Can losing teams cope with destructive voice behaviour? The role of game results and athletes' perceived motivational climate.

Running title: Destructive voice in team sports. Game results and the motivational climate

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Abstract

This study examined the relation between losing a game and players' destructive voice about the coach. As team performances would suffer when such behaviours are not managed properly, we tested the motivational climate as a potential mechanism by which coaches can manage these destructive behaviours. Twelve volleyball and basketball teams ($N = 136$) were weekly assessed during eight weeks using questionnaires. Players rated the extent to which their teammates expressed destructive voice about their coach. Each player's indegree centrality (i.e. the average score received from all teammates) functioned as measurement of his/her destructive voice about the coach. As hypothesized, losing a game increased players' expression of destructive voice about the coach. At both the within- and between-person level, perceived mastery (performance) climate negatively (positively) predicted players' destructive voice about the coach. When players perceived a more salient performance climate than usual after a loss, their increase in destructive voice about the coach was magnified. These results highlight the dynamics of players' destructive voice about the coach and how a single loss can start the utterance of such voice. A coach would be able to counter this process by increasing the focus on a mastery rather than a performance climate.

Introduction

A team sports setting is a dynamic microcosm in which teams continuously experience wins or losses. While losing games is inherent to team sports, research mainly considers game results as outcomes instead of predictors of group dynamics (Carron, Bray, & Eys, 2002; Heuzé, Raimbault, & Fontayne, 2006). Yet, we contend that losing a game not only is important as an outcome, but also determines team dynamics. After bad results, coaches often function as scapegoats and critique on the coach may arise within the team. For example, media reported that players revolted against Carlo Ancelotti at FC Bayern Munich and José Mourinho at Chelsea FC. They lost the trust of their dressing room after bad performances, resulting in poor team cohesion and ultimately the ‘sack’ (Austin, 2017; Hytner, 2015). Coaches and athletes acknowledge that when critical voice is not managed properly, it can increase negativity and disparity in the team, and ultimately result in worsening team performance (Cope, Eys, Schinke, & Bosselut, 2010). Not only losing a game will trigger criticism to the coach but we contend that when teams embrace strong performance standards as opposed to mastery-oriented standards, they will also encourage such destructive voice.

The concept of voice stems from organizational literature and is defined as “an individual’s voluntary and open communication directed toward individuals within the organization that is focused on influencing the context of the work environment” (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014, p. 88). Generally, research argued voice to be positive and constructive in nature (Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison, 2014). Yet, especially in the context of team sports critiquing or talking badly about the coach is a frequent occurrence. For example, Jowett & Timson-Katchis (2005) found that parents might criticize their children’s coaches, which detrimentally

affected the coach-athlete relation. Further it is not uncommon for teammates to mutually express dissent that results from concerns about or dissatisfaction with their coach (Kassing & Anderson, 2014). Recently, scholars argued for multiple types of voice, including destructive voice (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014), which also captures the essence of players' criticism on or talking badly about their coach. Destructive voice is "the voluntary expression of hurtful, critical or degrading comments regarding the current state of affairs and has the purpose of challenging the status quo in a prohibitive/destructive manner" (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014, p. 91). Exemplary destructive voice behaviours are bad-mouthing or expressing debasing comments regarding work policies, practices, procedures, etc. (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). In this way, we denote that criticizing and talking badly about the coach represent destructive voice about the coach because organizations and sports teams have been argued to contain many similarities such as a hierarchical supervisor (coach) – subordinate (athlete) relationship, clearly outlined goals, and leaders (coaches) who determine the policies and practices within their teams (Bridges & Roquemoire, 2004; Case, 1998; Kassing & Anderson, 2014).

Destructive voice behaviour has been found to negatively relate to performance in businesses (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). In sports settings, perceiving criticism on coaches can detrimentally affect athletes' trust in their coach (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005) and team members expressing negativity lead to a decreased focus and cohesion within teams (Cope et al., 2010). Coaching behaviour is an important determinant of athletes' performance and their experience of success and failure (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003; Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995; Turman, 2007). Destructively voicing about the coach might indicate that athletes are dissatisfied with their coach (Kassing & Anderson, 2014). For these reasons,

rendering insights on antecedents of destructive voice about the coach is highly valuable.

