceived motivational climate</i>		
Mastery climate	0.99*	0.17
Performance climate	-0.20	0.98*
<i>Sportspersonship</i>		
Commitment	0.98*	0.19
Soc. Conventions	0.57*	-0.38*
Opponent	0.29	0.44*
Rules/officials	0.52*	-0.36*

*Correlations equal to or above 0.30 are considered meaningful (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

differences were expected in that boys would perceive a higher performance climate, a lower mastery climate, and would be lower in sportspersonship than the girls.

The interesting finding of the motivational climate profile comparison was that no significant multivariate interaction effect emerged. The lack of a significant multivariate effect may have been because boys and girls did not differ meaningfully over their sportspersonship orientation. This is discussed in more detail below. Furthermore, the various dimensions of the sportspersonship scale may not be equally sensitive to the dynamics of sportspersonship. This issue is also addressed.

The overall MANOVA did, however, reveal main effects for gender, performance climate, and mastery climate which warranted *post hoc* univariate analyses. First, based on previous studies which identified girls to be higher in moral reasoning, moral functioning, and less aggressive than boys in sport (i.e., Bredemeier, 1985; Bredemeier et al., 1987; Stephens, 2000; Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001), we expected to find a similar pattern with girls reporting higher sportspersonship than boys. However, interestingly only the boys reported higher sportspersonship on one dimension. Specifically, the boys reported a higher respect for commitment, although the effect size was very low suggesting that actually boys and girls were quite similar in their sportspersonship orientation in this study. In addition, gender differences over motivational climate perception emerged for performance climate, although the effect size of the variance was also very low ($ES = 0.03$). Therefore, the interesting question that remains is why were strong gender differences not found in the present study?

A conceivable explanation is that the boys and girls in the present study may well have been socialized into the football context in a similar manner. The Norway Cup is a highly competitive tournament, with teams from across the world participating (the largest competition for youths of

its kind in the world). Even in Norway, only the strongest teams participate, and coaches prepare their teams for the competition. It may well be that coaches treat the players in a similar manner regardless of gender. This is supported by the fact that both boys and girls were introduced to competitive football at a comparable early age, and the boys and girls reported that, in general, they had played football for nearly the same amount of time as well as having played for their present team and present coach for a similar number of years. Thus, considering these similar patterns of participation, perhaps it should not seem surprising that the participants had a relatively like-minded understanding of sportpersonship as well as what criteria of success (and/or failure) the coach openly valued. Additionally, due to the length of time the participants have played competitive football, an argument paralleling that forwarded by Knoppers et al. (1988) seems plausible. Specifically, both boys and girls reportedly had played competitive football for a considerable length of time, indicating that their similar understanding of what sportpersonship encompasses perhaps serves as a reflection of their similar level of competition (Knoppers et al., 1988).

Historically, boys have received wider opportunity to participate in sport and are typically perceived as more unsportpersonlike and aggressive in sport than girls (Coakley, 1990). However, as more young women become involved in competitive sport (Gill, 2002), we forward that the traditional gender-specific patterns of sport behavior (i.e., women as more sportpersonlike than men) are now becoming less identifiable. Clearly, the notion that males endorse lower sportpersonship and are more likely to cheat than females warrants continued attention in competitive sport.

With respect to motivational climate, the main effects revealed that players perceiving a high performance climate were lower in sportpersonship than players perceiving a low performance climate. Participants who perceived their coach strongly emphasizing normative criteria of success and failure were lower in sportpersonship (see Table 1). In line with previous research (see Roberts et al., 1997), our results lend support to the assertion that coaches who are perceived to primarily emphasize winning likely affect players' acceptability of maladaptive behavior (e.g., Shields & Bredemeier, 1996; Guiverneau & Duda, 1998; Kavussanu et al., 2002). Specifically, it seems that when the coaches' personal values of winning are strongly perceived, these personal values affect the players' understanding of the meaning of sportpersonship in competition. When the performance climate was high, players were lower in sportpersonship. Similarly, Treasure

& Roberts (in review) indicated that the situational emphasis on beating the opponent was likely a strong influence on whether or not sportpersonlike behavior for soccer players was endorsed. Our findings further support this argument.

Also in concert with previous research (Lemyre et al., 2001; Ommundsen et al., in press) we identified that players who perceived their coach advocating a high mastery climate reported higher sportpersonship than players who perceived a low mastery climate. Specifically, players perceiving a high mastery climate were higher in sportpersonship with regard to their self-reported commitment, respect for social conventions, respect for the opponent, and respect for rules and officials than players perceiving a low mastery climate. When coaches are perceived to emphasize strongly a task-involving climate, thus focusing upon learning, development, and personal progress, it appears that even within highly competitive surroundings players are likely to embrace higher sportpersonship.

As stated earlier, a further explanation for the lack of a multivariate interaction effect and general lack of gender differences may be the result of the sportpersonship scale used in the present study. The MSOS (Vallerand et al., 1997) assumes that all the dimensions (i.e., respect for commitment, respect for social conventions, respect for the opponent, and respect for rules and officials) equally represent sportpersonship. Therefore, if a player lacks commitment, he or she is assumed to be as low in sportpersonship as a player who disrespects the rules and officials. Although Vallerand et al. (1997) have introduced an instrument intended to address explicitly the dimensional complexities of sportpersonship, it is our suggestion that each of the sportpersonship dimensions should not be considered equally valid. It is beyond the scope of the present study to identify which of the dimensions inherent in the MSOS should be considered more representative of sportpersonship, but further research specifically examining this issue is needed to clarify the validity of the dimensions of this multidimensional sportpersonship scale.

