



**FACULTY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES**  
**Department of Movement and Sports Sciences**

# **Fair Play in Sports Organizations: Effectiveness of Ethical Codes**

**Els DE WAEGENEER**

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Voor mijn mama,

die mij zowel wortels als vleugels gaf.

Voor mijn papa.

Zeven maal om de aarde gaan,  
als het zou moeten op handen en voeten;  
Zeven maal om die éne te groeten  
die daar lachend te wachten zou staan

Zeven maal om de aarde gaan.  
Zeven maal over de zeeën gaan,  
schraal in de kleren, wat zou het mij deren,  
kon ik uit de dood die éne doen keren.  
Zeven maal over de zeeën gaan,  
zeven maal, om weer met zijn 'vieren' te staan.

(Ida Gerhardt)



You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you.

What you do makes a difference,

and you have to decide which kind of difference you want to make.

(Jane Goodall)





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## SUMMARY

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Ethical challenges and scandals worldwide have generated widespread interest in unethical behavior in the sports domain, both on and off the field. An often-used approach to tackle unethical behavior in sports organizations is the establishment of an ethical code, although its effectiveness remains controversial. This study aims to detail ethical codes in Flemish sports organizations. Not only the mere existence is the object of this research, but also the creation, content, implementation, and enforcement are studied. It is investigated whether the ethical code and its characteristics influence ethical behavior in sports organizations. To evaluate code effectiveness, the ethical climate index of sports organizations is assessed. Results show that although a code of ethics, as such, is not capable of influencing the ethical behavior in sports organizations, it can still be a helpful and inspiring document. For the code to become truly effective, certain conditions need to be in place. The motivation to genuinely promote ethical behavior, the involvement of the coaches in the design of the code, the explicit mentioning of management responsibilities in the code, and the communication of the code at the registration of new club members improve the ethical behavior in the sports organizations. Also the tone of the code, the applied ethical orientation and the number of statements play a key role in the code effectiveness. Therefore, although the mere presence of an ethical code seems to be ineffective to guide ethical behavior, this is still no reason to throw this instrument overboard in the battle of malicious events in organizations. A code of ethics could be a sound starting point to enhance ethics in organizations and could prove to be successful when the right conditions are in place. A fundamental concept in ethical codes is Fair Play, which concerns sports participation ethics (as opposed to the more general organizational ethics). The way in which this concept is applied, has striking consequences for the domain of sport ethics on the field. The application of this crucial concept is observed for the first time in athletes themselves, using the advanced Factorial Survey Method. The research reveals that the judgment on Fair Play by athletes is affected by the act, the level of the match and the presence of an ethical code. The use of a certain conceptualization differs according to the observed act as well as to the gender of the subject that makes the judgment. When it comes to the intention of the athletes to engage in questionable behavior, this decision again shows to be influenced by the act and the gender of the subject. Overall this study has attributed to our knowledge on

ethical codes in sports organizations, and provides us with the characteristics that need to be in place to make this instrument effective in promoting organizational ethics. A quintessential concept in both sport ethics and ethical codes in sports organizations, namely Fair Play, is further investigated. This study increased the findings on the use of this central concept by athletes themselves. This project renders practical implications to increase the effectiveness of ethical codes on the sports field and points out ethical dilemmas that come forward from the different application of Fair Play by athletes.

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## SAMENVATTING

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Sportorganisaties hebben dagelijks te kampen met ethische uitdagingen en schandalen. Vaak vallen ze terug op het gebruik van ethische codes om onethisch gedrag binnen de organisatie te bestrijden. De effectiviteit van dit instrument is echter niet aangetoond. Daarom richt deze studie zich op het gedetailleerd in kaart brengen van ethische codes in Vlaamse sportorganisaties. De aanwezigheid van ethische codes wordt onderzocht, maar ook het ontwerp, de inhoud, de implementatie en de afdwingbaarheid komen aan bod. Er wordt nagegaan of een ethische code en haar bijhorende eigenschappen het ethisch gedrag in sportorganisaties kan sturen. Om de effectiviteit van de codes na te gaan, wordt beroep gedaan op de "Ethical Climate Index" van de sportorganisaties. De resultaten tonen aan dat een ethische code op zichzelf niet in staat is om ethisch gedrag in de organisaties te beïnvloeden, maar dat het toch een nuttig instrument kan zijn. Om een effectieve code te realiseren, moet aan bepaalde voorwaarden voldaan worden. De oprechte motivatie om ethisch gedrag te stimuleren, de betrokkenheid van de trainers bij het ontwerp van de code, de expliciete opsomming van de verantwoordelijkheden van het management en de communicatie van de code bij inschrijving naar leden leveren een bijdrage tot meer ethisch gedrag in sportorganisaties. Ook de toon van de code, de toegepaste ethische oriëntatie en het aantal richtlijnen spelen een belangrijke rol in de effectiviteit van de ethische code. Hoewel de aanwezigheid van een code op zich geen effect blijkt te hebben op het ethisch gedrag, is dit geen reden om het instrument volledig overboord te gooien. Een ethische code kan een goed uitgangspunt vormen en onder bepaalde voorwaarden succesvol zijn in het stimuleren van ethisch gedrag. In ethische codes van sportorganisaties komt het fundamenteel concept Fair Play vaak aan bod. De toepassing van dit concept heeft verregaande gevolgen op het vlak van sportethiek op het veld zelf. In deze studie wordt de toepassing van dit cruciale concept voor het eerst bestudeerd bij atleten zelf. Dit gebeurt aan de hand van de Factorial Survey techniek, die in de context van sport niet eerder werd toegepast. De resultaten tonen aan dat het morele oordeel over Fair Play beïnvloed wordt door het gestelde gedrag, het niveau van de wedstrijd en de aanwezigheid van een ethische code. Het gebruik van een bepaalde interpretatie van Fair Play hangt af van het gestelde gedrag en van het gender van het subject dat het oordeel velt over dit gedrag. De besluitvorming over de intentie om bepaald gedrag te stellen, wordt op haar beurt ook

beïnvloed door deze twee factoren. Deze studie draagt bij tot de kennis over ethische codes in sportorganisaties en reikt de voorwaarden aan die nodig zijn om van een ethische code een effectief instrument te maken voor het bevorderen van organisatie-ethiek. Het gebruik van het essentiële concept Fair Play door atleten wordt ontleed, net als de intentie van atleten om bepaald gedrag te stellen. Al deze bevindingen laten toe om ethische codes werkbaar en nuttig te maken in de sportpraktijk.

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FAIR PLAY IN SPORTS ORGANISATIONS: EFFECTIVENESS OF  
ETHICAL CODES

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**1. PART 1 - GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

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## Introduction

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Ethics and sport have always been entangled in a complex relationship. Not a day goes by without the occurrence of events in the sport context that are questionable or disturbing. It is, therefore, no surprise that the recognition of the need for more ethical behavior in sport has been growing in recent years, both within the sports world and outside this field (Play The Game, 2015; Unesco, 2015). Sport faces complex issues, such as doping, violence, and matchfixing, and most of the time there are no immediate answers or easy solutions to tackle the existing problems (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010; McNamee & Parry, 1998; McNamee, 2010). The challenges that sport faces are two-fold: the organizational risks (that also exist in other organizations) as well as the ethical challenges on the field, namely the sports participations ethics. A lot of challenges in and off the field are specific to sports and so might be the methods and instruments to handle them, such as ethical codes. However, still very little is known about the operation and effectiveness of these instruments (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008). This is surprising, as a lot of energy, time, and money are invested in the prevention and sanctioning of unethical behavior on and in the field of sport. Especially the use of ethical codes has become a popular way to prevent organizational unethical behavior and to guide stakeholders in the sport context, as well as on-field behavior. In this thesis, the prevalence, content, implementation and effectiveness of ethical codes in sport organizations is studied and discussed in depth. Next to this investigation into the organizational ethics of sports organizations, this study also focuses on the ethics of sports participation. A special emphasis is put on the concept of Fair Play, which is quintessential to sport and crowds the ethical codes in this domain. Therefore, the question is raised how athletes themselves apply Fair Play and how this use is influenced by determinants, such as competition level. Next to this, it is studied whether the athletes are inclined to behave unethically and which contextual factors enhance this chance.

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## The specificity of sport organizations

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When looking at ethics and ethical challenges in sports organizations, it is important to realize that sports organizations differ from other, more general organizations and businesses. It is not so much the case that sports organizations have specific characteristics

that are not to be found elsewhere, but rather that they combine certain characteristics into a unique setting.

The sport industry has a number of features that make the range of ethical concerns broader than in other industries. First of all, sports organizations may have to do with the passion and interest in the product (the team, the game) generated among fans/consumers (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Chadwick 2009). The high fan loyalty can possibly explain some of the violent reactions that are happening when a certain team loses or when a transfer to another sports organization happens. The almost unconditional attachment to a sport or a sports organization is quite unique and could mean that unethical behavior is more easily tolerated because of this high loyalty. (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009).

Furthermore, DeSensi and Rosenberg (2010) refer to the fact that management of sport is a service provided by one human being to another, but in which the sport managers themselves regularly don't come face to face with the people that are affected with their decisions (i.e. the stakeholders). This increases the risk of them scanning the moral horizons, in order to obtain results. When it is forgotten that the sports products are human beings, a potentially dangerous situation is created.

Another differentiating attribute of sports organizations is the high transparency, which other organizations typically do not face in the same way (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). Smith and Westerbeek (2007) underline the mass media distribution of sports and everything that has to do with it.

Also the performance measurement is specific: on the one hand, there is the very obvious on-field performance, i.e. medals, titles and points scored, and on the other hand, there is also the off-field performance of the sports organizations that is a reason for concern. The financial measures and their impact on the on-field performance need to be taken into consideration. This tension between the on-field and the off-field financial performance is also a typical characteristic of sports organizations (Chadwick, 2009).

A particular set of stakeholders is another distinctive feature of the sports business (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009): a sports team cannot operate without the cooperation of sponsors, fans, parents, referees and so on. All these particularities make ethical decision-making in sports organizations very distinct and challenging (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010).

The amount of money that goes on in the sports context, as well as the lifestyle of certain athletes/board members, makes this domain vulnerable for illegal payments and to tolerate unethical behavior (IRIS, 2012).

As Chadwick (2009, p.195) puts it, sports bind together “a broad, unique, socio-cultural, economic and commercial constituency. Sports often has a profound impact on communities, social cohesion, identity and self-esteem, health and lifestyle”. Both this unique configuration of characteristics and the specific ethical challenges and problems of the sports context need to be taken into account when considering an approach to guide ethical behavior and ethical decision-making.

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### Ethical challenges in Sport Organizations

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To be able to discuss the subject of ethics in organizations, the concepts need to be clarified. Ethics comprises the critical research and justification of the norms, values, rules, and principles that are supposed to guide behavior (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010). Ethics is the branch of philosophy that deals with how we ought to live, with the idea of ‘good’ and concepts as ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ (Loland, 2002). Ethics deals with the duty of morality and the standards of morality that individuals should follow, questions of value and concepts of rightness and wrongness (Loland, 2002). In most instances, the main task of ethics is to evaluate the standard of right and wrong that people use to assess humans and their behavior (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010). Ethics has to provide tools to determine whether or not we should do a certain action and the extent to which a past action should have been done (Malloy, 2003). Morality and ethics are often used interchangeably, although the first concerns the rules, guidelines and principles of living in a certain time and space, whereas the latter is the systematic reflection upon the morality (McNamee, 2010).

Ethics and sport are entangled in a strained relation. Ethics is about setting limits to behavior, while sport tries to exceed limits. It is clear that both can easily contradict. This tension between defining and pushing limits has always existed, but recent developments have forced the issue even more. Commercialization of sport and the emergence of technological and medical opportunities to enhance performance have put traditional values and norms, such as Fair Play, under serious pressure (Devisch, 2011). Johns (1998) argues that sport has a very specific morality, in which the standards of what is acceptable seem to



have shifted. On the other hand, Boxill (2003) claims that sport has moral significance because of incorporated concepts such as 'Fair Play' and 'sportsmanship' and is often seen as a tool for moral development and ethical education. Festini (2011) concludes that sport indeed has a specific ethical atmosphere and morality but argues that nowadays more can be spoken of a moral crisis in the originally positive ethical values of sport.

When considering a sports organization, two types of ethical challenges can be distinguished. First of all, sports organizations face the same 'typical' challenges as other organizations, such as concerns for the environment, gender inequality, and bribery. These aspects are subject to organizational ethics. However, also a second type of challenges and problems come at play, which are specifically sport-practice related, and which happen on the sports field, such as cheating. An overview is given of the most threatening issues in contemporary sports organizations, as they were considered by leading academics in the field (Boxill, 2006; McNamee, 2010; Morgan, 2007). Of course this inventory is not exhaustive.

### **Violence**

The occurrence of violence in sport is an issue of great importance in contemporary sport ethics (Parry,1998). Both organized and spontaneous violence, by athletes as well as spectators, pose a massive problem in a wide range of sports and settings (Young, 2012). The literature on sport violence seems to struggle with an exact definition and also keeps confusing the terms 'aggression' and 'violence' (Parry, 1998). A distinction is put forward by Coakley and Donnelly (2009) who describe aggression as 'verbal or physical actions grounded in an intent to dominate, control, or do harm to another person', while violence is defined as 'the use of excessive physical force, which causes or has the potential to cause harm or destruction.' It can be argued that aggression is part of the game, because one parties' interest is exactly to control/dominate the opponent, but excessive and harmful physical forms of aggression, e.g. violence, are without a doubt a form of unethical behavior in sport.

The most popular typology of violence amongst players is put forward by Smith (1983, in Young, 2012, p.18) who considers four categories. First, there is the category 'brutal body contact', that covers acts that are included in the rules of the sport and to which consent is agreed upon (implicitly). A second category is so-called 'border violence', which constitutes

of acts that are officially prohibited, but occur regularly and are implicitly accepted. If there are any sanctions imposed, they are remarkably light (Young, 2012). An example of borderline violence is the 'wandering elbow' in soccer or basketball. Both these two categories of player violence are 'relatively legitimate', whereas the next two categories are 'relatively illegitimate' (Young, 2012). The third category is 'quasi-criminal violence' and refers to violations of formal rules of the sport, the law, and the informal norms of players. This type of violence poses serious injury risks. The last category is 'criminal violence' and includes behavior that can be treated formally by the criminal justice system (Young, 2012). Although a distinction is been made between 'relatively legitimate' and 'relatively illegitimate' forms of violence, the tolerance towards these acts can shift over time and there seems to occur a global trend towards criminalization of sport violence (Young, 2012).

Another form of sport-related violence, next to player violence, is crowd violence, which can be understood as "verbal and physical aggression (threatened or actual), perpetrated by partisan fans at, or away from, the sports arena that may result in injury to persons or damage to property" (Young, 2012, p.42). A distinction can be made again between different categories. The first category encompasses the crowd violence that is centered on the contest itself, where antagonistic situations are intensified among fans from opposing teams (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010). A second category consists of crowd violence embedded in social and political issues, e.g. racism and social class issues, that are underlined at sport events. The sometimes vivid distinction, for instance the luxury of the corporate boxes versus the high ticket prices for an average family, can create tensions. A third form is so-called celebratory violence, where the victory of one party is followed by destructive behavior of its fans (DeSensi and Rosenberg, 2010). Unlike player violence, this issue has always been recognized as a serious problem and this disorderly behavior has been the subject of strict measures. However, this global ethical challenge in sport has shown to be very persistent. (Coackley & Donnelly, 2009).

### **Fair Play Violations and Cheating**

Fair Play is a quintessential concept in sport ethics, but its exact definition is been discussed (Butcher & Schneider, 2007; Sheridan, 2003). However, two interpretations of this concept dominate the debate, namely the "rules" and the "spirit" definition. In the rules definition, fair play is considered as sticking to the explicit rules of the sport/game (Butcher &

Schneider, 2007). Whereas the spirit conceptualization goes a step further by defining Fair Play as ‘in agreement with the spirit of the sport/game’. Another application of Fair Play is its use as a “container” for virtues that are acknowledged in the sports domain, for instance honesty, respect towards others, and striving for excellence (Butcher & Schneider, 2007). Irrespective of the chosen definition, it is clear that a lot of violations are made against this central concept in sport.

When it comes to following the rules, Eitzen (1981, as cited in DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010, p.126) considers two forms of cheating in sport. First, he described normative cheating as the illegal acts that are accepted as part of the game, e.g. tripping a football player without detection, intentional fouls in all sports, violent play in basketball (a non-contact sport). These actions tend to be ignored or punished minimally. This form of cheating is even socially rewarded at some times. Deviant cheating, however, is an illegal act that is not accepted, e.g. accepting bribes or sabotaging equipment (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010).

Fair Play encompasses all stakeholders that are associated with sport, including opponents, spectators, coaches, management, etc. (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010). However, daily reports in media are witnesses to the violations that are committed by all these groups. Crowd-pleasing violence, hooliganism, and verbal abuse and intimidation of officials are only a few examples that occur persistently.

### **Matchfixing**

A growing problem in the world of sports is the so-called matchfixing, i.e. “the manipulation of on-the-field-events for motives related to potential gain in betting markets” (Forrest, McHale, McAuley, 2008, p.156). This criminal activity poses significant risks to the integrity of sport.

Different actors can arrange a “fix”: an athlete, an official, the management, the medical staff or even a member of the technical staff. They can all fix by making a betting gain themselves or by being bribed by others betters or bookmakers. Different actions may be corrupted; not only losing can be the object of the fixing, but also less noticeable events like getting a red card or missing the first serve in tennis. This malpractice has been found the most predominant in soccer (>90% of the known cases occurred in soccer), however every sport is at risk of facing this expanding problem (IRIS, 2012).

This form of corruption has probably been around as long as organized sport itself (Forrest et al., 2008), but seems to be increasing rapidly in the last decade because of several reasons. One of the most infamous incidents is the Bochum case, which was detected in 2008-2009. In the space of just over one year, a total of €12 million was injected to corrupt players, referees, trainers and federation officials. Tens of millions of euro were bet, including €32.4 million by a single gambler registered with the Asian operator Samvo (licensed in the United Kingdom). In total, it is estimated that this gang profited to the tune of €7.5 million (IRIS, 2012). An illustration of the scale of the problem is also given by the fact that FIFA promised to allocate €20 million to help combat rigged matches, particularly by creating a cooperative structure with Interpol in Singapore, in 2012 (IRIS, 2012).

Global changes as well as changes in the betting scene appear to be inductive to the growth of matchfixing. First of all, there is the rapid increase in liquidity in the betting sector, from the beginning of 2000 (Forrest et al., 2008). For the traders in betting, this means that they can get greater returns since the amount that can be transacted without driving the price against them is higher. Fixers will offer higher amounts of bribes to manipulate an event. Another consequence of the highly liquid betting markets is that possible detection is lowered: large sums can be injected into the market with little impact on the movements in odds, which is otherwise a possible indicator for manipulation. A second factor that has brought forward incentives for matchfixing is the boom of the Internet, which makes remote gambling very easy and accessible. This makes it harder to trace the flows of money and also protects fixers by the presence of different jurisdictions and a lack of transnational regulation (Forrest et al., 2008). The Internet offers anonymity and makes live betting very easy (IRIS, 2012). Large networks of illegal gambling have easy access to fix sporting events around the globe (Hill, 2010). It is estimated that more than 80% of the sport betting activities are organized in an illegal manner (IRIS, 2012). Another element that contributes to the increasing incidence of matchfixing is the growing availability of “proposition-betting” (Forrest et al., 2008). In this case, the bet is not put on the final outcome of the game, but rather on smaller actions, such as awarding fouls as a referee, or committing a yellow card offense as an athlete. The availability of proposition betting has increased the risk for matchfixing because detection risks are lower and athletes face less threat to their reputation. Next to this, there has been a shift in the organized crime organizations that used to deal illegal drugs to the scene of matchfixing. Rather than taking big risks to

transport and distribute illegal substances, with the high chance of getting caught and to face the established and severe penalties, these groups turn to manipulation of sporting event: the chances of getting caught are significantly lower, they can gain even more money through it in just one attempt, money from the illegal circuit can be laundered, and the penalties are not well established because of the different jurisdictions and the lack of transnational regulations (IRIS, 2012).

This substantial threat to the integrity of sport needs a coordinated approach that involves all the different stakeholders. At the level of the jurisdiction, as well as with the betting agencies and the sports organizations a streamlined and thorough plan of action is required urgently.

### **Sexual harassment and abuse**

Sexual harassment and abuse is another area for ethical concern in sports organizations. A lot of definitions of sexual harassment and abuse can be found in literature and in laws (Fasting & Brackenridge, 2009), but there is general agreement as describing sexual harassment as “unwanted sexual attention” (Fasting & Brackenridge, 2009, p.22) and sexual abuse as a situation where “the victim may be either groomed or entrapped, and thus, unwittingly consent, or coerced to comply through force” (Fasting & Brackenridge, 2009, p.22).

In the last twenty years there has been extensive research on this form of abuse and a lot of studies have attempted to shed a light on this topic. Their results show that up to 48% of female athletes have experienced sexual harassment and/or abuse (Brackenridge, Bisshop, Moussalli, & Tapp, 2008; Marks, Mountjoy & Marcus, 2012; Stirling, Bridges, Cruz & Mountjoy, 2011). For male athletes, estimates are around 6% (Parent & Bannon, 2012).

The potential victims are predominantly young people who practice an organized sport (Brackenridge et al.; 2008). The psychological and physical consequences of the harassment in sport are similar to those reported outside of sport. However, the specific nature of the context gives rise to different dynamics, characteristics and manifestations of the abuse than in non-sport contexts (Brackenridge, 2000). The environment of sport is conducive to sexual abuse, for various reasons. First of all, there is the role of the coach, whose authority stands often without question (Sterling & Kerr, 2009; Stirling et al., 2011), who has legitimated

power, and has a very close relationship with the athlete (Brackenridge, 2000). All these characteristics raise the vulnerability of the young athlete. Next to this, the culture of sport has to be taken into account: the predominance of performance over well-being can also contribute in a negative manner (Parent & Bannon, 2012; Sterling & Kerr, 2009). This single-minded pursuit of excellence increases the risk for sexual abuse. Also, coaches are not often guided and informed about the rules and limits of the coach-athlete relationship (Parent & Bannon, 2012). The power of the coach is also something to take into account when looking at the reporting of sexual abuse. Since he or she is often seen as the one who can ensure success on the sports fields, victims are at a high risk to remain silent in the case of harassment. This reluctance to report inappropriate behavior further enhances the risk for sexual abuse in sport (Stirling et al., 2011).

This continuing challenge is addressed by the International Olympic Committee Medical Commission, which states the “right of athletes to enjoy a safe and supportive sport environment” and that “everyone in sport shares the responsibility to identify and prevent instances of abuse and harassment” (IOC, 2009). A first step to reach this goal would be to educate all the stakeholders involved: athletes, parents, coaches, board members and medical staff (Stirling et al., 2011). An ethical code could play an important role in this education process.

### **Trafficking**

Human trafficking has become a worldwide concern and poses a specific challenge to the sports domain as well. This form of modern day slavery, which manipulates people into a certain situation, becomes associated with (large) sporting events and sport organizations in an increasing manner (Adeyanju, 2010). Two forms of human trafficking have raised concerns, namely sex trafficking and labor trafficking, for both athletes and construction workers.

Sex trafficking involves the induction of a commercial sex act by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person is under the age of consent. The demand for commercial sex increases temporarily when large sporting events take stage, such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup. Major sporting events are seen as an opportunity for huge profits by traffickers with little risk of punishment (Matheson & Finkel, 2013). The full scale of this criminal

activity remains relatively unknown, as victims of human trafficking are often unwilling or fearful to report to the authorities (Matheson & Finkel, 2013). Preventive measures can be undertaken to fight this crime, at governmental level (e.g. prosecution, victim support), but also organizers of large sports events are a stakeholder and could establish measures, for instance in their security plan or via an awareness campaign (Matheson & Finkel, 2013).

Another form of human trafficking is labor trafficking, which involves “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.” (United Nations, 2015). The construction of sport venues is one of the examples where such labor abuses occur. A striking and poignant example is given by the so-called World Cup Slaves in Qatar (The Guardian, 2013). A staggering 44 Nepalese workers, typically from a very poor background, died in only two months, in circumstances of modern-day slavery (Pattison, 2013). The Nepalese construction workers that were able to seek refuge at their embassy tell a very ugly story about confiscation of passports, working on an empty stomach for 24 hours in a row, and assault (Pattison, 2013). “And while the whole world is worrying about the effect of Qatar’s extreme heat on few hundred footballers, they are ignoring the hardships, blood and sweat of thousands of migrant workers, who are building the World Cup stadiums in shifts that can last at least eight times the length of a football match (Pattison, 2013, p4.)”

Next to this form of labor trafficking, exploitation of athletes themselves is taking place as well (Play The Game, 2005). Young football players, predominantly from Africa, are lured and recruited with promises of wealth and a better life. However, upon their arrival they are kept in appalling conditions (Adeyanju, 2010; Play The Game, 2005).

### **Performance enhancing substances and techniques**

The issue that has put sport ethics in the spotlights is undoubtedly the problem with doping. Although the problem stretches back as far as the origin of sport itself, there is still no agreement on this topic in academic circles, and its existence keeps posing risks and challenges to the sport field every day. Next to the well-known use of certain

pharmacological substances, other forms of performance enhancement are emerging as well, such as genetic enhancement or the transfusion of red blood cells.

There are a lot of definitions about what compasses performance-enhancing substances, but in the current debate, the definition of the World Anti-Doping Association is predominant. They catalogue every substance on their list as forbidden doping products (WADA, 2015). A substance is put on the list when at least two out of three criteria are met: a) performance enhancing b) health risk for the athlete c) detrimental for the spirit of sport (Morente-Sanchez & Zabala, 2013). The list includes genetic enhancement (e.g. using genetically modified cells) and manipulation of blood and components of blood.

When looking from the viewpoint of the athlete, there is the expectation and pressure to perform. This ambition can overrule all other arguments, and tempt the athlete to use performance enhancing substances/techniques in order to secure themselves a chance of winning (Moller, 2010; Hodge, 2013). This motive can be considered the principal reason behind the use of performance enhancing substances. It must be noted that the key people around the athletes (coaches, management) most of the time, share the responsibility for their use of doping (Moller, 2010). The controlling climate of the elite athlete can instigate this forbidden action or even demand it (Hodge, 2013). Keeping sponsors and management pleased is another factor that contributes to the use of performance-enhancing substances or techniques (Petroczi, 2007).

Different authors have dismantled various prejudices about the use of performance-enhancing substances (Bloodworth, 2010; Brouwer, 2009; Parry, 2009; Savulescu, Foddy & Clayton, 2004; Vangrunderbeek & Tolleneer, 2011), but the current situation remains that most of them are categorized as forbidden by the World Anti-Doping Association (WADA, 2015). However, this ban seems not to discourage all athletes and not a day goes by without a new case of doping reported in the media. This issue poses a lot of challenges to the domain of sports; since it occurs at all levels and a lot of stakeholders are involved. There is an urgent need for a reconsideration of this debate or for a more effective enforcement of the current ban, since the WADA policy is clearly falling short.



## **Inequality issues**

Sport has not been able to outrun the thorny issues of inequality that are present in our contemporary society. Although efforts are made to obtain equity for different groups, still a lot of people do not have the opportunity to participate. Unequal treatment and discrimination is directed against people because of gender, disability, cultural, or religious reasons, or sexual orientation. Sometimes this problem occurs at a larger scale in sports organizations, e.g. the taboo on homosexual orientation in football clubs, than in our society in general.

Several studies show that gender discrimination and inequality is a widespread problem in sports (Flake, Dufur & Moore, 2012; Tännsjö, 2007; Schneider, 2010) and can take on many forms. Some of the origin of this situation stems from the historical paternalistic idea that women should be prevented to participate in sport for their own sake (Schneider, 2010). But next to this historical artifact, the confirmation of gender stereotypes is seen daily on the sports field, in the board room and in sport governing bodies (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012), and is manifested on female athlete's paychecks (Flake et al., 2012). There is also the fact that women's sports receive less media coverage (Adams & Tuggle, 2004; Huffman, Tuggle, & Rosengard, 2004; Weber & Carini, 2012) and are subject to sexual objectification and trivialization of athletic achievements (Vincent, 2004; Weber & Carini, 2012).

Physical disabled persons keep facing inequality issues as well. People with disabilities have been denied the opportunity to participate in sports on an equal basis (Silvers & Wasserman, 2007). Our society has excluded its disabled members, deliberately or through negligence, from a lot of activities. The elimination of this structural form of discrimination requires an effort from all the people who are involved, included those at the level of sports organizations. Attempts must be made to bring disabled people "from the margins to become integral members of the sporting community" (Fay & Wolff, 2009, p.232). Studies showed that the integration of sport for disabled persons in sports organizations for able-bodied athletes was proceeding more slowly than intended (Sorensen & Kahrs, 2006), even when significant financial support was offered. The elements of inclusion not only encompass practical possibilities for participation, such as access to facilities and the necessary equipment, but also include the presence of individuals with a disability in decision-making bodies (Sorensen & Kahrs, 2006). Besides these structural and

organizational conditions, other criteria for integration are social aspects in the environment, e.g. positive attitudes, acceptance and willingness to make the benefits of disabled participants a priority (Sorensen & Kahrs, 2006). Although literature presents different studies on the topic of physical disability, mentally ill persons are not considered to date. This blind spot deserves however attention, since also this characteristic should be dealt with on a basis of equality.

Another issue that keeps on being problematic in the sports domain is the inequality based on differences in culture, ethnicity and nationality. Studies show that referee discrimination is an ongoing problem: non-white, non-European and black players are treated more severe than white players by officials (Chu et al., 2014) and that there is an overall racial bias among referees, with more fouls awarded against players in opposite-race officiating (Price & Wolfers, 2010). Next to the referee discrimination, there is also a racial bias in sports media coverage (Schmidt & Loe, 2014) with evidence of racial stereotyping in media reports of athletes (Billings & Angelini, 2007; Eagleman, 2009; Eastman & Billings, 2001). Customer discrimination is another issue: Foley and Smith (2007) reported a reduced attendance to games when Hispanic players are added to the roster in baseball games.

Sexual orientation is another reason that athletes are discriminated. Krane and Barber (2005) and Cavalier (2011) reported persistent prejudices of athletes against male professionals (e.g. coaches) working in sports organizations. The expression of sexual prejudices was also found in aspiring sport managers (Plummer, 2006; Sartore & Cunningham, 2009). Homophobia is a notorious problem in certain sports, for instance football (The Football Association, 2015), with tragic consequences, such as suicide among homosexual athletes (The Justin Campaign, 2015).

All these forms and expressions of inequality should be taken very seriously and all the stakeholders at hand should consider the extension of opportunities for the aforementioned groups.

### **Physical and Psychological integrity issues**

Another threat to the sports sector is the risk of compromising the physical and psychological integrity of the individuals involved. When looking at physical integrity issues, a specific group is formed by sexual harassment and abuse, as discussed above. However,

another important element of physical integrity issues is linked with (too) intensive training or the systematic infliction of pain in training and competition (David, 2010; Spitzer, 2010). Pain is unfortunately used as a means of producing absolute disciplines in some sports and some contexts (e.g. the Communist Regime in the German Democratic Republic as well-known example) or coaches and doctors may ignore the athlete's pain in order to push beyond the limits of endurance (Spitzer, 2010). Also the involvement of (very) young children in intensive training deserves attention. The potential for abuse exists in these situations, as many adults perceive child athletes as miniature adults and treat them accordingly, and due to the fact that many coaches are not sufficiently aware of the complex developmental needs and boundaries of young children (David, 2010). When considering threats to psychological integrity, bullying is an increasing problem. Whether it's from parents, players or coaches, disrespectful behavior has become a growing concern (Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, 2015). Bullying can take on many forms: verbal, social, physical and cyber bullying are all aspects of this problem. (Play by the Rules, 2015) and it can have detrimental outcomes on the individual involved. Strategies for the prevention and management of bullying should be high on the agenda of all people involved in the sports domain, i.e. parents, coaches, athletes and other stakeholders.

