

ETHICS MANAGEMENT **IN FOOTBALL CLUBS**

Bram Constandt

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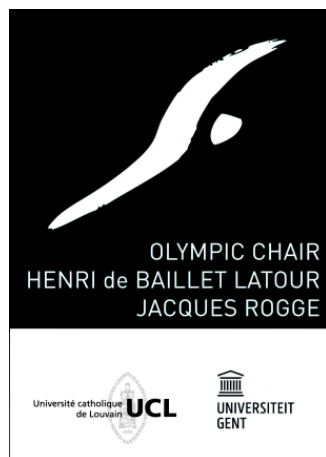
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CONTENT

TABLES AND FIGURES	V
SUMMARIES	VI

PART I: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: PROJECT SITUATION	1
1.1 Situation of the PhD project	1
1.2 References	2
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	4
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 Ethical behaviour and ethical issues in football	6
2.2.1 What is (un)ethical behaviour in sport?	6
2.2.2 (Un)ethical behaviour in football	7
2.2.3 Prevailing ethical issues in football	8
2.2.3.1 Unfair play	8
2.2.3.2 Human trafficking	10
2.2.3.3 Violence	10
2.2.3.4 Corruption	11
2.3 Ethics management in football clubs	14
2.3.1 Formal ethics programme	17
2.3.1.1 The meaning of an ethical code	17
2.3.1.2 Ethical codes in sport organizations	18
2.3.2 Ethical leadership	21
2.3.2.1 Conceptualization	22
2.3.2.2 Theoretical underpinnings	24
2.3.2.3 Ethical leadership in sport management	26
2.3.3 Core ethical values	28
2.4 Measuring the influence of ethics management	29
2.4.1 Ethical climate	31
2.4.1.1 Collective moral sensitivity	32
2.4.1.2 Collective moral judgment	33
2.4.1.3 Collective moral motivation	33
2.4.1.4 Collective moral character	33
2.5 References	34

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH CONTEXT & OVERVIEW ORIGINAL RESEARCH	46
3.1 Ethical approval, research context, and research questions	47
3.1.1 Ethical approval	47
3.1.2 Research context	47
3.1.3 Research questions	48
3.2 Overview of original research	52
3.3 References	54

PART II: ORIGINAL RESEARCH

CHAPTER 4: ETHICAL CODE EFFECTIVENESS IN FOOTBALL CLUBS	58
4.1 Introduction	60
4.2 Theory	61
4.2.1 Ethical codes	61
4.2.1.1 Definition and role	61
4.2.1.2 Ethical codes in sport clubs: Characteristics and prevalence	62
4.2.1.3 Ethical codes in sport clubs: Structural determinants of effectiveness	65
4.2.2 Measuring code effectiveness	67
4.2.2.1 Shared perceptions approach	67
4.2.2.2 The “Ethical Climate Index” (ECI)	68
4.3 Methodology	70
4.3.1 Sample and procedure	70
4.3.2 Data analysis	73
4.4 Results	74
4.4.1 Descriptive statistics	74
4.4.2 Repeated measurements ANOVA	75
4.4.3 Regression analyses	75
4.5 Discussion and conclusion	79
4.6 Limitations and future research	82
4.7 References	86
CHAPTER 5: COACH ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN FOOTBALL CLUBS	92
5.1 Introduction	94
5.2 Theoretical framework and hypotheses	96
5.2.1 Ethical leadership	96
5.2.1.1 Defining the concept	96
5.2.1.2 The distinctness of ethical leadership	97
5.2.2 Ethical behaviour and ethical leadership in football	98
5.2.3 Affective organizational commitment in football clubs	100

5.2.4 Ethical climate	102
5.3 Method	106
5.3.1 Procedure	106
5.3.2 Participants	107
5.3.3 Measures	107
5.3.4 Data analysis	108
5.4 Results	109
5.5 Discussion	111
5.5.1 Theoretical implications	111
5.5.2 Limitations and future research	114
5.5.3 Practical implications	115
5.5.3.1 For non-profit football clubs	115
5.5.3.2 For sport authorities	116
5.6 Conclusion	116
5.7 References	117
 CHAPTER 6: THE TRICKLE-DOWN EFFECT OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN FOOTBALL CLUBS	 126
6.1 Introduction	128
6.2 Literature review	129
6.2.1 The nature of ethical leadership	129
6.2.2 Ethical leadership in non-profit organizations	131
6.2.3 Ethical leadership in sport	133
6.2.4 Ethical leadership effectiveness: Ethical climate	134
6.2.5 The trickle-down effect of ethical leadership	137
6.3 Methodology	141
6.3.1 Procedure and sample	141
6.3.2 Data analysis	142
6.4 Results	142
6.5 Discussion	144
6.6 Conclusion	149
6.7 References	150
 CHAPTER 7: FOOTBALL FANS' PERCEPTIONS OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP	 156
7.1 Introduction	158
7.2 Literature review	160
7.2.1 Ethical leadership in football clubs	160
7.2.2 Football fans as "stakeowners"	162
7.2.3 Ethical leadership and fans as "stakeowners"	165

7.3	Method	166
7.3.1	Data collection overview	167
7.3.2	Data collection procedure	168
7.3.3	Data analysis	170
7.4	Results	171
7.4.1	Ethical leadership	171
7.4.1.1	Moral person	172
7.4.1.2	Moral manager	173
7.4.1.3	Moral entrepreneur	175
7.4.2	Fans as “stakeowners” and ethical leadership	176
7.5	Discussion and conclusion	177
7.6	References	184

PART III: GENERAL DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 8: MAIN FINDINGS AND OVERALL DISCUSSION	192
8.1 Overview of the main findings	193
8.2 Overall discussion	195
8.2.1 The positive evolution of the ethical climate in football clubs	195
8.2.2 Ethical codes in football clubs: Necessary but not sufficient	197
8.2.3 Ethical leadership in football clubs as a subjective phenomenon	200
8.2.4 Ethical behaviour in football: A nuanced story	203
8.2.5 Football fans as “stakeowners”	205
8.3 Strengths and limitations	206
8.4 Future research	209
8.5 The future of football imagined: The role of ethics management	212
8.6 References	213
CHAPTER 9: PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS	220
9.1 The importance of policy support	221
9.2 An integrative form of ethics management in football clubs	221
9.3 Ethics training in football clubs	223
9.4 The Sport Ethical Leadership Game (SELG)	224
9.5 References	225
APPENDIX A: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	226
APPENDIX B: GOOD PRACTICE ETHICAL CODE	230
APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRES	236
APPENDIX D: CURRICULUM VITAE	240

TABLES AND FIGURES

Overview of tables

Table 1. Overview original research	p. 53
Table 2. Structural determinants of ethical code effectiveness	p. 71
Table 3. Descriptive statistics ethical climate football clubs	p. 74
Table 4. Effect of code characteristics on the residualized change scores for ethical climate and its four dimensions	p. 75
Table 5. Participant demographics coach ethical leadership study	p. 107
Table 6. Means, standard deviations, and correlations	p. 109
Table 7. Regression analyses	p. 110
Table 8. Total, direct and indirect effects of coach ethical leadership	p. 110
Table 9. Participant demographics trickle-down study	p. 142
Table 10. Means, standard deviations, and correlations	p. 143
Table 11. Total, direct, and indirect effects of board ethical leadership	p. 144
Table 12. Overview of fan interviews	p. 167

Overview of figures

Figure 1. Elements of ethics management in organizations	p. 16
Figure 2. Hypothesized conceptual model coach ethical leadership	p. 105
Figure 3. Hypothesized conceptual model trickle-down effect	p. 140
Figure 4. The road to an integrative form of ethics management	p. 222

SUMMARIES

Summary (English)

Football (soccer) is facing an ongoing moral crisis, illustrated by different ethical challenges, such as match-fixing, management corruption, and abuse. Although support of (inter)national authorities and football federations is key to tackling these challenges, football clubs are able to proactively strive for change on their own. Through ethics management, football clubs at all levels of play may stimulate an ethical climate in their club, preventing ethical challenges and promoting ethical behaviour. Given this context, this dissertation provides important insight in the influence of two main aspects of ethics management in football clubs, namely ethical codes and ethical leadership. After a general introduction in which the theoretical framework and research hypotheses are outlined, four original empirical studies are presented.

A first study focuses on the influence of ethical codes, being formal documents prescribing desired behaviour within an organization, on the ethical climate in football clubs. Despite their popularity, the effectiveness of ethical codes is heavily debated, in sport and elsewhere. Drawing on a longitudinal quantitative study design, this study indicates a positive evolution of the ethical climate in football clubs over three years' time. While the presence or absence of an ethical code does not account for this evolution, several structural determinants of the ethical code play a positive role. These determinants are the motivation to professionalize and the involvement of sponsors when creating an ethical code, the presence of a helpdesk, and the support for whistle-blowers. A second study emphasizes the crucial position of the coach in terms of stimulating ethical behaviour in football clubs. Building on survey data provided by football players, this study indicates that if the coach acts as an ethical leader – by being a moral person and promoting ethics as a moral manager – players experience a positive influence of the coach on the ethical climate of their football club and on their own organizational commitment. Players' organizational commitment is fundamental for football clubs, which are struggling to find and keep loyal players. In a third study, we further build on the crucial position of the coach in football clubs. By analysing survey data of both players and coaches, this study highlights that the effect of ethical leadership by the board of directors of the football

club partly trickles down to the ethical climate of the club via coach ethical leadership. This marks how the coach is needed to translate organizational ethical policies to the rest of the football club. A fourth and final study broadens the scope to the unique position of the fans. We argue fans have become “stakeowners” within their football club, meaning that they have both rights (e.g. being protected, respected, and informed) and duties (e.g. not engaging in hooliganism). Based on fan interviews, this study demonstrates that fans support the notion of being a “stakeowner,” while they seem to be self-interested rather than caring about ethical leadership in their club.

Taken together, these four studies render important theoretical implications in relation to the (perceived) meaning and influence of ethical codes and ethical leadership in football, relevant for the academic fields of sport and non-profit management, sport and business ethics, and moral sport psychology. These implications are reviewed in a general discussion at the end, in which attention is paid to how different levels of ethical leadership in football clubs might be needed to fully translate an ethical code into practice. Furthermore, our findings shed light on the boundary conditions of the influence of ethical leadership, indicating that the social distance between leader and observer (i.e. follower/stakeholder) might have a strong effect on how critical or careless ethical leadership is assessed.

Samenvatting (Nederlands)

Voetbal ondergaat momenteel een morele crisis die geïllustreerd wordt door een diverse set aan ethische uitdagingen, zoals match-fixing, management corruptie en misbruik. Ook al is de steun van (inter)nationale autoriteiten en voetbalfederaties onontbeerlijk om deze uitdagingen succesvol te bestrijden, toch beschikken voetbalclubs over de mogelijkheid om zelf proactief een positieve verandering na te streven. Door middel van ethisch management kunnen voetbalclubs op alle niveaus een ethisch klimaat in hun club creëren, waarin ethische uitdagingen vermeden worden en ethisch gedrag gestimuleerd wordt. Vanuit die opvatting heeft dit doctoraat tot doel om belangrijke inzichten aan te reiken betreffende de invloed van twee hoofdaspecten van ethisch management in voetbalclubs, namelijk ethische codes en ethisch leiderschap. Na een algemene introductie met aandacht voor het theoretisch kader en de onderzoekshypothesen worden vier originele empirische studies voorgesteld.