Additionally, we conducted canonical correlation analyses to examine the association between perceived motivational climate and the sportpersonship variables. Consistent with previous research (Roberts et al., 1996; Treasure, 1997; Lemyre et al., 2002) we found that two significant functions emerged which called for subsequent canonical correlation analysis. Although canonical correlations serve to reveal associative patterns between two sets of variables (i.e., predictor and criterion), we found this method to reflect effectively the sportpersonship patterns of participants within specific perceived motivational climate combinations.

The first significant function to emerge, namely a combined high mastery/low performance climate, revealed that participants perceiving the coach as primarily emphasizing mastery-oriented criteria reported a strong commitment to football, as well as a respect for the social conventions and respect for the rules and officials. Our results are in concert with those identified by Ommundsen et al. (in press) which also found respect for social conventions and respect for the rules and officials to be associated with a strong mastery climate. Moreover, playing by the rules, respecting the officials, and the social conventions reflect Nicholls' (1989) theoretical assertion that a sense of fairness is likely to be found and fostered in a task-involving climate. These findings are in line with Ames (1992) in her contention that coaches emphasizing mastery criteria over performance criteria endorse adaptive rather than maladaptive motivational setting for their players. As suggested in recent literature (Duda, 2001; Roberts, 2001; Lemyre et al., 2002; Shields et al., 2002), a task-involving climate in sport may encourage athletes to focus upon being more sportpersonlike in their competitive behavior, thereby creating a pro-social and moral competitive setting.

The second function, a low mastery/high performance climate, revealed some interesting associations. This climate combination emerged with negative associations to the respect and concern of social conventions, as well as respect and concern for the rule and officials. These findings are congruent with the assumption that rule-breaking tendencies and a general lack of fairness in competition may well be due to ego-involving criteria established by the coach that are salient in such a setting (Nicholls, 1989). When winning is overtly emphasized and players are made to feel threatened by the possibility of losing, the importance of respecting the rules of a game become of little concern. The present findings support previous research that emphasis on and pressure to win erodes fair play (e.g., Sherif, 1966; Bredemeier, 1999;). Shields & Bredemeier (1995) argue that a competitive sport environment valuing normative outcomes may influence players to adopt a "dehumanized" or depersonalized perspective of the opponent. However, an anomaly did appear.

Because of the positive association of the performance climate to respect and show concern for the opponent, it appears that at this level of competition, for this age group at least, the players value and respect their opponents even while not respecting the rules nor respecting the officials regulating the matches. It may well be that in the context of high-level competition, even for youths, there is a respect for the opponent even if there is disrespect for the social conventions and the rules and officials. We

suggest that we could expound on the Shields and Bredemeier depersonalization argument and include officials as being placed in a depersonalized perspective when winning is emphasized. Given their significant presence in competitive football, perhaps officials in their capacity of setting of boundaries by interpreting situational play within competition may be construed as an obstacle when winning is perceived as the only acceptable outcome. Although it should be noted that the Vallerand et al. (1997) sportpersonship instrument is relatively new, we suggest that combining rules with officials may not capture the conceptual importance of officials as human factors involved in the competitive experience. In the light of this assertion, we forward that further investigation utilizing this particular sportpersonship instrument is needed.

Future research should continue to investigate the sportpersonship of males and females and aspects of achievement motivation such as the perceived motivational climate. As males have been identified as being lower in moral functioning than females in the majority of research grounded in achievement goal theory (e.g., Duda et al., 1991; Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001; Lemyre et al., 2001), the reason for the gender differences in those studies remains to be determined. We did not enquire about the gender of the coaches for the teams participating in our study, which may also have been beneficial in further explaining why the boys and girls were similar over nearly all the variables of interest. In addition, further investigation utilizing the Vallerand et al. (1997) sportpersonship instrument is needed to identify what conceptual differences exist in the way the dimensions of the MSOS describe sportpersonship behavior. It must be stressed that the present study is cross-sectional in nature, and longitudinal analyses of sportpersonship as well as other sociomoral behavior variables in youth sport is clearly needed. Lastly, our study has once again highlighted the significant and influential role that coaches play in competitive youth sport. Future research investigating team differences with respect to the coach-created motivational climate is called for in order to identify explicitly what climate perceptions are most beneficial for fostering prosocial, moral behavior.

Perspective

In this study, we addressed the important effect that the coach-created motivational climate has on interpretations of what is deemed acceptable and unacceptable sportpersonship among youth football players. Lower sportpersonship was associated with a perceived high performance climate than a perceived low performance climate, while a perceived

high mastery climate was associated with higher sportspersonship than a perceived low mastery climate. When normative outcomes are strongly valued, this result should come as no surprise (Roberts, 2001). Congruent to previous research (e.g., Miller et al., 2000; Lemyre et al., 2002) our findings indicate that higher sportspersonship is likely to be fostered if players perceive an explicit emphasis on skill development and cooperation, and on downplaying the importance of winning and losing in competition. In concert with a growing body of research (e.g., Shields & Bredemeier, 1995; Kavussanu et al., 2002), we conclude that by giving equal recognition to all players, valuing development and learning, and not supporting internal rivalries among teammates, coaches thereby serve to promote

prosocial, sportspersonlike behavior in competitive youth sport.

Key words: motivational climate, sportspersonship, gender.

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