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## Methods and Instruments to tackle unethical behavior in Sports Organizations

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### **Formal methods and instruments**

Different instruments and methods have been applied to promote ethical conduct in organizations. In this project, the focus is put on initiatives that originate from within the organization itself, in contrast to rules and instruments that are imposed on the organization from above, such as laws or decrees. The first method that meets the eye is the introduction of an ethical code in the organization. The popularity of this instrument, despite the lack of knowledge on its effectiveness, can be explained partly because it is considered as a good managerial practice (Adam & Rachman-Moore, 2004) and also because certain countries, for instance the USA, reward this through legislation (Weaver et al., 1999).

Alternative initiatives take place as well. Next to the ethical code, training and courses on the subject of ethics are increasing as well (Adam & Rachman-Moore, 2004). This tool is used

to raise the ethical awareness of members of an organization and to guide them in making ethical decisions (Jose & Thibodeaux, 1999). The prevalence of ethics training varies among organizations but no figures are known for sports organizations. Ethics training and ethical codes can supplement and reinforce each other, when members of the organization see how codes can be applied in everyday situations (Jose & Thibodeaux, 1999). Hyman, Skipper and Tansey (1991) came up with another formal document as a supplement to ethics training: the 'general ethics checklist', which can be used for evaluating managerial decisions. The checklist draws attention to common causes of ethical tensions and unethical conduct. Although their effort is worthwhile, this instrument is more useful for encouraging a thought process and debate, rather than a workable and pragmatic list for guaranteeing the right outcome when the boxes are checked. Other formal methods include newsletters, ethical committees, ombudspersons and hotlines (Jose and Thibodeaux, 1999).

### **Informal methods and instruments**

Informal methods include the social norms of the organization, as well as the example set by others (Adam & Rachman-Moore, 2004). The first one encompasses the (implicit) coercion or pressure that can come from the group, peers or superiors, to conform to certain social norms (Trevino, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006). Not giving in to this pressure could mean that the member of the organization is rejected or experiences other forms of disapproval (Adam & Rachman-Moore, 2004). This relationship is often developing during non-formal moments. Another example of an informal method is the example set by the manager. It consists of the influence of the (lack of) ethical behavior from the manager on the other members in the organization. The manager is a so-called role model, whose behavior can be crucial in the formation of the behavior of the other members of the organization (Adam & Rachman-Moore, 2004; Jose & Thibodeaux, 1999). Therefore, the specific training of leaders in an organization in ethics, may contribute to their performance as role model (Trevino & Nelson, 2011). Another term to define this aspect is "ethical leadership", that is present in a certain organization (Trevino et al., 2006). Ethical leadership is thought to "set the moral standards for the organization by focusing on the integrity of common purpose" (Jose & Thibodeaux, 1999, p.135). Informal and formal instruments can complete each other.

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## Ethical Codes

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A code of ethics is an instrument that is frequently used by organizations, including sports organizations, to tackle unethical behavior and to manage ethical challenges. However, ethical codes in sports organizations and their effectiveness are hardly considered in literature. Therefore, it is useful to study the literature on ethical codes in general first before elaborating on the application of these findings to the context of sport.

### **Definition**

A universally accepted definition is hard to find, since the phenomenon is complex and the perceptions of what constitutes an ethical code, differs (Wood & Rimmer, 2003). Nevertheless, literature provides us with various definitions of ethical codes.

A first classification of types of codes is formulated by Vincent (1990), who clarifies that there are regulatory, aspirational and educational codes. A regulatory code contains clear statements and the imperatives on behavior are not open for debate, e.g. the Ten Commandments. The aspirational codes, on the contrary, provide a standard to which one can aspire, without expecting full compliance. At the other end of the continuum, finally, is the educational code, which doesn't contain rules or standards, but encourages the individual to search his/her conscience before taking action. According to the distinction made by St James Ethics Centre, the latter would be classified as a code of ethics, whereas the regulatory and aspirational code would count as codes of conduct (Wood & Rimmer, 2003).

Another classification method uses a first set of definitions that encompasses the form (written) and content (statements of norms and beliefs regarding good conduct) of the document. For instance, Weaver (1993, p.45) calls them "distinct, formal documents specifying self-consciously ethical constraints on the conduct of organizational life". Stevens (1996) described an ethical code as a written document that attempts to state the major philosophical principles and accents the values the organization stands for. Other authors state that codes include open guidelines describing desirable behavior and closed guidelines prohibiting certain behavior (Nijhof, Cludts, Fischer, & Laan, 2003).

A second group of definitions also elaborates on the intended target group of this document. Langlois and Schlegelmilch (1990, p.522) state that a code of ethics is “a statement setting down corporate principles, ethics, rules of conduct, codes of practice or company philosophy concerning responsibility to employees, shareholders, consumers, the environment, or any aspect of society external to the company.”

The most elaborate and detailed definition is offered by Kaptein and Schwarz (2008, p.113) who argue that a code of ethics is “a distinct and formal document containing a set of prescriptions developed by and for a company to guide present and future behavior on multiple issues for at least its managers and employees toward one another, the company, external stakeholders and/or society in general.” This definition sets ethical codes apart from external guidelines (e.g. laws) and from other internal documents (e.g. mission statements).

A clear distinction with other internal documents is made by Stevens (2008), who argues that a mission statement articulates the objectives and goals of an organization. Ethical codes on the contrary, express the value system and ask the question “within what ethical standards and values should the mission be pursued?” (Stevens, 2008, p.602).

Synonyms that are used for ethical codes include a code of conduct, a business code or an integrity code (Kaptein, 2004). Although this is contested by The Saint James Ethics Centre (1993), who expresses that a code of ethics will tend to be much more general, contains fewer principles and provides general guidance to all persons affected (and not to employees only). The two forms can overlap in practice.

In this study, the aforementioned definition of Kaptein and Schwarz (2008) is applied. This definition acknowledges that the code is the result of a process in the organization and not some externally imposed set of rules (Stevens, 2008). However, it is still very broad and could be applied to other types of documents that provide instructions. By adding the word “ethical” to the definition, we mark out the sort of behavior that is discussed. Off course, when it comes to the sports domain, the word company is replaced by “sports organization” and “athletes” replaces the word “employees”. “An ethical code is a distinct and formal document containing a set of prescriptions developed by and for a sports organization to guide present and future ethical behavior on multiple issues for at least its athletes toward one another, the organization, external stakeholders and/or society in general.”

## **Reasons for establishing an ethical code**

The reasons and motivations for the establishment of an ethical code, found in literature, can be categorized into four different groups.

A first, large set of motivations the motivation can be ethical in nature. The objective for an ethical code can be to meet ethical concerns and to encourage ethical behavior (Askanazy et al., 2000), to establish and communicate responsible business practices (Erwin, 2011), to provide ethical guidance and to reduce conflicts (Kaptein and Schwartz, 1998), to promote honest and ethical behavior and to obtain an improvement in corporate culture (Rodriguez-Dominguez, 2009), the provision of consistent normative standards for members (Malloy and Fennell, 1998; Boo and Koh, 2001; Schwartz, 2001), or to rally members around the values expressed in the code (Singh, 2011).

A second type of motivation is professionalism, where an ethical code is established in order to mark the professional character of the organization/sector, to indicate an organization's commitment to ethics (Malloy and Fennell, 1998; Ashkanazy et al., 2000), to enhance the profession's reputation (Frankel, 1996), or to convey the message that the corporation is committed to ethical behavior (Malloy and Fennell, 1998; Singh, 2011).

Protection against laws and decretal measures is a third reason for organizations to obtain a code of ethics (Adam et al., 2004; McKendall, 2002; Rodriguez-Dominguez, 2009; Singh, 2011). Also the motivation to avoid legal consequences and pursuing resides under this group (Gaumnitz & Lere, 2004; Schwartz, 2001).

To conclude, a fourth motivation is found in enhancing public relations. Codes can be installed for the sake of appearance (Adam et al., 2004), to gain public confidence (Higgs-Kleyn & Kapelianis, 1999), to promote public image (Schwartz, 2001), corporate reputation and brand image (Singh, 2011), and to create a more positive image to the stakeholders (Stevens, 2008).

## **Effectiveness of ethical codes**

Evidence on whether codes are effective instruments to improve ethical behavior in organizations is very mixed. Rigorous reviews are presented by Helin and Sändstrom (2007) and Kaptein and Schwarz (2008). They show that the debate on code effectiveness is still

very much alive, since the results of the consulted studies differ enormously. Certain authors defend the power of a code to guide and influence behavior for persons when confronted with ethical dilemmas. For instance, Adams et al. (2001) claim that a code of ethics has the ability to provide legitimacy and support for ethical behavior, and serves as a deterrent for those with unethical intentions. Higgs-Kleyn and Kapelianis (1999) argue that a code can act as a way to convince society of their responsible behavior and to protect them against improper demands. Frankel (1996) points out that the development of ethical standards is testimony to the recognition of the moral dimensions of practice. On top of this, absence of a code of ethics may be seen as a lack of interest in or awareness of the importance of ethics (Adams et al., 2001). In contrast, some authors state that the use of a code did not reduce violations (McKendall et al., 2002; Snell et al., 1999) or that the presence of a code could even be counterproductive (Ethics Resource Center, 2004). The use of ethical codes to handle ethical problems has been subject to many other critiques. It is argued that these codes are a form of window-dressing: a cunning form of public relations, which serve the organization rather than the public good (Jamal and Bowie, 1995; McKendall et al., 2002). Molander (1987) states that codes are a threat because, if something is not stated explicitly in the code, it is not considered as wrong by the users of the code. Also, Magnet (1986) argues that codes foster the belief that individuals are no longer personally responsible for their actions. Moreover, it should be evident that society is complex to such an extent that members of an organization will inevitably be confronted with ethical issues which no code will be able to completely resolve (Molander, 1987). It is also argued that the responsibilities of the persons involved are undermined and the existence of a code is seen as accusatory, threatening, and demeaning (Raiborn & Payne, 1990). Other scholars state that they make stakeholders suspicious and raise cynicism (Dobel, as cited in Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008), and that they don't show enough return on investment (Hess et al., 2006).

The great variance in research methods may contribute to the different results, as is shown by Kaptein and Schwartz (2008). The type of research, e.g. the use of questionnaires, tends to influence the outcomes, as well as the type of respondents (e.g. students versus managers) accounts for a difference (Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008). Often the research method assesses individual evaluations, which lends to bias (Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008). Also the use of different definitions of what constitutes a code of ethics, can contribute to



the conflicting results that are yielded by studies on code effectiveness, just as different definitions of effectiveness can (Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008).

The fact that no consensus has been reached on the topic (Helin and Sandström, 2007; Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008), together with the fact that the specific characteristics of the sports domain are not considered, raises the need for investigation of ethical codes in sports organizations.

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### Measuring effectiveness of ethical codes in organizations

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In order to assess the effectiveness of an instrument, such as an ethical code, it is necessary to measure the (un)ethical behavior in the organization at hand. In literature, there are four distinctive indicators described to measure code effectiveness.

Firstly, some studies measure code effectiveness in an organization by looking at the awareness of the ethical code by the members of the organization. However, being aware of a code is no guarantee to comply with the content of the document. This is described in a study of Schwartz (2001), where employees who were all aware of the ethical code of their organization, mention violations. The study offers reasons for non-compliance, e.g. self-interest or dissatisfaction, despite awareness of the code of ethics (Schwartz, 2001). This method to measure effectiveness does not seem to be a reliable one, since the mere awareness of a code of ethics by the members of an organization does not guarantee that these members understand it and use it to guide their actions. Thus, familiarity with a code of ethics and its content does not guarantee that the intended audience will follow the described guidelines (Wotruba, Chonko, & Loe, 2001).

Secondly, the number of violations is sometimes used as an indicator for the ethical behavior in organizations. For instance, Somers (2001) used the employee propensity to report wrongdoing as an indicator for the effectiveness of the ethical codes in firms. However, this is rather an indicator of the support for whistleblowing than of the complete ethical behavior of the members of the organization. This approach is also used by McKendall, DeMarr, and Jones-Ridders (2001) and Stohs and Brannick (1999), who study the effect of ethical codes on behavior by looking at the number of detected violations. Again, this indicator seems to be problematic, since it can occur that a very ethical organization tends to have more reporting in place, rather than having more unethical behavior. It may be that

a very unethical organization reports few unethical incidents because there is no support for whistle-blowing and the large number of violations stays unreported. Therefore, the number of reported violations is not an adequate measurement for the effectiveness of ethical codes.

Thirdly, another method is the direct observation of actual behaviors as a method to study effectiveness of ethical codes (Farell, Cobbin, & Farell, 2002). This is a rarely applied method, probably due to the high practical demands and the possible occurrence of bias in the behavior of the respondent. Limitations of this method are: a) the analysis of behavioral patterns of addressees to whom the code applies does not give insight in the ethical elements that are influenced by the code (i.e. the awareness of the moral importance of certain issues or the moral judgment made by athletes), only the actual behavior can be analyzed b) certain unethical actions will go unnoticed, since they are very subtle or are disguised by the authors of the act (i.e. sexual harassment) c) the method is also very time-consuming: it would take a very long time to come to (significant) results d) It is difficult to rule out the (unintended) influence of the researcher on the behavior of athletes, e.g. there could be less violence in a training session that is covered by the researcher.

Finally, the perceptions of practice can be tested to assess the ethical behavior of the organization. This is a commonly used method in studies on code effectiveness (Adams et al., 2001). In this case, the respondent's perceptions of the organizational ethical behavior are seen as a proxy for the actual ethical behavior in the organization. This approach brings along the usual limitations of self-reporting instruments, namely the non-response bias and the response bias (Boo & Koh, 2001). Non-response bias stems from the lack of sampled objects, which differ significantly from the respondents, whereas response bias occurs when the respondents answer in a biased way due to their background characteristics. Another form of response bias takes place when respondents answer what they think is socially accepted. However, both limitations of this approach can be held to a minimum by a careful design of the study, e.g. sampling of respondents and anonymity of responses.

Several concepts for the measurement of perceived ethical behavior in organizations are available in the literature, along with their accompanying questionnaires. The most prevalent concept by far to assess the perception of organizational ethics is the so-called Ethical Climate.

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## Ethical Climate

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A management concept that is used to assess and describe organizational ethics is the Ethical Climate. An Ethical Work Climate is defined as the shared perceptions of the content and strength of the prevalent ethics-related values, norms, attitudes and behaviors of the members of a social system (Arnaud, 2006). Ethical Climate reflects the organizational procedures, policies, and practices with moral consequences. Such climate arises when members believe that certain forms of ethical reasoning or behavior are expected standards or norms for decision-making within the organization. Ethical climates are not characterizations of the individual's morality; they rather represent components of the person's environment as perceived by its members (Cullen et al., 2003).

Different questionnaires and measuring tools have been developed to assess Ethical Climate or other indicators of business ethics of an organization. They have all been grounded in different philosophical theories. For example, the Multi-Dimensional Scale of Business Ethics by Reidenbach and Robin (1993) considers five ethical theories, including Deontology, Utilitarianism, Egoism, Relativism and Theory of Justice. Another model to assess organizations is the Moral Continuum by Vidaver-Cohen (1995, 1998). In this model, moral climate is seen as a continuum, with at one end, the positive moral climate, or ethical climate, in which organizational norms always facilitate ethical behavior and on the other hand, the negative moral climate or unethical climate, which is never conducive to such behavior. The operationalization of the model is, despite of its sound theoretical construct, difficult and complex (Arnaud, 2006).

By far the most used instrument is the Ethical Climate Questionnaire (ECQ) by Victor and Cullen (1988), grounded in the theory of Ethical Work Climate (EWC). This theory uses two dimensions to identify the collective perceptions of ethical practices in an organization: the ethical criteria used for decision-making, and the loci of analysis used as a referent in the ethical-decision-making process. The ethical criteria dimension identifies the collective decision-making framework employed in making moral judgments involving the social system. It is grounded in Kohlberg's theory of cognitive moral development (Kohlberg, 1983). According to Kohlberg (1987) moral development is characterized by three levels of moral reasoning: the pre-conventional (level I), the conventional (level II) and the post-conventional level (level III). Kohlberg sees these levels in terms of the relationship between

the individual and society's rules and expectations. Consequently, Level I is characterized by a separation between conventions and the individual. The person sees social rules as external to the self. The individuals in this level define morality in terms of the personal consequences of their actions. A Level II individual closely identifies with society's rules and expectations. A person at the conventional level defines morality in terms of peer influences, family and societal norms. At the post-conventional level, level III, individuals define morality in terms of personal conscience and universalistic principles. The person has identified his or her norms independently of social norms. These stages are considered sequential (Kohlberg, 1987; DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010; Arnaud, 2006). Victor & Cullen (1988) argue that these three levels of moral reasoning will be reflected in three distinct ethical decision criteria employed by organization members. They call them egoism, benevolence and principled criteria, respectively (Schminke, 2007). The loci of analysis dimension identifies the referent group to be considered as the source of moral reasoning. Victor & Cullen (1988) propose three possible loci of analysis: individual (the self as a referent for moral reasoning), local (sources of ethical reasoning within the organization) and cosmopolitan (sources of ethical reasoning external to the focal organization, such as the Law).

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### Ethical Climate Index

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The EWC framework has been the dominant paradigm for many years, but there are a number of critiques from the theoretical and the methodological point-of-view. Arnaud (2006) identify two theoretical issues as especially important. They suggest that ethical criteria and loci of analysis do not represent distinct dimensions of ethical climate, but rest on a similar foundation. The second significant theoretical challenge of the EWC framework is that it is ignoring other important components in the process of ethical decision-making and behavior. Rest's four-component model suggests that four distinct processes must happen in order for ethical behavior to occur: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation and moral character. As the EWC model only represents moral judgment, it seems to be underspecified with respect to the other three components (Arnaud, 2006).

Arnaud (2006) also identified methodological limitations of the framework, such as an unstable factor structure (Wimbush, Shepard & Markham, 1997a; Vaicys, Barnett, & Brown, 1996; Fritzsche, 2000; Peterson, 2002; Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbaum, 2009), the emergence

of different climate types (Cullen, Victor, & Bronson, 1993; Wimbush, Shepard & Markham, 1997a) and a modest ability to predict ethical outcomes (Wimbush, Shepard & Markham, 1997b; Peterson, 2002; Martin & Cullen, 2006). Because of these shortcomings, Arnaud & Schminke (2006) present us with a new theory and measure for ethical work climates, the Ethical Climate Index (ECI).

Rest (1986) argued that ethical decision-making requires four psychological processes: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation and moral character. Moral sensitivity concerns the recognition of an ethical dilemma and the evaluation of how one's action affects others. Moral judgment involves bringing one's moral decision-making framework to bear on the problem and to determine the ethical course of action. Moral motivation involves to which degree the ethical values dominate the other values in the situation and moral character is about whether the person has the power to act upon the chosen ethical course of action (Arnaud, 2010). Arnaud (2010) suggests that all these components are the foundation for the ethical climate of organizations, and not only the second component, collective moral judgment, as captured by Victor & Cullen's existing framework. Based on this sound theoretical ground, named the Psychological Process Model (PPM), a measuring instrument for the Ethical Climate of an organization was composed, namely the Ethical Climate Index (ECI).

The ECI has four components: Collective Moral Sensitivity, which is assessed with a 12-item scale, including 5 items for the factor Norms of Moral Awareness, and 7 items for the factor Empathetic Concern. Collective Moral Judgment is assessed with a 10-item scale, including 5 items for the factor Focus on Self and 5 items for the factor Focus on Others. Collective Moral Motivation is assessed with an 8-item scale, "Power/achievement over Ethics", which assesses the prevalence of ethical values over power and achievement values. Collective Moral Character is assessed with a 6-item scale, "Norms of Responsibility", which assesses the prevalent levels of outcome responsibility and control (Arnaud, 2006). Validation studies (Arnaud, 2010) suggest that the ECI is a reliable instrument and indicate the convergent and discriminant validity of the ethical work climate dimensions of the PPM. Results also indicate the predictive validity of the ECI when it comes to ethical and unethical behavior.

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## Ethical Behavior in the context of sport: the concept of Fair Play

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Fair Play is a key concept when studying ethical behavior in the concept of sports and namely on the sports field. A lot of different definitions and conceptualizations of this term were formulated throughout the years (Butcher & Schneider, 2007; Sheridan, 2003). However, as mentioned before, there are two dominant tendencies in this debate, namely the “rules” stance and the “spirit” stance, as the study of previous research learns us, or termed differently the formal versus the informal interpretation of Fair Play (Loland, 2002). This discussion is not only important and valuable from a philosophical point of view, but actually determines what is accepted on the sports fields in everyday life.

The first point-of-view, Fair Play as respect for the rules of the game, is rather narrow as it regards all behavior that doesn't violate the explicit and literal rules, as ethically permitted behavior (Sheridan, 2003). These rules can be divided into two groups: the constitutive rules and the regulative rules (Loland, 2002). Constitutive rules stipulate the goals and the means by which to attain these goals. They constitute through prescriptions and define what it means to win a competition (Loland, 2002). They define and demarcate a sport, for instance “in football, winning means scoring goals by getting the ball over the goal line more often than the opposing team without using the arm below the shoulder and without being in so-called off-side positions” (Loland, 2002, p.2). Regulative rules rather involve certain constraints that are independent of the game as such. Sometimes a third set of rules is put forward: those needed to define how to compete, the so-called rules of skill: the technical and tactical rules that learn us how to perform well (Loland, 2002).

The contrasting stance applies another meaning of Fair Play. In the definition of Fair Play as respect for the spirit or ethos of the game, broader expectations are raised when it comes to behaving ethically in sports. This informal interpretation of Fair Play is tied to a certain attitude of respect for competitors, officials and the game, and to certain virtues, linked to the values of sport itself (Loland, 2002).

The stance taken on the concept of Fair Play, i.e. the moral judgment on what consists Fair Play, can be crucial to the displayed and accepted behavior of athletes. For instance, when a judo or badminton athlete considers Fair Play as adhering to the explicit rules of the game, he/she will behave ethically according to his own judgment when he tries to lose on purpose in order to meet a weaker opponent in the next round, as this is not explicitly forbidden by

the rules. The focus on following the rules could result in a very narrow conception of ethical behavior. A similar situation could have a different outcome for athletes who define Fair Play in a broader sense, as respect for the spirit of the game. They will possibly consider this act as unethical.

To date, there have been theoretical studies on the concept of Fair Play, but this has not been put to the test empirically. The conceptual issue has been the subject of a lively debate amongst academics (Butcher & Schneider, 2007; Sheridan, 2003), but so far no research has been done on the actual application of the concept in practice. There have been empirical studies on Fair Play, but they do not take the conceptual issue into account. The investigation of the use of the different conceptualization of Fair Play could, however, shed a light on how athletes come to their behavior and evaluate it. It is therefore of great interest to examine the conceptualization of Fair Play by athletes and also to consider which elements are influential in this judgment.

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#### Measurement of Moral Judgment

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A classical approach to the measurement of judgments is the design of a questionnaire. However, to render the questions a more lively character, another method is available, namely the vignette-technique (Smith & Rogers, 2000). Respondents are presented with one or several vignettes and asked for their judgment. Vignettes are fictitious units, which are described in terms of potentially relevant characteristics. In the case of Fair Play this could for instance be the gender or the experience of the athlete, or the level of the match. These are characteristics that could possibly influence the judgment of the respondent. The fact that respondents are presented with an actual situation, rather than an anonymous and theoretical question, raises the external validity of the inquiry. A realistic scenario generates greater involvement by respondents (Ashill & Yavas, 2006). Of course there could still be a social desirability bias and it is not possible to tell which characteristics exactly influenced the judgment of the respondent. These disadvantages are elegantly circumvented by the factorial survey approach, a clever application of the vignette-technique.

The aim of the factorial survey method is to uncover human judgments and moreover, to identify the characteristics that causally affect the judgments of the respondents (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010). Again vignettes are designed, describing fictive situations with different,

selected characteristics to the respondents. However, the vignettes represent different combinations of levels (the characteristics, e.g. gender) of various dimensions (variables, e.g. male or female). The levels and their dimensions are included on account of their presumed relevance as determinants of the judgment made by the respondent (Wallander, 2009). This gives rise to a so-called vignette universe: all possible combinations of dimension levels. By having respondents judge a randomly drawn sample from the universe, each dimension included in the vignette varies independently (Wallander, 2009). This makes it possible to untangle the effects of the different variables on the judgment. The experimental variation of all contextual factors (the different levels) allows the estimation of unconfounded and context-dependent effects (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010).

Because of its quasi-experimental nature, it offers several advantages. First of all, the stronger claims of validity that are true for vignettes, are also applicable to the factorial survey method. A meticulously designed scenario, with a realistic setting, a clear problem and well described characteristics, is what makes the question representative and valid for the respondents (Ashill & Yavas, 2006; Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010; Wallander, 2009). Second, the fact that an issue is framed in a vignette lessens the need for respondents to add their own contextual information (Ashill & Yavas, 2006). The third advantage is very important: in contrast to direct questioning techniques, there is far less chance of social desirable answers from the respondents. Concrete and detailed descriptions help to gather genuine responses, especially when it comes to delicate issues, such as ethical dilemmas (Wallander, 2009).

This approach is thus excellently suited to unravel the judgments on Fair Play, made by athletes themselves. Not only will this method provide a more valid outcome, but it will also enable to identify the determinants of the judgments at hand.

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### Measurement of moral motivation

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The moral judgment that is made by an athlete will contribute to the displayed behavior. However, there are still other steps that need to be taken before the judgment is put into action, according to the Rest model (1986), as presented in chapter 8. For instance, when an athlete makes the judgment that cheating is wrong, he may still cheat because other values are ranked higher in his motivation, e.g. financial gains. The so-called moral motivation tells



more about the intended behavior of the person at hand. According to the literature (Kavussanu, Seal, & Philips, 2006), it can be considered as a valuable predictor for the actual behavior, which is often hard to measure. Also in the sport context, it is important to know when athletes are motivated to behave according to Fair Play and what determinants can alter this intention.

The factorial survey approach is by far the most valid and detailed method to study the intentions and their determinants in athletes. By varying characteristics in the vignettes, it is possible to analyze the influence of important features on the intention of the athletes, such as the level of the match or the reaction of the public and the official.

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### Problem analysis: Research questions

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Scientific literature, as well as regular media, governments, and non-governmental organizations clearly communicate the need for more ethical behavior in sports, both on and in the field. Sport clubs count for a large part of all sports organizations and they are an ideal context for the promotion of ethical behavior. A tool that is frequently used in organizations worldwide to establish more ethical behavior is the code of ethics. In this study the first aim is to assess the prevalence of ethical codes in Flemish sport organizations. There is no research available on effectiveness of ethical codes in the sport sector. The more general literature on code effectiveness is not helping much, as it shows great indecisiveness and conflicting results. Therefore, investigation of the effectiveness of ethical codes in promoting organizational ethics in sports organizations is the second aim of this study. Not only the effectiveness as such, but also its different determinants are examined in detail. Both contextual variables as well as code content are taken into account in this study.

Ethical behavior in the sport context is not limited to the organizational aspect, but also involves the ethics regarding sport participation, i.e. the behavior in the field. This is often defined in relation to the concept Fair Play and it can be expected that this quintessential term will also be featured in the ethical codes in the sports domain. Ethical behavior, e.g. Fair Play, is achieved by going through four phases according to the model of Rest, namely moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation and finally the moral behavior itself. The second step in this process can alter the final behavior substantially according to the conceptualization of Fair Play that is being used. However, to date there has been no

research on the application of the concept by athletes. This study aims to uncover how athletes use the concept Fair Play and what determines the conceptualization that they apply. Next to this, a fourth goal of this study is to examine the next step in the process, being the moral motivation. Since earlier studies have shown that this moral motivation is a significant predictor of the actual behavior, the question is 'what makes that athletes are motivated to display ethical behavior (Fair Play) and which determinants have an influence on this intention'.

To summarize, the research questions of this thesis are:

- 1) What is the prevalence of ethical codes in Flemish sports organizations?
- 2) Is an ethical code effective, i.e. does the existence of an ethical code improve the ethical behavior in the sport organizations?
- 3) What are the characteristics of ethical codes in Flemish sports organizations?
- 4) Which characteristics of the ethical code influence its effectiveness?
- 5) What is the content of ethical codes in Flemish sports organizations?
- 6) How does the content of an ethical code influence its effectiveness?
- 7) Which conceptualizations of Fair Play are used by athletes themselves?
- 8) Which personal and circumstantial characteristics influence this conceptualization?
- 9) Are athletes inclined to engage in certain questionable behavior?
- 10) Which personal and circumstantial characteristics influence this intention?

Questions 1-6 relate to the study of organizational ethics in sports, i.e. the conduct in the field, whereas questions 7-9 concern the behavior on the sports field, i.e. the study of sport participation ethics. However, there is a link between both, since ethical codes often contain statements regarding on-field behavior and on the other hand, fair play is expected within organizations that have a sound overall ethical climate. The first two studies in this thesis do not concern the investigation of the effectiveness of codes of ethics in promoting ethical behavior in athletes, but rather in the sports organization as a whole. Therefore the Ethical Climate Index was chosen as the suited instrument to assess the organization when it came to organizational ethics, rather than an assessment instrument that focuses solely on the athletes. In this case the different stakeholders from the organization as a whole were assessed since it concerns the influence of the code of ethics, an aspect of organizational ethics.

The two studies regarding sport participation ethics, i.e. the research on Fair Play, however, were directed towards the athletes (and not towards the organization as the basic unit). In this case a sports participation dilemma was presented to and assessed by the athletes themselves, not by the organization. Here, there is no confusion possible between the nature of the dilemma (not organizational, but clearly concerning sport participation ethics) and the measured moral judgment and moral intention. In this case, only the stakeholders that are on the field are considered, since it concerns an issue of sports participation ethics.

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### Objectives and outline of the thesis

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A first study in this manuscript (Ethical Codes in Sports Organizations: An Empirical Study on Determinants of Effectiveness) will focus on the presence and effectiveness of ethical codes in Flemish sport organizations. It encompasses a quantitative study using a questionnaire on the presence and characteristics of the ethical codes, as well as an internationally validated questionnaire on ethical climate (ECI-index) to measure the effectiveness of the code and the characteristics that are of influence on this effectiveness. The study is conducted with six different sports disciplines, which reflect the majority of the sport organizations in Flanders (individual versus team, contact versus non-contact sports).

In the next study (Ethical Codes in Sports Organizations: Classification Framework, Content Analysis and the Influence of Content on Code Effectiveness), the content of ethical codes in these sports organizations is studied in detail. To make this possible, a framework for qualitative analysis was designed after careful study of the literature available. This framework, combined with the results from the ECI-index, is able to tell us what ethical codes in Flemish sports organizations look like and how these characteristics influence the effectiveness of the code.

The concept of Fair Play is critical when considering sport ethics and it is expected that this concept will be overly present in the ethical codes of sports organizations. The third study (Moral judgments on Fair Play by Badminton Players – a Factorial Survey Study) focuses on the moral judgments on Fair Play that are made by athletes, as the application of different conceptualization of this term can lead to very different outcomes in ethical behavior. This issue was very urgent and problematic at the London 2012 Olympic Games in the discipline of Badminton. Since the conceptualization of Fair Play was very much debated and

influenced greatly the course of action in this event, the population of interest is Flemish badminton clubs. In this study, the moral judgments on Fair Play are assessed and analyzed through the use of the factorial survey approach. This method is able to resolve which judgments are made and how contextual factors (e.g. level of the match, reaction of the public) influence the judgments.