Een eerste studie focust op de effectiviteit van ethische codes, zijnde formele documenten die het gewenste gedrag binnen een organisatie voorschrijven. Ondanks hun populariteit is de effectiviteit van ethische codes hoogst onzeker, zowel binnen een sportcontext als daarbuiten. Aan de hand van een longitudinaal studie design toont deze studie aan dat het ethisch klimaat in voetbalclubs over drie jaar tijd positief geëvolueerd is. Hoewel de aan- of afwezigheid van een ethische code in voetbalclubs niet bijdraagt tot deze evolutie, spelen bepaalde structurele determinanten van een ethische code een positieve rol. Deze determinanten zijn de motivatie om te professionaliseren en de betrokkenheid van sponsors bij de opmaak van de ethische code, de aanwezigheid van een helpdesk en de steun voor klokkenluiders. Een tweede studie benadrukt de cruciale positie van de coach wat betreft het stimuleren van ethisch gedrag in voetbalclubs. Steunend op data van door spelers ingevulde vragenlijsten duidt deze studie aan dat wanneer de coach optreedt als een ethisch leider – door zelf een moreel persoon te zijn en daarnaast ethiek te promoten als moreel manager – spelers een positieve invloed op het ethisch klimaat van de voetbalclub alsook op hun eigen organisatorische betrokkenheid ervaren. De organisatorische betrokkenheid van spelers is van fundamenteel belang voor voetbalclubs die worstelen met het vinden en behouden van loyale spelers. In een derde studie bouwen we verder op de cruciale positie van de coach in voetbalclubs.

Door de analyse van vragenlijstdata, verzameld bij spelers en coaches, zet deze studie in de verf dat het effect van ethisch leiderschap door het bestuur van voetbalclubs gedeeltelijk doorsijpelt tot het ethisch klimaat van de club via ethisch leiderschap door de coach. Dit geeft aan dat de coach nodig is om organisatorisch ethisch beleid te vertalen naar de rest van de voetbalclub. Een vierde en laatste studie verbreedt de blik naar de unieke positie van de fans. We argumenteren dat fans “stakeowners” geworden zijn van hun voetbalclub, waarmee we bedoelen dat ze zowel rechten (bvb. beschermd, gerespecteerd en geïnformeerd worden) als plichten (bvb. geen hooliganisme) hebben. Aan de hand van fan interviews illustreert deze studie dat fans onderschrijven een “stakeowner” te zijn, terwijl ze wel eerder uit eigenbelang lijken te denken dan belang te hechten aan ethisch leiderschap in hun voetbalclub.

Deze vier studies hebben samengenomen belangrijke theoretische implicaties omtrent de betekenis en (gepercipieerde) invloed van ethische codes en ethisch leiderschap in voetbal, relevant voor de wetenschappelijke domeinen van sport- en non-profit management, sport- en bedrijfsethiek en (morele) sport psychologie. Op het einde worden deze implicaties besproken in een algemene discussie, waarin onder andere de nood aan verschillende niveaus van ethisch leiderschap wordt aangetoond voor de praktische vertaling van een ethische code in voetbalclubs. Daarnaast werpt dit doctoraat licht op potentiële grenzen aan de invloed van ethisch leiderschap, aantonend dat de sociale afstand tussen leider en observator (volger/stakeholder) een groot effect kan hebben op hoe kritisch of achteloos ethisch leiderschap benaderd wordt.

PART I: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: PROJECT SITUATION

1.1 Situation of the PhD project

“Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence: in other words it is war minus the shooting.”

~ George Orwell (in 1945)

It is obvious from the aforementioned quote that George Orwell did not mince words when describing sport in the most unflattering of terms. Even more discomforting, is the fact that much has remained the same in the three-quarters century since. Worse yet, modern sport is plagued by ongoing moral crises, fueled by trends including globalization and the ever increasing commercialization of sport (Hancock & Hums, 2015; Morgan, 2007; Vanden Auweele et al., 2016). New ethical issues (e.g. genetic doping) seem to appear out of nowhere and other ethical issues (e.g. match-fixing and management corruption) are currently operating on an unprecedented scale.

The challenges, or dangers related to this moral crisis in sport are twofold (Morgan, 2007). Successfully safeguarding people involved in sport from violence, abuse, and other ethical issues represents a clear and unquestionable first challenge. A second challenge however, is nearly as important. It refers to the fact that we should be on guard against this moral crisis so as not to overshadow the positive aspects of sport, as a stimulator of physical and mental fitness, social bonds, and cultural wealth (DeSensi, 2014; Morgan, 2007, Vanden Auweele et al., 2016). In other words, caution is taken to make sure that sport is not written off as “a lost cause,” where the costs outweigh the benefits (Morgan, 2007, p. xi).

Although policy measures and reforms are crucial in dealing with both challenges, we believe that sport organizations (clubs in particular) are not helpless when it comes to addressing them. Sport clubs are well-positioned to embody ethics management and deal with the ethical issues, while highlighting the positive aspects of sport (Maesschalck & Vanden Auweele, 2010; Van Eekeren, 2016). Notwithstanding, scarce research has yet been devoted to how ethics management by sport clubs may overcome this twofold moral crisis (Byers et al., 2012). This doctoral dissertation aims to help fill in this research gap, by examining the influence of ethics management in

football¹ (soccer) clubs. Focus is put exclusively on football, “due to its global appeal that is unlike any other sport” (Gardiner, 2018, p. 376).

This dissertation is divided into three parts. A first part contains a general introduction of the theoretical framework, the research context, and the research hypotheses. Next, a second part offers an overview of the original studies that have been executed in the context of this dissertation. Finally, a third part brings the results and insights of the original studies together into a broad general discussion of the contributions, limitations, and implications of the dissertation.

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¹ We consider the European term football and the North American term soccer as synonyms throughout this dissertation. Nonetheless, we aim to consistently use the term football in all chapters.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

It is only since the second half of the 20th century that the field of philosophy has developed a real interest in sport (McNamee, 2007; Reid, 2012). Today, this interest has led to a steadily growing body of work focusing on such topics as the meaning and values of sport, sportsmanship, and fair play (Lunt & Dyreson, 2014; Reid, 2012; van Hilvoorde et al., 2010). While sport philosophy has lately become a well-established research field, little attention is still paid to the ethical dimensions of sport management (Byers et al., 2012; Sherry et al., 2007). This is surprising, given the increased complexity of, and the many ethical issues arising from the management of sport organizations (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010; Grange, 2014; Hums et al., 1999). These ethical issues are incredibly diverse and include both sport-typical issues, such as doping and match-fixing, as well as general societal issues, such as gender equality, violence, and abuse (Byers et al., 2012; De Waegeneer, 2015).

In light of this dissertation's aim to analyse the influence of ethics management in football clubs, this chapter will define the studied concepts and outline the applied theoretical framework. This theoretical framework is divided in three sections. A first section discusses the meaning of (un)ethical behaviour in sport and football, next to illustrating some of football's most pressing ethical issues. Moreover, the second section pays attention to the meaning and different elements of ethics management. Finally, the third section focuses on how the influence of (the different elements of) ethics management can be assessed and measured.

When it comes to analysing (un)ethical behaviour and ethics management in sport, several theories are commonly applied (Kavussanu, 2008; Kavussanu & Stanger, 2017a, 2017b). This dissertation appreciates this theoretical wealth by combining theories that originate from several academic fields, such as (business) ethics, (moral) psychology, and management. Such approach is strongly encouraged in a rich and holistic view (Malloy & Zakus, 1995). Additionally, our main focus is on the use of these theories and accompanying concepts in the specific contexts of sport and football. Although most included original research reports on findings in non-professional (amateur) football, cited concepts and ideas are also largely suitable for professional football. After all, most ethical issues in football are present on all levels of play, which makes ethics management instruments broadly applicable.

Hence, this dissertation is mainly characterized by a so-called *derived* approach, referring to the fact that non-sport specific theories are derived from other academic fields, after which they are (slightly) adapted and applied to sport (Chalip, 2006). Such an approach sets the stage to consider how our findings extended and/or generated sport management specific theory (Doherty, 2013). These theoretical contributions, which for instance relate to the exposure of the ethical code determinants that are (not) effective, to the boundary conditions of the influence of ethical leadership, and to the presence of off-the-field *bracketed morality* in sport, are further outlined in the general discussion of the dissertation.

2.2 Ethical behaviour and ethical issues in football

Although the main objective of this dissertation is the examination of ethics management and measuring its influence in football clubs, certain attention must be given to the meaning of (un)ethical behaviour² in sport and football, as well as to some of the prevailing ethical issues in football.

2.2.1 What is (un)ethical behaviour in sport?

Ethical behaviour in sport is often defined as “a low frequency of engagement in negative social behaviors or unfair play” (Chow et al., 2009, pp. 425-426). A particularly negative approach to ethical behaviour in sport is reflected in the way this definition is phrased. Nonetheless, ethical behaviour in sport can be divided into two dimensions, namely a *proactive* dimension (i.e. engaging in prosocial and humane behaviour) and an *inhibitive* dimension (i.e. refraining from antisocial and inhumane behaviour) (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Kavussanu et al., 2013).

Theoretical support to explain this twofold dimensionality of ethical behaviour is provided by the work of Albert Bandura (1999), who argued that an individual’s moral agency is influenced by several psychosocial mechanisms. In particular, the concept of moral disengagement is introduced to indicate that an individual may activate certain mechanisms – such as distortion of consequences, euphemistic labelling, and displacement of responsibilities – when faced with situations in which an ethical

² For the sake of simplicity, we will use the concepts of ethics and morality interchangeably. However, we support the idea that ethics refers to theories and principles to define right and wrong, whereas morality is related to the practical implementation of these theories and principles (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010). Despite this distinction, a further profound analysis of differences and commonalities between both strongly related concepts is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

decision must be made (Bandura, 1999; Kavussanu & Stanger, 2017a). As a consequence, people may disconnect (disengage) with self-sanctions, personal preservations, and feelings of guilt, and eventually engaging in unethical behaviour (Bandura, 1999). Hence, moral disengagement is a process that allows individuals to engage in unethical behaviour without feeling bad about it.

2.2.2 (Un)ethical behaviour in football

Unfortunately, research suggests that football has changed in a negative sense during the last few decades, illustrated by the fact that antisocial behaviours, such as diving, elbowing, and injury faking have become more common than prosocial ones, such as helping an opponent or supporting teammates (Kavussanu et al., 2006; van Hilvoorde et al., 2010). Furthermore, considerable differences are experienced when comparing the thoughts and actions regarding (un)ethical behaviour in sport with those expressed outside sport. Scholars tend to speak about *bracketed morality* in this regard, by which they mean that several mental barriers are likely to disappear the moment someone enters the sport field or engages in a sport-related situation (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986; Kavussanu & Ring, 2016). Bracketed morality indicates that people often transform into less admirable versions of their selves when engaging in sport. More precisely, a winning at all cost mentality is believed to come over them, leading to the neglect of general principles such as respect, and to an increased likelihood of engaging in unethical practices (Kavussanu & Ring, 2016).