All sports teams are confronted with losing games. Frustration aggression hypothesis (Berkowitz, 1989) proposed that frustrating events (i.e. failure to attain a goal such as losing a game) arouse overt or covert aggression towards the agent that is responsible for this frustration. In organizations, frustrating events indeed cause counterproductive work behaviours, which include inappropriate verbal (or even physical) actions (Bies & Tripp, 2005; Spector et al., 2006). These behaviours are aimed at harming (people in) the organization. Accordingly, we will expect that after losing a game, which is considered a frustrating and stressful event in team sports (e.g., Kerr, Wilson, Bowling, & Sheahan, 2005), players will engage in more destructive voice about the coach as s/he is considered responsible for the team's performance (Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995).

Yet, coaches could influence team members' destructive voice as individuals inspect their social environment for cues and norms that signal desired behaviour within the social context (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). For example, when the prevailing climate (i.e., social environment) stresses the necessity of cooperation to achieve success, players will help and correct each other to improve the team's functioning (Van Puyenbroeck, Stouten & Vande Broek, 2017). It is therefore crucial that coaches create a climate that contains norms, beliefs and values that (1) limit the presence of destructive voice and (2) protect a team from potential negative effects of losing a game on the team dynamics.

In sports, the (motivational) climate is a central concept to achievement goal theory (AGT: Ames, 1995; Heuzé, Sarrazin, Masiero, Raimbault, & Thomas, 2006). AGT states that individuals strive to achieve success and competence. Individuals'

conceptualization and criteria to assess competence, and their beliefs and values regarding the appropriate behaviours to reach success (i.e., their goal orientation) determine their actions in achievement-related settings. Highly task-oriented individuals conceptualize competence in terms of task mastery and self-referenced progression (i.e., improving their own skills while using themselves and their previous performances as standards), which can be achieved by expending effort and learning. Individuals who are ego-oriented believe that success is other-referenced as it is tied to outperforming others, which targets their actions at exceeding the competencies of others (Nicholls, 1984, 1989).

While task- and ego-orientation are dispositional characteristics, the social environment is an important factor in stimulating task-or ego-involvement. This social environment, which is referred to as the motivational climate by AGT, can differentially stress the importance of task-oriented and ego-oriented characteristics, thereby influencing the values and beliefs that prevail within a team about the most desirable actions that leads to success (Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1988; Roberts, 1992). AGT distinguishes between two types of motivational climates within sports teams (Ames & Archer, 1988; Seifriz, Duda, & Chi, 1992). Within a performance or ego-oriented climate, success is tied to winning and contains the beliefs that intra-team rivalry, normative feedback, and outperforming team members are crucial for team performance. A mastery climate is characterized by a focus on success as self-referenced progression and the beliefs that obstacles are opportunities to learn as a team, and hard work and cooperation lead to success (Ames & Archer, 1988; Duda, 2013; Heuzé, Sarrazin, et al., 2006; Newton, Duda, & Yin, 2000).

A performance climate has been related to several unfavourable outcomes such as the application of superficial learning strategies, performance anxiety and

negative developmental experiences (e.g., Ames & Archer, 1988; MacDonald, Coté, Eys, & Deakin, 2011; Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007; Young, 2005). Its focus on intra-team rivalry and outperforming others also results in detrimental interpersonal consequences such as increased conflict between peers, reduced fair play (i.e., more hostility), and lower cohesion within teams (e.g., Boixados, Cruz, Torregrossa, & Valiente, 2004; De Backer, Boen, De Cuyper, Hoigaard, & Vande Broek, 2015; Ommundsen, Roberts, Lemyre, & Miller, 2005). Given the performance climate's emphasis on outperforming others and at the same time encouraging suboptimal interpersonal behaviours towards others to stress one's superiority, we expect players to express destructive voice. Indeed, expressing critical comments about others commonly occurs in situations that are characterised by the importance of demonstrating superiority (Schutz, 1998). As players more negatively evaluate their coaches in a performance climate, thereby indicating their dissatisfaction with their coaches' approach, a coach is a salient feature in the environment for players to engage in more destructive voice about (Balaguer, Duda, & Crespo, 1999; Cumming, Smoll, Smith, & Grossbard, 2007).