A final study (Moral judgments on Fair Play by Badminton Players – a Factorial Survey Study) focuses on the moral motivation of athletes and asks them how they would behave in certain situations. The factorial survey method is used to unveil their intentions, as well as the determinants for these intentions. Again, the badminton organizations in Flanders make for the sample population, given the importance of this issue in today's debate about Fair Play in this particular sports discipline.

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#### Publications included in the thesis

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De Waegeneer, E., Devisch, I., Willem, A. (2015). Ethical Codes in Sports Organizations: An Empirical Study on Determinants of Effectiveness. *Ethics & Behavior*, *accepted for publication, in press*.

De Waegeneer, E., Willem, A. (2015a). Ethical Codes in Sports Organizations: Classification Framework, Content Analysis and the Influence of Content on Code Effectiveness. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *published online +in press*.

De Waegeneer, E., Willem, A. (2015b). Moral judgments on Fair Play by Badminton Players – a Factorial Survey Study. *Ethics & Behavior*, *published online + in press*.

De Waegeneer, E. , Willem, A. (2015c). A Factorial Survey Study on the Personal and Contextual Determinants of Moral Intentions of Badminton Players. *Submitted*.

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## 2. PART 2 – ORIGINAL RESEARCH





De Waegeneer, E., Devisch, I., Willem, A. (2015). Ethical Codes in Sports Organizations: An Empirical Study on Determinants of Effectiveness.

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## Ethical Codes in Sports Organizations: An Empirical Study on Determinants of Effectiveness.

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### **Abstract**

Confronted with numerous scandals, sports organizations are turning to the adoption of ethical codes to attain more ethical behavior in their daily activities. However, the effectiveness of an ethical code as a means to increase ethical behavior remains largely debated; furthermore the particular characteristics of a sports context have not yet been taken into account when assessing code effectiveness. Neither have the different stages of code establishment been considered in evaluation. This article investigates empirically the effects of the presence, creation, content, implementation, and enforcement of ethical codes on ethical behavior in sports organizations. Our results shed a light on the conditions that have to be met for a code in sports organizations to be effective.

Keywords: sport management, sports ethics, code of ethics, sport ethics

### **Introduction**

Scandals and abuses have raised the question for more ethical behavior and management in sports clubs worldwide (Kartakoullis, 2009; Parent and Demers, 2011; Rouvrais-Charron and Durand, 2009). A widely used instrument for tackling ethical challenges in organizations is the establishment of a code of ethics (Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008; Singh, 2011; Webley and Werner, 2008). Governing institutions, such as Unesco, and sports organizations worldwide, for instance USA Gym and the Badminton World Federation, have also applied this instrument in the context of sports to obtain more ethical behavior in sports organizations. However, the effectiveness of these ethical codes is still heavily debated, as literature mentioned below will show. Systematic research on this topic has been carried out by Helin and Sandström (2007) and Kaptein and Schwartz (2008), who accurately concluded that the results of studies on code effectiveness produce conflicting results.

Moreover, there is no literature when it comes to the effectiveness of these instruments in sports organizations. This is problematic because we cannot simply assume that a transfer from general business organizations to the specific sport context is legitimate. The sport context has several characteristics, such as high media visibility and extreme consumer

loyalty, that together create a unique and particular context (Babiak and Wolfe, 2009). The ethical problems concerning sports organizations are numerous. First of all there are the same issues that afflict organizations in general, for instance, gender inequality (Sibson, 2010) and environmental issues (Wang et al., 2009). Secondly, sports clubs also have to face ethical problems that are specific to this sector, such as match fixing (Hill, 2010), the behavior of fans and parents (Petersen, 2010), the use of performance enhancing drugs (McNamee, 2011), and the manifold discussions on the topic of fair play (Boxill, 2003; DeSensi and Rosenberg, 1996). The specific ethical challenges of the sports context need to be taken into account when studying the determinants of code effectiveness.

The fact that no consensus has been reached on code effectiveness (Helin and Sandström, 2007; Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008), together with the fact that the specific sports situation has not been examined, exposes a research gap and raises the need for investigation of determinants that make a code of ethics a sound and effective instrument to influence ethical behavior, and to offer insights into the use of such ethical codes in sports organizations. This article addresses this research gap by making an inventory of the possible determinants of code effectiveness in sport organizations and by putting the accompanying hypotheses to the test empirically.

### **A Code of Ethics**

In order to study the effectiveness of ethical codes, a definition is necessary to distinguish this type of document from other statements made or used by organizations. Definitions of ethical codes in the literature share two fundamental elements, these being the fact that the document is formal, i.e. written, and that the purpose of the code is to guide behavior. This is explicitly stated in the definition of an ethical code by Kaptein and Schwartz (2008, p.113), that describes a code of ethics as “a distinct and formal document containing a set of prescriptions developed by and for a company to guide present and future behavior on multiple issues for at least its managers and employees toward one another, the company, external stakeholders, and/or society in general”. This definition acknowledges that the code is the result of a process in the organization and not some externally imposed set of rules. The definition is still broad and could be applied to other types of documents that provide instructions. By adding the word “ethical” to the definition, we mark out the sort of behavior that is discussed: “a distinct and formal document containing a set of prescriptions

developed by and for a company to guide present and future ethical behavior on multiple issues for at least its managers and employees toward one another, the company, external stakeholders, and/or society in general". For instance, behavioral guidelines that concern etiquette rather than ethics will be excluded by this addition. This definition clearly sets ethical codes apart from external guidelines, such as laws or codes developed by a professional association, and from other internal codes, such as mission statements (Ho, 2010; Stevens, 2008). In a sports context, such codes apply to sports organizations, such as sports clubs, instead of 'companies' and refers to issues relevant in a sports context.

### **The particular sports context**

Next to the specific challenges that are met in the sports context, we also have to consider the particular setting in which sports take place. The sports domain has a set of distinctive characteristics, each of which alone is not unique, but which together comprise a unique setting. DeSensi and Rosenberg (1996) refer to the fact that management of sport is a service provided by one human being to another, but in which the sport managers themselves frequently do not come face to face with the people affected by their decisions. When it is forgotten that the sport product is about human beings, a potentially dangerous situation is created with a risk of overlooking individual rights and personal concerns. Another differentiating attribute of the sports domain may have to do with the passion and interest the product (the team, the game) generates among fans/consumers (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). This could be an indicator for a larger, more attentive audience when certain behavior occurs (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). Another particularity is the high media visibility, which other organizations do not face in the same way (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009), and which raises the amount of scrutiny in comparison to other spheres of commercial endeavor (Smith & Stewart, 2010). Also the performance measurement is specific, in terms of medals, titles and points scored, and this creates a tension between on-field and off-field (financial) performance (Chadwick, 2009). A particular set of stakeholders is another distinctive feature of the sports business (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009): a sports team cannot operate without the cooperation of sponsors, fans, parents, referees and so on. The high loyalty of sport fans to their organization is also characteristic. The admiration and passion are almost unconditional, which is rare in most sectors (Koenigstorfer et al., 2010; Smith & Stewart, 2010). Another distinct feature is the low degree of substitutability of the sporting product

(Smith & Stewart, 2010), which makes that fans maintain their loyalty to a poor performing team, because there is no easy replacement available. This is different from typical other businesses, such as the car or clothing industry. This unstinting attachment, even when a sport organization regularly under-performs, raises the question whether ethical 'under-performance', i.e. unethical behavior, is as easily tolerated. As Smith and Stewart (2010, p.11) literally state 'Sport can get away with a number of anti-competitive practices that would normally put the CEOs of business enterprises in jail.' All these particularities make ethical decision-making in the domain of sport distinct and challenging (DeSensi and Rosenberg, 1996).

Both this unique setting and the specific ethical challenges of the sports context need to be taken into account when studying the determinants of code effectiveness.

### **Effectiveness of ethical codes**

Research on the effectiveness of ethical codes has produced conflicting results (Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008). Relationships between the presence of an ethical code and the ethical behavior in an organization vary from weak or non-existent, to successful and effective, or even counterproductive in some cases. An elaborate review on the mixed results of code effectiveness research is presented by Helin and Sandström (2007) and Kaptein and Schwartz (2008). Certain authors defend the power of a code to guide and influence behavior for persons when confronted with ethical dilemmas. For instance, Adams et al. (2001) claim that a code of ethics has the ability to provide legitimacy and support for ethical behavior, and serves as a deterrent for those with unethical intentions. Higgs-Kleyn and Kapelianis (1999) argue that a code can act as a way to convince society of their responsible behavior and to protect them against improper demands. Frankel (1996) points out that the development of ethical standards is testimony to the recognition of the moral dimensions of practice. On top of this, absence of a code of ethics may be seen as a lack of interest in or awareness of the importance of ethics (Adams et al., 2001).

In contrast, some authors argue that the use of a code did not reduce violations (McKendall, 2002; Snell et al., 1999) or that the presence of a code could even be counterproductive (Ethics Resource Center, 2004). For instance, Stohs and Brannick (1999, p.324) state "firms with a formal code of ethics will make decisions that are arbitrary and inconsistent". The use

of ethical codes to handle ethical problems has been subject to many other critiques. It is argued that these codes are a form of window-dressing: a cunning form of public relations that serve the organization rather than the public good (Jamal and Bowie, 1995; McKendall 2002). Molander (1987) states that codes are a threat because if something is not stated explicitly in the code, it is not considered as wrong by the users of the code. Also, Magnet (1986) argues that codes foster the belief that individuals are no longer personally responsible for their actions. Other scholars state that they make stakeholders suspicious and raise cynicism (Dobel, as cited in Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008), and that they don't show enough return on investment (Hess et al., 2006).

The great variance in research results can be partly explained by looking at the research methods used in the different studies. The literature reveals two methods that are used to consider 'effectiveness' of ethical codes, namely gathering objective data and studying perceptions of practice. The difference in research methods may contribute to the great variance in results, as is shown by Kaptein and Schwartz (2008).

One method used to assess the effect of ethical codes on ethical behavior in organizations is to measure the number of violations reported (Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008; McKendall, 2002). This is a very unclear way to evaluate the effectiveness of a code. When there is a climate of fear and retaliation, and alienation can occur when someone reports a violation, major problems might remain unreported (Webley and Werner, 2008). Even if violations were reported every time a violation was committed, this is limited as an indicator of ethical behavior. For instance, one could argue that the observed number of violations increases if a code of ethics is effective, as employees are more attuned to such behavior in the organization (Kaptein, 2011; Somers, 2011).

Another frequently used method is asking respondents about their perceptions of practice (Adams et al., 2001; Singh, 2006). This method has limitations, as all self-reported data on perceptions do. When collecting data in this way, they are likely to be affected by social desirability. Subjects could alter their responses to please the interviewers, especially when discussing instances of their own behavior.

Next to the methodological concerns, we share the view of Singh (2011) that the mere presence of a code is possibly too broad a concept to allow us to draw conclusions as to whether the code is taking effect, and that other elements of the establishment of a code of

ethics can contribute to the effectiveness of this instrument. This might explain the fluctuation in research outcomes, because most studies have failed to clarify the degree to which their ambivalent findings arise from factors other than the existence of a code; in particular from process factors determining code effectiveness.

### **Determinants of code effectiveness in the context of sport**

When we consider the establishment of a code of ethics in an organization, we can distinguish four different steps in the process: code creation, code content, code implementation and code administration/enforcement (Schwartz, 2002). We discuss the process of the creation of a code of ethics, the stage in which it is decided who is involved in the formulation of the code, and why and in which manner the code is established and revised (“code creation”). This is followed by the actual design of the code and the shaping of its content (“code content”). When the code is finished, the next step is the implementation. We define this phase as the process of distribution and communication of the code in order for the people involved to know and understand its content, and to embed the statement in the organization. Training, support and reinforcement of the code are also considered as part of the implementation of a code (“code implementation”). Finally, we consider the enforcement of the code of ethics: this refers to how the organization investigates reports of code violation, how it provides sanctions in case of violation of the code, and the rewarding of people who behave consistently with the code, as well as protection when violations are reported (“code enforcement”). Singh’s (2011) determinants of code effectiveness are listed in table 1 and are attributed to these four different processes.

**TABLE 1: POSSIBLE DETERMINANTS OF CODE EFFECTIVENESS , ATTRIBUTED TO THE STAGES OF CODE ESTABLISHMENT.**

Code creation	Code should guide strategic planning Revise a code at least every 2 years Additional to Singh (2011): involvement
Code content	Codes assists with ethical dilemmas Additional to Singh (2011): code specificity (targeted audiences)



Code implementation	Displayed for all to view, Communicated to all employees, Customers should be informed, Suppliers should be informed, Should inform new employees, Have an ethics training committee, Have an ethics ombudsman, Ethics training for all staff
Code enforcement	Consequences for violation, Criterion for employee appraisal, Support of Whistleblowers, Presence of ethical evaluation, Greater need for the code in the last 6 months

Possible determinants of code effectiveness, based on the research of Singh (2011), that we argue differ in relation to the unique domain of sports, are discussed and complemented with other findings from the literature below. This list of determinants forms the basis for our research hypotheses.

### **Code Creation**

Singh (2011) considers code revision as a factor that affects the effectiveness of the code. We see no reason to think this should be any different in the sports context. Code purpose, on the other hand, could be particular to sports organizations. A sports organization can decide to install a code of ethics for a variety of reasons. When we consult the literature, a great number of motivating factors for having a code of ethics emerge, as listed in table 2.

In the sport landscape, this could prove to be an important variable, because sports organizations, as a consequence of their high media visibility, are under a lot of public scrutiny to put ethics on the agenda, and one popular way to meet this requirement is the establishment of a code of ethics. Another driving force to install an ethical code is legislation or institutional pressure (Singh, 2011; McKendall, 2012). The commitment to ethical concerns as a Public Relations (PR) tool is likely to occur in sports organizations, as this is even promoted by some authors (Walker and Kent, 2009; Sheth and Babiak, 2010). However, when the requirement to meet public relations (PR) or institutional obligations is the only motivation to subscribe to a code, this could have a great, possibly detrimental impact on the actual effectiveness of the code. There is a possibility that the code is used as a window-dressing instrument and remains a dead letter.

**TABLE 2: MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR THE ADOPTION OF A CODE OF ETHICS**

Public Relations: for the sake of appearance (Adam et al., 2004), to gain public confidence (Higgs-Kleyn and Kapelianis, 1999), to promote public image (Schwartz, 2001), corporate reputation and brand image (Singh, 2011), to create a more positive impression with stakeholders (Stevens, 2008)

Professionalism: As a marker of the professional character of the organization/sector, to indicate an organization's commitment to ethics (Malloy and Fennell, 1998; Ashkanazy et al., 2000), to enhance the profession's reputation (Frankel, 1996), to convey the message that the corporation is committed to ethical behavior (Malloy and Fennell, 1998; Singh, 2011)

Legal/decretal: compliance with guidelines (Adam et al., 2004; McKendall, 2002; Rodriguez-Dominguez, 2009; Singh, 2011), in defense against legal proceedings (Gaumnitz and Lere, 2004), to avoid legal consequences (Schwartz, 2001)

Ethical: to meet ethical concerns and to encourage ethical behavior (Askanazy et al., 2000), to establish and communicate responsible business practices (Erwin, 2011), to provide ethical guidance and to reduce conflicts (Kaptein and Schwartz, 1998), to promote honest and ethical behavior and to obtain an improvement in corporate culture (Rodriguez-Dominguez, 2009), the provision of consistent normative standards for members (Malloy and Fennell, 1998; Boo and Koh, 2001; Schwartz, 2001), to rally members around the values expressed in the code (Singh, 2011)

*Hypothesis 1a: The effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs differs according to the intentions in introducing it.*

*Hypothesis 1b: The effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs is higher when the motive for code establishment is the improvement of the ethical behavior in the organization.*

Literature has provided us with other factors that could be of great relevance when it comes to establishing an effective code in a sport organization, such as the importance of the participation of members of the organization in the development of ethical standards (Frankell, 1996). This involvement makes the relevance of the code clearer to them. Stevens (2008) points out the need to engage in a collaborative process to create the code and incorporate revisions, in order for the code to be an effective instrument for influencing behavior. This viewpoint is supported by Tucker et al. (1999), who considers the a priori input from members as opposed to simple ratification of an already developed document very worthwhile in the creation of a code of ethics. Sometimes even the participation of different stakeholders involved is considered (Molander, 1987; Webley and Werner, 2008).

In the case of sports, the stakeholders differ from traditional business stakeholders. We consider the internal stakeholders (board of directors, management, coaches, players, medical staff) and the external stakeholders (fans, parents, sponsors). In contrast to the situation in a general business setting, a lot of the stakeholders are volunteers (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). Haivas et al. (2012) states that a climate that supports autonomy has a positive effect on the motivation of volunteers for performing volunteer activities. Whether

the involvement of internal stakeholders increases the effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs has not yet been put to the test.

*Hypothesis 2a: The effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will increase if the internal stakeholders are involved in the creation process.*

*Hypothesis 2b: The effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will increase if the external stakeholders are involved in the creation process.*

### Code Content

Code content is an important determinant of code effectiveness (Singh, 2011). As stated, the sports sector encounters very specific ethical challenges, absent from general business settings, such as doping and Fair Play. We, therefore, consider this factor as different from the general determinant formulated in earlier research (Singh, 2011). A critical aspect of code design is the choice between general precept codes and specific practices codes (Molander, 1987). If a code is very general, it may cause confusion regarding enforcement, whereas, if the code is too specific, it will become too rigid and fixed. A (too) general code contains statements as “be kind” or “behave as a true athlete”, without making clear what is expected and/or forbidden in practice. A very rigid code contains an almost endless list of rules for conduct, without the mentioning of any motivation or rationale for these rules.

Not only the degree of specific guidance is possibly relevant, also the specificity for the sector could be relevant for the code effectiveness. Holder-Webb and Cohen (2012) state that codes should vary from industry to industry and even from firm to firm, based on consideration of their unique ethical issues.

In sport organizations, the content of the code could be a very important variable as well. The effects of a very general precept code, used for all kinds of sports, with several kinds of club features (competitive or not, youth and/or adults,..), will probably differ from the effects of a sport- and club-specific code, with rules adapted and described for every stakeholder.

*Hypothesis 3: The effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will be higher if the content is designed to affect more stakeholders of the sports organization in a specific manner.*

The consideration of the content of a code is undoubtedly of great value, as pointed out by Kaptein and Schwartz (2008). On the other hand some aspects of content-oriented studies use very different and diverse methods, such as grammatical analysis, and are not within the scope of this research.

### Code Implementation

Singh (2011) discusses different aspects of implementation of a code of ethics. We distinguish between communication and other elements of this process, such as training in ethics (on the subjects dealt with in the code) or the possibility to ask questions about the meaning of code statements, or even the example set by other members of the organization.

When considering the particularities of the sport sector, code communication poses a lot of challenges. Not only members, but also external stakeholders, such as fans, parents, and sponsors, and even the media, should be considered in the communication of the code. In many cases, communication with youngsters is also necessary and appropriate forms of getting across one's point have to be considered.

*Hypothesis 4a: the timing of its communication will determine the effectiveness of an ethical code.*

*Hypothesis 4b: the format of its communication will determine the effectiveness of an ethical code.*

Other aspects of implementation are relevant for the code effectiveness, such as ethics training, an ethics committee, and an ethics ombudsman (Singh, 2011). Because of the high complexity of the matters at hand, a determining factor in the effectiveness of the ethical code could be the availability of support for the interpretation and employment of its statements ('helpdesk'). We distinguish between two types of authoritative sources to turn to when questions are raised about the code of ethics: the internal stakeholders (board, management, coaches, ombudsman, ethical committee) and the external supporting bodies, such as the sports federations, which can support the clubs in these matters.

*Hypothesis 5a: The effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will be higher when an internal helpdesk is available.*

*Hypothesis 5b: The effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will be higher when an external helpdesk is available.*

## Code Enforcement

### Consequences for violations

Codes should contain statements on sanctions and enforcement provisions as well as descriptions of methods to investigate and detect violations (McKendall, 2002; Molander, 1987). In the context of sports, as opposed to corporations in general, these elements will be determined not only by the code itself but also by other authorities, such as the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). Unlike in other organizations, the scrutiny of the media and the public also play a big part in this process (Babiak and Wolfe, 2009).

Hypothesis 6a: The effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will be higher when sanctions in case of code violations are stated.

Hypothesis 6b: The effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will be higher when procedures in case of complaints are stated.

Hypothesis 6c: The effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will be higher when procedures in case of violations are stated.

### Support of whistle-blowers

In the sports domain, retaliation on the reporting of code violations can not only take place in the organization itself but can also be engaged in by the public (fans), media and/or sponsors, because of their extremely high involvement (Babiak and wolfe, 2009; Stewart, 2007). Therefore, strong protection for whistleblowers seems an important factor in increasing the effectiveness of a code of ethics. Singh (2011) confirms this intuitive idea in his empirical study. As stated by Webley and Werner (2008), fear of retaliation might be an element to explain the gap between the presence of a code and the effective influence on ethical behavior.

*Hypothesis 7: The effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will be higher when stakeholders are protected against retaliating in case of whistle-blowing.*

## Methodology

### *Scale Items*

This research empirically examines the effectiveness of codes of ethics in sports organizations. The independent variables are elements in the establishment of the code of ethics, which were chosen because of their relevance as shown by the literature. We can categorize them according to the distinction in the processes mentioned above (Table 3).

TABLE 3. INDEPENDENT VARIABLES CONSIDERED IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CODE OF ETHICS.

#### Code creation

1. Motivation for the establishment of the code of ethics
2. Involvement of internal and external stakeholders in the creation process

#### Code content

3. Target audiences

#### Code implementation

4. Communication of the code: timing
5. Communication of the code: format
6. Availability of an internal helpdesk
7. Availability of an external helpdesk

#### Code enforcement

8. Support for whistle-blowers
9. Procedure complaints
10. Procedure Violations
11. Sanctions

We designed a questionnaire to examine the elements of the establishment of a code of ethics ('Questionnaire 1'). The administrations of the sports organizations were asked if their sports club had an ethical code. If so, they were asked specific questions relating to the design, the content, the implementation and the enforcement of the code. First, the motivation for the establishment of the code was assessed by offering different intentions (enhancing ethical behavior in the club, professionalization of the club, PR/image-building, decretal) and asking the sports organizations to answer on a 5-point scale to what extent these motivations played a role. Next to this question, there was the option to mention other motivations than those stated. Concerning the creation of the code, the respondents

were asked whether the different internal (board, management, coaches, athletes) and external (parents, fans, sponsors) were involved in the design of the ethical code. The collaboration of each group of stakeholders was assessed on a 5-point scale. This was followed by the question on the code content, namely the specific targeting of the different stakeholders by the ethical code. Again, a 5-point scale allowed the organizations to express this for the board, the management, the coaches, athletes, parents, fans and sponsors. A next set of questions applied to the communication of the code. Respondents answer (yes/no) if the code was communicated at several points in time: at the registration, when questions arise, at the time of complaints and/or when violations occurred. Other moments could be reported by the organizations. The same type of question was formulated on the format of the communication of the code: did this take place on the website, by means of a workshop, by means of a flyer, in the newsletter and/or with a poster. Again, other types of format could be added by the organizations themselves. Another set of questions assessed the availability of a 'helpdesk': which group(s) could be consulted when questions or dilemmas concerning the ethical code arose. The respondents could express the possibility to turn to these different groups (board, management, coaches, other athletes, ethical committee, ombudsman, sports federation) for guidance in the application of the ethical code and for ethical challenges at hand. The final part of this questionnaire aimed to assess the enforcement measures in the sports club. Organizations were asked to report (yes/no) if there were measures for sanctioning in the code, as well as procedures in case of complaints, procedures in case of violations, and measures to protect whistle-blowers against retaliation.

Our dependent variable is the effectiveness of the code, which we believe can be assessed by measuring the Ethical Climate Index (ECI) of the sports organizations. This instrument assesses the Ethical Work Climate (EWC), which is defined as "the shared perceptions of the content and strength of the prevalent ethics-related values, norms, attitudes and behaviors of the members of a social system" (Arnaud, 2006). Ethical Work Climate reflects the organizational procedures, policies, and practices with moral consequences. Such climates arise when members believe that certain forms of ethical reasoning or behavior are expected standards or norms for decision-making within the organization (Cullen et al., 2003).



The ECI has four components: Collective Moral Sensitivity, including Norms of Moral Awareness and Empathetic Concern, Collective Moral Judgment, Collective Moral Motivation and Collective Moral Character (Arnaud, 2006). We argue that the ECI is a valuable and adequate indicator for the ethical behavior in sports organizations, and therefore can prove its usefulness to evaluate code effectiveness in the sports context. The ECI not only considers the vantage point of the manager but also takes into consideration the members' view of the ethical behavior and practices in organization. This specific questionnaire ('Questionnaire 2') is composed of 36 questions, which can be filled in by using a five-point answering scale. For the purpose of this study, the original ECI-scale was translated to Dutch according to academic standards. The reliability of the ECI (Cronbach's alpha = 0.880) and its subscales (Moral sensitivity: Cronbach's alpha = 0.764, Moral judgement: Cronbach's alpha= 0.685; Moral motivation: Cronbach's alpha= 0.881, Moral character: Cronbach's alpha= 0.954) was evaluated as good and found to be entirely sufficient.

#### *Sampling frame & profile of respondents*

Our sample population consists of Flemish sports clubs from six different sports disciplines: judo, equestrian sport, gymnastics, soccer, badminton, and tennis. These sports disciplines were selected because they represent popular sports and have a variety of characteristics, such as team and individual sports, non-contact and contact sports. The sports federations in which these clubs are organized were asked to cooperate and to invite their members to fill out our questionnaires. The questionnaire on the establishment of the ethical code (= Questionnaire 1) was e-mailed to the administration of 2788 sports organizations of the six different disciplines: judo (230 clubs), equestrian sport (486 clubs), gymnastics (286 clubs), soccer (1402 clubs), badminton (229 clubs) and tennis (45 clubs). Responses were received from 557 clubs, for a response rate of 20%.

The second questionnaire, the ECI, was delivered to the administration as well, and they were then asked to spread this questionnaire to the members of the sports organizations (board members, management, trainers, athletes). Questionnaire 2 was also posted on the website of the according sports federations and on the facebook pages of the sports organizations, to reach the members of the club in a direct way. A total of 2242 responses were gathered for Questionnaire 2, the ECI of the organizations. To be able to assess the ECI,

we wanted at least three responses for each sports organization, to get a reliable score. This was the case for 149 sports organizations. For this proportion of sports clubs, we have data on both the establishment of the code and on the ECI in their organization. The average number of responses per club was 12.25, with a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 44. Athletes were the dominant group of respondents for the ECI questionnaire (82.9%). The ECI for each organization was calculated as the mean score of the responses per club. The extensive questionnaires played an important role in the nonresponse of certain clubs. Another reason for the rather low response is the condition of at least three members from each club to take part in the survey.

## **Results**

Results show that the majority of the sports organizations, namely 53%, had some sort of ethical code. Looking at the characteristics of the creation of the code, we see that the motivation for the creation of an ethical code is mostly (83.4%) the intention to promote more ethical behavior in the sports club. This is followed by the motivation to enhance the image of the club (79.8%), the motivation to professionalize the club (75.0%) and the will to follow an external decree on 'Ethically Responsible Sport' as was issued by the Flemish Government (68.8%). Other reasons to establish an ethical code were marginal (2.2%).

The involvement of different stakeholders (both internal and external) was analyzed and results show that coaches are predominantly involved in the process of code creation (81.8%). Also members of the board (67.6%), management (54.0%) and athletes (51.5%) are involved in this process in most of the cases, whereas the parents offer input in 40.3% of the ethical codes in sports clubs and fans are consulted in 22.8% of the cases. Sponsors are only involved in the creation of the code of ethics in a minority of the clubs (9.9%).

When it comes to the code content, we see that most codes contain guidelines for the athletes (96.3%), coaches (88.0%), for the members of the board (72.6%), and the parents (65.8%). Fans are targeted in 51.1% of the clubs. Almost half of the ethical codes have guidelines for managers in them (49.6%), whereas sponsors are explicitly mentioned in 19.3% of the cases.

Communication of the code of ethics is mostly done at the time of registration (68.6%). Clubs do not have the tendency to communicate at other points in time, such as when

ethical questions arise (38.6%), when violations occur (29.7%) or when there are complaints (27.6%). In 11.3% of the sports clubs, the code is not explicitly communicated at a certain point in time.

Next to the timing of the communication, the format of the communication of the ethical code was also considered. 34.2% of the clubs displays the ethical code on its website, 28.9% organizes a specific meeting to spread the ethical code, 26.2% of the clubs hand out leaflets with the ethical code, 23.6% has enclosed the code of ethics in an internal newsletter to the members of the club, and in 15.0% of the cases, the ethical code is communicated by means of a poster in the club.

Enforcement measures are present in most of the ethical codes. Sanctions are mentioned in 64.6% of the codes, procedures in case of complaints in 56.4%, procedures in case of violations in 61.8% and 57.4% of the documents contain guidelines on whistle-blowing.

The next step in our analysis is to look at the influence of these characteristics on the effectiveness of the code, i.e. the ethical climate and its subscales in the sports clubs. Multiple regression was performed and the results of the effects of the different variables on the ECI were complemented by looking at the different subscales of the ECI in more detail: the Collective Moral Sensitivity, Collective Moral Judgment and Collective Moral Character and the Collective Moral Motivation of sport organizations (Table 4). When taking into consideration the sports discipline, we found an effect of the presence of a code of ethics: in judo, badminton and gymnastics, the presence of a code of ethics had a significant positive effect on the ethical climate. A closer look at the different subscales revealed the significant positive relationship of these disciplines with the collective moral motivation of the sports clubs. Both badminton and judo showed a significant positive relationship with the collective moral character as well. After taking into account the effect of the sports disciplines, we investigated the influence of the presence of an ethical code on the ethical climate in the sports club. Multiple regression showed that there is no significant effect (Table 4). When looking at the different subscales of the ECI in more detail, the presence of an ethical code showed no significant effect on the Collective Moral Sensitivity, Collective Moral Judgment, Collective Moral Character, or on the Collective Moral Motivation of sport organizations (Table 4).

When the rationale to establish a code was motivated by the will to enhance ethical behavior in the sports club, this had a significant positive effect on the ECI and on the Collective Moral Motivation. A negative significant effect on the Collective Moral Motivation was found when the motivation for establishing a code was the professionalization of the sports club.

The involvement of the coach in the design of the ethical code has a significant positive effect on the Collective Moral Judgment of the sports club. When athletes are involved in this creation process, this had a positive significant effect on the Collective Moral Sensitivity and the Collective Moral Character. This contrasts with the findings on the involvement of external stakeholders, which has no significant effect on the ECI or its four subscales.

Specifically targeting an audience has no effect on the ethical behavior, except for the explicit mentioning of the management in the ethical code. This significantly raises the Collective Moral Judgment in the sports club.

The timing of communication plays no role in the effectiveness of the ethical code, except for the communication at registration. When this happened, the Collective Moral Motivation in the sports club was significantly higher. Another aspect of the communication, the format, had no effect on the ECI or its subscales, except when posters were used. In this case, the Collective Moral Character was significantly lower.

The availability of a helpdesk did not have a significant effect on the ECI. However, when the athletes were considered as the authority to turn to in case of questions or dilemmas, this undermined the Collective Moral Judgment significantly. The explicit mentioning of procedures in case of violations or complaints in the ethical code had a significant negative effect on the ECI and the Collective Moral Sensitivity in the sports club. The explicit mentioning of sanctions and the procedures in case of complaints in the code did not have a significant effect on the ECI and its subscales. The presence of protection of whistleblowers against retaliation in the ethical code was related to a significantly higher Collective Moral Sensitivity in the sports club, but did not have an effect on the ECI and the other subscales.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The results of our study reaffirm the specific position that sports organizations take in the business world. This study reconfirms the important finding of Singh (2011), that the mere

presence of a code of ethics has no effect on the ethical behavior in organizations. This finding goes also against the statement of Adams et al. (2001) that the existence of a code of ethics and its symbolic significance is enough in itself to serve as an enhancer of ethical behavior. Often times, most of the attention in research is given to this dichotomy, rather than looking at the contextual factors that could determine the effectiveness of the instrument. Hopefully, this study can contribute to the abolishment of this kind of oversimplification of the matter.