Initially, bracketed morality was shown to be present concerning athletes' moral development or reasoning (Shields & Bredemeier, 1995). More recently, the existence of bracketed morality has also been demonstrated in regards to (un)ethical behaviour, in numerous settings and relating to different stakeholders. For instance, Kavussanu and colleagues (2013) implied that university students are engaging more regularly in antisocial behaviours (e.g. intimidation and criticism) in sport compared to outside sport, treating their fellow students as opponents on the sport field. Moreover, the work of Smith and Lord (2018) evinced that bracketed morality is not only relevant with respect to athletes, as these authors reveal that fans often accept antisocial behaviours when watching sport (e.g. insults and confrontation), whereas they tend to oppose the same behaviours in most normal everyday situations.

2.2.3 Prevailing ethical issues in football

According to recent figures, football is world's most popular sport, with an estimated fan base of more than four billion people (Chadwick et al., 2018). To many fans, football is preeminent in shaping their personal identities and social relationships. However, the pressure that comes with the sport's popularity, and many of football's characteristics – such as its dominant focus on performing, common egocentrism, and the presence of high levels of emotional involvement and pressure – also contribute to an environment in which many ethical issues easily occur (Bortoli et al., 2012; Claringbould et al., 2018; Vanden Auweele, 2010; 2016). Moreover, football is a sport in which goals (points) are very scarce, which creates situations in which every (disputable) decision may have a strong impact on the end result of the game.

Besides these general characteristics of football, several broader social evolutions add to the present sensitiveness of football to ethical issues (Vanden Auweele, 2016). In recent years, football has undergone evolutions in globalization and commercialization, increasing the stakes of those involved as well as the associated challenges and potential issues (Cronin, 2014; McNamee & Fleming, 2007). These ethical issues manifest themselves in all levels of play and relate to a very broad continuum of challenges, ranging from inappropriate behaviour, such as unfair play, to heavily immoral – and in some cases, criminal – behaviour, including sexual abuse and corruption (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Vanden Auweele, 2010, 2016).

Given all the above, football is a sport in which the existence of bracketed morality is often expressed. Therefore, it is no surprise that, while football is often invoked as *the beautiful game*, scholars have started to refer to the sport's collection of ethical issues as football's *dark side* (Cashmore & Cleland, 2014). In the following subsections, a non-exhaustive overview addresses some of the main ethical issues that are present in football. The sequence in which these issues are presented, does not reflect their (relative) importance.

2.2.3.1 Unfair play

The concept of fair play is central to the study of ethics in sport, albeit the interpretation is still strongly debated (De Waegeneer, 2015; Loland, 2002). In general, two interpretations are available to approach fair play in sport, namely one that focusses on following *the rules of the sport* and one that takes into consideration

the spirit of sport (Butcher & Schneider, 2007; De Waegeneer & Willem, 2016). In the first approach, unfair play is equalised with disrespecting the explicit rules of the sport, whilst the second approach is much broader, as it not only regards rule violations as unfair play, but includes all behaviours not in line with the spirit of the sport (Butcher & Schneider, 2007).

Depending on the applied interpretation, certain behaviour could be acknowledged as fair conform prevailing regulations, whereas labelled as unfair in the light of the spirit of sport. For example, the act of diving – being the pretention of a fault – is strongly discussed in football. Diving has long been tolerated, as it was not explicitly forbidden according by the rules of football. However, diving can also be seen as an inappropriate act that is in opposition to the spirit of football, since it deceives the referee. As diving has been added to the football rulebook, it is now regarded as unfair in the eyes of both fair play interpretations. This example indicates the need to look out for loophole ethics in sport, which relates to the idea that anything that is not explicitly forbidden, is therefore allowed (Kvalnes & Hemmestad, 2010).

Besides diving, several other disgraceful behaviours, such as elbowing, injury faking, and retaliation are often associated with football (Kavussanu, 2006; Kavussanu et al., 2006). In sum, the social nature and the aforementioned characteristics of football, are believed to contribute to a context in which unfair play regularly occurs (Bortoli et al., 2012; Kavussanu et al., 2006).

Next to fair play on the playing field, an off-the-field concept has recently been added. Financial fair play in professional football declares that fair competition between football clubs is jeopardised if the economic market of football remains deregulated (Schubert & Frias, 2019; Schubert, et al., 2016). Subsequently, financial fair play (FFP) regulations have been implemented in European football since 2009-10, to prevent an unbridgeable financial and sportive gap between wealthy and cash-strapped clubs (Birkhäuser et al., 2019; Schubert & Frias, 2019). These regulations state any club that competes in European football, should not spend more than the club earns (Schubert & Frias, 2019). While FFP is a valid objective, its effectiveness is questioned (Birkhäuser et al., 2019). Recent examples suggest stronger sanctions for rule violations are required to prevent that FFP is considered as an empty concept or as window dressing. As for now, some scholars even argue FFP “might have

further amplified the competitive imbalance,” making it more difficult for new investors to enter as sponsors (Birkhäuser et al., 2019, p. 113).

2.2.3.2 Human trafficking

Human trafficking is a major concern in the globalized economy football operates in today (Esson, 2015; Esson & Drywood, 2018). The term human trafficking is often used in a football context when referring to the recruitment (i.e. transferring) of talented players from poorer countries in Africa, Asia, or Central/South America by well-known and affluent European or Asian football clubs (Esson & Drywood, 2018). These players are lured into contracts with the promise of a lucrative career. Unscrupulous go-between figures (i.e. player agents) are paid extensive fees by these football clubs in their “war for football talent.” Yet, only a fraction of these players ever achieve the reality of becoming a successful football player. Others are abandoned and end up in exploitive situations similar to those encountered by undocumented immigrants (Esson & Drywood, 2018). A worse fate awaits players that come to Europe with contracts that appear to be fake upon their arrival, after which they are exploited – sometimes as prostitutes – by criminal gangs that made up their phony contracts (Esson & Drywood, 2018). Given this context, it is no surprise that human trafficking is considered as a form of modern slavery (Esson & Drywood, 2018).

2.2.3.3 Violence

Violence refers to a broad collection of psychological, physical, and sexual acts, including, but not limited to intimidation, abuse, neglect, maltreatment, and exploitation (Vertommen et al., 2016, 2017). Unfortunately, many acts of violence are present in football. Although the scale of violence in football cannot be fully understood in one introduction section, some examples will be provided to illustrate the wide-ranged nature of this issue.

First, interpersonal violence against minor players is prevalent in all levels of football, as evidenced by the disconcerting sexual abuse scandal in European football that shocked the world in 2016-17 (Bennhold, 2016). In contrast to the prominent theory that coaches are the quintessential perpetrators of violence against children in sport, research indicates that in most incidents, multiple peer players are the perpetrators (Vertommen et al., 2017).

Besides players, referees are regularly confronted with violence in football. In particular, referees are victimized by acts of verbal (e.g. persistent criticism and threats) and physical aggression (Deal et al., 2018). A study of recent disciplinary incidents in Canada shows that violence against referees is taking place in all types (indoor and outdoor) of football, yet with more incidents occurring at the amateur level (Deal et al., 2018). Typical perpetrators are players, but can include coaches and fans (Folkesson et al., 2002).

Violent behaviour from fans is not just directed at referees, as fans also direct their homophobic, racist, and other discriminatory incidents, towards rival fans, players, coaches, and leaders of football clubs (Cashmore & Cleland, 2014). In addition, research argues these incidents – which can all be labelled as “hooliganism” – still represent a deeply rooted cultural reality in football (Cashmore & Cleland, 2014; Müller et al., 2007).

2.2.3.4 Corruption

Although the exact definition of corruption is heavily debated, the concept can be defined simply as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain” (Gardiner, 2018, p. 13). In a sporting context, examples of corruption are often divided in two categories, *competition corruption* (i.e. referring to players, referees, and/or officials who manipulate the outcome or process of a sport competition), and *management corruption* (i.e. involving sport managers/ administrators whose decisions are rooted in fraudulent motivations) (Chappelet, 2015; Gardiner, 2018; Kihl, 2018; Maennig, 2005). Guided by these characteristics, the remainder of this section will feature three present forms of sport corruption across football including doping, match-fixing, and management corruption on behalf of football’s governing bodies.

2.2.3.4.1 Doping (*prohibited performance enhancement*)

Striving for excellence is a fundamental element of sport (Teetzel, 2014). Yet, while some forms of performance enhancement (such as training and adapted sport diets) are accepted, others such as turning to doping products and procedures are considered highly problematic (Teetzel, 2014). Conceptualized as prohibited performance enhancement, doping is claimed to differ from corruption, as corruption is associated with *malperforming*, whereas doping is linked with *superperforming*

(Maennig, 2005). However, recent work argued that a broad view on corruption in sport should include a consideration of doping (Gardiner, 2018).

According to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), a violation of doping regulations is present when a product or a procedure meets at least two of the following three conditions: (a) it is potentially performance enhancing, (b) it presents a potential health risk, and (c) it violates *the spirit of sport* (de Hon, 2017). Doping is thus opposed, based on both health-related and ethical arguments. In summary, doping is assumed to be detrimental to athletes who dope, their competitors, fair competition, spectators (fans), and human nature (Tolleneer & Schotsmans, 2013). Although the current anti-doping movement itself has generated multiple side effects – for instance relating to the privacy of athletes – a strict zero tolerance approach remains today's norm (Dimeo & Møller, 2018).

Football is not regularly perceived as a sport in which doping is a major issue, in contrast to other sports including cycling and weightlifting (Malcolm & Waddington, 2008). While doping violations may be more prevalent in other sports, systematic doping programmes have nonetheless been present across multiple European professional football clubs (Malcolm & Waddington, 2008). Next to professional football, doping seems to be present in a multifaceted way in amateur football as well (Ama et al., 2003). According to a recent BBC poll, approximately one in two football players has come in contact with a teammate or competitor who has used doping substances, such as cocaine and cannabis (BBC, 2017).

2.2.3.4.2 *Match-fixing*

Match-fixing, or the deliberate manipulation of the final outcome or certain aspects of the game, such as the amount of yellow cards or free kicks is currently regarded as “the biggest threat to sport” (Carpenter, 2012, p. 13). However, concerns about the extensive risks related to match-fixing have only recently been raised on a large scale (Chappelet, 2015; Gardiner, 2018; Numerato, 2016). The rationale to oppose match-fixing is focused on the belief that the manipulation of sport events endangers the uncertainty of outcome in sport. As a consequence, match-fixing may decrease the trust in, and the popularity of, sport in the eyes of stakeholders, including fans and sponsors (Chappelet, 2015; Nowy & Breuer, 2017). Moreover, the deliberate underperformance of athletes, believed to be the most common example of match-

fixing, stands in strong opposition to one of sport's key values, namely performing to the best of one's abilities (Cleret et al., 2015; Harvey, 2013).