A mastery climate on the other hand is associated with self-regulated learning strategies, feelings of enjoyment, intrinsic motivation, and lower performance anxiety (Ames & Archer, 1988; Seifriz, Duda, & Chi, 1992; Smith et al., 2007; Vazou, Ntoumanis, & Duda, 2006). As opposed to a performance climate, players maintain better social relations, cooperate when faced with obstacles as problems are considered essential to improve (Ashauer & Macan, 2013; Gully & Philips, 2005; Ommundsen et al., 2005). Accordingly, the cooperative mindset of a mastery climate results into more cohesion and proactive behaviours from players (i.e., correcting others or voicing suggestions for improvement) (De Backer et al., 2015; Van

Puyenbroeck et al., 2017). Furthermore, athletes appear to be more satisfied with their coach when the coach fosters a mastery climate (Balaguer et al., 1999; Cumming et al., 2007). Given these more cooperative and collegial behaviours a mastery climate endorses, players will be less likely to engage in destructive voice about their coach.

The motivational climate also determines players' reactions to losing. A performance climate is characterized by a quest for victory (Ames, 1992; Ommundsen et al., 2005). This strong focus on winning causes players to feel more frustrated after losing or being outperformed (Boixados et al., 2004). As we propose that players will express more destructive voice after a game, we can expect that this relation will be stronger in a high performance climate. On the contrary, players can be expected to experience less frustration after a loss in a mastery climate as setbacks and problems are considered inherent to making progression (Ashauer & Macan, 2013). Hence, this emphasis might shift players' attention from the game outcome to finding solutions for improvement, which would coincide with decreased destructive voice about the coach after a loss.

The Present Study

The present study will examine the relation between game results, the motivational climate and destructive voice about the coach. First, based on frustration-aggression hypothesis we expect that losing a game will positively predict players' destructive voice about the coach (Hypothesis 1). Second, drawing upon AGT, we expect that the ego-oriented beliefs of a performance climate will stimulate players to engage more frequently in destructive voice about the coach. In other words, players' perceived performance climate will positively predict destructive voice about the coach (Hypothesis 2a). Accordingly, we expect that because of the

cooperative and constructive mindset of a mastery climate, players will feel less inclined to express destructive voice about the coach. Hence, we hypothesize that players' perceived mastery climate will predict less destructive voice about the coach (Hypothesis 2b). Third, we expect an interaction between the motivational climate and game result. In a performance climate, we expect players to be more frustrated with a loss as it confronts them with their desire to display superiority. Therefore we hypothesize that players' perceived performance climate will magnify the positive relation between a loss and destructive voice about the coach (Hypothesis 3a). A mastery climate's emphasis on self-reference progression and hard work will prevent the focus on the game result but will encourage players to focus on the lessons that can be learned from such a loss and look for ways to improve. Thus, players' perceived mastery climate will weaken the positive relation between a loss and destructive voice about the coach (Hypothesis 3b).

There is an increasing awareness that a wide array of organizational behaviours and constructs fluctuate over short time-periods (Beal, 2012), including voice (Morrison, 2011; Morrison, 2014). However, most longitudinal studies examining voice are limited to designs that only include two waves that are separated by large time gaps from three to even ten months (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison, 2014; Paukzstat, Steglich, & Wittek, 2011). These designs are unable to obtain a dynamic picture of voice that takes into account time-varying or contextual predictors. The present study aims to provide a more veridical picture of fluctuations in destructive voice about the coach and how they are predicted by game results and the motivational climate, using an extensive sampling procedure with short intervals.

In addition, this approach enables to test relations at both between- and within-subjects level, which can differ substantially (e.g., Curran & Bauer, 2011;

Hamaker, 2012; Hoffman & Stawski, 2009). Examining within-person effects of the motivational climate (e.g., perceiving a stronger mastery climate than a player usually does) will contribute to AGT as it enables to test the applicability of its theoretical assumptions at the within-person level. While the majority of AGT-related research is limited to the examination of between-person effects (e.g., Cumming et al., 2007; De Backer et al., 2015; Ommundsen et al., 2005), the present study will explore the importance of players perceiving (within-person) changes in their social environment (e.g., additional focus on task-oriented features). Finally, these insights will have implications for coaching literature and practice in general.

Method

Participants

Participants were 32 basketball players (22 males and 10 females) and 104 volleyball players (49 males and 55 females). These players' mean age was 22.73 years ($SD = 5.53$, range = 16-40), had on average 14.08 years of experience ($SD = 5.73$).