Our findings show determinants of the effectiveness of ethical codes in sport organizations that are not discussed in the literature so far or that differ from determinants in a general business setting.

The influence of the motivation for code establishment was thus far not investigated in the literature. The hypothesis that the intention has an influence on the ethical climate was confirmed by our results. More in depth, when the club is inspired to establish a code of ethics because it wants to promote ethical behavior, this will have a positive effect on the ethical climate in the organization. We believe that the genuine intentions to improve ethical behavior in sports organizations could possibly trickle down to the people involved and inspire and motivate them. The fact that an ethical code is solely installed for window-dressing/image-building has no effect on the ethical behavior. The only positive determinant of the effectiveness of a code of ethics, when it comes to motivation, is the intention to make the sports organization more ethical. On the other hand, the motivation for code establishment could also have a negative impact on the moral motivation of the organization, when this is driven by the intention to professionalize the sports club. When the motivation is professionalization of the sports clubs, the motor for establishing an ethical code is the will to mark the professional character of the organization/sector, to indicate an organization's commitment to ethics (Malloy and Fennell, 1998; Ashkanazy et al., 2000), to enhance the profession's reputation (Frankel, 1996), to convey the message that the corporation is committed to ethical behavior (Malloy and Fennell, 1998; Singh, 2011). This motivation could result in a greater chance that the code remains a document filled with hollow phrases, once this hurdle in the step of professionalization of a club is taken and the message is communicated by the club. This is possibly less the case when true ethical concerns are the motor for the establishment of this instrument.

When looking further at the process of code creation, we notice that the involvement of internal stakeholders as such is no guarantee for creating more ethical behavior. This contrasts with Tucker et al. (1999) who state that the input from members of the organization in general is stimulating the importance and acceptance of the instrument. It also challenges the findings of Stevens (2008), who advises managers to engage in the creation process as a success factor for code effectiveness. Our results do show that it is vital to include the coaches in this process in order to improve the collective moral judgment in the organization. Fortunately, these groups are often involved when designing an ethical code, as our findings show. The reason that codes are more effective when coaches are involved, is possibly due to the fact that they are in a good position to raise awareness in the groups that have to carry through the desired actions. A gap between policy and practice is a risk in the establishment of a code of ethics (Webley and Werner, 2008). Coaches are possibly the elected persons to know which ethical risk and challenges must be considered in the ethical code of the sports club, as they experience the day-to-day problems personally, and therefore could function as an antidote to this risk of the code becoming too theoretical. Athletes are involved in the creation of the code in 56% of the cases. Their involvement should be encouraged, as it stimulates the collective moral sensitivity and the collective moral character in a positive manner. This could be due to the fact that it raises awareness within the largest group that has to carry through the desired actions. The bottom-up approach could give the athletes a sense of being heard in matters that (most of all) concern them. Day-by-day management has to be aware of their major role in guiding ethical behavior, both as a role model and as an actor when reporting and sanctioning unethical behavior. The involvement in the design of the code could possibly raise this awareness and therefore increase the positive effect of the ethical code, as was suggested by Tucker et al. (1999). Because the coaches and certainly the athletes are mostly volunteers, it is important to ensure their sense of autonomy, as this has a positive effect on the motivation of volunteers for performing volunteer activities (Haivas et al., 2012). Active consideration of their opinions and concerns in the process of designing the code, could meet this requirement. In contrast to findings in other businesses (Mollander, 1987; Webley and Werner, 2008) the involvement of all the groups of internal stakeholders is not what determines the effectiveness of the code of ethics.

The involvement of the external stakeholders in the design of the code is not essential if an organization wants to effectively guide ethical behavior by means of an ethical code. Although fans are the customers in the sports business and can play an important role in the creation of an atmosphere that tolerates, induces or penalizes what happens on the sports field, their involvement in the process of code creation has no influence on the behavior of the internal stakeholders.

Our findings show that it is not necessary to target all stakeholders explicitly. This implies that general ethical principles can be sufficient, rather than creating a specific code for each division. There is however one exception to this, when it comes to management. We see that explicitly mentioning the management and formulating specific statements for their conduct, increases the effect of the code on the collective moral judgment on the sports club significantly. This could be because their role in 'typical' ethical issues in sport, such as violence and doping, is often overlooked and all eyes are on the athletes themselves. By raising their awareness and by stressing their responsibilities, a more ethical climate can be achieved by a code of ethics. Management could perhaps be more able to react when complaints or violations are reported, whereas coaches or athletes have less powerful means (such as sanctioning or banning) to stand up to unethical behavior. On the other hand, at this level is it also possible to ignore unethical behavior or to make people keep quiet about these issues. Therefore, it is of great importance to actively target this group of people that are active gatekeepers for ethics in sports organizations.

Our study of the process of implementation reveals some interesting determinants of code effectiveness as well. Our findings show that the timing of the code communication has no significant impact on the effectiveness of the instrument. This result is in contrast with the study on code effectiveness by Singh (2011), which shows that the communication with new employees is a positive determinant. However, when the code is communicated at the registration of the members (which is an event that is repeated every year, as opposed to starting at a job), this has a significant positive effect on the collective moral motivation in sports clubs. An explanation is that the sports clubs put an emphasis on the importance of this document by introducing it at this point in time. It could come across as an informal condition to register and therefore gain authority. This could then again be in agreement with Singh (2011): the start of a job and the registration in an organization are two clear

points in time that could be an effective moment to define the expectations of the organization on ethical behavior.

Another contrast with this study (Singh, 2011) comes from our findings on the format of communication. The fact that the code is displayed for all to view is a significant negative determinant in sport organizations, as opposed to the situation in general business settings. The mere display of a poster could possibly be used as an alternative for a thorough communication strategy and therefore undermine the effectiveness of the ethical code. Although we found no other effects of the communication format on the effectiveness of the code, the effect of communication could still be pivotal in considering the impact of the code. In this study only formal communication formats were considered, whereas the informal communication through the demonstration of behavior by the peers in the organizations, or the informal communication through leading-by-example could turn out to be major factors in successfully guiding ethical behavior, as was stated by Ho (2010).

Considering the complexity of the ethical issues at hand, it seems necessary to provide a 'helpdesk': a well skilled and informed source that can help the sport organization that is confronted with ethical questions, complaints or violations. This is sometimes handled internally, by the board of directors, the management or the coach, or externally, for instance by the sports federation or by an ethical committee. However, their availability for this purpose does not have an effect on the ethical climate in the organization. This is in agreement with general business findings (Singh, 2011), that show that the availability of an ethics committee or an ethics ombudsman is not found to be a determinant for code effectiveness in this context. The availability of athletes as the persons to turn to when one has questions or dilemmas concerning ethics, has a significant negative effect on the collective moral judgment of the sports clubs. Possibly athletes are not considered as experts or authorities on this subject and therefore their role as 'helpdesk' does not grow much confidence in the ethical challenges at hand.

An important element in the enforcement of a code of ethics is the provision of measures for sanctioning. Our research shows however that such statements do not have an effect on the ethical behavior of people in sports organizations. This could be explained by the fact that a lot is at stake for employees, whereas (recreational) members of a sports clubs possibly do not risk the chance of losing their job or having to pay large financial penalties. The same goes for incorporating procedures in case of complaints. As our results show, an



ethical code should be more seen as an instrument to prevent unethical behavior rather than as a means to remedy this problem. This is confirmed by the finding on the explicit mentioning of procedures in case of violations in the ethical code: this has a significant negative impact on the ethical climate and the collective moral sensitivity in the organization.

Another element in reporting and sanctioning unethical behavior is the role of the whistle-blower. There is a lot at stake when making unethical actions public: scandal for the sports organization involved, with possible consequences for the whistle-blower and the rest of the club, shaming by the public and even by the own fans, possible disbelief and even retaliating by each of the different stakeholders. Because of the high media visibility and the extreme fan loyalty, blowing the whistle is possibly even harder in this sector than in other contexts. Therefore, we expect the protection of the whistle-blower to be of great significance in sports clubs. However, our results surprise with the finding that the provision of protection for whistle-blowers in sports organizations is not a significant factor in determining the effectiveness of the ethical code. The only significant positive effect was found in relation to the collective moral sensitivity. This determinant thus raises awareness, but does not have an effect on the total ethical climate within a sports club. This result poses a contrast with findings in general business context, where support of whistle-blowers did have an effect on the effectiveness of the code (Webley and Werner, 2008; Singh, 2011).

## **Conclusions**

As codes of ethics become increasingly important in sports clubs, the study of their effectiveness should be high on the agenda of research in sport science. The existing literature shows a diversity of results and is not able to answer the question as to whether codes are effective instruments or not. Next to this inconclusive debate about the effectiveness of ethical codes in general, we discovered a research gap on the topic of ethical codes in sports organizations. Research on code effectiveness in the specific context of sports is, therefore, highly recommendable.

We argue in favor of taking into account several factors that accompany the establishment of a code of ethics in an organization, as opposed to considering the mere presence of a code of ethics for the assessment of its effectiveness. A rigorous inventory of the possible

determinants surrounding code establishment has been made (Singh, 2011). However, the transfer to the field of sports poses a challenge because of the different characteristics and ethical challenges of this particular domain. Therefore, we presented an overview of the different variables and discuss their interpretation in sport organizations. We state that these determinants are critical to consider when assessing the effectiveness of ethical codes in sports organizations.

Although the mere presence of an ethical code seems to be ineffective to guide ethical behavior, this is still no reason to throw this instrument overboard in the battle of malicious events in organizations. A code of ethics could be a sound starting point to enhance ethics in organizations and prove to be successful when the right conditions are in place. It would be naïve to believe in the almighty power of the ethical code, but on the other hand it would be all too easy to throw out the baby with the bath water and consider this document as pointless. We found that certain factors do play a role in making the code effective, such as the involvement of the coach in the design, the motivation for establishment and the explicit targeting of the management.

#### *Limitations*

Several factors limit this study. First, only some of the aspects of code content that could have an influence on code effectiveness are discussed. For instance, the syntax used in ethical codes was not considered in this article, although, it could be a possible determinant of code effectiveness. Earlier research (Farrell & Farrell, 1998; Malloy, 2002) has shown that for instance functional grammar (the use of passive versus active verbs, the use of moderators, etc.) can play a role in the code's effectiveness. Research into these formal aspects of codes of ethics can reveal useful information. Other variables that could influence the effectiveness of the code are informal methods of communication, such as the role of the managers to lead by example. The fact that only six sports disciplines were studied is also a limitation to our research, as well as the rather limited response. Another limitation could be the dependent variable. This scale is based on the respondent's perception of ethical behavior and therefore may turn out to be a skewed proxy for what it actually happening in the organization. However, this limitation should be minimal as it concerns a validated instrument for which social desirability bias was tested and considered acceptable. Also the anonymity of the respondents and promised confidentiality of the responses were

actions undertaken to mitigate this methodological concern. As this is not a longitudinal study, care is warranted in the causal interpretation of the results.

#### *Future Research*

We believe a thorough and rigorous empirical study on the effectiveness of ethical codes in sports organizations is urgent and absolutely necessary, given the large investments of time, money, and energy the clubs are spending to adapt this approach. Next to the possible determinants that were presented by Singh (2011) and examined in this study, code content should be considered when examining effectiveness. The study should be complemented by other research designs, in which a combination of observational and attitudinal measures of the ethical behavior in sports clubs is undertaken. Next to this, causal relations should be affirmed by longitudinal data.

The comparison with findings on the effectiveness of ethical codes in other sectors should remain a point of interest. Not only sports clubs, as those that were subjected to study in this research, but also other organizations in the sport domain have codes of ethics, for instance the International Olympic Committee, the FIFA, etc. It would be very useful to take a look into the prevalence and effectiveness of codes of ethics in the mentioned organizations. This is certainly an important remark for future research.

Together with our findings, the identification of what elements in the content of an ethical code are important determinants of its effectiveness, can shed a light on what works and what does not, and can be adapted into guidelines for the establishment of ethical codes in sports clubs and possibly also in other organizations.

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TABLE 4. EFFECT OF CODE CHARACTERISTICS ON THE ETHICAL CLIMATE INDEX.

n=77	Ethical Climate Index		Moral Sensitivity		Moral Judgment		Moral Motivation		Moral Character	
*p<0.05	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
<b>Discipline</b>										
Judo	.304	3.584 *	.146	1.626	-.135	-1.503	.326	3.832 *	.247	2.884 *
Badminton	.317	3.700 *	.125	1.370	.027	.298	.274	3.184 *	.236	2.716 *
Tennis	.015	.179	-.015	-.167	.079	.914	.038	.467	-.097	-1.173
Equestrian Sports	.099	1.216	.029	.336	-.092	-1.071	.107	1.311	.001	.008
Gymnastics	.219	2.600 *	.036	.398	-.013	-.145	.235	2.775 *	.168	1.971
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.109		-.007		.002		.102		.086	
F-value	4.618		.808		1.066		4.360		3.796	
<b>Ethical code</b>										
Ethical code	-.029	-.362	.058	.674	.161	1.907	-.145	-1.800	.067	.816
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.103		-.010		.020		.116		.084	
F-value	3.847		.747		1.511		4.230		3.267	
<b>Motivation</b>										
Ethical behavior	.230	1.972 *	.169	1.301	-.189	-1.465	.303	2.617 *	.089	.717
Professional	-.091	-.783	.010	.078	.248	1.925	-.289	2.508 *	.099	.797
Decree	.097	.999	.040	.366	.181	1.678	.087	.902	.017	.164
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.201		.005		.026		.217		.093	
F-value	3.859		1.060		1.303		4.157		2.163	
<b>Involvement in code creation</b>										
Board	-.081	-.765	-.074	-.654	.151	1.342	-.012	-.114	-.113	-1.030
Managers	-.032	-.306	.128	1.133	.111	.805	-.129	-1.214	-.024	-.219
Athletes	.199	1.523	.302	2.151 *	.293	2.192 *	-.050	-.377	.270	1.985 *
Parents	-.100	-.805	-.111	-.837	-.070	-.498	.000	-.003	-.170	-1.320
Fans	.067	.583	.084	.689	-.149	-1.257	.089	.772	.071	.595
Sponsors	-.026	-.212	-.101	-.776	-.127	-.933	.140	1.149	-.059	-.466
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.148		.022		.044		.135		.082	
F-value	2.442		1.186		1.384		2.294		1.740	
<b>Target</b>										
Board	.137	1.245	.086	.749	.039	.331	.095	.858	.129	1.116
Managers	.023	.205	.150	1.273	.292	2.410*	-.152	-1.333	.002	.018
Coaches	-.073	-.630	-.134	-1.110	-.108	-.867	.035	.297	-.032	-.267

n=77	Ethical Climate Index		Moral Sensitivity		Moral Judgment		Moral Motivation		Moral Character	
*p<0.05	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Parents	.102	.729	.197	1.345	.156	1.038	-.056	-.393	.102	.692
Fans	.004	.030	.173	1.255	-.184	-1.031	.053	.399	.003	.023
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.160		.077		.020		.134		.070	
F-value	2.727		1.758		1.182		2.410		1.681	
<b>Communication: timing</b>										
At registration	.154	1.473	.118	1.015	-.014	-.114	.222	2.136*	.058	.519
In case of violations	.012	-.761	-.014	-.111	-.068	-.523	-.002	-.021	-.007	-.059
In case of complaints	-.084	.102	-.023	-.187	.084	.672	-.103	-.942	-.095	-.811
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.174		-.017		-.049		.187		.072	
F-value	3.377		.812		.479		3.580		1.868	
<b>Communication: format</b>										
Flyer	1.181	.241	.188	1.576	.155	1.288	.009	.085	.092	.802
Workshop	.921	.359	-.035	-.277	.107	.846	.098	.833	.098	.811
Newsletter	-1.789	.077	-.134	-1.032	-.180	-1.373	-.170	-1.398	.049	.390
Poster	-1.562	.122	-.145	-1.271	-.152	-1.319	-.005	-.045	-.287	-2.610*
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.162		.010		-.013		.122		.084	
F-value	2.992		1.100		.872		2.432		1.945	
<b>Helpdesk</b>										
Management	0.45	.411	.069	.597	.103	.892	-.112	-1.031	.139	1.249
Coaches	-.050	-.463	-.085	-.739	.025	.218	-.011	-.107	-.143	-1.295
Athletes	-.040	-.377	.108	.943	-.236	-2.062*	-.005	-.048	.055	.498
Ombudsperson	.036	.327	.033	.276	.148	1.245	-.036	-.326	.037	.325
Ethical Committee	.039	.372	.104	.917	-.046	-.405	-.031	-.289	.069	.637
Sports Federation	.000	-.001	.145	1.255	.040	.342	-.068	-.631	-.025	-.226
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.118		-.005		-.008		.117		.069	
F-value	2.096		.960		.938		2.082		1.606	
<b>Enforcement</b>										
Procedure in case of violation	-.333	-2.227*	-.369	-2.293*	-.181	-1.042	-.092	-.579	-.245	-1.557
Procedure in case of complaint	.268	1.604	.276	1.536	-.054	-.279	.133	.749	.242	1.374

n=77	Ethical Climate Index		Moral Sensitivity		Moral Judgment		Moral Motivation		Moral Character	
*p<0.05	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Protection of whistle-blowers	.203	1.652	.310	2.344 *	.178	1.253	.030	.226	.228	1.760
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.241		.123		-.018		.140		.160	
F-value	4.614		2.593		.795		2.857		3.168	



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## Ethical Codes in Sports Organizations: Classification Framework, Content Analysis and the Influence of Content on Code Effectiveness.

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### **Abstract**

Sports organizations face various ethical challenges. To tackle these, ethical codes are becoming increasingly popular instruments. However, a lot of questions remain concerning their effectiveness. There is a particular lack of knowledge when it comes to their form and content, and on the influence of these features on the effectiveness of these codes of ethics. Therefore, we developed a framework to analyze ethical codes and used this to assess codes of ethics in sports clubs from six disciplines (soccer, gymnastics, badminton, equestrian sports, tennis and judo). The form and content characteristics of the codes were tested for their impact on the ethical climate of sports clubs. Our results show that most codes focus on the themes of integrity, and on solidarity among the members of sports clubs. Deontological phrasing is dominant in ethical codes in sports clubs. The occurrence of comprehension aids, such as examples, and procedural content, such as the mentioning of sanctions, is low. When it comes to code effectiveness, i.e. the influence on the ethical climate, we see a positive significant effect of the use of consequentialist oriented statements, and of the combination of regulatory and inspirational phrasing. Also the presence of explicit guidelines for the members of the board had a positive significant affect. This shows that codes should be a source of inspiration and stimulate moral awareness, rather than merely guide behavior by simple rules. Other content elements do not influence code effectiveness, suggesting that ethical codes merely have a function of raising ethical awareness in sports clubs. These results help to shed light on what it takes for a code of ethics to become a useful and effective instrument to tackle unethical behavior in sports clubs.

**Keywords:** code content, code of ethics, ethical climate index, sports organizations

### **Introduction**

Ethical codes are a common approach to confront ethical problems in the business world (Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008; Singh, 2011; Webley and Werner, 2008). Organizations turn to these instruments for the promotion of ethical behavior, for the communication of their

commitment to ethical business practices as well as for the reprimanding of internal unethical behavior. The business of sport is no exception to this, as was shown at the London 2012 Olympic Games, where the World Badminton Federation disqualified several highly ranked contestants for breaching the ethical code for players (World Badminton Federation, 2012). This demonstrates how ethical codes have gained prestige and authority in the sports sector, as they have in more traditional business settings. Ethical codes are a prominent part of a formal ethics program, which is a key element in the development and maintenance of ethical behavior in an organization, according to Schwartz (2013). To date, this theory has not been put to the test in the sports sector and there has been no research on the occurrence and effectiveness of ethical codes in this specific context. In this paper, the definition of an ethical code by Kaptein and Schwartz (2008, p. 113) is used. These authors describe a code of ethics as “a distinct and formal document containing a set of prescriptions developed by and for a company to guide present and future behavior on multiple issues for at least its managers and employees toward one another, the company, external stakeholders, and/or society in general.” By adding the word “ethical” to the definition, we mark out the sort of behavior that is discussed and by replacing the word “company” by the term “organization”, we acknowledge the occurrence of ethical codes in other contexts, such as sport clubs: “a distinct and formal document containing a set of prescriptions developed by and for an organization to guide present and future ethical behavior on multiple issues for at least its managers and employees toward one another, the company, external stakeholders, and/or society in general.”.

A large number of studies have been devoted to the existence and effectiveness of such ethical codes, but the results remain inconclusive (Helin and Sandström, 2007; Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008). Singh (2011) has established a theoretical model on code effectiveness, in which the content of these ethical codes plays an important role, next to a group of five other variables (i.e. code purpose, implementation, internal communication/enforcement, external communication, and recency of code utility). The influence of form and content of the ethical codes is often overlooked, despite the fact that these factors might be important to explain large differences in results on effectiveness.

Singh (2011) urges the development of a method to measure the quality of content of ethical codes and to establish a link between this quality and the effectiveness of the code. Kaptein (2011) and Kaptein and Schwartz (2008) agree that it is relevant to study the content



of the code and its relationship with unethical behavior. Despite the number of content studies found in the literature, the research gap on how content can influence output, i.e. the effectiveness of the code, has not been filled (Helin and Sandström, 2007).

Studies on the influence of the content of ethical codes are available but offer insufficient insight into this matter, mostly because their methodology does not consider all the relevant elements, or because they report results that contradict one another. For instance, Gaumnitz (2002, 2004) and Erwin (2011) thoroughly examine many aspects of code content, such as focus of the statements, tone and presentation, but do not include the presence of examples and the ethical viewpoint that is used, which could be relevant variables (Malloy, 1998; Farrell, 2000). Furthermore, variables that do not strictly relate to content but rather concern code development, implementation or communication issues are considered as content variables and thus influence the analysis. For instance, Erwin (2011) considers the public availability of the document as a content variable, while we argue that this is a matter of communication. Due to the lack of a comprehensive instrument for content analysis, the construction of a solid framework to analyze the content of ethical codes is a first step toward a better understanding of what elements are vital in a code of ethics in order for it to be an effective instrument to guide ethical behavior.

The mixed results on code effectiveness can also be partly attributed to the use of different methods to define and examine effectiveness. In literature, we find several authors who apply the number of violations in an organization as a measure of code effectiveness (McKendall, 2002; Kaptein and Schwartz, 2008). However, certain objections can be formulated against the validity of this method. For instance, when there is a fear of reporting unethical behavior and whistleblowers are not sufficiently protected against retaliation, a large proportion of the problems might remain unreported (Webley and Werner, 2008). Even if violations were reported every time a violation was committed, this is limited as an indicator of ethical behavior. For instance, one could argue that the observed number of violations increases if a code of ethics is effective, as employees are more attuned to such behavior in the organization (Kaptein, 2011), a hypothesis that is also supported by Somers (2001). Another method for the assessment of code effectiveness is turning to the perception of practice by members of the organization (Adams et al., 2001; Singh, 2006). Of course, this method has its limitations as well. The fact that data are collected by means of self-reporting could pave the way for social desirability in responding to questions.

Another complicating factor in drawing conclusion on the effectiveness of ethical codes in sports organizations is the fact that we cannot consider sports to behave as any other business setting. The sports sector has a particular set of characteristics (Babiak and Wolfe, 2009) and this could influence the occurrence, use and effectiveness of ethical codes. The high media visibility (Babiak and Wolfe, 2009) for instance, could increase the need for tangible commitments of ethical responsibility because the amount of scrutiny in comparison to other spheres of commercial endeavor is raised (Smith & Stewart, 2010). Another characteristic is the specificity of the stakeholders at hand: youth, sponsors, fans, parents, referees and so on (Babiak and Wolfe, 2009). The extent to which these stakeholders are included in the code affects content and use of the ethical code. Also the ethical challenges are very distinct in this sector: more general organizations do not have to face problems such as matchfixing, doping, and aggression. Another distinct feature is the low degree of substitutability of the sporting product (Smith & Stewart, 2010), which is different from most other businesses. In addition, another important influencing factor in the evaluation of ethical behavior is the passionate, almost unconditional admiration and loyalty of fans to their sport organization (Babiak and Wolfe, 2009). As Smith and Stewart (2010, p.11) literally state 'Sport can get away with a number of anti-competitive practices that would normally put the CEOs of business enterprises in jail'. The low product substitutability and high loyalty of fans, even when a sport organization regularly underperforms or doubtfully excels, raises the question how unethical behavior is treated by highly loyal stakeholders. Together all these characteristics make up for a specific business setting and this fact does not allow us to simply transfer general findings on ethical codes to the sports sector.

#### *Framework*

To address the issues stated above, the present study deals with the construction of a comprehensive framework for content analysis of ethical codes, investigates the form and content of ethical codes in sports organizations, using this newly established framework, and studies the potential influence of code form and content on the effectiveness of the code. The present study differs from earlier ones in the larger number of codes (119) that were analyzed. This research extends the work of others in several ways, by providing a comprehensive framework for analysis of code content in general and a contribution to the understanding of the occurrence and effectiveness of ethical codes in sports organizations in

particular. It sheds new light on the topic of ethical codes in the sport context, whereby the requirements made by Kaptein (2008) to consider content when studying ethical codes, have been met.

A comprehensive framework for the analysis of content and form of ethical codes is not readily available. Both Gaumnitz (2002, 2004) and Erwin (2011) have established a classification scheme, but some essential variables are lacking and other variables that they do incorporate in the classification are not relevant to the analysis of content and/or form, such as the display of the code.

Several authors have mentioned variables that can be assessed to describe the form of codes of ethics. We will discuss all these variables systematically below, and evaluate if they are of importance in the setting of ethical codes in the sports context. Assumptions are then formulated regarding the effect of these code variables on the effectiveness of the code, i.e. the ethical climate in the sports club.

#### Length and Focus of the code

Several authors take the length of the ethical code, i.e. the number of statements and/or the number of pages, into account when analyzing the content (Farrell, 1996; Gaumnitz, 2004). Whilst length is an important dimension, a lot of information is lost when only this measure is used to describe the form of the document (Gaumnitz, 2004). It does not capture the attention that each theme in the code has received. For instance, a code can contain a lot of statements, but only cover one topic, or it can contain the same number of statements and cover several topics. Therefore, it is also important to consider if different themes are present in a code of ethics. In our classification framework, we include length (both number of pages and number of statements) as well as focus (number of themes).

A1: the length (i.e. number of pages) of the ethical codes in sports clubs will have an influence on its effectiveness, i.e. on the ethical climate in the club

A2: the number of statements in a code of ethics in sports clubs has an impact on its effectiveness

A3: the focus of the ethical code in sports clubs will have an influence on its effectiveness

## Thematic content

When we consider focus in our framework, this applies to the different themes that are present in a code, but this variable does not assess the content of these themes. This thematic content is another relevant variable to analyze.

Themes are categorical classes to describe the specific ethical issues that are being tackled. Because sport has very specific ethical challenges, it is necessary to include relevant themes, i.e. respect for diversity, fair play, solidarity, children's rights in sports, inclusion, and physical and psychological integrity. Respect for diversity is explained as the fact that in a sports club, there should be room for everyone, irrespective of their race, gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, origin or religion. An important emphasis is put on racism, as this is a persistent problem in the sports setting (McNamee, 2010; Wagner-Egger et al., 2012; Burdsey, 2012). Another theme is fair play, which concerns respect for the rules and the spirit of the game (Simon, 1991; DeSensi and Rosenberg, 2010; McNamee, 2010). The violation of fair play is at the center of unethical behavior in sports: cheating, matchfixing, doping and violent behavior on the field are unfortunately widespread (Maennig, 2005; Hill, 2009; Emrich & Pierdzioch, 2013; Gould, 2013). Solidarity is the theme that deals with both respect for the members of the club and with creating a feeling of unity among the members of a sports club (Fair Play International Committee, 2013). Improving the cohesion among people is often seen as one of the important goals of sports (Pain et al., 2012), and therefore it is worth investigating if a code of ethics pays attention to solidarity. For instance, codes can provide guidelines for conflict-handling in a sports club (Holt et al., 2012). We also consider children's rights in sports as a theme: the belief that every child should have the opportunity to compete in an appropriate environment, without experiencing unhealthy pressure from parents and/or coaches, and with attention for the child's autonomy and the parental concern for the child's well-being (Weber, 2009; Petersen, 2010; Sagar and Lavalee, 2010; Hartil, 2013). The theme 'inclusion' emphasizes that efforts should be undertaken to make sports accessible for disabled persons and persons that in other ways encounter barriers to engage in sports (Boxill, 2003; McNamee, 2010; Fitzgerald and Stride, 2012). The final theme is physical and psychological integrity, by which we capture the idea that all means should be used by sports clubs to guarantee the protection of its members against any form of intimidation, violence, aggression and bullying (Boxill, 2003; DeSensi and Rosenberg, 2010; McNamee, 2010). Unfortunately, sports club are still confronted with

sexual, psychological and physical abuse (Stirling et al., 2011; Marks et al., 2013; Parent and Hlimi, 2013). It is worthwhile to look into the occurrence of guidelines in ethical codes that aim to identify and prevent instances of abuse and harassment to assure the health and safety of participants in the sport environment.

A4: the themes in the content of the ethical code in sports clubs will impact the effectiveness of the code

### Ethical Orientation

Some studies not only look at the themes of the statements in ethical codes, but consider their ethical orientation as well. For instance, Getz (1990) makes the distinction between deontological and consequentialist oriented statements. In the first case, the primary determinant of ethical behavior is the duty to follow rules. The consequences or possible consequences of behavior are of secondary importance to the intent (DeSensi and Rosenberg, 2010). This is not the case in the consequentialist oriented ethical theories, where the outcome of action is the dominant concern, rather than the means and intent of the act. As a result, a consequentialist-based statement will prescribe a certain behavior, and will indicate the rationale for this behavior as well. This is opposed to a deontological statement on ethical behavior, where only the obligation of following a certain duty will be mentioned, without a rationale or justification (Malloy, 1998). As DeSensi and Rosenberg (2010, p. 74) state on deontology, 'it does not matter whether the consequences of behavior are good or bad. One's only duty is to adhere to accepted and well-established moral standards.'. A third ethical orientation that forms a base for statements and guidelines is called 'Virtue ethics'. In this theory the point of departure is the idea that a virtuous character is what is needed to make sound ethical judgments and behave in an ethical manner. Virtuous character traits are sufficient to attain ethical behavior and a virtuous person has no need to be guided by ethical rules or obligations (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010). To tackle an ethical challenge, one does not have to look for rules or duties, but rather envision an ideal type of virtuous agent who would respond to this challenge. For instance, when faced with an ethical dilemma in sports, one would consider how an imaginary ideal sportsman would react in this particular situation, based on his/her virtues, such as sensitivity, compassion or respect. This type of ethical guidance could be found in the ethical codes of sports clubs. For instance, a certain statement said 'Act like a worthy athlete when

you lose a game'. This division according to ethical orientation is also followed by Malloy (1998, 2002). Although expressed in other words, a similar classification is made by Tucker (1999) and Farrell and Cobbin (1996) in their studies on content analysis of ethical codes.

All three orientations hold risks and advantages and this could affect the organization's ethical behavior. The frequent use of deontological statements holds the risk that the codes come across as rigid and do not involve the audience in the act of moral deliberation and judgment. With consequentialist theories, there is a risk of ignoring or overlooking values when the focus lies only on the consequences of an action (DeSensi and Rosenberg, 2010). For instance, when a statement points out that the goal of the team should be to always perform in their best way, it could happen that certain values, such as equal participation, are trampled. The virtue ethics approach has the risk of being too implicit. For instance, the guideline "when you lose the game, act as a worthy athlete", without the explanation of what is meant by this in practice.