In general, two types of match-fixing are found in sport, namely *gambling related* and *non-gambling related* (arranged) match-fixing (Hill, 2013). The main difference between both types is the aim of the manipulation. Whereas gambling related match-fixing is directed towards profit maximization on the gambling market, arranged match-fixing is most often meant to help a team with promotion to a higher division, or prevent it from being relegated to a lower division (Harvey, 2015; Hill, 2013). As is the case with arranged match-fixing, gambling related match-fixing is often undetected, which makes it an ideal activity for criminal enterprises, especially when combined with a lucrative sports betting market estimated to be worth more than \$1 trillion USD (Gardiner, 2018; Nowy & Breuer, 2017).

Match-fixing is an issue that occurs in many sports, but football is believed to be “the sport in which the problem is most widespread” (Chappelet, 2015, p. 1260). After all, both aforementioned types of match-fixing are highly represented in football, illustrated by a world-wide estimation of more than 9,000 fixed football matches each year (De Waegeneer, 2015; IRIS, 2012). Other, more recent sources suggest that match-fixing occurs in 0,5% of all football matches (Marchetti, 2019). Despite the widespread nature of this issue, some football clubs – especially inefficient clubs belonging to corruption-prone countries – are more susceptible to match-fixing (Nowy & Breuer, 2017). Many people are involved when it comes to fixing, ranging from players and coaches, to referees and board members (De Waegeneer, 2015). Rather than being coerced to fix matches, the most common trigger to engage in match-fixing is financial gain (Hill, 2013).

2.2.3.4.3 Management corruption

In recent years, management corruption has been strongly associated with international football governing bodies, such as Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) (Geeraert, 2018; Geeraert et al., 2013). Both organizations have undergone major crises, in which a number of their respective officials has been convicted of accepting bribes, fraud, money laundering, and tax evasion (Conway, 2016). Each form of management corruption appears to happen regularly, often during the allocation of

hosting rights for major tournaments, such as the FIFA World Cups in 2018 and 2022 (Geeraert, 2018). Although the new leadership of FIFA and UEFA claim they are cleaning up mistakes, concerns exist as to the extent they take management corruption seriously (Harris, 2018).

2.3 Ethics management in football clubs

The responsibility of tackling ethical issues in sport clubs is shared by all stakeholders (Claringbould et al., 2018; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Pritchard & Burton, 2014). Yet, people in leading and management positions are especially able to play a decisive role in successfully coping with these issues and in simulating ethical behaviour (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). As such, ethics management in sport clubs is at least part of the desired answer to sport's moral crisis (Vanden Auweele, 2011). Ethics management in sport can be defined as "the coherent set of policy strategies and instruments aiming at the pro-active promotion of both positive values and the prevention of misbehaviour and abuse (integrity violations) on all levels of the sport sector" (Vanden Auweele, 2011, p. 63).

Due to the influence ethics management may have on everyone involved in an organization, its importance and necessity can hardly be overstated (McNamee & Fleming, 2007). However, the extensive research attention to ethical issues in sport has long stood in considerable contrast to sport management's scarce academic interest in ethics management (Byers et al., 2012; Sherry et al., 2007). Nevertheless, several recent studies are providing support to grasp the meaning and structure of ethics management in sport.

For instance, De Waegeneer (2015) shows how a diverse set of instruments is available to sport organizations that aim to deal with ethical issues. These instruments range from *formal*, such as an ethical code, a helpdesk, and an ethics officer; to *informal*, such as leadership and values (De Waegeneer, 2015). To achieve a level of ethics management that goes further than mere window dressing, the informal instruments are a much needed addition to their formal counterparts (De Waegeneer, 2015). In essence, leadership and the propagation of values present themselves as necessary conditions to actually transform formal policies into practices (Pritchard & Burton, 2014).

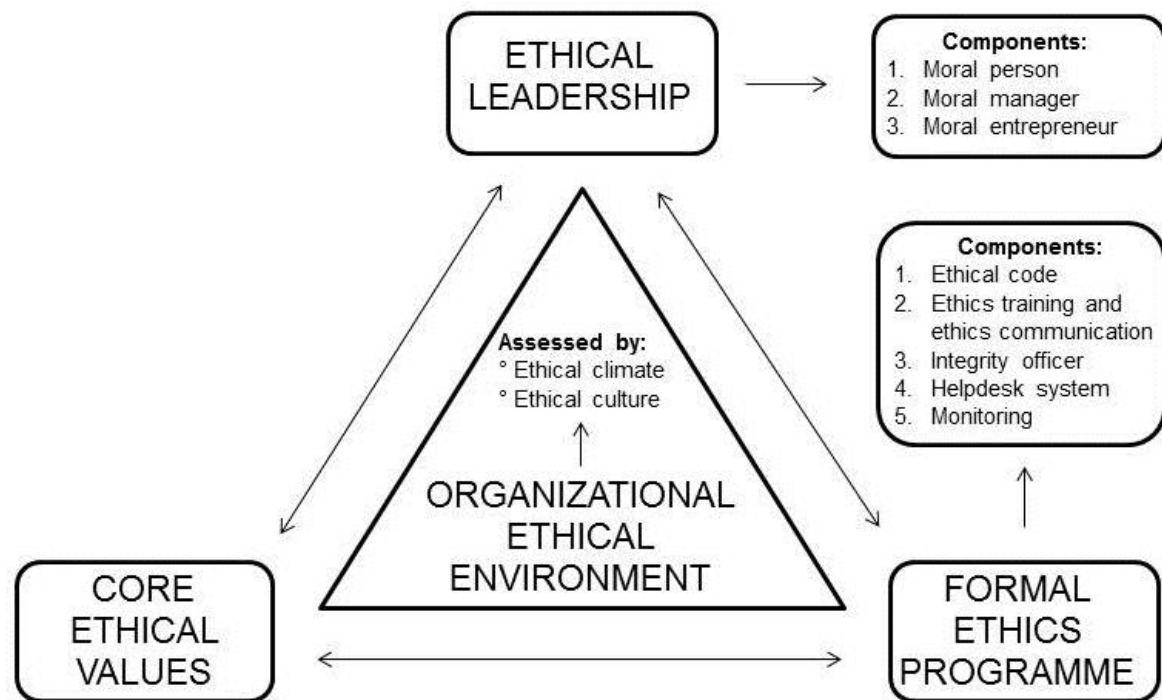
Furthermore, Maesschalck and Vanden Auweele³ (2010, p. 1) present ethics management “as a strategic reaction to what is perceived as a moral deficit in sports.” They advocate for a balanced combination of *rules-based* and *values-based* approaches to overcome resistance against the implementation of ethics management, such as denying that a problem exists or stating that investing in ethics management would be seen as a lack of trust towards the people involved in the organization (Maesschalck & Vanden Auweele, 2010). The distinction between a rules-based and a values-based approach builds strongly on the division between formal and informal instruments. A rules-based approach implies the desirability of formal rules and procedures, thereby concentrating on prevention and reinforcement, while a values-based approach takes into account how desirable practices can be stimulated, supported, and promoted (Maesschalck & Vanden Auweele, 2010).

In addition to the frameworks of De Waegeneer (2015) and Maesschalck and Vanden Auweele (2010), this dissertation highlights and applies the work of Schwartz (2013) as an overarching structure to further conceptualize the different elements of ethics management in football clubs (see Figure 1). According to Schwartz (2013), three elements are indispensable for organizations aiming to create and maintain an ethical climate within their organization, namely *a formal ethics programme*, *ethical leadership* at all levels of the organization, and the presence of core *ethical values* in the organization’s policies, processes, and practices. These elements are not operating in complete isolation, as they strongly interact and reinforce each other.

This dissertation adds to the theory building on ethics management, by (a) assessing several elements (and components) of ethics management in an integrated fashion, (b) studying the relations between these elements and some of the consequences they induce, and (c) enabling causal claims about those structural determinants of a formal ethics programme that are really effective (Fink, 2013). Introducing stakeholder theory, this dissertation meets a call to extend current ethics management theories (Heres, 2014; Ho, 2011). However, as outlined below, this dissertation also builds on popular ethics management theories, such as Rest’s (1986) theory of moral decision making and Bandura’s (1986) social learning theory.

³ Maesschalck and Vanden Auweele (2010) apply the concept of integrity management instead of ethics management. Although Vanden Auweele (2011) makes a plea in another publication to consider integrity management as a more narrow form of ethics management, these concepts can be seen as synonyms. In light of this context, ethics management is here applied in terms of consistency.

Figure 1. Elements of ethics management in organizations (own figure, based on Kaptein, 2009, 2017; Schwartz, 2013)



Before turning to a more detailed explanation of the content of the three elements of ethics management, the subsequent part will first shed some light on the overlap and differentiation of ethics management in comparison with strongly related concepts, such as good governance and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Good governance – also called corporate (good) governance is a form of governing with attention for the organization’s accountability towards both internal and external stakeholders (Alm, 2013). In sport, good governance is most often applied in the context of sport’s (inter)national governing bodies (Alm, 2013; Geeraert, 2015; Vanden Auweele, 2010). Although certain principles of good governance – such as transparency and democratic processes – are broadly applicable to all kind of football clubs, the examination of good governance in (inter)national football bodies, such as FIFA and UEFA is not a main focus of this dissertation.

CSR can be conceptualised as “the responsibility of organizations to be ethical and accountable to the needs of their society as well as to their stakeholders” (Bradish & Cronin, 2009, p. 692). Accordingly, it is an important element of ethics management and good governance within football clubs and governing bodies (Anagnostopoulos

et al., 2014; Bradish & Cronin, 2009; Breitbarth & Harris, 2008). However, CSR will largely remain beyond the scope of this dissertation due to its distinct nature. CSR applies an external perspective, in which the relationships between the organization and the society are considered as a social contract (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010). While building on the insights of moral philosophy, the conceptualization of ethics management we apply, examines how the organization and those closely involved are affected (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010).

2.3.1 Formal ethics programme

A formal ethics programme is regarded as one of at least three indispensable elements to create and promote an organizational ethical environment (Schwartz, 2013). According to the literature, an ethics programme should consist of the following components, namely the presence of (a) an ethical code, (b) ethics training and ethics communication, (c) an integrity officer (often referred to as ombudsperson, compliance officer, or ethics committee), and (d) a reporting or helpdesk system (Kaptein, 2009; Schwartz, 2013). Additionally, process-based monitoring of the entire ethics programme is encouraged, in function of implementing regular improvements (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2016; Kaptein, 2009; McNamee & Fleming, 2007).

Notwithstanding the importance of all aforementioned components of an ethics programme in shaping the ethical environment of an organization, this dissertation will focus mainly on the ethical code, which is considered to be the “foundation” of an ethics programme (Kaptein, 2009). However, since prevailing organizational regulations concerning other components of an ethics programme are most often incorporated within the ethical code of an organization, these components will be discussed throughout (De Waegeneer, 2015; Geva, 2006).