Procedures

Twenty-four basketball and volleyball coaches were contacted by means of a standardized e-mail explaining the purpose and design of the study. Twelve coaches (three basketball and nine volleyball) confirmed their willingness to participate. The level of their teams ranged from the regional levels to the second highest national level in Belgium. Paper-and-pencil questionnaires were weekly administered by a research assistant during eight weeks. For each team, the assessments took place on the same day in the week and lasted for 15-20 min. Usually, these teams play one game every week, during the weekend. However, due to national holidays or unexpected changes in the competition schedule that occurred, some teams did not play a competitive game during particular weekends. The first page of the questionnaire included an informed consent. Respondents received no rewards. APA

guidelines were followed and this study was approved by the Social and Societal Ethics committee of the research institution.

Team sizes ranged from 9 to 13, and all players within the team were assessed every week. Except for one female and one male hockey team, all teams were from different clubs. Players worked on average 2.08 years ($SD = 1.83$) with their coach.

Measures

Game result

The research assistant who administered the questionnaires also inquired about the result (i.e., win or loss) of the most recent game.

Destructive voice about the coach

Destructive voice about the coach was assessed using a social network approach. That is, participants had to indicate how frequently each of their teammates, whose names were listed in advance, “criticized/talked badly about their coach (while s/he could not hear this critique) during the last week”. Participants had to indicate this frequency by giving one score on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*continuously*). By convention, self-ratings were not allowed (e.g., Fransen et al., 2015). This resulted in an NxN matrix for each team in which the rows represent the players that are giving the ratings, while the columns represent the players that are ‘receiving’ the ratings. This approach has been commonly used to measure voice within teams (e.g., Detert, Burris, Harrison, & Martin, 2013; Paukzstat et al., 2011). A network approach enables to calculate each player’s indegree centrality, which is equal to the average score that a player ‘received’ from all teammates (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013). This score can be described as the average frequency a player voices towards his/her teammates (as perceived by

this player's teammates). We used this measurement as operationalization of each player's amount of destructive voice about the coach.

Motivational climate

To avoid boredom or fatigue during the frequent assessments, it was necessary to limit the length of the questionnaire (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001). The motivational climate was therefore assessed weekly using only eight items from the 20-item Perceived Motivational Climate in Sport Questionnaire (Seifriz et al., 1992). Four items measured performance climate and four items mastery climate. These items were the four highest loading items for mastery and performance climate in a comparable sample (Van Puyenbroeck et al., 2017). All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Omega-reliability coefficients (Geldhof, Preacher, & Zyphur, 2014) demonstrated internal consistency of the mastery-oriented items at the within-person ($\omega = .81$) and the between-person level ($\omega = .96$). Also the performance climate scale showed internal consistency at the within-person ($\omega = .84$) and the between-person level ($\omega = .98$).

Plan of analysis

Multilevel regression modelling was used to test the hypotheses because this analysis allows predictors that differ within (at level 1) and between players (at level 2). We constructed a series of nested regression models to predict players' destructive voice about the coach. In *model 1*, the result of the game (0 = win, 1 = loss) was inserted as a level 1 predictor. *Model 2* added mastery climate and performance climate to test Hypothesis 2a and Hypothesis 2b. At level 1, we included within-person centered scores of mastery and performance climate while we inserted players' personal means of their perceived mastery climate and performance

climate at level 2. This procedure enabled to capture effects that are solely due to within-person differences at level 1 and to between-person differences at level 2 (Hofmann & Stawski, 2009). *Model 3* added the interactions between mastery climate and game result, and between performance climate and game result at level 1. In addition, the cross-level interactions between game result and players' personal mean of perceived mastery climate, and between game result and players' personal mean of perceived performance climate were included. This addition enabled us to test Hypothesis 3a and Hypothesis 3b. All models included players' age and gender (0 = female, 1 = male) as controls.

The models contained random intercept and slope (for the effect of game result) at level 2. A level 3 random intercept was also included, which allowed us to report relations that are not biased due to nesting within teams. The proportional reduction in unexplained level-1 variance (pseudo- R^2_e) and unexplained level-2 variance in intercept (pseudo- R^2_0) and in slope (pseudo- R^2_1) was calculated in case of, respectively, an additional significant predictor at level 1, level 2 or cross-level interaction (as compared to the more parsimonious model). Each model's fit was compared to the fit of its more parsimonious model (e.g., *model 3* vs. *model 2*). Model 1 was compared to the unconditional means model.

Results

Means, standard deviations, intercorrelations and intraclass correlations can be found in Table 1. In this section we describe the results that are central to the hypotheses. All results are depicted in Table 2, including parameter estimates and their confidence intervals. All differences in fit between the nested models were significant.