We will include ethical orientation (i.e. deontological vs. consequentialist vs. virtue ethics approach) in our classification framework.

A5: the effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will be influenced by the ethical orientation of the code

## Tone

Tone is often considered a relevant variable when analyzing the content of ethical codes. We can see a distinction between on the one hand, an inspirational/directing ("thou shalt") tone, and on the other hand a regulatory/proscriptive tone (Gaumnitz, 2004). A similar distinction is found in the formulation of the statements, i.e. positive ("thou shalt") versus negative ("thou shalt not") statements (Tucker, 1999; Gaumnitz, 2004). Malloy (1998) calls this aspect the 'mood of the message'. We include both distinctions in our classification framework.

We will not expand this by assessing the linguistic characteristics of the document, as this is a proxy for code tone.

A6: the effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will be influenced by the tone of the code

### Comprehension Aids

Another variable to benchmark codes of ethics is the availability of comprehension aids (Erwin, 2011). In this case, a comprehension aid is an example to clarify the meaning of statements in the ethical code and to help with interpreting and applying these statements in the reader's situation. Other elements that can be considered as comprehension aids are checklists, FAQs and Q&As. We will include this variable in our classification framework for content analysis of ethical codes in sports clubs.

A7: the effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will be influenced by the presence of comprehension aids.

### Procedural content

Guidance for reporting and sanctioning of unethical behavior and statements can be included in the ethical code. These variables, which we call 'procedural content', are included in our framework for classification, as was the case in the research of Cressey and Moore (1983), Farrell (1996), Caracso and Singh (2003), Erwin (2011) and Lugli (2009).

A8: the effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will be higher if procedural content is available in the code

### Target audience

The content of an ethical code can explicitly target certain stakeholders. In the case of sports, the stakeholders differ from traditional business stakeholders (Babiak and Wolfe, 2009). We consider the internal stakeholders (board of directors, management, trainers, athletes) and the external stakeholders (fans, parents, sponsors). All these different groups contribute to the sport setting and its ethical climate, and, therefore, can give rise to different statements on their specific ethical responsibilities in the code of ethics. For example, some youth clubs explicitly mention guidelines for parents in their documents. Some authors refer to this variable as the 'focus' of the code (Wiley, 2000; O'Dwyer, 2006), however, this term can be confused when applied to describe the number of themes (Gaumnitz, 2004). Therefore, we prefer the term 'target audience', and use this term in our classification framework.

A9: the effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs will be influenced by the target audience

## **Methodology**

### *A. Content analysis of ethical codes in sports organizations*

Within Flanders, the boards of directors of 549 sports clubs from six different sports disciplines cooperated in a study on the presence of ethical codes (ICES, 2012). The targeted population included judo, equestrian sport, gymnastics, soccer, badminton, and tennis. These sports disciplines represent popular sports and a variety of characteristics, such as team and individual sports, non-contact and contact sports. 57.7% of the clubs in this sample indicated that they had a code of ethics. This is our population of interest.

The 316 sports clubs that claimed to have a code of ethics were asked to send us an original copy of this document. The board of directors was addressed in Flemish and received details (mail, telephone) to contact us in case of questions or doubts. An additional round of code gathering was performed by telephone and e-mail. These actions supplied us with 119 ethical codes to analyze, representing a response rate of 37.8%.

The codes of ethics were analyzed using our framework. To ensure reliability between different observers, a random set of 10% of all the codes were also rated by another researcher. We attained a substantial inter-rater reliability agreement of 0,72 ( $p < 0.001$ ).

### *B. Influence of Code Content on Effectiveness*

The method we used to evaluate the effectiveness of the ethical codes is the assessment of the perceptions of practice by the members of the sports club. More specifically, we measure the Ethical Climate of the organization, which is defined as “the shared perceptions of the content and strength of the prevalent ethics-related values, norms, attitudes and behaviors of the members of a social system” (Arnaud, 2006). Ethical Climate reflects the organizational procedures, policies, and practices with moral consequences. A sound concretization of the Ethical Climate of an organization was composed by Arnaud (2006), namely the Ethical Climate Index (ECI). The ECI consists of four components: Collective Moral Sensitivity (MS), including Norms of Moral Awareness and Empathetic Concern, Collective Moral Judgment (MJ), Collective Moral Motivation (MM) and Collective Moral Character (MC) (Arnaud, 2006). The ECI is a valuable and adequate indicator for the ethical behavior in



organizations (Arnaud, 2006), and therefore can prove useful in evaluating code effectiveness in the sports context, when adjusted to this setting. The ECI concept describes the type of ethical decision-making that is in place, as well as the level of moral thinking that dominates the respondents' behavior. It not only considers the vantage point of the manager but takes members' view of the ethical behavior and practices in organizations into account. To tailor the ECI questionnaire to our study design, the original ECI scale was translated into Flemish according to scientific standards. Subsequently, the terminology of the general business setting was adjusted to that of the sports context. For instance, the term 'employees' was replaced by 'athletes'. We will refer to this form of the ECI as the s-ECI in this manuscript.

The sports clubs whose response indicated that they have a code of ethics were contacted to fill out the s-ECI. This questionnaire was delivered to the board, and the board was then asked to spread this questionnaire to the members of the sports organizations (board members, management, trainers, athletes). The questionnaire was also posted on the website of the according sports federations and on the Facebook pages of the sports organizations, to reach the members of the club in a direct way. To be able to assess the s-ECI, we needed at least three responses for each sports organizations, to get a reliable score (Arnaud, 2006). This was the case for 62 sports clubs (52,1% of the clubs for which code were analyzed). For these clubs, we have their ethical code, as well as the data on the s-ECI in their organization. The extensive questionnaire played an important role in the nonresponse of certain clubs. In particular, the requirements to have a) a board member filling out the questionnaire b) having an ethical code c) providing this code and d) a minimum of three responses for each organization, made that a lot of clubs were excluded. The average number of responses per club was 6.81, with a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 44. Athletes were the dominant group of respondents for the s-ECI test (82.9%). The s-ECI for each organization was calculated as the mean score of the responses per club.

The assumptions are analyzed via different statistical procedures. Independent t-test sampling was used to study the relation between the ECI-scores and respectively the qualitative variables in our framework, such as ethical orientation and tone. MANOVA tests were performed to study the relation between the ECI-scores and the quantitative variables, such as number of statements, in our framework. Assumptions about data normality and homogeneity were tested and met.

## Results

### A. *Content Analysis*

The codes of ethics were classified according to our framework. We found that the variables in our classification framework, based on the literature, were sufficient for the content analysis of ethical codes.

Descriptive statistics revealed that 26.9% of the sports clubs in our sample adopted the Panathlon Declaration on Ethics in Youth Sports, in addition to their tailor-made code of ethics. 9.24% of the clubs only had the Panathlon Declaration and no other code next to this document.

When we look at the length of the code, 16.0% of the clubs had a code that was less than half a page. 31.1% of the clubs had a code with a length from one half to one page and 52.9% of the clubs had a code of ethics that contained more than one page. When we look at the number of statements, the ethical codes had an average of 25.2 ( $\pm 23.8$ SD) statements. The minimum was as few as two statements, the maximum number of statements in an ethical code was 141.

Related to the thematic content of the ethical codes, the theme 'solidarity' appeared in 89.9% of the clubs, followed by 83.2% for the theme 'physical and psychological integrity'. 'Fair play' was found as a theme in 55.5% of the codes, 'Inclusion' in 42.9% of the codes, 'Respect for diversity' in 36.1% of the codes, and 'Children's rights in sports' were mentioned in at least one statement in 42.9% of the cases. Further analysis showed that when it comes to level of detail, the theme of 'solidarity' was expressed most often (average number of statements: 25.2). This theme was followed by 'physical and psychological integrity' (4.9), 'fair play' (3.0), 'children's rights in sport' (2.2), 'respect for diversity' (1.1), and 'inclusion' (0.9) respectively. Examples of guidelines for each theme from ethical codes are given in Table 1.

TABLE 1: EXAMPLES OF GUIDELINES FOR THE DIFFERENT THEMES IN THE CODES OF ETHICS IN SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

Theme	Examples
Solidarity	<p>“The members of our club are not supposed to beat each other, but to learn from each other and support each other.”</p> <p>“Every member should have an equal amount of time to participate, as our coaches have the task to enhance the capabilities of all the players. ”</p>
Physical and psychological integrity	<p>“No smoking is allowed in our sports club.”</p> <p>“Bullying is not accepted in our organization and will be punished.”</p>
Fair play	<p>“Performance-enhancing products are forbidden as they go against the spirit of fair play.”</p> <p>“Do not go against the judgment of the referees.”</p> <p>“Do not corrupt matches.”</p> <p>“Play by the rules.”</p>
Children’s rights in sport	<p>“We urge parents to withhold from negative remarks on the players, the coaches and the referees during and after the match.”</p> <p>“Do not put too much emphasis on the aspect of winning, but rather stimulate the pleasure your child experiences during the game.”</p>
Respect for diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Every member of the club has to respect the religious, moral and political beliefs of the other members.”</li> </ul>
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Differences in motorial skills are respected in our sports club.”</li> </ul>

94.1% of the codes contained deontological statements, 40.3% had consequentialist statements and in 24.4% of the ethical codes appeared statements that were formulated from a virtue ethics point of view. Half of all the ethical codes showed a combination of ethical orientations. 46.6% of the codes had only deontological statements, 5.1% contained only the consequentialist orientation and there were no codes with merely solely virtue ethics statements. The statements in ethical codes were mostly deontological in nature. Considering the overall group of statements, across the different codes, it shows that 91.7%

of all statements were deontological, whereas 6.4% were consequentialist and only 2.9% of the total number of statements were rooted in virtue ethics.

When it comes to tone, 21.4% of the codes were inspirational, versus 43.6% that were strictly regulatory in nature. In 35.0% of the cases, the codes contained both inspirational and regulatory statements.

Comprehension aids were rather limited. Examples were used in only 28.0% of the ethical codes. The same was the case for Procedural statements. 42.4% of the ethical codes mentioned sanctioning. No statements on protection for whistleblowers were present in any of the codes.

The athletes were the dominant audience that was targeted by ethical codes. 90.7% of the codes contained statements that were directed towards them. Most codes (70.6%) had statements for the parents. Almost half of the codes (45.8%) had statements for the trainers, and 35.6% addressed the fans. This was followed by the board of directors, who were targeted in 29.7% of the codes. Sponsors were not mentioned in the codes.

#### *B. Influence of Code Content on Effectiveness*

When it comes to code length, the results showed no significant effect ( $F=1.456$ ,  $p=.232$ ) of length (number of pages) on the scores of the s-ECI and its four subscales. Another content variable that we assessed was the level of detail, namely the number of statements of the different themes in the ethical code. Plotting and analyzing the data gave us valuable information about this aspect of the code of ethics. We saw that there was a significant difference in effect on the s-ECI and on Moral Motivation between codes with 30 or less statements on the one hand and more than 30 statements on the other hand, as was shown in Table 2. Codes with over 30 statements scored notably lower on the overall Ethical Climate Index and on the subscale for Moral Motivation than codes that contain 30 statements or less. The focus of the ethical code (number of themes) showed no significant effect ( $F=.938$ ,  $p=.337$ ) on the scores of the s-ECI and its four subscales.

TABLE 2: THE EFFECT OF THE NUMBER OF STATEMENTS IN A CODE OF ETHICS ON THE ETHICAL CLIMATE INDEX AND ITS SUBSCALES.

(N=62)	Codes with ≤30 statements	Codes with > 30 statements
Moral Sensitivity	3.21	3.19
Moral Judgement	3.12	3.14
Moral Motivation	4.19 **	3.73**
Moral Character	3.74	3.62
s-ECI	3.56 *	3.44*

*\*the difference is significant at level  $p < .05$ , \*\* the difference is significant at level  $p < .005$*

The thematic content did not have a significant effect on the score of the ECI and its subscales: the presence of guidelines concerning children’s right ( $t=.478$ ;  $p=.635$ ), inclusion ( $t= -.224$ ;  $p=.823$ ), fair play ( $t=1.106$ ;  $p=.314$ ), integrity ( $t=-.353$ ;  $p=.731$ ), diversity ( $t=1.414$ ;  $p=.167$ ), and solidarity ( $t=.817$ ;  $p=.443$ ) did not significantly impact the effectiveness of the code.

The ethical orientation of the statements in ethical codes was shown to have a significant effect on ethical behavior. Codes with consequentialist expressions showed a trend towards positive significant effect for s-ECI ( $p=0.057$ ). The occurrence of statements of different ethical orientations in the same code, as opposed to codes with statements rooted in only one orientation, showed a trend toward a significant effect ( $p=0.053$ ) on the Moral Motivation Subscale. When a code contained statements from only one orientation, the moral motivation was higher than when different orientations were combined in the same code.

When we consider the tone of the statements in the ethical codes, there appeared to be a multivariate significant effect (Wilk’s Lambda = .039). A univariate significant effect was found for the scores on subscales Moral Judgment and Moral Motivation as was shown in Table 3. Post hoc tests showed that the score on Moral Judgment was significantly higher when the ethical code contained a combination of both inspirational and regulatory statements ( $3,21 \pm 0.28$ ) than when only regulatory ( $3.09 \pm 0.15$ ) statements or only

inspirational (3.01 ±0.16) were included. Moral Motivation score was significantly higher when inspirational statements (4.35 ± 0.33) were used to phrase the guidelines in the ethical code than when regulatory (4.19 ±0.60) or combined (3.77 ±0.53) statements were formulated.

TABLE 3: THE EFFECT OF THE COMBINATION OF ETHICAL ORIENTATIONS IN A CODE OF ETHICS ON THE ETHICAL CLIMATE INDEX AND ITS SUBSCALES

(N=62)	Codes with 1 orientation	Codes with only deontological orientation	Codes with >1 orientation
Moral Sensitivity	3.20	3.20	3.21
Moral Judgement	3.12	3.13	3.13
Moral Motivation	4.17A	4.12*	3.87A,*
Moral Character	3.73	3.74	3.65
s-ECI	3.55	3.65	3.48

<sup>A</sup>trend toward significance:  $p = .053$

\* the difference is significant at level  $p < .05$

TABLE 4: THE EFFECT OF THE TONE IN A CODE OF ETHICS ON THE ETHICAL CLIMATE INDEX AND ITS SUBSCALES

(N=62)	Regulatory	Inspirational	Combination
Moral Sensitivity	3.20	3.19	3.20
Moral Judgement	3.09	3.10	3.21*
Moral Motivation	4.19	4.35*	3.77
Moral Character	3.68	3.87	3.68
s-ECI	3.54	3.61	3.49

\* the difference is significant at level  $p < .05$

Analysis showed that the number of comprehension aids had no significant effect ( $t = .943$ ;  $p = .349$ ) on the s-ECI and its subscales. Neither the fact that a code of ethics stated sanctions

( $t=1.111$ ;  $p=.272$ ) had a significant effect on the ethical climate in the sports club. This held for all the constructs of the s-ECI.

The target audience of the ethical codes did not have an influence on the s-ECI, except when the code contains explicit guidelines for board members (Table 5). When this is the case, we see a significant higher score in S-ECI, Moral Motivation and Moral Character. A positive significant effect on the Moral Judgment subscale is found when the code contains guidelines for athletes. However, this does not affect the overall s-ECI.

TABLE 5: THE EFFECT OF TARGET AUDIENCE IN A CODE OF ETHICS ON THE ETHICAL CLIMATE INDEX AND ITS SUBSCALES

N=62	board	coaches	athletes	parents	fans
Moral Sensitivity	774	-220	346	-502	711
Moral Judgment	-215	-177	2.667*	184	-322
Moral Motivation	2.092*	1.166	-1.655	-485	1.735
Moral Character	2.317*	128	-1.007	213	1.006
s-ECI	2.097*	623	-861	-268	1.797

*\*the difference is significant at level  $p<.05$*

## Discussion

The majority of the sports clubs in our sample had a certain form of ethical code. When we looked more closely to the content of such codes, we found that almost all sports clubs (92.4%) had a specific code, tailor-made for their organization. This shows that sports clubs prefer to formulate their own statements on what they think is right and important in their specific organization. Even if an existing document is available, as was the case here, the

majority of the clubs choose to control the code of ethics by adding or changing elements. The Panathlon code is adopted by 9.24% of the sports clubs in the study. The Panathlon Declaration was designed by Panathlon International, which was founded in 1951 in Venice as an organization concerned with ethical values in sport. Nowadays, the organization has spread to 30 countries, covering some 300 clubs and is recognized by the IOC. Their slogan is 'ludis lungit' which means 'connected through the game'. Panathlon Flanders was founded in 1978 and is a club of former Flemish managers of sport federations, athletes and sports lovers, who aim to defend, protect and promote norms and values and fair-play in sport.

The most dominant themes were 'solidarity', 'integrity', and 'fair play'. These represent quintessential values in the domain of sport and seem to be self-evident in sports organizations. This does not go for 'children's rights in sport'. A lot of clubs do not make specific guidelines for children or do not consider them as a group with own needs and characteristics. However, the understanding of the tension between children, performance and parents, or between sport and school, for instance, could benefit from explicit statements for minors by the organization. Inclusion and diversity are very much underrepresented. This could be due to different reasons. It could be the case that a lot of organizations do not have the expertise to handle this subject in their code. In this case, the federation or a specialized organization (e.g. anti-discriminatory groups) could be helpful in learning the sports clubs to engage in these values in an appropriate way. Another explanation could be that sports organizations do not consider these values as their responsibilities and therefore do not elaborate on this, but rather add one general guideline that can be referred to in case someone (e.g. the federation, an organization for disabled persons, a government) asks about this. However, the statement "we do not discriminate in our organization" is not very helpful in making concrete decisions about who can attend the club and at what level.

In our study, the assumption was made that the length (both number of pages and number of statements) of the ethical code in sports clubs could influence its effectiveness. Some sports clubs seem to believe that a certain length is vital for the effectiveness of an ethical code in sports clubs. Codes with no less than 141 statements were found. However, a higher number of statements did not show a significant positive relationship with the ethical climate in these organizations. On the contrary, when a code had more than 30 statements, we see a decline in effectiveness. Probably, ethical codes with too many statements



discourage the target audience and are often displayed and/or signed without being read. Although length and number of statements were already assessed by other researchers (Farrell, 1996; Gaumnitz, 2004), their role in the effectiveness of the code was not looked into before this study. Too expansive documents could contribute to the fact that sometimes ethical codes remain hollow phrases rather than becoming a vivid and effective instruments for guiding behavior in organizations.

Looking at the different themes that were articulated in ethical codes, solidarity and integrity were predominant. Little attention was given to the themes inclusion and respect for diversity. Possibly, the latter are included as a form of window-dressing, to emphasize the political correctness of the organization. On the other hand, fair play statements are found in the ethical code of most sports clubs. This could have to do with the fact that 'fair play' is a value that is really at the heart of sports and distinctly appeals to the sportsmanship in athletes. However, neither the focus (number of themes) or the thematic content itself showed to influence the code's effectiveness in sports clubs, as was assumed based on study of earlier research findings.

Considering ethical orientation, deontology is undoubtedly the most prevalent foundation for the formulation of the statements in codes of ethics. This could be explained by the fact that sports clubs choose to establish distinct and clear rules, hoping that this will create consistent guiding and uniform treatment of all possible problems. As this ethical orientation is predominant in ethical codes in sports clubs, attention should be given to these possible risks and disadvantages. Consequentialism and virtue ethics are rarely applied in codes of ethics in sports clubs. This could be due to the desire of sports clubs to guide behavior in a very strict ways is the case for the rules in the sports discipline itself. Another explanation can be the lack of trust of the sports club in the fact that persons involved in ethical challenges will be able to judge (potential) behavior when consequences or virtues are formulated, rather than distinct rules.

The prevalence of deontological statements follows the results that were found in other sectors. The deontological orientation outweighs the other orientations in previous studies in other sectors (Malloy, 1998; Malloy, 2002). The assumption was made that ethical orientation of the ethical code in sports clubs has a significant effect on the ethical behavior. Consequentialist statements are indeed related to the ethical climate in sports. This is no surprise, as the focus in this ethical orientation is on the careful deliberation of (possible)

consequences, rather than simply adhering to a strict rule (Morgan, 2007; DeSensi and Rosenberg, 2010). Our findings seem to contrast with the opinion formulated by Malloy (2002), that the prevalence of deontology holds no risk for the effectiveness of the code, because “most will follow codes unquestioningly and no rationale is required” (Malloy, 2002, p.457). However, this finding is supported by the results that state that codes with a single ethical orientation have more effect on the ethical climate in sports clubs than codes based on more than one ethical orientation. This effect is even stronger when the orientation at issue is deontology. This suggests that adherence to one viewpoint of ethics in the whole code of ethics is important and that this condition could even overrule the possible risk of rigidity of deontological codes.

Another element of the content of ethical codes that was assumed to affect ethical behavior in sports clubs is the tone. This turned out to be the case, as Moral Judgment was significantly higher when the ethical code contained a combination of both inspirational and regulatory statements than when only regulatory statements or only inspirational were included. The target audience wants both clear guidance on how to behave in certain situations, as well as more philosophical aspirations. On the one hand, the mere mentioning of guidelines could come across as too rigid and on the other hand, a focus on inspiration rather than rules, could come across as non-binding and does not achieve pragmatic guidance in everyday situations. Farrell (1998) underwrites our position that empowerment in decision-making via tone in ethical codes can encourage the audience to behave in an ethical manner. Inspirational elements seem of great value when it comes to motivating people to do the right thing. Their presence is vital for the moral motivation in sports clubs. Because they often consist of greater goals and objectives, rather than practical rules, they could engage people more, as is the case for consequentialist statements, as we considered earlier.

Comprehension aids, such as the presence of examples that accompany the statements in the ethical code, did not prove to enhance ethical behavior in sports clubs, in contrast with our assumption. This is also in disagreement with the assertion by Erwin (2011), who states that comprehension aids are one of the critical components to benchmark code quality. The finding that examples do not contribute to a better ethical climate in sports clubs may come as a surprise, as the use of an example makes the statements in the code much more specific and brings these to life. The reader can experience how the code works and how it should be

applied. The use of examples reconciles the distance between the sometimes theoretical content of the code and the actual application of the guidelines. However, our results show that the lack of tangible applications of the statements in most of the codes did not impact the effectiveness of the code.

Most of the codes did not mention sanctioning or did not have guidelines for reporting of violations. This is in contrast with findings in general business settings, where no less than 86.6% of the codes had such procedural content (Singh, 2006). However, the author states that this does not guarantee a more effective code of ethics. Procedural content was put forward as an essential element to ensure the effectiveness of a code of ethics by O'Dwyer and Madden (2006). In contrast to our assumption, our study found that the occurrence of procedural content did not have a significant impact on the ethical behavior in sports clubs. The explicit mentioning of sanctions did not seem to affect the audience. A possible explanation could be that a lot of the people involved in sports are volunteers, who do not fear substantial consequences, such as resignation or financial implications, when violating a rule, which could be more prevalent in other businesses.

Our findings show that it is not necessary to target all the internal and external stakeholders explicitly. This implies that statements that could guide the behavior of all these groups, can be sufficient, rather than creating a specific code for each division. There is however one exception to this, when it comes to board members. We see that explicitly mentioning the board of directors and formulating specific statements for their conduct, increases the effect of the code significantly. This could be because their role in 'typical' ethical issues in sport, such as violence and doping, is often overlooked and all eyes are on the athletes themselves. By raising their awareness and by stressing their responsibilities, a more ethical climate can be achieved by a code of ethics. The board of an organization could perhaps be more able to react when complaints or violations are reported, whereas coaches or athletes have less powerful means (such as sanctioning or banning) to stand up to unethical behavior. On the other hand, at the board level is it also possible to ignore unethical behavior or to make people keep quiet about these issues. Therefore, it is of great importance to actively target this group of people that are active gatekeepers for ethics in sports organizations.

What our results reflect most, is that certain content elements in a code of ethics, such as the number of statements and the tone of the statements, as well as including guidelines for the board of directors, seem to have an impact on its effectiveness. Other elements do not

have a significant impact on the ethical climate. However, this does not necessarily mean that a well-designed code of ethics is not a useful instrument in sports clubs. It would be too easy to discard the meaning and function of ethical codes because not all the elements of the content make a difference for the ethical climate in an organization.

The actual achievements of the ethical code could still be raising moral awareness in the sports clubs. It is a mean by which the sports club can show its ethical concern and state the importance of ethical behavior in the organization, rather than a practical instrument to guide this behavior according to certain guidelines. This view is supported by Adams et al. (2001), who argue that codes play a symbolic role and serve as a signal as to whether the organization is concerned with ethics. The signaling function of the presence of a code of ethics could have an impact on the ethical behavior in sports clubs, as people are explicitly told that this subject does matter. Rather than telling literally to people how to (not) behave, it calls upon their own sense of responsibility in ethical dilemmas and urge them to behave in an ethically guided manner. This is supported by our finding that consequentialist statements influence the ethical behavior in sports clubs in a positive way. Consequentialism has the tendency to engage the audience and to offer insights in the rationale of behavior, rather than just postulating the desirable outcome.

## **Conclusion**

This study provides an examination of the content analysis of ethical codes in sports and contributes to the understanding of the influence of code content on code effectiveness. Our study purpose meets the requirements of Kaptein and Schwartz (2008) to take content of codes into consideration when investigating their effectiveness. The importance of examining the code content was also put forward by Singh (2011). To date, no findings are available in the literature on the topic of ethical codes in sports clubs, let alone on their effectiveness. The results of our research demystify some speculations on the role that ethical codes can play in promoting ethical behavior in sports clubs, and in other non-profit organizations that rely heavily on volunteers to function smoothly.

Kaptein and Schwartz (2008) and Singh (2011) acknowledged the contribution of code content in code effectiveness. However, they did not put forward which content determinants actually influence the effectiveness of the code. The main goal of this study

was to identify these determinants. Our results support the importance that Kaptein and Schwartz (2008) and Singh (2011) rightly attach to code content. We can conclude that most ethical codes were longer than half a page and contain 17 statements on average. Solidarity and physical and psychological integrity were the dominant themes in the codes of ethics. The occurrence of comprehension aids, such as examples, and of procedural content, such as measures for sanctioning, was quite low. For a code to become an effective tool, it is to be recommended to design the code as a concise document with a combination of regulatory and inspirational statements, as this provides a significant positive effect on ethical behavior. When it comes to ethical orientation, consequentialist statements are most effective in the promotion of ethical behavior. The explicit mentioning of the ethical responsibilities of the board members is also significant to enhance ethical behavior in sports organizations. These findings suggest that a code should be more than a simple list of rules to adhere to, but rather an instrument that inspires the audience to engage in the responsibilities that being part of a sports clubs entails. These results could be useful for other business sectors as well, especially for organizations that depend heavily on volunteers, such as the cultural sector and youth organizations.

The effectiveness of the code could also be achieved by its implementation in everyday situations, rather than by its exact content alone, as was suggested by Singh (2011). This possibility provides interesting material for further research that explores the influence of communication and application of ethical codes on their effectiveness. The findings of this study teach us something about what motivates people to behave in a more ethical manner and about the possible barriers to tackle unethical behavior in organizations. A code of ethics can still be a good starting point to enhance ethical awareness and could influence the ethical climate in organizations if it does not remain a gathering of hollow phrases, but becomes a usable tool. Our results however show that a sound designed ethical code is not enough to have an impact on the ethical climate of the organization. Other mechanisms must be in place to realize a sound ethical climate or for the instrument to have an influence. This could have to do with accompanying measures, either related to the code (such as communication measures) or unrelated to the code (such as workshops on ethics). Future research should therefore concentrate on unraveling the meaning and function of the presence and implementation of ethical codes, both in sports organizations and in other businesses.

As this is the first study on the content of ethical codes in sports clubs, there is still a lot of room for further research, in which some limitations of this study can be overcome. A limitation of this research is the potential bias of social desirability when measuring ethical behavior. It is also advisable to unravel the exact effects of tone and ethical orientation, in order to be able to lend support to sports clubs in designing the most effective and suitable code of ethics.

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## **Appendix: Panathlon Charter for Sporting Rights of the Young**

- The right to practice sports
- The right to have fun and play like a child
- The right to benefit from a sound environment.
- The right to be treated with dignity.
- The right to be surrounded and trained by competent persons.
- The right to attend training sessions adequate to one's rhythms.
- The right to confront oneself with young people having the same opportunity of success.
- The right to participate in competitions adequate for one's age.
- The right to practice one's sport in absolutely safe conditions.
- The right to have adequate rest periods.
- The right not to be a champion.



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## Conceptualizations of Fair Play: A Factorial Survey Study of Moral Judgments by Badminton Players.

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### **Abstract**

A lot of discussion in sports is taking place on whether certain behavior should be considered as Fair Play or not. This moral judgment on Fair Play is influenced by the conceptualization of the term Fair Play as either 'respect for the rules' or as 'respect for the spirit of the game', as well as by other determinants. To uncover the moral judgment of athletes and which conceptualization of Fair Play dominates in practice, a factorial survey approach is used. The act and the level of the match played a role in the judgment, as well as the gender of the athlete. Our results showed that both conceptualizations 'respect for the rules' and 'respect for the spirit of the game' were important in this judgment, with an ascendancy of the spirit.

**Keywords:** sport ethics, vignette, ethical decision-making

### **Introduction**

Badminton is a sport that has been practiced and enjoyed worldwide. It has been an Olympic discipline with five events (men's and women's singles, men's and women's doubles, and mixed doubles) since 1992 and appeals due to its high level of physical fitness, strategy and technicality. However, the use of strategy and tactics seems to backfire more and more often. This problem came to a sad climax at the London Olympic Games of 2012, where several teams tried to avoid winning, in order to sidestep a victor that would lead to a match against tougher opponents. The Badminton World Federation (BWF), the world governing body for badminton recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), reacted by disqualifying the eight players involved, with the charge that "the players were not using one's best efforts to win a match" and "were conducting oneself in a manner that is clearly abusive or detrimental to the sport", guidelines that are states in the BWF's code of conduct (BWF, 2012, p.2-3). However, the use of such strategy could be considered an essential part of the sport as well and could have been seen as a tool used for the maximization of results. Following this point of view, the Fair Play principle was not harmed (Savulescu, 2012). After the publication of the decision of the BWG, the distinction between these two judgments on Fair Play became obvious on social media sites (Savulesco, 2012). This brings us to the

question of what constitutes Fair Play. There is an ongoing theoretical discussion on what encompasses Fair Play, but to date the conceptualization has not yet been studied empirically (Butcher & Schneider, 2007; Sheridan, 2003). The use of a certain conceptualization when making a moral judgment on Fair Play is, however, a necessary condition to investigate what triggers unethical behavior (i.e. the lack of Fair Play) on the sports field. In order to obtain more ethical behavior in sports, we need to find out whether the concept of Fair Play needs to be reconsidered by the Badminton World Federation, the International Olympic Committee and other sports governing bodies. Not only badminton, but also other sport disciplines could be subject to this issue. Losing on purpose in order to meet a weaker component in the next round, is also seen in other sports with a similar competition structure, such as judo.

The innovative aim of this research is to examine a) the judgments on Fair Play made by athletes, b) how this judgment was influenced by different variables, and c) which conceptualization of Fair Play was applied by the athletes. This has not yet been established in literature. It also contributes to the existing literature on judgments on Fair Play, as most studies (Shields, LaVoi, Bredemeier, & Power, 2007; Singleton, 2003; Stephens, Bredemeier, & Shields, 1997) available are focused on judgments by youth players and in the context of youth sports.

### **Different conceptualizations of Fair Play**

Despite the fact that the term Fair Play is broadly used, the precise concept is still heavily debated (Butcher & Schneider, 2007; Sheridan, 2003). In the literature, we found that seven different conceptualizations of the term can be distinguished.