2.3.1.1 The meaning of an ethical code

An ethical code is a formal and strategic document that is initiated at the top of the organization (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016). It includes the expectations and rules of the organization regarding the behaviours of at least its internal members (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016; Downe et al., 2016; Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008; Leigh, 2013). Besides its clear internal function as a risk management tool, an ethical code also has an external purpose, as it displays and promotes the ethical operation of the organization to the external public (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016).

Although strongly related, an ethical code is distinct in comparison to other prescriptive documents, such as a mission statement, or code of conduct (Leigh, 2013). While a mission statement formulates the organizational goals, an ethical code is meant to showcase the broader environment in which these organizational goals should be pursued (Stevens, 2008). Meanwhile, an ethical code is considered as some kind of internal, social contract between the organization and its members, whilst legislation is the outcome of an external process in which the organization has little to say (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016; De Waegeneer et al., 2017). In addition, the practical application of an ethical code is very similar to a code of conduct, an integrity code, or a business code (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). Nonetheless, an ethical code is in theory less compulsory and more broadly (towards more stakeholders) formulated (Wood & Rimmer, 2003).

2.3.1.2 Ethical codes in sport organizations

Countless ethical scandals have forced organizations in all sectors to establish an ethical code – or update an existing one – during the first decade and a half of the 21st century (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008; Walters & Tacon, 2018). The sport sector is no different, as (inter)national, regional, and even small-sized local sport organizations have turned to ethical codes in an attempt to deal with the broadly presumed moral crisis in sport (De Waegeneer, 2015; De Waegeneer & Willem, 2019; Mullane, 2015; Thompson & Dieffenbach, 2016; Walters & Tacon, 2018).

In fact, three distinct types of ethical codes in sport are discernible (De Waegeneer & Willem, 2019). First, a *sport ethical code* is adopted to describe a so-called typical ethical code that is meant to regulate players' on-field behaviour (e.g. relating to aggression and fair play) (De Waegeneer & Willem, 2019). Second, a *general off-field code* is used to label a code that is meant to regulate off-the-field behaviours (e.g. relating to match-fixing) of different stakeholders (e.g. players, coaches, parents, and fans) in a sport club (De Waegeneer & Willem, 2019). Finally, a *good governance ethical code* is applied to model the acts of board members and managers of (inter)national sport governing bodies (e.g. FIFA and UEFA) to good governance principles, such as transparency, accountability, and democracy (De Waegeneer & Willem, 2019; Walters & Tacon, 2018).

As the governance of sport on the (inter)national level remains beyond the scope of this dissertation, future attention will be paid solely to ethical codes in sport clubs. In practice, many sport clubs apply only one ethical code, which is a mix of a sport ethical code and a general off-field code (De Waegeneer et al., 2016). In this context, an ethical code can be defined as:

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 (De Waegeneer, 2015, p. 38)

Despite its popularity, the effectiveness of ethical codes in sport clubs remains largely uncertain (De Waegeneer, 2015; De Waegeneer & Willem, 2019).⁴ For a long time, sport management research on ethical codes in sport remained limited to providing prescriptions on what an ideal code should look like and on exposing code perceptions in the context of North American intercollegiate athletics (Greenwell et al., 2001; Jordan et al., 2004). Recently, however, our knowledge was strongly enhanced, both when it comes to the content-related and structural aspects of ethical codes in sport clubs (De Waegeneer et al., 2016, 2017).

2.3.1.2.1 Content

Consensus exists regarding the fact that composing an ethical code in sport clubs is a challenging task, in which the need for sufficient and unambiguous code statements must be balanced with avoiding the perception that every behaviour that is not explicitly forbidden, is implicitly allowed (Jordan et al., 2004; Kvalnes & Hemmestad, 2010). Moreover, research warns against ethical codes that are too comprehensive in terms of length, as it is indicated that codes that contain too many statements may be less effective (De Waegeneer et al., 2016). In general, an ethical code should be clear regarding the enclosed statements, but also in terms of clarifying the target audiences, such as the players, coaches, board members, parents, and/or fans (De Waegeneer et al., 2016; Jordan et al., 2004).

⁴ The meaning of, and the difference approaches to measure the effectiveness of ethical codes will be discussed in detail in a following section of this chapter. At this point, it is sufficient to state that the ultimate goal of an ethical code is to successfully stimulate prosocial behaviour and discourage antisocial behaviour.

Furthermore, based on the study of the content of the ethical codes of 119 Flemish (Belgian) clubs in football, gymnastics, badminton, equestrian sport, tennis, and judo, De Waegeneer and colleagues (2016) demonstrate that a majority of the studied ethical codes pay attention to the themes of (physical and psychological) integrity, solidarity, and fair play. On the other hand, regulations focusing on inclusion, children's rights, and diversity appear in less than half of the studied ethical codes (De Waegeneer et al., 2016).

Moreover, nearly all studied ethical codes contain regulations that reflect a deontological ethical orientation, meaning that the appropriateness of certain behaviours is based on the presumed intrinsic value of these behaviours (De Waegeneer et al., 2016; Malloy & Zakus, 2003). Nonetheless, to enhance the effectiveness of their ethical codes, sport clubs are encouraged to supplement such a deontological orientation with a consequentialist point of view that focuses on the potential consequences of these behaviours (De Waegeneer et al., 2016).

Finally, albeit that these content related suggestions bear considerable value, the effectiveness of an ethical code will mainly depend on the general acceptance of the ethical code within the sport club. After all, an ethical code can only succeed in its purpose when all organizational members are willing to comply with its content (Jordan et al., 2004).

2.3.1.2.2 Content, process, and structure

Alongside highlighting the importance of a carefully crafted ethical code in terms of content, research has shown that several structural determinants may contribute to the effectiveness of an ethical code in sport clubs (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). These determinants can be attributed to the four different stages of the establishment of an ethical code, being the code creation stage, the code content stage, the code implementation stage, and the code enforcement stage (Singh, 2011). As such, the establishment of a balanced and widely supported ethical code should be seen as a complex and time-consuming process (Walters & Tacon, 2018).

Regarding the *code creation* stage, attention must be paid to the involvement of different stakeholder groups that are relevant in the context of sport clubs (e.g. players, coaches, board members, management, parents, fans, and sponsors) (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). Moreover, it is worth taking into account the motivation in

establishing an ethical code, which may range from – or be a mix between – complying with external legislation, promoting ethical behaviour, professionalizing, and enhancing public relations and appearance (De Waegeneer et al., 2017).

When it comes to the *code content* stage, the most important elements of an ideal type of ethical code have already been highlighted in the previous section. However, besides the aforementioned content-related suggestions, an ethical code in sport clubs should pay specific attention to specific statements that align with the expectations and needs of all involved stakeholder groups.

With respect to the *code implementation* stage, structural characteristics of the ethical code, relating to both communication and other organizational processes may determine the effectiveness of the ethical code (Schwartz, 2002). Reaching and influencing different stakeholder groups requires tailor-made communication strategies (Schwartz, 2013). For example, when aiming to connect with sponsors, other types of communication may be needed as opposed to reaching parents or fans. Additionally, the timing and format of communication should be considered when analysing the effectiveness of an ethical code. Next to the importance of communication, it is advised to examine the influence of (the presence) of an internal or external helpdesk to guide stakeholders with questions regarding the code (De Waegeneer et al., 2017).

Finally, the *code enforcement* stage emphasizes the relevance of compliance with the ethical code, as there is a risk that the code becomes an empty document when violations of the code are not sanctioned (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2016). Moreover, sanctions for code violations must be clearly mentioned, while whistle-blowers – people who want to report violations – should be protected from acts of retaliation (Webley & Werner, 2008).

2.3.2 Ethical leadership

Despite the relevance of a formal ethics programme when it comes to creating an organizational ethical environment, informal methods present an indispensable addition to ensure that such a programme is effective (Adam & Rachman-Moore, 2004; Leigh, 2013; Schwartz, 2013). More precisely, the behaviour and attitudes of organizational members are more likely to be influenced by leadership and prevailing

organizational norms, than by the mere presence of a formal programme (Adam & Rachman-Moore, 2004). As such, ethical leadership is believed to be very helpful in translating an ethics programme into practice (Schwartz, 2013).

2.3.2.1 Conceptualization

Leadership is one of the most studied social phenomena, and although many definitions exist, leadership can best be understood as a process or relationship between leader and follower(s), aiming to accomplish shared goals (Yukl, 2008). Within the extensive body of literature on leadership, consensus is present about the fact that leadership entails an inherent ethical dimension (Ciulla et al., 2018). Ethics are at *the heart of leadership* (Ciulla, 2014). In fact, leadership implies a form of authority, which causes leaders' decisions to have a broad impact and increases the likelihood that ethical issues occur (Flanigan, 2018). Consequently, research has paid extensive attention to what ethical leadership is, or what it should be (Ciulla, 2014; Flanigan, 2018). This research line could be labelled as a normative approach on ethical leadership. To the contrary, a descriptive approach, considering how ethical leadership is perceived in different contexts was far less common until about a decade and a half ago (Bedi et al., 2016; Brown & Treviño, 2006).

This research paucity on descriptive ethical leadership studies has largely been overcome with the seminal study of Brown and his colleagues (2005), whose definition and conceptualization of ethical leadership initiated numerous empirical studies. Brown et al. (2005, p. 120) define ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making.” This conceptualization has quite expeditiously lead to an enhanced knowledge on the antecedents (such as moral identity and emotional stability on behalf of the leader), mechanisms (such as ethical climate and team cohesion), and consequences (such as followers' commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour) of ethical leadership (Ko et al., 2018). Yet, it did not take long before certain criticism about this descriptive approach was raised (Eisenbeiß, 2012).

In general, formulated critiques disclose a number of issues. First, scholars argue that the reference to “normatively appropriate conduct” is too vague, leading to the

belief that “while this definition leaves little to argue with, it also provides little to work with” (Giessner & van Quaquebeke, 2010, p. 43). Second, it is reasoned that the literature on ethical leadership is predominantly analysed from a western perspective, leaving little room for the consideration of the values and principles of other cultures (Eisenbeiß, 2012). Finally, several scholars welcome the popularity of the descriptive approach to ethical leadership, whereas they also experience that normative foundations are currently largely neglected in research contexts (Ciulla et al., 2018; Flanigan, 2018). These scholars advocate for an approach that goes beyond studying perceptions on ethical leadership in a merely descriptive way. In fact, they strive for the return of a more nuanced, complex, and normative approach (Ciulla et al., 2018; Flanigan, 2018).

Although this dissertation acknowledges that a descriptive approach on ethical leadership has its limitations, we experience several reasons that clearly highlight its value and motivate its application. Moreover, we consider both approaches as necessary and complementary sides of the same coin (Flanigan, 2018). Mainly, as discussed later in greater detail, this dissertation aims to build on the strong theoretical underpinnings of empirical ethical leadership scholarship, whose popularity also stems from the exposure of the different roles of ethical leadership (Lawton & Paéz, 2015). The conceptualization of Brown et al. (2005) has sparked the attention for ethical leadership in numerous scientific fields, such as business ethics and psychology. Our aim is to further build on this new tradition, by adding an applied, sport scientific view to the literature. However, before turning to ethical leadership in sport management, this dissertation will first shed light on the roles and theoretical underpinnings of ethical leadership.