Table 1 and Table 2 near here

Predicting destructive voice about the coach by game result

The results of *model 1* revealed that losing a game positively predicted players' destructive voice about the coach, which was in line with Hypothesis 1. Players displayed more destructive voice about their coach according to their teammates, after a loss. It should be noted that obtaining a negative Pseudo-R² is possible but should not be interpreted (Singer & Willett, 2003).

Predicting destructive voice about the coach by the motivational climate

In *model 2*, also mastery climate was negatively significant at level 1 and level 2, thereby confirming Hypothesis 2a. The significance at level 1 indicates that the larger the increase of players' perceived mastery climate as compared to their average perception of such a climate, the less they will utter destructive voice about the coach. Also at the between-person level (i.e. level 2), the stronger players' average perception of a mastery climate over time, the less likely they will be to display destructive voice about the coach. Performance climate was revealed as a positive significant predictor at level 1 and level 2, which confirmed Hypothesis 2b. At level 1, this result indicates that the larger the increase of players' perceived performance climate as compared to their average perception of such a climate, the more they utter destructive voice about the coach. At the between-person level (i.e. level 2), the stronger players' average perception of a performance climate over time, the more they will display destructive voice about the coach.

Examining the interaction between game result and the motivational climate

In *model 3*, the level 1 and the cross-level interactions between mastery climate and game result were non-significant, thereby rejecting Hypothesis 3a. The level 1 interaction between game result and performance climate was significant. As indicated by simple slope analysis (see Figure 2), when players perceive a stronger

performance climate than usual, losing a game more strongly predicts destructive voice about the coach ($\beta = 0.42$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < 0.001$), as compared to when they perceived the same extent of such a climate than usual ($\beta = 0.30$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < 0.001$) or a weaker performance climate than usual ($\beta = 0.19$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = 0.02$). This result confirmed Hypothesis 3b. However, the cross-level interaction was not significant.

Figure 1 near here

Discussion

Even though game results have been primarily used as outcomes, anecdotal and qualitative evidence suggests that bad performances elicit criticism aimed at coaches (Austin, 2017; Hytner, 2015). This study focused on the dynamic picture of how destructive voice about the coach fluctuates in response to game results. By assessing sports teams for eight weeks, we revealed that a single loss is already positively associated with players' destructive voice about the coach, thereby confirming Hypothesis 1. Previous work has already revealed that players' percentage of lost games over the season is negatively related to their satisfaction with the coach (Cumming et al., 2007). The present results indicate that already one lost game, which can be considered as a stressful and frustrating event (e.g., Kerr et al., 2005), can be associated with more destructive voice about the coach as he may be held responsible for this result (Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995).

Because such destructiveness might result in team fragmentation, distractions and decreased performance, it is important that coaches are able to manage these destructive tones within the team (Cope et al., 2010). This study suggests that the motivational climate can function as a mechanism by which coaches can manage destructive voice about the coach. In line with Hypothesis 2a, the more salient

players perceive a mastery climate than usual, the less they utter destructive voice about the coach. Also, at the between-person level, the higher players' average perception over time of a mastery climate, the fewer destructive voice about the coach is displayed. The cooperative and improvement-oriented mindset of a mastery climate has already been shown to encourage players to display more constructive voice (Van Puyenbroeck et al., 2017), and students towards more team learning behaviours such as discussing errors and providing feedback or suggestions (Ashauer & Macan, 2013). The present results imply that the same mastery-oriented mindset not only results in positive voice-related behaviours but also might urge players towards reducing destructive voice about the coach.

In line with Hypothesis 2b, the higher players' average perception of a performance climate or the more salient players perceive such a climate than usual, the more they will express destructive voice about the coach. Interestingly, Van Puyenbroeck et al. (2017) revealed a positive relation between a performance climate and constructive voice behaviour. Drawing upon Social Interdependence Theory (Johnson & Johnson, 2005), they argued that even when players' aim to demonstrate superiority, they still depend on their teammates to achieve this goal and will therefore help them voicing suggestions. In addition, the utility of such voice might lay in self-promotion and creating a good impression as an individual in order to be regarded as more favorable than others (Morrison, 2014). However, within the context of voice behaviour, a performance climate appears to function as a two-edged sword as its focus on superiority also appears to thrive players towards more destructive voice about the coach.