A first approach in defining Fair Play is the application of different praise-worthy values, such as justice, honesty and responsibility, or behaviors, such as friendship, to sport. This approach is followed by the International Fair Play Committee (2012), who describe the concept of Fair Play as “[..]a complex notion that comprises and embodies a number of values that are fundamental not only to sport but also to everyday life. Respect, friendship, team spirit, fair competition, sport without doping, respect for written and unwritten rules such as equality, integrity, solidarity, tolerance, care, excellence and joy, are the building blocks of Fair Play that can be experienced and learnt both on and off the field.”. A likewise



enumeration is provided by Unesco (2013) by stating that “Fair Play is defined as a way of thinking, not just a way of behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of cheating, gamesmanship, doping, violence (both physical and verbal), the sexual harassment and abuse of children, young people and women, exploitation, unequal opportunities, excessive commercialization and corruption.”. Thus, rather than giving a definition of Fair Play, they describe related virtues. This is called the ‘bag of virtues approach’ by Butcher and Schneider (2007). It is dismissed by the same authors because it offers no criteria for inclusion or exclusion of a certain virtue, and because there is no guideline for dealing with rivaling virtues (Butcher & Schneider, 2007). Despite this theoretical rejection of this description, it is plausible that athletes themselves use such a list of related virtues to come to a moral judgment.

A second conceptualization claims that Fair Play is to be considered as playfulness, which emphasizes the enjoyment of sports as the main goal (Keating, 1981 in Sheridan, 2003). However, critics remark that this neglects the importance of the pursuit of victory in sports (Butcher & Schneider, 2007). Athletes could use the pleasure derived from sport as an argument in evaluating a situation on its fairness.

An alternative approach to the concept is Fair Play as respect for the rules of the game. This formalistic conceptualization of the notion of Fair Play is for instance used by the International Council for Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSPE). However, Sheridan (2003) argues that three objections can be made against this approach. Firstly, it is too abstract to explain sporting or game actions. Secondly, it does not consider the essential social contexts of games, and finally, it ignores that rules are interpreted and applied. Fair Play as ‘respect for the rules’ is a very narrow understanding of the concept, however, it can be used by athletes to evaluate the situation.

Next to the aforementioned conceptualizations, Sheridan (2003) explains Fair Play as the ethos of a game, capturing the common-sense conventions about what is acceptable and not. It does not only include the players themselves, but also involves the shared understanding of officials, coaches, spectators, and so on in shaping Fair Play norms (Sheridan, 2003). This conceptualization goes further than interpreting a sport as a system of rules, in which no social or historical aspects have an influence (Sheridan, 2003). The lived ethos is created by the shared experiences of the whole community of a particular sport.

Sheridan (2003) however does not elaborate on how intentional violations of rules should be considered as fair behavior on the field.

Another view to Fair Play is to see it as an implicit contract or agreement, to which the athletes agree by entering the game (Butcher & Schneider, 2007; Sheridan, 2003). In this view, fairness is doing what you agreed upon you would do, nothing more or less. However, the content of the agreement is questionable: is this the content set out by formal rules of the game or is it something that goes beyond those explicit rules? The first conceptualization of the agreement makes the idea very similar to the formalistic approach of Fair Play. The ambiguous interpretation of 'contract' or 'agreement' could account for some problems in defining Fair Play as abiding to a contract. Another difficulty is created by the fact that, in this view, fairness is merely the absence of unfairness. The negative concept of not breaking the contract ignores the positive sound of honoring the spirit of the game (Butcher & Schneider, 2007). A factorial survey could shed some light on whether this conceptualization of Fair Play is being applied by athletes when facing ethical dilemmas.

Loland (2002) comes up with another conceptualization of Fair Play. He proposes to formulate a basic set of norms or guidelines that people involved in the pluralistic world of competitive sport can agree upon. This formulation of ethical norms can make up a common moral code to guide the overall practice of sport (Loland, 2002). Loland (2002) asks us to voluntarily participate in a rule- governed social practice. This could be problematic if, for example, we agree upon cheating or harming other players (Sheridan, 2003). However, Loland (2002) responds to this by stating that intentional rule violations should be rejected as part of the ethos of sport. Sheridan (2003) objects to this view by saying that a moral code of conduct does not take the context and the particularity of sport into account.

Butcher and Schneider (2007) introduce the notion of Fair Play as respect for the game. They go further than accounts of respect for the rules. In this conceptualization the ethical evaluation of fairness in sports is based on whether the conduct adheres to the conventions of sport (Sheridan, 2003). This does not only require respect for the rules of the game, but also for the interest of the sport as a practice (Butcher & Schneider, 2007). The interests of both athletes and the game itself are at stake and should be respected. In this conceptualization, opponents see each other as essential to arrive to a well-played game, rather than as obstacles to victory (Butcher & Schneider, 2007). Sport should not be regarded as an instrument, but with respect for its intrinsic value. Sheridan (2003) remarks

that this account of Fair Play is yet again too abstract, since it does not elaborate on the specific ethos of the sport itself. We argue that this conceptualization of Fair Play was used by the Badminton World Federation when they decided to disqualify the badminton players at the London 2012 Olympic Games. This was made clear by the argument that the athletes behaved in a manner that is “abusive and detrimental to the sport” (BWF, 2012).

Although seven different conceptualizations are found, only two conceptualizations are used in empirical studies, namely Fair Play as respect for the rules (the formalistic approach) and Fair play as respect for the ethos/spirit of the game (Brunelle, Goulet, & Arguin, 2005; Loland, 2002; McNamee, 2014). Distinctions among the other more theoretical and philosophical interpretations cannot be easily made in practice and are unworkable (Butcher & Schneider, 2007) and are, therefore, not considered in empirical research on Fair Play. Hence, only two clear and distinctive conceptualizations of Fair play will be used in our study (i.e. respect for the rules and respect for the spirit of the game). We will put to the test which conceptualizations are used in which circumstances, and if one or both conceptualizations determine the judgment on Fair Play made by athletes.

### **Moral judgment on Fair Play**

The dominant paradigm on ethical behavior is presented by Rest (1986) and despite its age, it is still the leading model for studying ethical behavior (Craft, 2013; Rudd, Mulane, & Scroll, 2010; Vansteenkiste, Mouratidis, & Lens, 2010). As this models states (Rest, 1986), there are four psychological steps one needs to take in order to establish an ethical decision or ethical behavior: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation/intention, and moral character. The first of these essential steps, moral sensitivity or moral awareness, refers to the ability of a person to recognize the moral issues that come with a situation (Lincoln & Holmes, 2011). Moral judgment is the process through which the person comes to a moral evaluation of the issue at hand. A third component is the moral motivation, which refers to the intention to choose this value of morality, formulated in the moral judgment, over a different value, such as power, fame or money. The final step is moral character, which includes the determination and ability to follow through with the moral decision. Failure in any of these steps can result into failure to make an ethical decision (Lincoln & Holmes, 2011). When applied to our study, the desirable outcome is the ethical behavior ‘Fair Play’. To establish this ethical behavior, each of the four steps of the model of Rest (1986) are

important. This study focuses on the second step, moral judgment on Fair Play, which is a necessary step in the achievement of the ethical behavior 'Fair Play'. In this step, athletes make a moral judgment, i.e. they evaluate a situation as either fair play or not. Moral judgment made by athletes could be influenced by the conceptualization of Fair Play, as well as by other determinants. Therefore, it is worthwhile to examine how athletes conceptualize Fair Play including the relevant influencing determinants of the athletes' judgments. Given the fact that fair play is most pertinent during the game itself, the study focuses on the moral judgment on Fair Play during a badminton game. This could teach us a lot about the occurrence of unethical behavior (i.e. the lack of Fair Play) on the sports field.

### **Determinants of Moral Judgment on Fair Play**

Literature offers some insight in what factors influence Fair Play judgment and the according behavior on the field (Brunelle et al., 2005; Miller, Roberts, & Ommundsen, 2005; Stephens et al., 1997; Ommundsen et al., 2003; Tod & Hodge, 2001; Gardner & Janelle, 2002), but does not say explicitly which determinants could play a role in the choice for a certain conceptualization for Fair Play. We present an overview of these findings from the literature in the following paragraphs.

When measuring Fair Play, several studies (Brunelle et al., 2005; Miller et al., 2005; Ommundsen, Roberts, Lemyre, & Treasure, 2003; Stephens et al., 1997; Tod & Hodge, 2001) differ between different forms of (possible) violations of Fair Play. For instance, a distinction is made between cheating, physical/verbal aggression, faking an injury, and rule bending (Miller et al., 2005; Ommundsen et al., 2003). It will be put to the test if different persons decide in a consistent manner about Fair Play (e.g. all questionable acts are regarded in the same way and for instance, rejected), or if these judgments differ within the same person according to the act itself.

The gender of the subject, i.e. the person that makes the judgment, is also expected to play a role in the ethical decision-making. Shields et al. (2007) investigated this determinant and found that males reported more unethical behavior than did females. This is consistent with earlier findings of Bredemeier (1985) that males were more likely to legitimize transgressive behavior than females. This is supported by Guivernau and Duda (2002), who identified that males were more accepting of cheating than females when losing was at stake. Gardner and

Janelle (2002) also found different results for males and females when it comes to legitimize injury and aggression among both contact and non-contact sport athletes. Both the tendency to legitimize/disapprove certain behavior and the applied conceptualization of Fair Play could be influenced by the gender of the subject and therefore, this variable needs to be included in our study.

Another possible determinant is the level of the match at hand. The findings of Miller et al. (2005) show a connection between high performance contexts and lower moral judgment, as well as a relationship between high performance contexts and the legitimization of using intimidation in sports. It could be possible that subjects apply different conceptualizations of Fair Play in different performance contexts, namely in recreational, national or Olympic tournaments, and that they would engage differently in transgressive behavior if more is at stake (Miller et al., 2005).

The expertise of the subject, namely whether the person judging plays at the recreational or competition level could be another possible determinant of ethical behavior regarding Fair Play and of the conceptualization of this term. The effect on ethical decision-making was tested for youth soccer players by Shields et al. (2007) and showed a trend toward increasingly poor reasoning when the expertise of the subject was higher. It is a factor that should be considered as well when it comes to conceptualizations on Fair Play in badminton.

As ethical decision-making is traditionally seen as a characteristic that is closely linked to different stages in development (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hower, 1983; Kohlberg, 1987), it is necessary to consider the age of the subject as a possible determinant. It may be likely that youngsters are more prone to the concept of following rules, than to the broader interpretation as seeing Fair Play as respect for the ethos of the game. This would be in agreements with Kohlberg et al. (1983) that persons go through several moral development phases and are not able to display certain moral competencies until they have reached a certain age. Therefore this variable will be included in our survey.

The role and reaction of the referee is taken into account as a possible determinant. In 1984, Higgins, Power, and Kohlberg already stated that moral action takes place in a context and this has a profound influence in the moral decision-making of individuals. Tod and Hodge (2001) also highlighted the important role of significant others in moral reasoning. Both the ethical decision-making and the conceptualization of Fair Play could be influenced by the

reaction of the referee on the performed act. Putting this determinant to the test will also contribute to the clarification of the moral authority of the referee. The increasing violence against referees and officials (Bowker, Boekhoven, Nolan, Bauhaus, Glover, Powell, & Taylor, 2009; Dolan & Connolly, 2014) could be partly explained by the decline/absence of the moral authority of this person.

The quote of Higgins et al. mentioned above does also involve the audience that react to certain acts during a badminton match. Spectator behavior was considered an important factor in ethical decision-making by Shields et al. (2007). Their approval or repulsion to the behavior and perceived attitude of the badminton players showed to influence the moral judgments that are made and possibly to the concept of Fair Play that is applied.

In the literature, there is an ongoing debate on whether the presence of an ethical code in sports organizations has an influence on the moral judgment (De Waegeneer et al., 2015). The availability of guidelines on Fair Play, even if they are not made concrete, could possibly affect the outcome of Fair Play and therefore, will be put to the test.

To summarize, the innovative aim of this research is to examine which conceptualization of Fair Play is applied by athletes (i.e. as respect for the rules, as respect for the spirit of the game, or as a mix of both) and how this is influenced by the different variables discussed above.

## **Methodology**

The chosen method to analyze the variables that influence moral judgments is the Factorial Survey Study, where scenarios, the “vignettes”, are presented to the respondent. In order to make the vignettes as realistic as possible, which is an important condition for the validity of the survey method, a focus group was organized.

### *Factorial Survey Study*

We propose to use the factorial survey approach, an advanced quasi-experimental method for measuring human judgment. In this research design, true-to-life case descriptions, so-called vignettes, will be presented to decision makers to make a judgment about a realistic type of scenario (Taylor, 2006). In our case, the persons involved will be badminton players, the judgments will be normative and the scenarios will take place in a familiar sports

context. The vignettes describe a scenario by using sentences in a fixed order, that contain factors, such as the level of the game, that are relevant to the normative judgment (Taylor, 2006). The presence of the factor is randomly varied across the vignettes and logically impossible scenarios are removed from the set of vignettes. After this, a randomly selected unique set of vignettes will be presented to the different members of a group of badminton players to make their judgment. In this way the effect of multiple factors in complex decisions on fairness in sport can be investigated. The randomization within the scenarios itself and in the allocation of vignettes to the participants, gives this approach the robustness of an experimental method (Taylor, 2006).

The factorial survey method offers several advantages. A great quality of the factorial survey method is its capability to provide superior control over the different factors in a study. The aim of the study is exactly to identify and assess the importance of factors that affect individuals when they make judgments (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2001). The short scenarios can be developed for the specific target audience (Ashill & Yavas, 2006), in our case badminton players, so the hypothetical situations are realistic and adjusted to the typical circumstances in which the ethical dilemmas in badminton take place. This allows for a better study of the contexts and conditions that affect moral judgments (Wallander, 2009) and makes stronger claims of external validity possible (Ashill & Yavas, 2006). Another advantage of this design is the greater involvement of the respondents (Frederickson, 1986). A potentially sensitive topic can be discussed more freely, as commenting on a story, as opposed to giving information about a personal experience, and could be less threatening for the respondents (Barter & Renold, 1999), probably because they feel less accountable for their decisions and judgments (Taylor, 2006). A precise assessment of each variable is allowed thanks to the systematic variations of the characteristics used in the vignettes (Ashill & Yavas, 2006; Wallander, 2009). Another advantage is that the need for respondents to incorporate their own contextual information, which could be unreliable and biased, is minimized by the use of framed scenarios (Fredrickson, 1986; Wallander, 2009). A limitation of this method is the rapid increase of the number of combinations of factor categories (Brauer, Hanning, Arocha, Royall, Goy, Grant, Dietrich, Martino, & Horrocks, 2009).

#### *Focus group*

For the respondent to be able to take a certain viewpoint (in our case: from the stance as athlete) in a valid way, it is not strictly necessary to have experienced the exact same situation, but it is important to be able to identify with the situation presented in the vignette (Wallander, 2009). In order to reach this, we organized a focus group to make the factors as relevant and realistic as possible. The focus group was asked to analyze the possible determinants that could complement the findings in the literature and interpret them from the point of view of badminton.

The focus group was conducted with persons who have extensive experience in the field of badminton, such as members from the Flemish Badminton Federation, badminton teachers at academic level, recreational and competition athletes, and parents of elite players. The goal was not to achieve a consensus, but rather to hear the different possibilities and point of views, so the study design would embrace all the important possible determinants and the design of the vignettes was as realistic as possible.

We developed a semi-structured focus group scheme based on the findings from the literature. A written informed consent was obtained from all the participants. The moderator explained the purpose of the study and ground rules (e.g., speaking one by one, confidentiality) and conducted the focus group. Questions included how the members of the focus group conceptualized Fair Play and if they considered the different determinants found in literature to be of any influence in making a moral judgment on Fair Play. They were also allowed to add other possible determinants, based on their own experiences and beliefs. The moderator knew the relevant literature, but was not a member of the badminton community. The focus group was recorded, transcribed and carefully analyzed. After careful qualitative analysis of the focus group, it became clear that no new determinants were added, and therefore the results from the literature study were used. However, the focus group gave an important added value by making the interpretation of the vignette characteristics realistic for the context of badminton. This is utterly important, as the design of relevant vignettes is critical for the validity of the factorial survey study (Jasso, 2006; Wallander, 2009).

The members of the focus group agreed upon the variable 'Act' as a possible determinant for the conceptualization of Fair Play, and were able to specify the variable to the badminton context. The fact that badminton is a non-contact sport makes it more prone to verbal aggression than to the physical injury of opponents. Three different, relevant acts were



proposed to be tested: losing on purpose in order to meet a weaker opponent in the next round, name-calling the opponent and not mentioning the shuttle was out when the opponent was not able to see this. It is important for our research design that these acts are questionable.

The focus group was presented with the variable 'level of the match' as possible determinant in the conceptualization of Fair Play. It does not surprise that they agreed upon the fact that different attitudes towards Fair Play and different behaviors were displayed when more was at stake during a certain match. The level of the match can therefore be recreational/competitive/Olympic. The expertise of the subject however, is restricted to recreational/competitive, since the Flanders does only have a handful of Olympic athletes in the field of badminton, and therefore the option 'Olympic' as expertise of the subject does not reflect the situation at hand.

When it comes to our outcome variable, Fair Play judgment and its different conceptualizations, the focus group agreed that only two of the seven philosophical approaches were practically used in badminton, being Fair Play as respect for the rules and Fair Play as respect for the spirit of the game. The other conceptualizations are rather philosophical approaches that are not used in day-to-day situations. This is confirmed by existing studies on Fair Play, where this term is (almost automatically) used and defined as respect for the rules, respect for the game or a mixture of both conceptualizations (Brunelle et al., 2005; Ommundsen et al., 2003; Shields et al., 2007; Stephens et al., 1997).

The possible determinants of Fair Play judgments, from both the literature and the focus group, are the independent variables in our study: act, playing expertise of subject, gender of the subject, playing level of the match, age of subject, role of the referee, role of the audience, and presence of ethical guidelines.

The outcome variables are moral judgments on Fair Play, on Respect for the Rules, and on Respect for the Spirit of the game.

The vignette universe

A vignette universe was put together with the different levels and dimensions that were put forward (Table 1). This gathered a total of 162 vignettes (acts x levels of the match x presence of guidelines x reaction of the referee x reaction of the public:  $3 \times 3 \times 2 \times 3 \times 3 = 162$  possible combinations). In order to get valid results, each vignette had to be rated by at

least 5 respondents. According to the literature, a deck of six vignettes for each respondent is suited to get answers without bringing on fatigue to the respondents. This makes that at least 135 respondents are needed to get sound results (162 possibilities times 5 respondents, divided by 6 vignettes per deck).

TABLE 1: DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS AND LEVELS OF THE VIGNETTES IN THE VIGNETTE UNIVERSE.

Dimension	Different levels of the dimension
Act	Losing on purpose, in order to get a weaker opponent in the next round
	Verbal aggression
	Not reporting the shuttle was out, when it fell on the line
Level of the match	Recreational
	National tournament
	Olympic Games
Presence of ethical guidelines for the players	(blank)
	An ethical code that states Fair Play is present.
Reaction of the referee	(blank)
	In favor of the player
	In favor of the opponent
Reaction of the public	(blank)
	In favor of the player
	In favor of the opponent

The respondents are offered the vignette with the different factors, which are distributed in an experimental way (i.e. with control of explanatory variables), so that we can measure which factors they consider when making a judgment and which ones they leave out of their judgment.

Three questions were asked to the respondents, after each vignette:”1. Do you think this is Fair? 2. Do you think this respects the rules? 3. Do you think this respects the spirit of the game? “. These questions were rated a 5-point Likert scale. When piloting the three questions with two international experts on Factorial Survey and with 10 athletes from different age and expertise, no confusion was reported about these concepts. Participants were asked to respond in accordance with their role as athletes.

After the vignettes were designed, they were again presented to a focus group of methodologists that specialize in Factorial Survey Studies. The sampling of the vignettes was then performed randomly, however with a stratification for the dimension ‘act’, so that each respondents gets presented with two situations about losing on purpose, verbal aggression and the shuttle incident in their personal deck of vignettes. After this sampling, the vignettes were integrated into questionnaires via the CAWI method, computer-assisted web interview, to administer the questions for the respondents. The decks were introduced into the online questionnaire program ‘Qualtrics’. Decks were sampled randomly with replacement, so that every deck was placed back in the universe after it has been drawn. Also a random presentation order of the vignettes to the respondents was integrated to prevent methodological artifacts caused by the specific order of the vignettes. Next to the vignettes, the respondents were asked to report their age, gender, club and expertise (recreational/competitive). The possibility was given to get more information about the terms (like ‘spirit of the game’ or ‘Fair Play’) in an accessible manner, but this opportunity was never used. An example of a vignette is given in Figure 1. Because different respondents rated the same vignettes, it is possible to study the determinants of the moral judgments, thus exploring why athletes differ in what they consider as Fair Play, as Respect for the Rules, and as Respect for the Spirit of the Game (Jasso, 2006)

#### FIGURE 1: EXAMPLE OF A VIGNETTE

John and Pete are competing against each other at a national badminton tournament. John is losing on purpose, in order to meet a weaker opponent in the next round. The referee does not disapprove of John’s actions. The audience does not approve of John’s actions.

### *Sample*

Responses were gathered at badminton tournaments at different levels in Flanders, in order to get a good mix of respondents according to their experience and expertise. The sample recruitment was in accordance with ethical guidelines. Next to recruitment of respondents at tournaments, the questionnaire was communicated via the Flemish Badminton Federation as well as on the Facebook pages of the Flemish badminton clubs. The selection bias is small, as tournaments on different levels were visited and as the invitation on the website of the Flemish Badminton Federation and on Facebook was open to all players. In this way, all ages (14-65), both genders, and all levels of expertise were represented in the sample. The sample consisted of more male than female respondents. This comes as no surprise, as there are more males than females (61% versus 39%) involved in this sport in Flanders (Badminton Vlaanderen, 2014). Respondents came from all five Flemish provinces. Respondents were invited to participate according to informed consent guidelines and were offered the possibility to ask questions or comment on the questionnaire electronically. Anonymity was promised to the respondents to ensure more reliable answers.

### *Analysis*

The answers on the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and mixed model statistical techniques in the program SPSS 22. Multilevel models were developed to account for the variation of vignette characteristics (level one – i.e. act, level of the match, reaction of the referee, reaction of the audience, and presence of ethical guidelines) and for respondent characteristics (level two – i.e. age of the subject, gender of the subject, expertise of the subject). Following three models were sequentially developed:

Model 1: this is an intercept model, also referred to as empty model or two-level null model. This model has no level one or level two predictors. When significant, this intercept model will function as a benchmark for comparing the other models.

Model 2: A model including all predictors on the first level (vignettes). This model assesses the effect of vignette characteristics, namely act, level of the match, reaction of the referee, reaction of the audience, and presence of ethical guidelines, on the dependent variables.

Model 3: A model including the second level variable: the respondent characteristics, namely age of the subject, gender of the subject, and expertise of the subject.

As the log likelihood in our models become smaller, it is shown that the multilevel approach (models with first and second levels) gives us a better fit than considering the observations at the null-model (the intercept model).

Next to Multilevel Modeling, Regression Analysis was used to investigate the contributions of the Rules and Spirit conceptualizations to the item 'Fair Play'.

## Results

The final sample consisted of 171 participants (73.4% males; 50.3% between 26 and 49 years of age; 82.8% were competitive players). Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of this group.

TABLE 2: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

N = 171	
Sex (%)	
Male	73.4
Female	26.6
Age group (%)	
14 - 18	11.4
19 - 25	32.3
26 - 49	50.3
50 - 62	6.0
Grade of the subject (%)	
Recreational	17.2
Competition	82.8

There are three dependent variables, namely moral judgment on Fair Play, moral judgment on 'Respect for the Rules', and moral judgments on 'Respect for the spirit of the game'. Table 3 shows the significant results of the different multilevel models in the order they were developed. In table 3, no third model is included as there were only statistically

significant determinants found at the first level (level of the vignette) and not at the second level (level of the respondent).

Next to this, the regression analysis showed which conceptualization (rules, spirit, or both) contributed to the first dependent variable moral judgment on Fair Play.

The following results were found for the different dependent variables:

*Determinants that influence the moral judgment on Fair Play*

Variables 'Act' and 'Level of the match', as well as 'Presence of ethical guidelines' (all level one) contribute significantly to the judgment on Fair Play of the respondents. Name-calling the opponent and losing on purpose were not punished in the same decisive way, but are much more acceptable in terms of Fair Play. The competitive level is judged in the strictest way when considering Fair Play. 16.1% of the variance is explained by 'Act' and 1% of the variance is explained by 'Level of the match'. No significant variables were found at the level of the respondent (level two). 26,8% of the variance in the scores of the judgment on Fair play is explained by the variance at the second level (characteristics of the respondents).

*Determinants that influence the moral judgment on 'Respect for the rules'*

Variables 'Act' (level one) and 'Gender of the subject' (level two) are significant predictive variables when it comes to deciding if respect for the rules was met. Again, name-calling the opponent and certainly losing on purpose were judged less as not in accordance with the rules, as opposed to telling the shuttle was out. Men considered more situations as within the rules than women. 22,3% of the variance in judgments on Respect for the rules is explained by the variance at the second level (differences between respondents), and of this variance 'Gender of the subject' counts for 3.4%. On the first level, 21.9% of the variance is explained by 'Act' (level one).

*Determinants that influence the moral judgment on 'Respect for the spirit of the game'*

When making a decision about the respect for the spirit of the game, the variables 'Act' (level one) and 'Gender of the subject' (level two) are again the significant factors. Again, telling the shuttle was out, was considered as less Respect for the Spirit of the Game than the two other acts. Men also judged that more situations were in accordance with the Spirit of the Game. 33% of the variance in judgments on Respect for the spirit of the game is explained by the second level (respondents). 7.4% of the variance is explained by Act (level one) and 14.8% of the variance finds its explanation in 'Gender of the subject' (level two).

TABLE 3. SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS OF THE VIGNETTE AND RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS ON FAIR PLAY, RESPECT FOR THE RULES, AND RESPECT FOR THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME FOR THE MULTILEVEL MODEL

	Fair Play		Respect for the rules			Respect for the spirit of the game		
Fixed Effects	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant (SE)	1.672 (.031) ***	.585 (.029) ***	2.038 (.056) ***	1.689 (.044) ***	1.385 (.115) ***	1.568 (.047) ***	1.436 (.057) ***	1.243 (.096) ***
Level 1								
Act (ref. shuttle out )								
Losing on purpose		-.695 ***		-1.095 ***	-1.095 ***		-.402 ***	-.402 ***
Verbal aggression		-.601 ***		-.814 ***	-.814 ***		-.411 ***	-.411 ***
Level of the match (ref. Olympic )								
Recreational		.141 *						
National Competition		.107 *						
Level 2								
Gender of the subject (ref. male)					.263 **			.263 **
	2717.556	2579.608	3206.108	3139.982	2999.580	2543.280	2483.283	2479.737
$\Delta 2$ Log Likelihood		137.948 ***		66.126 ***	206.42 ***		59.997 ***	63.534 ***

\* $p=.062$  ; \*\* $p<0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p<0.00$



### *Conceptualizations: rules or respect*

Regression analysis shows that both 'Fair Play as respect for the rules' and 'Fair Play as respect for the spirit of the game' are significant elements in the overall moral judgment on Fair Play (adjusted R2: .580, F=468.133). However, 'Respect for the spirit of the game' ( $\beta=.394$ ,  $t=13.533$ ,  $p=.000$ ) contributes more to the final evaluation than 'Respect for the rules' ( $\beta=.296$ ,  $t=11.684$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

## **Discussion**

A factorial survey study was conducted to investigate the moral judgments made by Flemish Badminton Players. Our results show how different elements play a significant role in the understanding and application of Fair Play. We will discuss them in the next paragraphs.

### *The moral judgment on Fair Play*

When athletes make a decision on whether an act is fair or not, we see that the different forms of (possible) violations of Fair Play were the most important factors in this judgment. This comes as no surprise, as Miller et al. (2005) and Ommundsen et al. (2003) in their studies showed that a distinction is made by athletes between different forms of questionable behavior. Our study shows that "raw cheating", e.g. telling the shuttle was out when this is not the case, is not accepted by most of the badminton players. On the other hand, name-calling the opponent and losing on purpose were not punished in the same decisive way, but are much more acceptable in terms of Fair Play according to the players. We believe these acts are seen as a strategic, intrinsic part of the game and therefore not in contrast with respecting Fair Play, in the view of athletes. Athletes may put emotional pressure on opponents as a strategic advantage, which can be considered as unethical to some people but as acceptable to others (Seve, Ria, Poizat, Saury, & Durand, 2006). Our finding clarifies the origins of the discussion on Fair Play in Badminton at the recent Olympic Games in 2012 in London. Where the Badminton World Federation (BWF) decided that this act was a violation of the Fair Play principle, this is perceived different by the respondents in our study. This should warn the BWF and organizers of tournaments: if they do not want strategic losing in their games, this should be explicitly stated in their guidelines, since the guideline of Fair Play does not cover this according to athletes themselves, or they should arrange their competition in such a way that loss cannot produce a strategic advantage.

Another significant factor in the judgment on Fair Play is the level of the match. Our findings demonstrate that different attitudes towards Fair Play are displayed in a national tournament. The judgment on Fair Play is harsher on the recreational and Olympic level than in a national setting. It would seem to us that the more restrictive application of Fair Play on Olympic level has to do with the importance of what is at stake (an Olympic medal is often considered the highest achievement in an athletic career), with the fact that athletes and federations are looked at by the whole world, and with the intrinsic moral character and origin of the Olympic Games. Surprisingly, the athletes are also more strict at the recreational level. Possibly, this can be explained by the fact that on this level the 'fun' is the most important aspect, so there is no need to stretch the concept of 'Fair Play' and a strict interpretation is used by these athletes. Whereas on the national competitive level, athletes are more inclined to engage in questionable behavior in order to win, as winning is a more prominent goal than the 'mere' fun in recreational settings. This has practical implications: the need for referees and moral education is possibly higher at the national competitive level. This does interfere with the finding that the referee does not make a difference when it comes to moral judgment on Fair Play. The athlete may be not inclined to change his/her intentions and behavior if a referee is present, but at least the referee can punish the behavior at hand.

A factor in the decision-making on Fair Play that shows a trend towards significance ( $p=.062$ ) is the presence of ethical guidelines. When the simple statement 'The club has an ethical code that states Fair Play' was added to the vignette, the athletes were more likely to apply a stricter interpretation of Fair Play and to reject questionable behavior. This has important implications for the management of Fair Play in clubs and at tournaments. The fact that athletes are reminded of their moral responsibilities on the domain of Fair Play makes them more prone to more narrow interpretations of what constitutes fair behavior on the sports court. The availability of ethical guidelines, even if they are not concretely expressed, reassures or warns the athlete when he or she makes moral judgments.

#### *The moral judgment on 'Respect for the rules'*

Our study shows surprising results on the conceptualization of Fair Play as 'following the rules'. First of all, it strikes us that the reaction of the referee (not present/in favor of the player/in favor of the opponent) is not a factor that contributes to the judgment on fairness

according to the rules. As opposed to the findings of both Tod and Hodge (2001) and Higgins et al. (1984), the 'significant other' in making moral judgments does not play a role in the sports setting we describe in our study. In contrast with the specifications of his role by the Badminton World Federation, who say that the referee is responsible for "the overall monitoring of matters related to the fair and proper conduct" (Badminton World Federation, 2014), the referee does not seem to have a moral upper hand according to the athletes. The decisions of the referee could therefore give rise to tensions, as his higher moral status is not accepted by the athletes. The fact that the moral authority of the referee is not acknowledged by the players, although he is in charge, can contribute to the explanation of the increasing violence against this person. The role of the significant other in the form of the audience is also of no importance when it comes to ethical decision-making in our study. The approval or repulsion of the audience does not influence the judgment on respect for the rules made by the badminton player.