The definition of ethical leadership implies that ethical leadership consists of three distinct roles. A leader who is aiming to be perceived as an ethical leader must embody all three roles to be successful (Kaptein, 2017; Treviño et al., 2000).

First, an ethical leader is a *moral person*, who behaves according to prevailing standards, norms, and values. In general, a moral person impersonates ethical characteristics that relate to certain traits (such as honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness) and behaviours (such as being empathic and open) (Treviño et al., 2000). Next to these traits and behaviours, this role also considers ethical decision-

making principles, of which holding a set of ethical values and principles and being objective and fair can be seen as two significant examples (Treviño et al., 2000).

Second, an ethical leader is not only a moral person, but (s)he also acts as a *moral manager*. This role examines the efforts of the leader to actually use his/her influential position to influence people's behaviour (Treviño et al., 2000). Crucial in this regard is the leader's ability to "lead by example," thereby engaging in practices such as clear ethics communication and the development of a reinforcement system, in which fair rewarding and punishment are central (Treviño et al., 2000). Additionally, an ideal moral manager is also able to empower his/her followers, by giving them a voice and stimulating their personal development (Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2009; Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012).

Finally, a third role was recently added to the ethical leadership conceptualization, namely *moral entrepreneurship* (Kaptein, 2017). Moral entrepreneurship entails the establishment of new ethical norms. This last role of ethical leadership is required when certain ethical issues occur, for which morality is lacking (Kaptein, 2017). In that situation, which can be seen as a moral void, new ethical norms are necessary to tackle these issues and to develop and stimulate morality in an effective way (Kaptein, 2017). The following example may help to illustrate this rather abstract role. In the context of football clubs, moral entrepreneurship may be present when the leadership of a football club decides to implement a rule that all coaches are required to hand in an official document showing they do not have a criminal history. Although this rule will not prevent all incidents of abusive coaching behaviour, it contributes to a safe environment (Vertommen et al., 2017).

2.3.2.2 Theoretical underpinnings

Next to these three roles of ethical leadership, the distinctness and strong foundation of ethical leadership is formed by the conceptualization's theoretical underpinnings (Lawton & Paéz, 2015). Many theories bear implicit relevance in terms of fostering our knowledge on ethical leadership. Yet, two ethical leadership theories are essential in regards to our specific understanding of how ethical leadership is (a) formed and evaluated, and (b) able to influence both direct followers as well as the broader organizational environment (Heres, 2014). These theories are social learning theory (within the broader social cognitive theory) and social exchange theory.

2.3.2.2.1 Social learning theory

Social learning theory represents one of the most influential theories with respect to explaining ethical behaviour. The seminal work regarding this theory dates back to Albert Bandura (1977, 1986), who stated that individual ethical behaviour is formed by the combination and interaction of both personal and environmental (socio-cultural) factors. However, the most influential motivation to come to ethical behaviour stems from the individual level (Bandura, 1991). Individuals apply cognitive (psychological) processes of self-evaluations to consider if they have to activate self-sanctions concerning the implementation of certain actions (Bandura, 1991).

These self-sanctions are the most effective barriers to avoid engaging in unethical behaviour. Nevertheless, these sanctions have to be activated and this is where the social learning comes in (Bandura, 1991). After all, people are not operating in a completely autonomous way in terms of the decisions they make. In fact, people experience the interplay of the influences of behaviour, cognitive processes, and environmental factors (Bandura, 1991). The impact of these environmental factors might be quite extensive, especially when behaviour or personal cognitive processes are not that well developed (Bandura, 1991). For example, in the context of football clubs, players with low levels of self-evaluation and self-sanctioning may need the support of their coach to be convinced that certain behaviours, such as criticizing a team player or insulting an opponent, are inappropriate.

In fact, leaders are one of the most significant environmental factors in stimulating moral reasoning and ethical behaviour (Brown et al., 2005). People are most likely to turn to other people who operate in their close surroundings to observe the behavioural standards that are executed and promoted, after which they imitate and absorb these standards themselves (Kavussanu & Stanger, 2017a). In summary, observation, imitation, and identification are fundamental in peoples' modelling of their own actions (Brown et al., 2005). Leaders operate as important and observable environmental influences, not only due to their close position, but also because of their authority. Credible role modelling on behalf of the leaders, both behavioural and attitudinal, is expected to generate the activation of vicarious learning by followers (Brown et al., 2005; Miles, 2012). Cognitive reflexes such as self-reflection and self-sanctions are activated, upon the observation of credible role models, such as leaders (Miles, 2012). Leading by example can be seen as a good metaphor in this

context, as the leader is expected to show the right way – to provide guidance – when it comes to ethical behaviour (Brown et al., 2005).

Social learning theory has been applied quite extensively in studying ethics in sport (Chow et al., 2009). The value of social learning theory in this regard resides in indicating that ethical behaviour “is not simply given by nature,” but the outcome of learning and observing what kind of behaviour is common and expected in a given context (Festini, 2011, p. 317).

2.3.2.2.2 Social exchange theory

Social exchange theory stipulates that people engage in social relationships with others, starting from the firm idea that doing so will be rewarding for them (Blau, 1964; Miles, 2012). Moreover, central to social exchange theory is the notion of reciprocity, which implies an interdependent relationship between two parties (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The premise of this interdependent relationship is that, when one party does something positive for the other party, it is expected that this favour will be returned (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The exchanges linked to this relationship can be both transactional (involving material goods) or socioemotional (involving respect and trust) (Blau, 1964; Miles, 2012).

Social exchange theory has been regularly applied to study the relationships (and exchanges) between leaders and their followers (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Leaders who provide their followers a caring environment, in which clear communication and support are present, are likely to encounter trustful and respectful exchanges with their followers (Malingumu et al., 2016). After all, followers are believed to reciprocate these positive exchanges with a strongly motivated attitude and by putting their best foot forward with the organization (Malingumu et al., 2016).

2.3.2.3 Ethical leadership in sport management

Quite extensive attention has already been paid to the topics of leadership and ethics in sport management research (Bowen et al., 2017; DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010; Hums et al., 1999; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Nevertheless, there is a void of research combining both topics into an empirical and explicit focus on how ethical leadership is perceived in sport and on how it might stimulate ethical behaviour in sport organizations (Burton et al., 2017). Despite the lack of empirical work, several conceptual studies have recently drawn attention to

the relevance of ethical leadership in sport, leading to (a) studies identifying the similarities between ethical leadership in business and in sport, and to (b) studies exhibiting the specificity of practicing ethical leadership in sport.

Concerning the first (a) variant of sport ethical leadership studies, Bischak and Woiceshyn (2016) draw on certain parallels between rock climbing and business, to identify six general ethical leadership virtues, namely rationality, honesty, independence, integrity, justice, and pride. These parallels relate to a shared orientation towards clear goals, a set of diverse challenges, the need for planning, and a risk of failure (Bischak & Woiceshyn, 2016). The underlying idea is that “business can learn from leadership in sport” (Westerbeek & Smith, 2005). While some authors warn against the use of sporting metaphors in business settings (see Vermeulen, 2016), business is believed to be able to learn from how leadership is shaped in sport (Bischak & Woiceshyn, 2016; Westerbeek & Smith, 2005). More precisely, certain principles that are strongly associated with sport, such as perseverance, teamwork, and excellence could serve as guiding principles in the context of business as well (Westerbeek & Smith, 2005).

Furthermore, with regard to the second (b) variant, a few studies have been conducted in recent years. In a first one, DeSensi (2014) outlines the values of sport and stipulates that everyone who is pedagogically involved, holds a responsibility regarding the teaching and practicing of these values. In a second study, Roby (2014) criticizes the dominant winning-at-all cost mentality in sport, while highlighting the importance of credible, values-based leadership to create an ethical environment in sport organizations. In a third study, Sagas and Wigley (2014) illustrate the distinction in leadership between doing things right and doing the right thing. In a final study, Staurowsky (2014) argues that ethical leadership in sport also consists of honouring the athletes’ rights, an aspect that is currently often neglected.

Notwithstanding the recent rise of conceptual ethical leadership research in sport, empirical studies on this topic continue to be limited in number and scope. For instance, Cotrufo (2014) shows that ethical leadership on behalf of athletic directors can lead to positive organizational behaviour from staff members within college athletic departments. Moreover, Wells and Walker (2016) outline the importance of the transparent communication aspect of ethical leadership in a college athletic

department during a period of organizational change. Nonetheless, other aspects of the ethical leadership concept largely remained beyond the scope of their study. Finally, examining ethical leadership perceptions of 14 US collegiate athletic administrators with the lens of institutional logics, Nite and Bopp (2017) suggest that these perceptions are shaped by different deeply engrained, yet often incompatible ideals. All three studies clearly build solely on American samples, whilst all present conceptual studies are also executed by North American scholars. Whereas this consideration does not imply any expressions about the quality of research nor of the generalizability of the research findings, it nonetheless features room for a view on the impact of ethical leadership in a European sport context.

2.3.3 Core ethical values

The presence of core ethical values is believed to be a third important element of ethics management within an organization (Schwartz, 2013). Values can be defined as “core beliefs or desires that guide or motivate attitudes and actions” (Mullane, 2015, p. 10). Although often conceptualized on an individual (personal) level, values are also applicable in the context of groups, organizations, and cultures (Abbott et al., 2005). As a consequence, it is often difficult to uphold a clear distinction between values and norms (Malloy et al., 2003).

When it comes to organizational values, discrepancies (or even conflicts) may be present between the values of the organization and those of the members of the organization (Argandoña, 2003). For example, equality may have a different meaning for the management of an organization, compared to other organizational members (Hamm et al., 2008). In an ideal situation, the interpretation of organizational values aligns strongly between the organization and its members, leading to a considerable impact of these shared values on the success of the organization (Argandoña, 2003; Finegan, 2000; MacIntosh & Spence, 2012).

To optimize the impact of values on the organizational environment, organizations are encouraged to embrace the strategic potential of management by values (MBV), instead of opting for a classical, passive form of management by objectives (MBO) (Dolan & Garcia, 2002; Dolan & Richley, 2006). MBV implies that an organization's objectives are more likely to be achieved when there is a clear understanding about the actual presence of three different types of organizational values, namely *ethical-*

social values (i.e. relating to appropriate behaviour, with examples such as honesty and loyalty), *economic-pragmatic values* (i.e. referring to efficiency, performance, and discipline), and *emotional-developmental values* (i.e. sources of motivation, such as creativity and freedom) (Dolan & Richley, 2006).

Based on the profound understanding of the different present values systems, sport organizations are increasingly adopting an MBV approach to enhance the success of their organization (Bell-Laroche et al., 2014; Kerwin et al., 2014; MacIntosh & Spence, 2012). With specific regard to football, research has put an ideal type of football club forward, the Valued Club, in which all aforementioned organizational values are rightly balanced (Van Eekeren, 2016). The Valued Club as ideal type is rarely achieved, as managing a football club has become an increasingly complex practice. Today, football clubs are supposed to generate business value for the organization, sporting value on the playing field, cultural value for the fans and other stakeholders, and public value for the broader society (Van Eekeren, 2016). In other words, the commercialization and professionalization of sport have led to conflicts between sport's "old" social, emotional-developmental, and pedagogical values, such as friendship, joy, and respect, versus sport's "new" economic-pragmatic values (Grange, 2014). Others argue sport has undergone an evolution of ever increasing "seriousness," which endangers its intrinsic "play" aspect (Wagendorp, 2018).