Finally, and aligning with Hypothesis 3b, when players perceive a stronger performance climate than usual after a loss, their increase in destructive voice about

the coach will be magnified. In other words, these results suggest that a performance climate focuses players' attention on the coach after a loss and will then function as a catalyser of critiquing the coach. In the interaction with game result, players' average perception of the performance climate appears to have no predictive value. When a performance climate becomes more salient, players might become increasingly aware of the importance of winning and superiority, which appears to be detrimental after losing a game. After a loss, this increased saliency seems to be more important than players' average perceived performance climate.

As opposed to a performance climate, mastery climate did not function as a moderator of the relation between game result and destructive voice about the coach. Decreases in performance-climate will coincide with decreases in the emphasis on the importance of superiority and winning. However, a mastery climate does not directly address the importance of winning. Increases in mastery climate will correspond with increases in focus on task progression, effort and cooperation. The fact that a mastery climate does not hold any direct beliefs or values about the (un)importance of winning might offer a potential explanation of the nonsignificant interaction between game result and mastery climate.

Previous research has already related the motivational climate to conflict, cohesion and proactive behaviour in teams (e.g., De Backer et al., 2015; Ommundsen et al., 2005; Van Puyenbroeck et al., 2017). Building on these findings, the present results provide additional empirical evidence that suggest an important role of AGT in explaining group-dynamical outcomes. However, AGT-related research has largely ignored the role of short-term within-person changes in the perceived motivational climate. The present study therefore adds to the Achievement Goal theoretical literature by revealing that its theoretical principles are applicable to both

between- and within-person relations between the motivational climate and destructive voice about the coach. Such a finding is not straightforward as between- and within-person relations between the same variables might substantially differ (e.g., Curran & Bauer, 2011; Hoffman & Stawski, 2009). Furthermore, we only found an interaction between performance climate and game result at the within-person level, demonstrating the importance of considering relations at this level. However, it should be noted that we are unable to make inferences about the applicability of Achievement Goal theoretical principles on the within-person effects on other outcomes as this study only examines destructive voice about the coach as an outcome variable.

Besides the extensive sampling procedure over time, another methodological strength of this study is the measurement of destructive voice about the coach. Morrison (2011) has already stressed the importance of assessing voice beyond self-reports. Because players might be hesitant to report their own negative behaviour, we asked respondents to indicate how frequently each of their teammates displayed destructive voice about their coach. In this case, a player's indegree centrality (i.e., the average score one receives from all other respondents) refers to the extent to which this player engages in destructive voice about the coach according to their teammates. This perception is important because when players perceive others engaging in destructive group behaviour, this might lead to spillover effects and dysfunctional group dynamics (Felps, Terence, & Byington, 2006).

Practical Implications

Losing games and subsequent negative tones appears to be inherent to elite sports. Sustainably managing such negativity as a coach can be considered valuable as such tones might lead to decreased team functioning (Cope et al., 2010). In order

to manage the amount of players' destructive voice about the coach, coaches should limit the continuing presence of a focus on outperforming others, winning and demonstrating superiority. Although such a focus might be – at least to some extent – characteristic for competitive sports, coaches should create a stable climate in which cooperation is encouraged and that measures success by controllable processes such as self-referenced and measurable goals in combination with effort. This approach is a sustainable manner to manage negative voice. In order to manipulate the motivational climate, coaches could benefit from following existing educational programs for coaches such as the PAPA-project (Duda, 2013).

Although these programs include many general practical guidelines, they should incorporate the relevance of dynamically altering their approach in case coaches want to address managing destructive voice about the coach. More specifically, it is also important that coaches are aware that players react to relative changes in a specific approach such as occasionally placing extra emphasis (i.e., more than usual) on mastery-oriented features. Accordingly, coaches should prevent creating additional focus on demonstrating superiority and winning at specific moments. They should especially inhibit the urge to immediately react in such a way after losing a game as a loss can already trigger destructive voice about the coach. Placing extra emphasis on the importance of winning after losing a game will magnify this trigger.