There are, however, two factors that do influence the moral judgment on rules, namely the act and the gender of the subject (the person who makes the judgment). We see the same distinction between more strategic behavior (losing on purpose and to a lesser extent verbal aggression as 'part of the game') and cheating (discarding/bending the rules), as was the case in the judgment on Fair Play. Another factor that contributes to the moral judgments on respect for the rules is the gender of the decision-maker. Men tend to apply the rules more loosely than women in our study. This comes as no surprise, as literature has demonstrated that males expose a higher tendency to legitimize questionable behavior and cheating in sports (Garnder & Janelle, 2002; Guivernau & Duda, 2002).

*The moral judgment on 'Respect for the spirit of the game'*

Remarkably, the moral judgment on the respect for the 'spirit' of the game is influenced by the exact same factors as the moral judgment on the respect for the rules of the game. The act and the gender of the subject are decisive in the conclusion on fairness that is made by the athletes.

One of the remarkable findings in our study is that some variables, which are considered in the literature as influencing factors, did not affect the moral judgments of the athletes. For instance, the behavior of the referee did not influence the judgment that was made, neither did the behavior of the audience. The limited impact of others raises concerns when

considering how to educate athletes on the topic of Fair Play. Next to this, age and expertise did not control the moral judgments. This means that a person does not develop a different moral stance when growing older. However, since our respondents were at least 15 years of age, there could be a moral development present before this age. The experience that an athlete gathers throughout his/her career, does not affect the judgment either. This contrasts the findings of Shields et al. (2007), who find a poorer moral reasoning with growing expertise of the athletes. In badminton, this is not the case. Educational efforts towards more ethical behavior in badminton players could therefore be designed and conducted regardless of their age and expertise.

#### *Conceptualizations: Rules versus Spirit?*

When we look closer at which conceptualization of Fair Play (rules versus spirit) contributes to the moral judgment on Fair Play, we see that both variables play a significant role in the general decision on the fairness. Both interpretations of Fair Play are important in the evaluation of Fair Play made by athletes, and are influenced by the same factors, i.e. act and gender of the subject. We see that 'respect for the spirit of the game' plays a larger role in the overall judgment on fairness. This proves that athletes interpret Fair Play as more than just 'abiding by the rules', and consider Fair Play as a broader concept. However, accordance with the rules stays an essential element in this judgment as well.

It seems that athletes do not make a clear distinction between these two conceptualizations, but rather apply both of them, complemented with the factors 'level of the match' and 'presence of ethical guidelines' to come to a final evaluation of the situation at hand. These empirical results, therefore, acknowledge the complex process of ethical decision-making on Fair Play, and shed light on the influencing factors in this process.

### **Conclusion**

Several elements are crucial in the moral judgment that athletes make regarding the Fair Play of a situation. First of all, we see that that the act itself, the level of the match, and the presence of ethical guidelines influence this decision. The judgment on Fair Play is a combination of the judgments on respect for the rules and the judgments of respect for the spirit of the game, where the latter contributes more to the final evaluation. Both the judgments on Rule agreement and Spirit agreement are influenced by the act and the

gender of the subject. These findings help us achieve a better understanding of the conceptualization of Fair Play that is applied by athletes themselves. Next to this contribution to the research on determinants of ethical decision-making, our research contributes by empirically demonstrating that the strict distinction between the formalistic approach of Fair Play and the interpretation of Fair Play as conduct in accordance with the spirit of the game cannot be made as clear in real-life situations. However, until now this was the leading paradigm in the current research on Fair Play. Both conceptualizations play a role in the final judgment made by athletes. This study clearly shows that when Fair Play is studied, it is important to incorporate both aspects of the Fair Play concept.

#### *Limitations*

A limitation to this study is of course the traditional critique to factorial survey research, which correctly argues that the method remains hypothetical in character. Athletes are judging situations in an experimental setting, which may create a bias to their judgments when these circumstances occur in the real world. This can be overcome by complementing our study results with observational studies. However, the factorial survey offers a lot of advantages, as were listed in the above chapter, that in our opinion outweigh the possible limitations. The combination of the strengths of an experimental design with the validity of a survey method makes this study design a rigorous method for studying decision-making, which to date has not been done when it comes to athletes.

#### *Future research*

This study could be extended to other participants in the sports fields, such as referees, coaches and spectators. Differences in the used conceptualizations of Fair Play and in factors that contribute to the moral judgment on Fair Play could give indications about the origin about tensions when it comes to decision made by sport authorities on this topic. It could also give information about which groups have the most varied interpretation of the concept and show the need for education within and balancing between these groups. It would also be of interest to study the differences in used conceptualizations of Fair Play across different sport disciplines. Future research could also investigate the proportion of variance in moral judgments on Fair Play that is not explained by the variables in our study.

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## A Factorial Survey Study on the Personal and Contextual Determinants of Moral Intentions of Badminton Players.

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the personal and contextual determinants that influence the moral intentions of badminton players. A total of 171 participants were asked to respond to scenarios describing moral dilemmas in the context of badminton, following the factorial survey approach. This approach allows combining advantages from both classical experiments and survey methods, making it possible to determine the underlying principles of the judgments and intentions of respondents. Multilevel analysis indicated that intention to engage in the described behavior was influenced by both the act and the gender of the subject. The results of this study complement previous research due to the advanced method of factorial survey and lead to implications for the promotion of ethical behavior in sports.

**Keywords:** fair play, moral motivation, badminton, sports ethics, factorial survey, vignette studies

### **Introduction**

The call for more ethical behavior in sports became more manifest in recent years. Major sports organizations, as well as other actors have expressed their concerns about ethical challenges and misconduct (DeSensi and Rosenberg, 2010; International Fair Play Committee, 2014; Parry and Brownell, 2012; SportAccord, 2014). Ethical behavior in sports has been subject of an increasing body of literature and gave rise to an ongoing debate (Sage and Kavussanu, 2007; Vansteenkiste, 2010). The problems and challenges are very diverse, going from the use of performance-enhancing substances (Morente-Sanchez & Zabala, 2013) over gender inequality (Flake, Dufur & Moore, 2012; Tännsjö, 2007; Schneider, 2010) to matchfixing (IRIS, 2012). A central theme in the debate, quintessential for the domain of sport ethics, is the concept of Fair Play. Fair Play can be defined in different ways (Butcher & Schneider, 2007; Sheridan, 2003), such as “behaving according to the rules” or “conduct in agreement with the spirit of the game”. The most interesting situations, regardless of the used definition, occur when athletes enter the “grey zone”: a situation where there exists an

opportunity to engage in questionable behavior in order to win the game. This kind of behavior can vary from 'raw cheating', e.g. lying about the position of an offside shuttle, over an intimidating style of playing (e.g. verbal aggression) to engaging in very strategic ways to play the game, e.g. losing on purpose, in order to meet a supposedly weaker opponent in the next round. All these examples are met on the sports fields and raise questions concerning their ethical soundness (Badminton World Federation, 2012; Duda, Olson & Templin, 1991; Shields et al., 2007; The Buffalo News, 2015). It still remains debated how ethical behavior can be encouraged in these situations and which determinants influence the intentions to engage in this behavior (Brunelle, 2005; Kavussanu and Spray, 2006; Miller, Blake and Ommundsen, 2005; Shields et al., 2007). So far, there has been little research on the intentions of athletes to come to ethical behavior, neither on the elements that are crucial in this decision-making. Given the sensitivity of the subject, there is a need for an instrument that assesses this intention without losing validity to the expected social desirability bias. This study empirically tests which determinants influence the intentions of athletes to engage in questionable behavior, on a large scale, by using a solid measure that can withstand this social desirability trap.

The outline of this article is as follows: we will first situate the concept of ethical behavior and intentions, and the approach to come to this conduct in a sports setting. Next, the possible determinants of ethical intentions on the sports field, found in literature, are presented. In the methodology section, a qualitative approach for examining the occurrence of these approaches in athletes, the factorial survey method, will be discussed. After the presentation of our results, the final section concludes the article, by explaining the opportunities and limitations the findings of this investigation can bring to current research in sports ethics.

### **Ethical behavior**

Several authors have argued on how people come to perform in an ethical manner (O'Fallon, 2005). However, the predominant model of this process is put forward by Rest (1986). Although this model celebrated its 30th birthday already, this extensive work on the understanding of ethical behavior remains the benchmark for studying ethical behavior (Craft, 2013; Rudd, Mullane & Stoll, 2010; Vansteenkiste, Mouratidis & Lens, 2010). According to Rest (1986), any form of ethical behavior can be broken into a four-steps

process. A person's needs to fulfill these conditions to establish an ethical act: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character. The first of these essential steps is moral sensitivity or moral awareness, and refers to the ability of a person to interpret a situation and recognize the moral issues that come with it (Kavussanu & Spray, 2006; Lincoln and Holmes, 2011). Moral judgment is the process through which the person comes to a moral evaluation of the issue at hand. A third component is the intention to choose the value of morality, formulated in the moral judgment, over a different value, such as power, fame or money. This is the so-called 'moral motivation' or 'moral intention' (Kavussanu and Spray, 2006). The final step is moral character, which is the ability to follow through with the moral decision and to actually behave in this way (Kavussanu and Spray, 2006). Failure in any of these steps can result into failure to behave in an ethical manner (Lincoln and Holmes, 2011).

This framework can also be applied to the sports context (Bredemeier & Shields, 1995; Miller, 2005). For instance, the issue of taking or leaving doping, can be broken down into this four steps: the first step would be that the athlete is aware of the ethical challenge that comes with taking doping. The second step would be to make the judgment whether doping is morally wrong or not. This is followed by the moral motivation/intention to dope or not, given the importance of playing 'clean' versus the importance of winning or other interests (money, reputation, etc.). In the final step the moral intention is converted into the resulting ethical behavior (doping or not). The third step, moral motivation, is a crucial element in the ethical behavior of athletes. It is a basis for (future) ethical behavior of athletes, as literature showed a high correlation between the intended behavior and the actual behavior in sports settings (Kavussanu & Ntoumanis, 2003; Kavussanu & Spray, 2006). Research showed a strong positive relationship between reported and observed unethical/questionable behavior (Kavussanu, Seal & Philips, 2006). Athletes that indicate intentions to engage in certain (questionable) behavior are more likely to perform the actual behavior, as put forward by the model of Rest (1986).

### **Determinants of moral intentions**

The question remains which determinants influence the intentions of the persons on the sports field. A thorough search in the existing literature has led us to an inventory of possible

determinants (Brunelle, 2005; Gardner & Janelle, 2002; Miller, 2005; Ommundsen, 2003; Stephens, 1997; Tod & Hodge, 2001).

Both personal and contextual variables are supported by the literature as being influential to moral motivation and moral behavior. For instance, Shields et al. (2007) take a look at which personal attitudes predict sportspersonship, whereas Miller et al. (2005) and Kavussanu and Spray (2006) investigate the influence of the surrounding factors, such as spectator behavior. Looking at personal determinants that are discussed and studied in the literature, the gender, grade of the respondent and age of the respondent are the most likely variables to have an influence on their moral intentions (Miller et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2007). The intention to pose certain behavior could be influenced by the gender of the subject, i.e. the person that makes the judgment. The importance of gender differences is consistently identified in previous research (Sage and Kavussanu, 2007). It was found that males reported more unsportpersonship behavior than did females (Shields et al., 2007) and were higher in aggressive tendencies (Bredemeier, 1985). This is consistent with the findings that males were more likely to judge injurious behavior and aggressions as legitimate than female (Bredemeier, 1986; Gardner & Janelle, 2002; Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001). Guivernau and Duda (2002) identified that males were more accepting of cheating than females when losing was at stake. Next to gender, age is also considered as a possible determinant. Higgins et al. (1984) found that persons go through several moral development phases during their life, and that they are not able to display certain moral competencies until they have reached a certain age. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the age of the subject as a possible determinant of behavior. A final personal determinant is the grade of the respondent. The grade of the subject, namely whether the person judging plays at the recreational or competition level could be a possible determinant of ethical behavior. Unethical behavior in sports appears to be more frequent as the grade of the subject increases (Shields et al., 2007). It is a factor that should be considered as well when it comes to moral intentions.

Besides the aforementioned personal determinants, contextual influences on the moral intention of athletes should also be investigated. Ethical behavior takes place in a social context and this context is assumed to be of great influence on the intentions and actual behavior of a person (Kavussanu and Spray, 2006; Stephens, 1997). Studies on Fair Play and ethical behavior in the sports context investigate different forms of (possible) violations,



such as cheating, physical/verbal aggression, faking an injury, and rule bending (Brunelle, 2005; Miller, 2005; Ommundsen, 2003; Stephens, 1997; Tod & Hodge, 2001). It is important to differentiate if certain acts are more likely to be conducted by the athletes, rather than assuming that an athlete always reacts in the same way, according to the same ethical judgment and ethical intention. Another contextual variable is the level of the match. Research shows that different behaviors were displayed when more was at stake during a certain match. It does not surprise that Miller (2005) described that there is a connection between high performance contexts and lower moral judgment, as well as a relation between high performance contexts and the legitimatization of using intimidation in sports. It could be possible that subjects would engage differently in unethical behavior if more is at stake. Therefore, the determinant 'level of the match' was included. Tod and Hodge (2001) also highlighted the important role of significant others in ethical behavior. In the sport context, an important role concerning ethical behavior is given to the referee. The judgment of this person could be key in the moral intentions and the resulting ethical behavior of the athlete. The role of the referee will be included as a possible determinant of ethical behavior in the survey. The context described above does also involve the audience that reacts to certain acts during a badminton match. Spectator behavior was considered an important factor in ethical decision-making by Shields et al. (2007). The reaction of the public can have consequences for the moral intentions and ethical behavior of the athletes. Another possible contextual determinant is the presence of ethical guidelines (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008; Singh, 2011). The explicit mentioning of guidelines could influence the ethical decision-making of the respondent, by emphasizing the importance of ethical behavior in the situation.

Our research objective is to assess the moral intention of athletes, e.g. investigate whether athletes are intended to engage in questionable behavior when winning was at stake. The novelty of this study lies in the study of the role of different personal and contextual determinants (and their combinations) on the reported intention of the athlete. The Factorial Study approach contributes to the understanding of their influences on moral intention, and due to its particular design, is able to overcome social desirability bias in this assessment.

## **Methodology**

### *Factorial Survey Study*

The factorial survey approach is applied in our study. This is an advanced method for measuring the beliefs, attitudes and judgments of respondents (Atzmüller and Steiner, 2010). In this research design, carefully constructed, true-to-life case descriptions, so-called vignettes, will be presented to respondents to make a judgment about a realistic type of scenario (Taylor, 2006). This offers the technique high external validity. In our case, the persons involved will be badminton players, the judgments will be normative and the scenarios will take place in a familiar sports context. The vignettes describe a scenario by using sentences in a fixed order, that contain factors, such as the level of the game in this case, that are relevant to the normative judgment (Taylor, 2006). The relevant factors and their factor levels have to be determined according to a systematic literature review and based on a strong theoretical framework (Atzmüller and Steiner, 2010; Brauer et al., 2009). The presence of the factor is randomly varied across the vignettes. After this, a randomly selected unique set of vignettes will be presented to the different respondents to make their judgment. In this way the effect of multiple factors in complex decisions on fairness in sport can be investigated. The randomization within the scenarios itself and in the allocation of vignettes to the participants, gives this approach the robustness of an experimental method (Taylor, 2006). Furthermore, the robustness of the statistical analysis is increased by using the vignette as the unit of analysis resulting in a large sample (Taylor, 2006).

The factorial survey method offers several other advantages. First of all, in comparison to traditional survey items, several explanatory and contextual factors can be presented at the same time, leading to more realistic scenarios (Atzmüller and Steiner, 2010). The short scenarios can be developed for the specific target audience (Ashill and Yavas, 2006), in our case badminton players, so the hypothetical situations are realistic and adjusted to the typical circumstances in which the ethical dilemmas in badminton take place. This allows for a better study of the contexts and conditions that affect moral intentions and the resulting ethical behavior (Wallander, 2009) and makes stronger claims of external validity possible (Ashill & Yavas, 2006). The method is less subject to social desirability bias since respondents are less aware of the controlled variation, i.e. the factor that is examined, in comparison to conventional survey items (Alexander & Becker, 1978). A precise assessment of each variable is allowed thanks to the possible systematic variations of the characteristics used in

the vignettes (Ashill & Yavas, 2006; Wallander, 2009). Another advantage of this design is the greater involvement with the respondents (Frederickson, 1986). A potentially sensitive topic can be discussed more freely, as it can be considered more as a realistic story, rather than as a personal experience, and could be less threatening for the respondents (Barter & Renold, 1999), probably because they feel less accountable for their decisions and judgments (Taylor, 2006). Another advantage is that the need for respondents to incorporate their own contextual information, which could be reliable and biased, is minimized by the use of framed scenarios (Frederickson, 1986; Wallander, 2009). A limitation of this method is the rapid increase of the number of combinations of factor categories (Brauer et al., 2009).

A vignette universe was put together with the different factors (so-called 'dimensions') and levels (values for that dimension). Literature suggests that factorial survey designs preferably include five to ten factors and the same number of factor levels for each factor (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010). In our study, this preference is met, as there are five factors which each two or three levels. This gathered a total of 162 vignettes. In order to get valid results, each vignette had to be rated by at least 5 respondents. According to the literature, a deck of six vignettes for each respondent is suited, as it is important to avoid fatigue effects in the respondents when presenting too much vignettes (Atzmüller and Steiner, 2010). This makes that in our study at least 135 respondents are needed to get sound results.

### *Vignettes*

To be able to write the vignettes with determinants adjusted to the specific context of badminton, a focus group was conducted with persons who have extensive experience in the field of badminton, such as members from the Flemish Badminton Federation, academic coaches in badminton, recreational and competition athletes, and parents of elite players. One of the determinants that needed to be translated by the focus group to the badminton context was the variable 'Act'. Three different, relevant acts were formulated: losing on purpose in order to meet a supposedly weaker opponent in the next round, name-calling the opponent and not mentioning the shuttle was out when the opponent was not able to see this. The other possible determinants of moral intentions are the independent variables in our study: grade of subject, gender of the subject, level of the match, age of subject, role of the referee, role of the audience, and presence of ethical guidelines. For each of these the

levels were determined for the specific badminton context. Table 1 displays the vignette universe applied to the specific context of a badminton game with the different factors or ‘dimensions’ and levels or ‘values for that dimension’.

The questions asked to the respondents, after the presentation of each vignette was: “Would you engage in this behavior if winning was at stake?” The outcome variable was questioned on a 5-point Likert scale.

**TABLE 1: DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS AND LEVELS OF THE VIGNETTES IN THE VIGNETTE UNIVERSE.**

Dimension	Different levels of the dimension
1. Act	Losing on purpose, in order to get a weaker opponent in the next round
	Verbal aggression
	Not reporting the shuttle was out, when it fell on the line
2. Level of the match	Recreational
	National tournament
	Olympic Games
3. Presence of ethical guidelines for the players	(blank)
	An ethical code that states Fair Play is present.
4. Reaction of the referee	(blank)
	In favor of the player
	In favor of the opponent
5. Reaction of the public	(blank)
	In favor of the player
	In favor of the opponent

After the vignettes were designed, they were again presented to a focus group of methodologists that specialize in Factorial Survey Studies. The sampling of the vignettes was then performed randomly, however with stratification for the dimension ‘act’, so that each respondents gets to answer two questions about the three different acts in their personal

deck of vignettes. The CAWI method, computer-assisted web interview, was used to integrate these vignettes into questionnaires, after the sampling. The so-called decks (the groups of vignettes to show to the respondents) were introduced into the online questionnaire program 'Qualtrics'. Decks were sampled randomly with replacement, so that every deck was placed back in the universe after it has been drawn. To prevent methodological artifacts caused by the specific order of the vignettes, a random presentation order of the vignettes to the respondents was integrated. Next to the vignettes, the respondents were asked to report their age, gender, club and grade. An example of a vignette is given in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: EXAMPLE OF A VIGNETTE

Marc and Eric are competing against each other at a recreational badminton tournament. Marc is shouting insulting terms at Eric to distract him and to raise his chances at winning. The referee does not disapprove of John's actions. The audience does not approve of John's actions.

#### *Sample*

In order to get a good mix of respondents according to their experience and level, responses were gathered at badminton tournaments at different levels in Flanders. Next to this, the questionnaire was communicated via the Flemish Badminton Federation as well as on the Facebook pages of the Flemish badminton clubs. Anonymity was promised to the respondents to ensure more reliable answers. Responses were first gathered at badminton tournaments at different levels in Flanders, in order to get a good mix of respondents according to their experience and expertise. Next to recruitment of respondents at tournaments, the questionnaire was communicated via the Flemish Badminton Federation and Facebook pages of the Flemish badminton clubs. The selection bias is small, as tournaments on different levels were visited and as the invitation on the website of the Flemish Badminton Federation and on Facebook was open to all players. In this way, all ages (14-65), both genders, and all levels of expertise were represented in the sample. Respondents were invited to participate according to informed consent guidelines and were offered the possibility to ask questions or comment on the questionnaire electronically.

### *Analysis*

The answers on the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics and mixed model statistical techniques in the program SPSS 22. Multilevel models were developed to account for the variation of vignette characteristics (level one – i.e. act, level of the match, reaction of the referee, reaction of the audience, and presence of ethical guidelines) and for respondent characteristics (level two – i.e. age of the subject, gender of the subject, grade of the subject).

### **Results**

171 participants were included in the final sample (73.4% males; 50.3% between 26 and 49 years of age; 82.8% were competitive players). Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of this group. Most respondents are male, but this reflects the current distribution of gender (61% males versus 39% females) in Flemish badminton clubs (Badminton Vlaanderen, 2014).

TABLE 2 – SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

N = 171	
Sex (%)	
Male	73.4
Female	26.6
Age group (%)	
14 - 18	11.4
19 - 25	32.3
26 - 49	50.3
50 - 62	6.0
Grade of the subject (%)	
Recreational	17.2
Competition	82.8

Table 3 shows the results of the three different multilevel models in the order they were developed. Model 1: this is an intercept model, also referred to as empty model or two-level null model. This model has no level one or level two predictors. When significant, this intercept model will function as a benchmark for comparing the other models. Results show that this model is indeed significant. This means that the -2 log likelihood of other models should be better than the -2 log likelihood of this model 1, before it can be considered an improvement (a better 'fit').

Model 2, including all predictors on the first level (vignettes), assesses the effect of vignette characteristics, namely act, level of the match, reaction of the referee, reaction of the audience, and presence of ethical guidelines, on the dependent variables. Comparing this model with the null model shows that the variable 'Act' (level one) contributes significantly to the intention to engage in the proposed behavior. 17.0% of the variance in the scores on the inclination to engage in the behavior is explained by 'Act'. Other variables on this first level appear to be not significant. Neither the level of the match, the presence of ethical guidelines nor the reaction of the referee or the audience, was able to change the intention of the athletes.

Model 3 included the second level variable, namely: the respondent characteristics, namely age of the subject, gender of the subject, and grade of the subject. The findings in the third model state that the variable 'Gender of the subject' (level two) contributes significantly to the intention to engage in the proposed behavior. 5.0% of the variance in the scores on the inclination to engage in the behavior is explained by the 'Gender of the subject'. Other variables on this level, that appeared important in literature, such as the age and the grade of the subject, did not significantly contribute to the intention to engage in the questionable behavior.

Table 3. Significant effects of the vignette and respondent characteristics on the intention to engage in the questionable behavior (Multilevel Model)

Fixed Effects	Intention to engage in this behavior (=Moral Motivation)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant (SE)	1.934 (.060)*	1.544 (.073)*	1.517 (.121)*
<b>Level 1</b>			
Act (ref. shuttle out)			
Losing on purpose		.929*	.929*
Verbal aggression		.240*	.240*
Level of the match (ref. Olympic)			
Recreational		-.120	-.120
National		.064	
Presence of guidelines (ref: present)		.018	.018
Reaction referee (ref: blank)			
Opponent		.030	.030
Player		-.080	-.080
Reaction public (ref: blank)			
Opponent		.010	.010
Player		-.012	-.012
<b>Level 2</b>			
Gender of the subject (ref. male)			.364*
Age (ref: 50-62)			
14-18			.067



Fixed Effects	Intention to engage in this behavior (=Moral Motivation)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
19-25			.135
26-49			.227
Grade (ref: recreational)			.094
-2 Log Likelihood	3298.052	3016.306	3011.150
$\Delta$ 2 Log Likelihood		281,746	286,902

\* $p < 0.05$

## Discussion

Ethical behavior is the final result of a four-step process (Rest, 1986), that involves (1) the awareness of the ethical issue at hand, this is the 'moral sensitivity' (2) the careful deliberation of the issue, which leads to the 'moral judgment' (3) the intention to live up to this judgment, i.e. the so-called 'moral motivation' and finally (4) the actual behavior, i.e. the 'moral character'. This study focuses on the third step in the process, namely the moral motivation, and therefore examines the intention of athletes to engage in ethical behavior when winning is at stake. Research showed a strong positive relationship between reported and observed unethical/questionable behavior (Kavussanu, Seal & Philips, 2006). Not only the intentions of the players are investigated, but our research complements existing studies by drawing on a quasi-experimental method that measures the personal and contextual determinants that influence the intentions of the athletes. Due to the advanced factorial survey approach, the social desirability bias is greatly diminished, as respondents are less aware of the controlled variation of the different elements in the vignettes (Wallander, 2009) and therefore a light can be shed on what actually influences the moral motivation of athletes. These influencing variables are important knowledge in attempts to promote ethical behavior, as they can guide the invested efforts and energy to become more effective.

When looking at the personal determinants that influence the intentions of athletes to act in an ethical manner, our results show that the gender of the subject is an important variable.

The findings point out that men are more intended to engage in questionable behavior than women. This result is in agreement with earlier research on ethical behavior in sports, which have consistently reported on gender differences, such as the study of Guivernau and Duda (2002) that identified males as more accepting of cheating than females when losing was at stake. This is also consistent with Shields et al. (2007) who provide evidence for the fact that males engage more in unsportsmanship behavior than females. Sage and Kavussanu (2007) confirm in their study that females displayed more ethical behavior. A possible explanation offered by several authors (Duda et al., 1991; Sage and Kavussanu, 2007; Shields et al., 2007) for this difference is the finding that males are more ego oriented than females. Ego orientation involves a focus towards achieving a positive evaluation of their abilities and importance from others, whereas task orientation focuses on learning and improving abilities (Li et al., 1996). These different definitions of goals, and therefore success, could explain that men are more likely to “endorse doing anything that is necessary to obtain victory and display superiority” (Duda et al., 1991, p.84) as they are more directed towards winning. Moral concerns become subordinate to the desire to win and feel superior (Shields et al., 2007). This implicates that another approach might be necessary when raising awareness on the subject of Fair Play in males and females. The awarding of a Fair Play trophy, for instance, might turn ethical behavior into an ego task in itself.

In our study, the age of the subject was not found to have an influence on the intentions of the athletes to engage in the proposed behavior. Most participants were adults (88.6%) and their age categories did not give significantly different results. Neither did the findings differ in a significant way when comparing them to the responses of adolescents (11.4% of all participants). This contrast with the findings of Kohlberg (1983), who found a difference in moral reasoning according to age. The displayed moral competencies did not seem to differ according to age, keeping in mind that all the participants were older than 14 years. This could be different when the intentions of younger children are subjected to investigation, but this is outside the scope of our research. It appears that all respondents shared the same level of moral ‘maturity’, which implicates that age should not be something to focus on when trying to promote ethical behavior in sports.

A variable that was surprisingly of no influence on the intentions of athletes to engage in questionable behavior is the grade of the athlete. Opposed to the work of Shields (2007), our study showed no significant evidence for more unethical behavior according to the

grade of the subject. This could be explained by the different sport types that were studied in previous research. In badminton, it seems of no importance in the moral motivation of athletes whether they play at the recreational or the (high) competitive level.

Next to the influence of the personal variables of the athletes on their intentions, also the contextual variables were put to the test. First of all, the act itself showed to make a significant difference. Although earlier studies have each investigated one or more of these acts, there has not been a study yet that examines the understanding of these acts towards one another. The order of these acts in relation to athletes' intentions showed that they are more likely to conduct 'strategic' questionable behavior than verbal aggression or 'raw' cheating. They are inclined to losing on purpose in order to meet a weaker opponent in the next round, which makes us conclude that they do not consider this unethical behavior or that they are still willing to impose this behavior, because what is at stake (winning) prevails over moral concerns. Name-calling the opponent is intended less frequently, and even less athletes are motivated to not mention that the shuttle was out when the opponent was not able to see this. These results have some implications for the promotion of ethical behavior in sports. It shows us that more emphasis needs to be put on the grey zone of 'strategic' forms of unethical behavior. If the sports world wants to ban acts, such as losing on purpose in order to meet a weaker opponent in the next round, it needs to take a clear stand on their moral status, to make sure that athletes consider them as unethical behavior as well. If not, the athletes might understandably not judge these acts as unfair, but rather apply them as strategic methods to win in an ethical legitimate manner. Non-physical forms of aggression need to be tackled as well. This type of unethical behavior is not so striking or noticeable as physical aggression or 'raw' cheating, and therefore, could be more legitimized by athletes. However, these acts need to be decreased as well if we want our sports to become more ethical.

The reaction of the referee and the presence of ethical guidelines did not influence the moral motivation of the athletes. Their intentions were not changed due to this contextual variable, which leads us to believe that the 'formal' social context is less dominant in the intentions of the athletes than is considered by some authors (Higgins, Power, & Kohlberg, 1984; Tod & Hodge, 2001). However, more 'informal' contextual variables, for instance the leadership style of the coaches, could be of importance and should be considered in future research.

A clear judgment on the fairness of certain acts is needed in order to play in an ethical manner. The referee is seen as the authority on the fairness of events (Australian Sports Commission, 2015; Bertman, 2007). The fact that this role is situated outside the game, makes that the consideration of fairness is not subject to social judgments, such as the reaction from the public or judgments from the athletes themselves (Bertman, 2007). If we want the referee to maintain or regain his/her function as the insurance for the fairness of the game, more emphasis should be put on the moral authority of the referee. We cannot simply assume that this person is able to guide all the unethical intentions of the athletes into more acceptable conduct, as our findings demonstrate. If we want this person to have an influence on the intentions of athletes, measures are needed to re-establish his/her power. A program to raise the respect for referees was, for instance, recently started by the Australian Government. Their awareness campaign wants to promote a greater recognition and respect for the referees, as well as a better understanding of their key role in sports (Australian Sports Commission, 2015).

The fact that only two of the seven tested variables had an actual impact on the intentions, i.e. the moral motivation, of athletes could have to do with the fact that our method, the factorial survey approach, rules out most of the social desirable answers. Letting your intentions, or rather the responses on questions about intentions, depend on the presence of guidelines or on the reaction of the referee could be considered as the socially desired answer. However, with the factorial survey approach, the effect of this bias is mostly ruled out and more truthful answers can be obtained. Moreover, the respondent cannot tell which social answer is desired, as the different dimensions are appointed to the vignettes in a random, experimental manner.

### *Limitations*

The limitations of this study should be considered when interpreting results. Firstly, the vignettes were specifically designed to apply to the context of badminton. This is a strength as it made the questions very relevant and tailored to our tested population, but it also makes it less transferable to other sports settings. The type of sport and its unique setting could be of great importance in the moral motivation of the athletes at hand and this specificity needs to be taken into account when generalizing our findings. Another limitation is the 'traditional' critique on factorial survey studies: the method remains hypothetical in

nature. Although this is of course the case, the method offers a lot of advantages that outweigh this possible limitation. The strengths of an experimental design combined with the validity of a survey method make this study design a rigorous method for studying decision-making and motivation.