2.4 Measuring the influence of ethics management

After the meaning of unethical behaviour and ethics management in football has been discussed, the question remains how the influence of ethics management can be assessed, in terms of promoting prosocial and discouraging antisocial behaviour. Measuring the influence of ethics management is heavily debated, yet strongly needed in light of increased public demand for ethical organizations (Geva, 2006). In general, three approaches are commonly applied (De Waegeneer, 2015; Kavussanu, 2008).

First, academics often turn to the study of official reports of incidents to analyse the prevalence and the handling of ethical issues (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008). More specifically, this approach takes into consideration the (number of) incidents that are reported. However, these seemingly objective data are not without bias, since different interpretations of the same reported data may be possible (Webley &

Werner, 2008). More precisely, someone may judge an organization with a lot of incidents reported as unethical (because there are a lot of incidents), whereas someone else may interpret the same organization as ethical (because these incidents are reported and dealt with). Moreover, it appears that the number of incidents represents the effectiveness of the reporting mechanisms and whistleblowing facilities within an organization, rather than the effectiveness of ethics management itself (De Waegeneer, 2015). This approach also neglects relevant organizational characteristics, such as a general fear for retaliation or prevailing apathetic attitudes (Kaptein, 2011; Webley & Werner, 2008).

A second option to scrutinize the influence of ethics management is using observation, both in the form of fieldwork and experiments (Kavussanu, 2008). For example, researchers could engage in an organization for a period of time, while observing how the organization in general and people in leading positions in particular deal with ethical issues (De Waegeneer, 2015). Moreover, another option is to employ experiments, containing certain manipulations, or changes (e.g. introducing an internal helpdesk) within the organization (Kavussanu, 2008). The effect of these changes can be examined, with the help of observations before and after their implementation (Kavussanu, 2008). In both situations, the researcher may be assisted by recording his/her observations, after which these audio or video tapes can be analysed in a research lab (Kavussanu, 2008). Nevertheless, both examples of this second approach pose a number of limitations, such as strong observer biases, practical limitations concerning time and space, and a lack of generalizability of the findings (De Waegeneer, 2015).

Finally, scholars often turn to the study of perceptions of practice as a tool to measure the influence of ethics management (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008). In this situation, the shared perception on how ethical issues are dealt with are used as some kind of proxy for the actual ethical nature of an organization (De Waegeneer, 2015). Although this approach also contains certain limitations, specifically with regard to self-report biases and the social desirability inherent to people's perceptions, it remains a valuable approach to study the effectiveness of ethics management (Mayer, 2014). When it comes to the study of these perceptions, multiple concepts are available. In this dissertation, the ethical climate concept is applied, since it is one of the most widely used and theoretically solid concepts to

assess the ethical environment within an organization (Mayer, 2014; Newman et al., 2017).

2.4.1 Ethical climate

As reported by its pioneering authors Victor and Cullen (1987, p. 51), ethical climate is defined as “the shared perceptions of what is ethically correct behavior and how ethical issues should be handled.” Albeit that the concept of ethical climate represents perceptions of behaviour and does not relate directly to actual behaviour, ethical climate is strongly linked to ethical behaviour through processes of moral emotion and ethical efficacy (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012; Malloy & Agarwal, 2001).

In addition to their definition, Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988) constructed a framework to measure the ethical climate in organizations, drawing on Kohlberg’s (1984) cognitive moral development theory, which stated that the moral reasoning, or moral judgment of a person runs through three chronological stages: a *preconventional* (i.e. personal decisions are made to avoid punishments and to strive for rewards), a *conventional* (i.e. the shared values of the social group are blindly adopted as personal guidelines), and a *postconventional* (i.e. universal principles become personal principles through the idea of having a social contract with the group and through personal moral reasoning) stage (Malloy et al., 2003).

Although Victor and Cullen’s (1987) framework remains today’s dominant paradigm to study ethical climate, several critiques have been raised over the years (Arnaud, 2006, 2010; Dickson et al., 2001). The main theoretical critique points to the fact that Victor and Cullen’s account of morality is incomplete (Arnaud, 2006, 2010). By referring to Rest’s (1986) four components model of morality, Arnaud (2006, 2010) highlighted that Victor and Cullen (1987) only consider one precondition for ethical decision making or morality, namely moral judgment (or reasoning). According to James Rest (1986), morality (i.e. moral functioning or moral decision-making) consists of four components, namely *moral sensitivity* (i.e. being aware that an ethical issue is at hand), *moral judgment* (i.e. defining and judging the situation, based on internalised ethical frameworks), *moral motivation* (i.e. making a trade-off between ethical motives and other motives such as financial gain or striving for pride and glory), and *moral character* (i.e. the actual implementation of (un)ethical behaviour). These four components of moral decision-making do not operate in a

perfect chronological sequence, as simultaneous interactions may be present. For example between judging an issue and considering the different motivations to deal with this issue (Geva, 2006). Unethical behaviour is caused when a failure occurs in one (or more) of these four psychological components (Romand et al., 2009).

Since the limitations of Victor and Cullen's (1987, 1988) ethical climate framework are acknowledged in this dissertation, Arnaud's (2006, 2010) alternative approach – operationalised as the "Ethical Climate Index" (ECI) – is applied to assess the effectiveness of ethics management in football clubs. The ECI offers a more profound explanation of how morality develops, through the consideration of all four of its components (De Waegeneer, 2015). In fact, the ECI provides a multidimensional perspective on a previously one-dimensionally interpreted process (Newman et al., 2017). Furthermore, the use of the ECI is strongly encouraged by recent studies, both in and outside the field of sport management (De Waegeneer et al., 2017; Kalshoven et al., 2013; Newman et al., 2017).

In the remainder of this section, the four components of ethical climate are discussed in greater detail. Whereas Rest's theory of morality has been established in relation to an individual's perspective, Arnaud's approach relates to its application in the context of an organization as collective entity (Arnaud, 2006, 2010). Moreover, the theoretical explanation of these four components is supplemented with an example to improve the reader's understanding about its practical operation.

2.4.1.1 Collective moral sensitivity

Collective moral sensitivity refers to the first component of morality and takes into account the prevailing norms in an organization regarding two subcomponents, namely moral awareness and empathic concern (Arnaud, 2010). Moral awareness discloses the identification of potential courses of actions when faced with a moral dilemma or problematic situation, whilst empathic concern details the common evaluation of the likely consequences of these actions for the people involved (Arnaud, 2010; Devisch, 2017; Johnson, 2012). For example, moral sensitivity is present within a football club, when there is a prevalent feeling that accepting money to fix a match poses a moral issue and puts a lot of people into danger.

2.4.1.2 Collective moral judgment

Moral judgment is by far the most studied component of morality (Johnson, 2012). Collective moral judgment involves an organization's common fashion to (a) define a problematic situation, and to (b) judge about potential responses to this situation (Arnaud, 2010; Geva, 2006). In fact, this component reflects the internalised ethical frameworks to judge a situation in terms of right and wrong (Arnaud, 2010; Geva, 2006; Johnson, 2010; Rest, 1986). For example, in the moral judgment component, an offer to manipulate a football match is defined as match-fixing, based on the prevailing norms of the football club, after which the appropriateness of the different responses to this offer – accepting or declining – are judged.

2.4.1.3 Collective moral motivation

Collective moral motivation mirrors how an organization commonly assesses moral concerns in comparison to other concerns (Arnaud, 2010). More precisely, this component refers to how certain motives (e.g. striving for recognition, financial gain, or morality) are relatively ranked (Arnaud, 2010). Formulated differently, this component considers if moral motives are prioritized over other motives (De Waegeneer, 2015). This prioritization of moral motives is necessary to come to ethical behaviour (Johnson, 2012; Rest, 1986). For example, one could speak about moral motivation when the general feeling regarding match-fixing within a football club is that the money that comes with engaging in fixing, does not outweigh the motivation of fair play.

2.4.1.4 Collective moral character

Finally, collective moral character entails the actual implementation of the preferred course of action (Arnaud, 2010). This component reflects the execution of the action plan that is developed in the course of the three other components of morality (Johnson, 2012). Persistence is the key to this component, in order to deal with opposition, distractions, and fatigue (Johnson, 2012; Rest, 1986). For example, moral character is present within a football club when match-fixing offers are disregarded.

2.5 References

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CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH CONTEXT & OVERVIEW ORIGINAL RESEARCH

3.1 Ethical approval, research context, and research questions

3.1.1 Ethical approval

The general outline of this dissertation was approved by both the ethics commission (code: project 2016/0034) and the doctoral commission of the Faculty of Health Sciences of Ghent University.

3.1.2 Research context

As reflected throughout the previous chapters, little academic interest has yet been dedicated to the study of ethics management in sport. In this dissertation, attention is paid to the influence of two elements of ethics management, namely ethical codes and ethical leadership. While core ethical values – a third element of ethics management – are strongly represented in ethical codes and ethical leadership, they remain beyond the main, explicit focus of this dissertation.

Focus is put specifically on football clubs. More precisely, all empirical research reported in this dissertation has been executed in the context of football clubs in Flanders, which is the Dutch speaking part of Belgium. Belgian football is an interesting case to study ethics management, as its history has been infected and shaped by several scandals (Baldock & Lucidarme, 2011; Dejonghe & Vandeweghe, 2006). These scandals, including the Bellemans raid (1984), the Heysel disaster (1985), the Bosman's arrest (1995), and the Clean Hands operation (2018) relate to such ethical issues as tax evasion, money laundering, deficient crowd control, human trafficking, and match-fixing. Most scandals generated a considerable international impact, next to presenting an impetus for Belgian football to professionalize (Casert, 2018; Dejonghe & Vandeweghe, 2006; Esson & Drywood, 2018; Kech, 2015).

Additionally, in Belgian football, a rather strict division between professional and amateur (nonprofessional) football clubs is present (Baldock & Lucidarme, 2011; Helsen et al., 2018). The Belgian professional football clubs, 24 in total, play in two national leagues, coordinated by the Royal Belgian Football Association and the Pro League (i.e. the umbrella organization of these 24 professional clubs). On the other hand, two regional branches of the Royal Belgian Football Association, namely Football Flanders and the Association of Francophonic Football Clubs are responsible for the organization of amateur football in their respective regions

(Helsen et al., 2018). In Flanders, amateur football clubs play on seven different league levels. While Belgium has long been known for having many football clubs (relative to its rather small population), many clubs have ceased to exist – due to financial or other problems – or have merged over the past decades (Dejonghe & Vandeweghe, 2006; Duke & Renson, 2003).