Limitations and Avenues for Future research

Several limitations and avenues for future research were inherent to this study. First, the study sample did not include any manipulations of the independent variables. Experimental or intervention studies should be conducted to confirm more causal effects. Also in general, future studies in team sports (or in daily life in

general) should focus more on the impact of within-person variability in predictors as well as the importance of their stability over time (Beal, 2012). Second, because we only included basketball and volleyball teams, future research should also focus on other team sports in order to generalize our findings to a broader athlete population. Third, these teams did not operate on the highest elite level. It is therefore recommended to include teams performing at the highest level in future studies as stakes are higher and they have more contact times, which might have an effect on group dynamical processes. Fourth, the average level of destructive voice was rather low. One potential explanation of this finding might reside within the nature of our study sample. Athletes participating at the highest elite level attach more value to sports participation and performance than athletes participating at the lower levels (Lamont-Mills & Christensen, 2006). Frustrations and dissatisfactions might therefore more quickly arise at the highest level, resulting in more destructive voice. In addition, high average levels of destructive voice about the coach might more likely occur within elite level teams that are going through a crisis (e.g., losing many games on a row, conflict with the coach). To test these assumptions, future studies could benefit from using an experience sampling approach with elite level teams as this enables to selectively measure the behaviour of interest after certain events (e.g., conflict, losing streaks). However, it should be noted that even managing low levels of destructive voice about the coach can be crucial as a limited amount of negativity can already lead to dysfunctional groups (Cope et al., 2010; Felps et al., 2006). Finally, future studies should focus on the role of within-person changes in the perceived motivational climate for additional motivational and group-dynamical outcomes. Such studies will provide insights in the applicability of the underpinning principles of AGT on within-person relations.

To conclude, this study highlights the dynamics of players' destructive voice about the coach and indicates that a single lost game already starts a process of uttering critique. The results suggest that a coaches might be able to counter this process in a motivational climate allowing for mastery rather than performance. Because for the latter, destructive voice would escalate and disrupt the team dynamics.

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Figure 1. *Level 1 interaction effect between performance climate and game result for the prediction of destructive voice about the coach.*

Figure 1. The full line depicts the relation between game result and destructive voice about the coach when players perceive a stronger performance climate than usual. The dotted line represents the same relation in the case of players perceiving a performance climate in the same extent than usual. The dashed line depicts this relation when players perceive a weaker performance climate than usual.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Intercorrelations and Intraclass Correlations for all Study-Variables, Aggregated over Eight Weeks

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1.Mastery climate	4.84	1.18	(.59)		
2.Performance climate	3.24	1.50	-.19***	(.64)	
3.Destructive voice about the coach	1.89	0.76	-.21***	.26***	(.40)

Note. **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

Figures between parentheses are intraclass correlations.

Table 2. *Parameter estimates [95% CI's] of the multilevel regression models predicting destructive voice about the coach.*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Fixed effects			
Intercept	1.37*** [0.90, 1.84]	1.50*** [0.80, 2.19]	1.43*** [0.70, 2.16]
Age	0.03** [0.01, 0.04]	0.02** [0.01, 0.04]	0.02** [0.01, 0.04]
Gender (0 = F; 1 = M)	-0.41** [-0.70, -0.11]	-0.28* [-0.52, -0.04]	-0.26* [-0.49, -0.03]
Game result (0 = W; 1 = L)	0.34*** [0.22, 0.46]	0.31*** [0.18, 0.43]	0.50 [-0.22, 1.22]
Mastery climate (L2)		-0.10* [-0.19, -0.01]	-0.09 [-0.19, 0.02]
Mastery climate (L1)		-0.21*** [-0.29, -0.13]	-0.15* [-0.26, -0.03]
Performance climate (L2)		0.11** [0.04, 0.18]	0.11** [0.04, 0.20]
Performance climate (L1)		0.11** [0.04, 0.18]	0.02 [-0.08, 0.12]
Game result X Mastery Climate (L2)			-0.03 [-0.16, 0.09]
Game result X Mastery Climate (L1)			-0.12 [-0.29, 0.05]
Game result X Performance Climate (L2)			-0.01 [-0.10, 0.08]
Game result X Performance Climate (L1)			0.18* [0.03, 0.33]
Random effects			
Residual	0.32	0.27	0.26
Intercept player-level	0.12	0.07	0.07
Slope game result	0.05	0.02	0.02
Intercept team-level	0.04	0.02	0.02
Effect sizes			
pseudo- R^2_e	-.02	.16	.03
pseudo- R^2_0		.40	
pseudo- R^2_1			
DID with the more parsimonious model			
$\Delta\chi^2$	820.5***	380.5***	10.9*

Note. *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

L1 = level-1 predictor; L2 = level-2 predictor; F = female; M = male; W = win; L = loss; DID = difference in deviance.