#### *Future Research*

Future research should be directed towards the broadening of the scope of sport disciplines. The investigation of the moral motivation could differ in other sports, such as medium-contact or contact sports, or in sports where the referee has a stronger or weaker status. Extending the study to other populations is therefore an important next step. Another element that should be investigated is if the overall moral atmosphere in sports organizations contributes to the moral motivation of athletes and in which way this is the case. Organizational variables could affect the intentions of athletes on a third level, next to personal and contextual variables. Another important goal for future research should be to measure how the actual behavior, the fourth step in Rest's model, is influenced by these personal, contextual and organizational variables and to clarify the relation between the intended and the actual behavior.

The promotion of ethical behavior in sports is very high on the agenda of sports organizations, such as the International Olympic Committee and sports federations worldwide, and international and national governmental and non-governmental organizations, for instance UNESCO. However, this is a very challenging task. This study examined the intentions of badminton players to engage in questionable behavior, as well as the personal and contextual variables that influenced these intentions. These findings could contribute to our knowledge on moral intentions in the sport context and could help us develop the necessary and suitable tools for promoting more ethical behavior. By applying the quasi-experimental factorial survey approach, which was not yet introduced in this context, the findings can be considered to have a great validity when it comes to resisting social desirability bias. The findings show a meaningful comparison between intentions towards different questionable acts and also indicate the importance of gender differences in moral motivation concerning the ethical behavior in the sport context.

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### 3. PART 3 – GENERAL DISCUSSION

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## Summary of the main research findings

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This manuscript aims to shed a light on crucial questions regarding the promotion of ethical behavior in the sports domain. The use of ethical codes and their effectiveness has not yet been studied in the sports context, although this instrument is widely used and a lot of effort is put in its establishment and operation.

In this thesis, first the prevalence of ethical codes in Flemish sports organizations, as well as its content and implementation are described. It was also investigated whether these codes of ethics are effective, i.e. raise ethical behavior, and how this effectiveness is influenced by the characteristics of the code studied (presence, creation, content, implementation, and enforcement). Next to these aspects of organizational ethics, also the ethical behavior on the field is studied. More specifically, the concept of Fair Play, which is an essential term in sport ethics.

It is important to keep in mind that organizational ethics (i.e. the code of ethics) is tested for the organization as a whole, whereas sport participation ethics (the contextual determining factors of Fair Play judgments and intentions) are tested with the athletes themselves as units of analysis.

1) *What is the prevalence of ethical codes in Flemish sports organizations?*

2) *Is an ethical code effective, i.e. does the existence of an ethical code improve the ethical behavior in the sport organizations?*

The results of this study teach us that ethical codes are present in 53% of the studied Flemish sports organizations. When linking the characteristics of these ethical codes to effectiveness, it appears that the mere presence of an ethical code has no significant effect on the ethical climate in the studied sports organizations, or on its subscales. However, in certain disciplines, we do see an effect. It is shown that in Judo, Badminton and Gymnastics, there is a significant positive relationship between the presence of an ethical code and the ethical climate, which is the measure for ethical behavior in this study. The significant positive relationship concerns the collective moral motivation, and for Judo and Badminton also the collective moral character.

3) *What are the characteristics of ethical codes in Flemish sports organizations?*

The main reason for their establishment was the motivation to enhance ethical behavior in the sports organizations (84%). The main stakeholders involved in the creation of the code are the coaches (82%), followed by board members (68%), management (54%), and athletes themselves (61%). Coaches and athletes are also strongly considered in the content of the code: no less than 96% for of the codes contain guidelines specifically aimed at the athletes and 88% towards the coaches of the sports organization. 73% have guidelines for the members of the board, and 66% for the parents. About half of the codes contain guidelines for management (50%) and statements for fans (51%) of the sports organization. Sponsors are scarcely targeted in the code of ethics of a sports organization (19%). Communication to new members of the code usually takes place at the moment of inscription (68%). The mode of communication was also studied and this points out that the website (34%) is the main medium that sports organizations use to get the code of ethics across. Most codes contain sanctions (65%), procedures for violations (61%), procedures for complaints (56%), and guidelines for whistleblowing (57%).

4) *Which characteristics of the ethical code influence its effectiveness?*

The motivation for the establishment of the code did have an influence on its effectiveness: the promotion of ethical behavior as motivation shows a significant positive relationship with the total Ethical Climate Index (ECI) and the subscale Moral Motivation. A significant negative effect on the Moral Motivation subscale was shown when the motivation for code establishment was the professionalization of the sports club. When it comes to the involvement of stakeholders in the creation of the code, the results show a significant positive relationship between coach involvement and the Moral Judgment subscale. Another positive relationship was found between the involvement of the athletes in the design of the code and the Moral Sensitivity and Moral Character. The involvement of other stakeholders did not affect the ECI or its subscales. The inclusion of explicit guidelines for managers showed to have a positive relationship with the Moral Judgment in the sports organizations. Concerning the communication, there is an effect for both timing and format. Communication of the code at the time of inscription has a positive relationship with the Moral Motivation, whereas communication through means of a poster has a negative relationship with the Moral Character of the sports organization. When looking at code enforcement, the results make it clear that there is no effect of the availability of a helpdesk on the ECI or its subscales. However, in sports organizations where the athletes are seen as

the authority to turn to in case of ethical questions or problems, a lower Moral Judgment score is found. A significant negative relationship is seen between the explicit mentioning of procedures in case of violations and both the ECI and the Moral Sensitivity in the sports organization. There was no effect found for the explicit mentioning of sanctions and procedures in case of complaints. Codes that contained protection for whistleblowers against retaliation were related to a higher Moral Sensitivity in the sports organization, but did not affect the ECI as a whole, neither on the other subscales.

5) *What is the content of ethical codes in Flemish sports organizations?*

Another part of this research looked at the content of ethical codes in sports organizations and linked these content characteristics to the Ethical Climate in the clubs. A first result shows us that 27% not only had their own tailor-made code, but also adopted the Panathlon Declaration on Ethics in youth sport. In 9% of the sports organizations, this Declaration was the only form of ethical code present. When we look at the length of the code, 16% of the clubs had a code that was less than half a page. 31% of the clubs had a code with a length from one half to one page and 53% of the clubs had a code of ethics that contained more than one page. When we look at the number of statements, the ethical codes had an average of 25 statements. The minimum was as few as two statements; the maximum number of statements in an ethical code was 141. The analysis of the thematic code content shows that the theme 'solidarity' appeared in 90% of the clubs, followed by 83% for the theme 'physical and psychological integrity'. 'Fair play' was found as a theme in 56% of the codes, 'Inclusion' and 'Children's rights in sport' in 43% of the codes, and 'Respect for diversity' in 36% of the codes. Furthermore, the theme of 'solidarity' was expressed most often (average number of statements: 25). This theme was followed by 'physical and psychological integrity' (4.9), 'fair play' (3.0), 'children's rights in sport' (2.2), 'respect for diversity' (1.1), and 'inclusion' (0.9) respectively. The analysis of the ethical orientations applied in the codes, showed that 94% of the codes contained deontological statements, 40% had consequentialist statements and in 24% of the ethical codes appeared statements that were formulated from a virtue ethics point of view. Half of all the ethical codes showed a combination of ethical orientations. 47% of the codes had only deontological statements, 5% contained only the consequentialist orientation and there were no codes with merely solely virtue ethics statements. The statements in ethical codes were mostly deontological in nature. Considering the overall group of statements, across the different codes, it shows



that 92% of all statements were deontological, whereas 6% were consequentialist and only 3% of the total number of statements were rooted in virtue ethics. When it comes to tone, 21% of the codes were inspirational, versus 44% that were strictly regulatory in nature. In 35% of the cases, the codes contained both inspirational and regulatory statements. Comprehension aids were rather limited. Examples were used in only 28% of the ethical codes. The same was the case for Procedural statements. 42% of the ethical codes mentioned sanctioning. No statements on protection for whistleblowers were present in any of the codes. The predominant audience that was targeted by ethical codes was the athletes. 91% of the codes contained statements that were directed towards them. Most codes (71%) had statements for the parents. Almost half of the codes (46%) had statements for the trainers, and 36% addressed the fans. This was followed by the board of directors, who were targeted in 30% of the codes. There was no mentioning of sponsors in the codes that were studied.

6) *How does the content of an ethical code influence its effectiveness?*

A next step in the study investigates whether these code characteristics influence the effectiveness of the code, expressed through the ECI score. The results showed no significant effect ( $F=1.456$ ,  $p=.232$ ) of length (number of pages) on the scores of the ECI and its four subscales. When looking at the level of detail, namely the number of statements of the different themes in the ethical code, there was a significant difference in effect on the ECI and on Moral Motivation between codes with 30 or less statements on the one hand and more than 30 statements on the other hand. Codes with over 30 statements scored notably lower on the overall Ethical Climate Index and on the subscale for Moral Motivation than codes that contain 30 statements or less. The focus of the ethical code (number of themes) showed no significant effect ( $F=.938$ ,  $p=.337$ ) on the scores of the s-ECI and its four subscales. The thematic content did not have a significant effect on the score of the ECI and its subscales: the presence of guidelines concerning children's right ( $t=.478$ ;  $p=.635$ ), inclusion ( $t= -.224$ ;  $p=.823$ ), fair play ( $t=1.106$ ;  $p=.314$ ), integrity ( $t=-.353$ ;  $p=.731$ ), diversity ( $t=1.414$ ;  $p=.167$ ), and solidarity ( $t=.817$ ;  $p=.443$ ) did not significantly impact the effectiveness of the code. The ethical orientation of the statements in ethical codes was shown to have a significant effect on ethical behavior. Codes with consequentialist expressions showed a trend towards positive significant effect for ECI ( $p=0.057$ ). The occurrence of statements of different ethical orientations in the same code, as opposed to

codes with statements rooted in only one orientation, showed a trend toward a significant effect ( $p=0.053$ ) on the Moral Motivation Subscale. When a code contained statements from only one orientation, the moral motivation was higher than when different orientations were combined in the same code. When considering the tone of the statements in the ethical codes, there appeared to be a multivariate significant effect (Wilk's Lambda = .039). A univariate significant effect was found for the scores on subscales Moral Judgment and Moral Motivation. Post hoc tests showed that the score on Moral Judgment was significantly higher when the ethical code contained a combination of both inspirational and regulatory statements ( $3,21 \pm 0.28$ ) than when only regulatory ( $3.09 \pm 0.15$ ) statements or only inspirational ( $3.01 \pm 0.16$ ) were included. Moral Motivation score was significantly higher when inspirational statements ( $4.35 \pm 0.33$ ) were used to phrase the guidelines in the ethical code than when regulatory ( $4.19 \pm 0.60$ ) or combined ( $3.77 \pm 0.53$ ) statements were formulated. Analysis showed that the number of comprehension aids had no significant effect ( $t=.943$ ;  $p=.349$ ) on the ECI and its subscales. Neither the fact that a code of ethics stated sanctions ( $t=1.111$ ;  $p=.272$ ) had a significant effect on the ethical climate in the sports club. This was the case for all the constructs of the ECI. The target audience of the ethical codes did not have an influence on the ECI, except when the code contains explicit guidelines for board members. When this is the case, we see a significant higher score in ECI, Moral Motivation and Moral Character. A positive significant effect on the Moral Judgment subscale is found when the code contains guidelines for athletes. However, this does not affect the overall ECI.

7) *Which conceptualizations of Fair Play are used by athletes themselves?*

The third study looks at Fair Play, a concept that is typical for the sports context and that is abounding in ethical codes of sports organizations. A factorial survey approach was used to assess the application of Fair Play by athletes themselves. More precisely, an answer was found on the question whether athletes use the "rules" or the "spirit" conceptualization of Fair Play and which determinants influence this judgment.

Regression analysis shows that both 'Fair Play as respect for the rules' and 'Fair Play as respect for the spirit of the game' are significant elements in the overall moral judgment on Fair Play (adjusted  $R^2$ : .580,  $F=468.133$ ). However, 'Respect for the spirit of the game' ( $\beta=$

.394,  $t=13.533$ ,  $p=.000$ ) contributes more to the final evaluation than 'Respect for the rules' ( $\beta=.296$ ,  $t=11.684$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

8) *Which personal and circumstantial characteristics influence this conceptualization?*

Multilevel models were developed to analyze the effect of the different variables. Variables 'Act' and 'Level of the match', as well as 'Presence of ethical guidelines' (all level one, i.e. contextual factors in the vignette) contribute significantly to the judgment on Fair Play of the respondents. 16% of the variance is explained by 'Act', 1% of the variance is explained by 'Level of the match', and 3% of the variance is explained by the 'Presence of ethical guidelines'. No significant variables were found at the level of the respondent (level two). 26,8% of the variance in the scores of the judgment on Fair play is explained by the variance at the second level (characteristics of the respondents).

Variables 'Act' (level one) and 'Gender of the subject' (level two) are significant predictive variables when it comes to deciding if "Respect for the rules" was met. 22% of the variance in judgments on Respect for the rules is explained by the variance at the second level (differences between respondents). 22% of the variance is explained by 'Act' (level one), whereas 3% of the variance is due to the 'Gender of the subject' (level two).

When making a decision on the "Respect for the spirit of the game", variables 'Act' (level one) and 'Gender of the subject' (level two) are again the significant factors. 33% of the variance in judgments on Respect for the spirit of the game is explained by the second level (respondents). 7% of the variance is explained by Act (level one) and 15% of the variance finds its explanation in 'Gender of the subject' (level two).

9) *Are athletes inclined to engage in certain questionable behavior?*

10) *Which personal and circumstantial characteristics influence this intention?*

In the last study, Fair Play motivations of athletes are put to the test. The central question is whether athletes have the intention to behave according to Fair Play and which determinants have an effect on this motivation. Again, a multilevel approach was used to analyze the answers. This analysis showed that variables 'Act' (level one) and 'Gender of the subject' (level two) contribute significantly to the intention to engage in the proposed behavior. Other variables did not affect the moral motivation of the sample population.

17.0% of the variance is explained by 'Act' and 5.0% of the variance in the scores on the inclination to engage in the behavior is explained by the 'Gender of the subject'.

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### Overall discussion and conclusions

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The aim of this doctoral study was to investigate the prevalence, design, content, implementation, and enforcement of ethical codes in sports organizations. The influence of these factors on the effectiveness of ethical codes was also studied. Next to these aspects of organizational ethics in sports organizations, the central concept of 'Fair Play', that abounds the codes of ethics in the sports domain and represents an important element of sport participation ethics, was studied in detail. The application of Fair Play by athletes themselves, as well as their motivation to engage in Fair Play behavior was put to the test. Four different studies have shed a light on the research questions in this doctoral project.

#### **Code establishment: a process rather than an instrument, with the emphasis on involvement**

First of all, it is shown that the mere presence of ethical codes does not generate more ethical behavior in sports organizations. It is not possible to state if this finding follows the literature, since earlier results on code effectiveness, albeit in other contexts than the sports domain, are extremely mixed (Helin & Sändstrom, 2007; Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008). This result strengthens the need to examine the establishment of ethical codes in more detail, rather than just considering the existence versus the absence of a code in sports organizations. This necessity was already expressed by Singh (2011), as well as by Ho (2010) and Kaptein and Schwarz (2008).

Looking at these other factors, it becomes clear that the motivation to establish an ethical code plays a key role in its effectiveness. If there is a genuine concern about ethical challenges and the will to diminish unethical conduct, this renders a code more effective. There are other elements of ethical codes that influence the ethical climate in sports organizations in a positive manner as well. They all seem to have to do with the degree of involvement that members of the organization feel or perceive. This is the case for the coaches and athletes, when they are involved in the design of the code and are able to influence its content. This is also true for the managers if they are reminded of their responsibilities, by explicit guidelines for this group in the code. Involvement also seems key

when it comes to communication. The findings show that the timing of communication is crucial: the moment of registration of members is the best timing to communicate the code, because it involves members in the process of code implementation. This stands in firm contrast with the format of communicating by a poster, which is less personal. A counterproductive effect is gathered by the detached way of signaling the presence of the code. It was Berenbeim (1988, as cited in Higgs-Kleyn, 1999) who stressed the importance of the involvement of members of the organization in the developmental phase. Frankel (1989) considers this concern with the code as an essential learning experience. Tucker, Stathakopolous and Patti (1999) argue that involvement in code creation raises awareness and therefore increases the positive effect of the code. The input from the members enables the acceptance of ethical codes (Tucker et al., 1999).

Another striking element seems to be the need for a supportive framework, in which to apply and use the guidelines of the ethical code. This is shown by the fact that supporting guidelines and protection for whistleblowers have a positive effect on the ethical sensitivity in the sports organization. Members appear to feel less insecure when these underpinning aids are in place.

All these findings direct us to assume that an ethical code is only effective when it is brought to live, both by the involvement of the members of the organizations and by the provision of structural supporting measures to apply and enforce the guidelines in the code. This was already suggested by Cheek and Leonard (1998) for the general business setting, and confirmed empirically by Singh (2011). Now it appears to be true for the sport context as well. If the surrounding factors which we discussed, are not in place, the code of ethics remain a paper tiger.

### **Code content: striking the right balance in guidance**

Although Adams et al. (2001) claim that an ethical code has a positive effect on ethical conduct in organizations, regardless of the content, different authors suggest a role for code content in the effectiveness of the instrument (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008; Singh, 2011). A positive effect is found when guidelines are consequentialist oriented. Rather than telling literally to people how to (not) behave, it calls upon their own sense of responsibility in ethical dilemmas and urge them to behave in an ethically guided manner. Consequentialism has the tendency to engage the audience and to offer insights in the rationale of behavior,

rather than just postulating the desirable outcome. This finding seems to contrast with the opinion formulated by Malloy (2003) that the prevalence of deontology holds no risk for the effectiveness of the code, because “most will follow codes unquestioningly and no rationale is required” (Malloy, 2003, p.457).

When there is a combination of regulatory and inspirational phrasing, this also has a positive effect. This shows that the followers of the code are in need of a delicate balance between guidance and autonomy. On the one hand, they have a desire to know the ‘greater values’ and the ethical goals behind the guidelines. They don’t want to act on rules without understanding their purpose. On the other hand, they lose their way when it becomes too philosophical and abstract, without concrete rules to live by. When there is a combination of these two types of statements, namely regulatory and inspirational, the members of the organization are more comfortable in presenting the desired behavior. Also the presence of explicit guidelines for the members of the board and management had a positive effect. This is once again a confirmation of the positive influence of involvement, certainly for this group of stakeholders.

Another aspect of the success of a code is its length. Too expansive documents prevent the code from becoming a practical instrument. This shows that sports organizations are not so much in search of a document that explicitly mentions everything that could possibly happen, but rather a pragmatic, useful aid to guide behavior. Rather than a whole collection of hollow phrases, the code needs to be able to become alive and to transform itself into a vivid and workable instrument.

Our study clarifies the need for different codes for different stakeholders in the sports organization. Different stakeholders have different responsibilities towards the sports organizations and they all deserve and need specific guidelines to help them make decisions and perform certain behavior. Our results support this statement: for instance, the explicit mentioning of statements for the board (organizational ethics) is needed in order to positively influence the ethical climate (behavior of the organization as a whole). Our study also showed the importance of not including too much statements ( $\leq 30$ ) and of making the statements not too general: when we combine these findings, it is almost not possible to respect these conditions unless there are different codes developed for the different populations in the sports clubs. Of course, we can not ignore that the need for different

codes also holds certain challenges: every other code requires a specific design, implementation and enforcement.

The analysis of code content and its effectiveness shows that codes should be a source of inspiration and stimulate moral awareness, rather than merely guide behavior by rules. Again, life has to be blown into the document to make it work in and for the sports organizations.

### **Fair Play: more than following the rules**

Fair Play has been the subject of a lot of debates, in academia, in the media and on the playing field. The concept is difficult to grasp, and there is still no consensus on what exactly constitutes Fair Play. However, the exact conceptualization of Fair Play has important consequences for the study of sport ethics, but moreover, also for the sport practice. Several authors have engaged in the scientific debate on Fair Play and literature offers thus a diversity of explanations and interpretations of this crucial concept. The term is also abundantly present in ethical codes, written for athletes and other members of the sports organizations. However, until now, no empirical data was available on how athletes apply and interpret Fair Play. So, when a code demands to play fair, it is not clear how the athletes conceptualize this concept. A factorial survey study makes it possible to investigate which conceptualization is used and which variables play a role in this judgment. The first remarkable finding is that the concept of Fair Play is interpreted both as respect for the rules and as respect for the spirit of the game. The classical theoretical distinction between these two stances is not made that clearly by athletes in practice. Both conceptualizations add to the final judgment on Fair Play. Results show that 'respect for the spirit of the game' plays a larger role in the overall judgment on fairness. This suggests that athletes interpret Fair Play as more than just 'abiding by the rules', and consider Fair Play as a broader concept. However, accordance with the rules stays an essential element in this judgment as well.

This moral judgment is influenced by certain variables, namely the act that is judged, the level of the match and the presence of ethical codes. It is no surprise that acts are evaluated differently, since Miller (2005) and Ommundsen (2003) showed that a distinction is made by athletes between different forms of questionable behavior. Our findings show that "raw cheating", e.g. telling the shuttle in badminton was out when this is not the case, is not

accepted by most of the badminton players. On the other hand, name-calling the opponent and losing on purpose were not punished in the same decisive way, but are much more acceptable in terms of Fair Play according to the players. We believe these acts are seen as a strategic part of the game and therefore (more) morally allowed in the view of athletes.

The level of the match has an effect on the judgment, in agreement with the findings of Miller (2005) who describes a connection between high performance contexts and lower moral judgment, as well as a relation between high performance contexts and the legitimization of using intimidation in sports. For this project, the most important determinant is of course the presence of an ethical code. The mentioning of the concept Fair Play in the ethical code, when describing the situation, makes athletes judge in a more strict way, as if this brings the code and its values to life and they are reminded of the importance of Fair Play.

The judgments on both conceptualizations (rules and spirit) are influenced by contextual and personal factors as well. The act determines this judgment, as was suspected, but also the gender of the subject makes a significant difference. It appears that men apply a looser interpretation of Fair Play. This result was predicted by findings from the literature. Guivernau and Duda (2002) found that males were more accepting of cheating than females when losing was at stake. Gardner and Janelle (2002) also found different results for males and females when it comes to legitimize injury and aggression among both contact and non-contact sport athletes.

These findings help achieve a better understanding of the conceptualization of Fair Play that is applied by athletes themselves and of the factors that play a role in the moral judgment on Fair Play. Another consequence of these findings is the fact that researchers should define which interpretation they are putting to the test, when performing empirical studies on Fair Play behavior in athletes. Nowadays, most empirical studies investigate 'Fair Play conduct' without being more specific about how they conceptualize this term. It is however crucial to know if they study if athletes follow the rules or behave in agreement with the spirit of the game, or if another interpretation is used.

### **From cognition to action: Fair Play intentions**

Ethical behavior is the final result of a four-step process (Rest, 1986), that involves (1) the awareness of the ethical issue at hand, this is the 'moral sensitivity' (2) the careful



deliberation of the issue, which leads to the 'moral judgment' (3) the intention to live up to this judgment, i.e. the so-called 'moral motivation' and finally (4) the actual behavior, i.e. the 'moral character'. This study focuses on the third step, the intention to act out a certain judgment. Two variables appear to affect this motivation, namely the act and the gender of the subject. The findings point out that men are more intended to engage in questionable behavior than women. This result is in agreement with earlier research on ethical behavior in sports that have consistently reported on gender differences, such as the study of Guivernau and Duda (2002) that showed that males are more accepting of cheating than females when losing was at stake. This is also consistent with Shields et al. (2007) who provide evidence for the fact that males engage more in "unsportpersonship" behavior than females. Sage and Kavussanu (2007) confirm in their study that females displayed more ethical behavior. A possible explanation offered by several authors (Duda et al., 1991; Sage and Kavussanu, 2007; Shields et al., 2007) for this difference is the finding that males are more ego oriented than females. Ego orientation involves a focus towards achieving a positive evaluation of their abilities and importance from others, whereas task orientation focuses on learning and improving abilities (Li et al., 1996). These different definitions of goals, and therefore success, could explain that men are more likely to "endorse doing anything that is necessary to obtain victory and display superiority" (Duda et al., 1991, p.84) as they are more directed towards winning. Moral concerns are made subordinate to the desire to win and feel superior (Shields et al., 2007). This finding has implications for ethical training: task-orientation has to be seen as a skill for both sexes and therefore encouraged throughout education, and/or other incentives and methods are desirable with women and men, for instance turning Fair Play into a goal by awarding a Fair Play trophy.

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### Strengths and limitations

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This project has certain strengths, of which the first is the range of characteristics that is taken into account when determining the effectiveness of ethical codes. Most studies only focus on the existence of ethical codes to investigate the generated effect, whereas this study considers more than twenty different aspects of the code and its content. Although the list of characteristics that has been put to the test is not exhaustive, it represents the most important variables mentioned throughout the literature and combines them to

establish a broad study. In doing so, it meets the most important expectations formulated by Kaptein and Schwarz (2008) on what research on codes and code effectiveness should consist of. The fact that the establishment of a code is considered as a developmental process, rather than a one-time event, is another strength of this project.

A clear merit of this study is the application of the studies of ethical codes to the domain of sports. Although it is shown that most sports organizations have a code of ethics, until now no empirical studies were found in literature. The same is true for the empirical study of Fair Play conceptualizations by athletes. The debate on what consists Fair Play is possibly as old as sports itself, but to date the debate is predominantly held by academics. The approach of this study made it possible to consider the stance of the athletes and even more so, to investigate which personal and contextual variables influence their point-of-view. The factorial survey design is an important addition to the collection of research methods in sport ethics.

Of course, every research design and implementation has its limitations and this project is no exception. First of all, the sample in the studies on ethical codes is restricted to six sport disciplines. However, because they represent a solid mix (individual versus team sport, racket sport, ball sport, animal sport) of popular sports, that are also Olympic disciplines and therefore known worldwide, it can be assumed that the results may be representative. A second drawback could be the sensitivity of the topic at hand. When studying ethics, a social desirability bias can considerably limit the strength of the findings. However, the used measure to assess ethical sensitivity, judgment, motivation and character, the Ethical Climate Index, has shown to be valid and able to counter possible socially desired responses. The strong claim of anonymity that was communicated with the respondents, added to the reduction of this possible limitation. However, the data on perceptions are self-reported, and this should never be forgotten when analyzing and interpreting the results. Third, the study design examines certain characteristics, but because of practical limitations, other characteristics are not studied in detail, for instance the use of passive versus active sentences. It is possible that some of the differences in these characteristics could account for differences in code effectiveness. A fourth remark considers the limited time frame of the study. Ethical codes have only been in place for some years in most sports organizations, whereas the implementation and embedment of codes is a long-term process (Kaptein & Schwarz, 2008). This leads to the fact that results can be expected more on the long term

than immediately. Finally, to prove the causality of the findings, it is necessary to set up a longitudinal study instead of a cross-sectional design, which have been implemented until now. To affirm effectiveness, this is a necessary addition to the comparison of code characteristics with the ethical climate of organizations. A substantial time frame with multiple moments of measurements, as suggested by Kaptein and Schwarz (2008) is crucial in the assessment of code effectiveness.

The study on Fair Play conceptualizations and intentions has its limitations as well. The most obvious one is the traditional critique to factorial survey studies, which correctly argues that the method remains hypothetical in character. The lack of evidence of a link between the choices made in the hypothetical situation and the subject's conduct in real events remains a difficulty (Farrell, Cobbin, and Farrell, 2002). However, the factorial survey offers a lot of advantages, which in our opinion outweigh the possible limitations. The combination of the strengths of an experimental design with the validity of a survey method make this study design a rigorous method for studying decision-making, which to date has not been done when it comes to athletes.

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#### Practical implications

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The findings on ethical codes and their effectiveness hold an important and clear message to those outside academics, namely sport policy and sport organizations.

First of all, it is important that the motivation to establish an ethical code is the genuine wish to stimulate ethical behavior, rather than the professionalization of the organization or the building of an attractive image. Therefore, there is still a need to increase the awareness that ethical behavior is a responsibility of all those involved in sports. A second message for sport organizations would be to involve the different stakeholders as much as possible in the relevant processes of code establishment. The coaches should play a key role in the design of the code. Involvement can also be encouraged by communicating at a certain time (i.e. at the registration) and in a certain manner (not in a detached style, e.g. a poster, but rather by more personal, engaging formats). Third, there is a need for a supportive framework and supportive measures. The realization of a so-called 'helpdesk', i.e. a designated place/person where members can go to with their doubts and questions, is an important step. Next to this, there should be sufficient protection measures in place for whistle-blowers. A fourth

implication concerns the content of the codes, which needs to be attentively considered. Length, tone, and ethical orientation are all elements that should be carefully deliberated and designed. Policy organizations could assist in this process by providing examples of good practices, or by providing a helpdesk function. Every attempt to actually bring the code 'to live' should be encouraged.

Looking at the Fair Play investigation, there are also certain practical consequences. First of all, an important ethical challenge in certain sports, such as badminton, is the fact that athletes tend to lose on purpose in order to meet a supposedly weaker opponent in the next round. Although the Badminton World Federation (2012) is in disagreement with this conduct, a lot of athletes seem to consider this practice as fair, and express also the intention to engage in this behavior if winning is at stake. If the Badminton World Federation and the IOC want to circumvent this from happening again, they should consider adjusting their competition scheme to a format that does not make this act possible or favorable. However, the fact that so much athletes consider this conduct as acceptable and/or are inclined to behave in this way, should also open the debate on the possible threat or desirability of this strategy. Next to this, the findings also suggest that ethical training should concentrate on different aspects in men as opposed to women, and that the efforts of creating awareness on Fair Play should be adjusted to the level of the matches that are organized. Moreover, it is useful to involve the ethical codes in this process, if such a document is available in the organization.

Different organizations could play a leading role in the valorization and implementation of these findings and suggestions. Institutions such as Panathlon, ICES (Belgium), CCES (Canada) and Play by the Rules (Australia), all centers that specialize in expertise on ethics in sports, are the apt and competent actors to take up this task.

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#### Directions for future research

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Our findings suggest a number of areas for future research. Considering the research on codes and their effectiveness, it is important to investigate how ethical codes in sports organizations, namely the parts regarding athlete on-field conduct, influence the behavior of the athlete on the field, rather than limiting the research to the study of the effect on the organizational ethics in the overall organizations. A closer look into which statements

(organizational versus sport performance) influence which stakeholders (on versus off the field) would be insightful.

It would be useful to expand the research beyond Flanders and beyond the sport disciplines that were put to the test in this project. The results could also gain representation when more professional organizations are added to the sample. Next to the expansion of sport organizations, in size, professionalism and geography, also an expansion of code characteristics can add to the validity of the results. For instance, the grammar and vocabulary used in the codes, and its effect on code effectiveness, can be examined. An additional research method, namely the in-detail study of one or more cases of the process of code establishment, can shed a light on the strengths and limitations of codes when it comes to promoting ethical behavior in sports organizations. As mentioned, the measurement at different moments over a substantial time frame could prove causality of the effect of code characteristics on ethical behavior in sports organizations.

Next to the study of a formal method to stimulate ethical behavior, it would be interesting to consider the effect of more informal methods, such as the influence of ethical leadership. Our results suggest a key role for the coach in tackling unethical behavior in sports organizations. The effect of leadership style of this figure, as well as others, on the ethical climate deserves attention and can help to forward practice. Also, the study of combined effect of formal (ethical code) and informal (leadership) methods promises to be interesting and useful.

The study on Fair Play conceptualizations and intentions can be extended to other actors in the sports field, such as referees, coaches and spectators. If there appear to be differences in the used conceptualizations of Fair Play and in factors that contribute to the moral judgment on Fair Play, this differences could give indications about the origin of certain tensions when it comes to decisions made by sport authorities on this topic. This could also shed a light on which groups have the most varied interpretation of the concept and shows the need for education within and balancing between these groups. It would also be enlightening to study the differences in application of Fair Play across different sport disciplines. Future research could also investigate the proportion of variance in moral judgments on Fair Play that is not explained by the variables in our study.

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