As depicted in Table 1 (see *infra*), the main empirical emphasis of our research is on amateur football clubs in Flanders. While all amateur football clubs in Flanders are non-profit organizations, some of them represent a specific type of non-profit organization that lacks a legal structure and administrative responsibilities (i.e. “feitelijke vereniging” in Dutch). Accordingly, these clubs are not obliged to submit annual financial reports, which makes it difficult to assess their financial situation (Thibaut et al., 2016). However, research and media have both indicated that many amateur football clubs in Flanders experience difficulties to survive due to financial issues, which often relate to the presence of black market money (Thibaut et al., 2016). Since a link can be drawn between financial issues and the occurrence of unethical behaviour, the peculiar situation of some Flemish football clubs may contribute to an organizational environment in which certain ethical issues might prevail.

Due to their (lack of) structure, it is difficult to approach the size and characteristics of these clubs. However, according to recent sources, an average amateur football club in Flanders consists of 153 members, which are predominantly – for 92% – male (Helsen et al., 2018). Also, approximately four out of ten football clubs in Flanders have no associated minor members, leading to the sole presence of adult football teams in these clubs (Helsen et al., 2018).

3.1.3 Research questions

This present dissertation builds on the work of former colleague Els De Waegeneer. In her doctoral dissertation, De Waegeneer (2015) studied the prevalence, content, and structure of ethical codes in sport organizations. Moreover, the effectiveness of these ethical codes was assessed by looking into the ethical climate of the studied sport organizations. Nevertheless, De Waegeneer (2015, p. 203) raised an important warning regarding the interpretation of her findings, namely:

to prove the causality of the findings, it is necessary to set up a longitudinal study instead of a cross-sectional design, which have [sic] been implemented now. To affirm effectiveness, this is a necessary addition to the comparison of code characteristics with the ethical climate of organizations.

Therefore, causal interpretations regarding the effectiveness (influence) of ethical codes in football clubs require us to apply a longitudinal study design, meaning that changes over time have to be taken into consideration if the purpose is to make causal claims. However, until now, no study on ethical codes, nor in a sport context, nor beyond has already applied such a longitudinal perspective to study code characteristics (De Waegeneer, 2015; Kaptein & Scharltz, 2008; Singh et al., 2011). As a consequence, the first three research questions (RQ's) are as follows:

RQ1: To what extent does the ethical climate within football clubs change over time?

RQ 2: To what extent can this change in ethical climate be ascribed to the presence or absence of an ethical code?

RQ 3: To what extent is there a relationship between the structural determinants of the ethical code and changes in ethical climate?

Although the presence of an ethical code is strongly encouraged for any kind of organization, ethical leadership is fundamental to translate an ethical code into practice (Schwartz, 2013). Nonetheless, while conceptual research highlights the potential of ethical leadership to stimulate the ethical environment in sport clubs, empirical research in this regard is nearly non-existent (Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Within football clubs, all people in a leadership position are able to step up as an ethical leader. However, previous research has identified the coach as the most prominent leader when it comes to stimulating ethical behaviour in sport clubs by players (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Chow et al., 2009). Ethical behaviour contains an inhibitive (refraining from unethical behaviour), as well as a prosocial (engaging in ethical behaviour) dimension (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009). As such, the influence of coach ethical leadership on both dimensions is considered, by assessing the influence on the ethical climate of the football club and on the affective organizational commitment (AOC) of the players. Players' AOC, or organizational loyalty, is an essential form of prosocial behaviour for football clubs. After all, many football clubs

are currently struggling to work on the long term, or even to survive, since many players switch clubs every year due to merely financial motives (Thibaut et al., 2016).⁵ Thus, the following research questions are formulated:

RQ 4: Is player-perceived coach ethical leadership positively related to players' affective organizational commitment in football clubs?

RQ 5: Is player-perceived coach ethical leadership positively related to player-perceived organizational ethical climate in football clubs?

RQ 6: Does the influence of player-perceived coach ethical leadership on players' affective organizational commitment partly run through the ethical climate of the football club?

Besides the stimulating role of the coach as an ethical leader in football clubs, other people in leadership positions may be strongly influential as well. Since the ethical tone at the top of the organization is critical (see Ruiz et al., 2011), attention is here paid to the influence of ethical leadership on behalf of the board of directors in football clubs. Yet, it is argued that social distance is an important factor regarding ethical leadership, indicating that the higher the distance between leader and follower, the smaller the leadership effect may be (Tumasjan et al., 2011).

Moreover, follower perceptions on ethical leadership tend to be more critical if there is a social gap between leader and follower (Tumasjan et al., 2011). Therefore, we analyse if the effect of the board on the ethical climate of the football club is stronger (less critical) when perceived by coaches instead of players. Also, we scrutinize if the coach operates as a mediator to enable the effect of board ethical leadership to fully trickle down to the players. In sum, the following research questions are presented.

RQ 7: Are positive perceptions of board ethical leadership associated with positive perceptions of ethical climate in football clubs (and the reverse)?

RQ 8: Are the associations between perceptions of board ethical leadership and perceptions of ethical climate in football clubs moderated by the function of who is judging (are these associations stronger when perceived by coaches compared to players)?

⁵ The argumentation regarding why players' affective organizational commitment is fundamental for football clubs will be further developed in detail in Chapter 5.

RQ 9: Do the associations between players' perceptions of board ethical leadership and players' perceptions of ethical climate in football trickle down via players' perceptions of coach ethical leadership?

In the consideration of all aforementioned research questions, the main emphasis is put on how important internal stakeholders, such as players, coaches, and board members perceive the ethical climate and ethical leadership in their football club. Such a focus on the perspective of internal stakeholders is very common and certainly logical when approaching ethics management in any organization, as these stakeholders are most acquainted with organizational policies and practices. Notwithstanding the relevance of internal stakeholders, a plea has recently been made to not ignore the perspective of important external stakeholders when aiming to offer a holistic perspective on the matter (Heres, 2015; Kihl et al., 2010). One very important external stakeholder group in football is fans. Fans represent the uniqueness of the sport sector (see Babiak & Wolfe, 2009), whereas they also have a strong and legitimate stake in their club, due to their physical involvement, loyalty, and economic impact (Anagnostopoulos, 2011; Biscaia et al., 2018; García & Welford, 2015). We argue fans have become “stakeowners” to their football clubs, being stakeholders with certain rights and responsibilities (Fassin, 2012). However, we largely lack knowledge regarding how fans feel about their position towards football club management and ethical leadership (García & Welford, 2015). Hence, the last research questions of this dissertation read as follows:

RQ 10: To what extent do football fans care about ethical leadership in their club?

RQ 11: To what extent do football fans consider themselves as “stakeowners”?

RQ 12: To what extent does football club leadership support the ideas that fans are “stakeowners” and that ethical leadership might promote fans’ “stakeownership”?

3.2 Overview of original research

Each of the forthcoming chapters of this dissertation focuses on some of the previously listed research questions. These chapters all contain original research that has been published by journals included in Clarivate Analytics' Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), made available through Web of Science.

Chapter 4: research questions 1-3:

Constandt, B., De Waegeneer, E., & Willem, A. (2017). Ethical code effectiveness in football clubs: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Business Ethics*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1007/s10551-017-3552-0

Chapter 5: research questions 4-6:

Constandt, B., De Waegeneer, E., & Willem, A. (2018). Coach ethical leadership in soccer clubs: An analysis of its influence on ethical behavior. *Journal of Sport Management*, 32(3), 185-198.

Chapter 6: research questions 7-9:

Constandt, B., & Willem, A. (2019). The trickle-down effect of ethical leadership in nonprofit soccer clubs. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 29(3), 401-417.

Chapter 7: research questions 10-12:

Constandt, B., Parent, M.M., & Willem, A. (2019). Does it really matter? A study on soccer fans' perceptions of ethical leadership and their role as "stakeowners." *Sport Management Review*. Accepted for publication.

Moreover, a reduced and integrated version of the general introduction (Chapters 1-3) and general discussion (Chapters 8-9) of this dissertation will be submitted shortly as a "PhD critical review paper" to the journal *Psychologica Belgica*.

A schematic overview of the chapters, containing original research, is displayed in Table 1 on the following page.

Table 1. Schematic overview original research

N° of chapter	RQ's	Scope	Methods	Period data collection	Sample
Chapter n°4	RQ1 - RQ3	Amateur football	Repeated measurements ANOVA + Regression analyses	<i>Phase 1:</i> Dec. 2012 - March 2013	73 clubs
				<i>Phase 2:</i> Dec. 2015 - March 2016	47 clubs
Chapter n°5	RQ4 - RQ6	Amateur football	Regression + mediation analyses	Dec. 2015 - March 2016	436 players
Chapter n°6	RQ7 - RQ9	Amateur football	Regression + mediation analyses	Dec. 2015 - March 2016	438 players + 106 coaches
Chapter n°7	RQ10 - RQ12	Professional football	Single case study → interviews + vignettes + document analysis	Febr. 2017 - Febr. 2018	17 fans + 3 club leaders + 183 pages of policy documents

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PART II: ORIGINAL RESEARCH

CHAPTER 4: ETHICAL CODE EFFECTIVENESS IN FOOTBALL CLUBS

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Abstract

As football (soccer) clubs are facing different ethical challenges, many clubs are turning to ethical codes to counteract unethical behaviour. However, both in- and outside the sport field, uncertainty remains about the effectiveness of these ethical codes. For the first time, a longitudinal study design was adopted to evaluate code effectiveness. Specifically, a sample of non-professional football clubs formed the subject of our inquiry. Ethical code effectiveness was assessed by the measurement of the ethical climate. A repeated measurements ANOVA revealed a positive evolution of the ethical climate within the studied football clubs. This evolution could not be ascribed to the mere presence of an ethical code. However, several potential code effectiveness determining characteristics were also included in the research design. Some of these accounted partly for the evolution of the ethical climate of the football clubs. Results suggest that football clubs should incorporate their ethical code into a broader ethical program, with attention for professionalization initiatives, stakeholder management, ethical leadership, and whistle-blowing protection.

Keywords: Code effectiveness; Ethical climate; Ethical code; Ethical program; Football clubs; Longitudinal analysis

4.1 Introduction

Unethical behaviour is a widespread issue in sports in general, and football in particular. Moreover, unethical behaviour appears to be deeply rooted in the climate and the culture of both professional and non-professional associations, federations, and clubs (Bell-Laroche et al., 2014; DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010). In this regard, three recent examples illustrate the multifaceted character, and the scope of unethical behaviour in football, which can be interpreted as any “engagement in negative social behaviors or unfair play” (Chow et al., 2009, p. 426).

First, the verdicts of the independent Ethics Committee of FIFA, world’s leading football association, indicate that corruption and fraud are commonplace at the top of football governance (FIFA, 2016). Second, the interview of a former British professional player about his abusive youth coach, triggered a massive outbreak of similar testimonials, and the foundation of several hotlines in- and outside Britain in late 2016 (BBC, 2016). Third, recent research on match-fixing highlights an alarming number of approximately 10 000 fixed sport matches a year, of which the extensive Bochum match-fixing scandal in football represents a sweeping example (IRIS, 2012; The Telegraph, 2013).

Scholars broadly acknowledge that there are several ways to address unethical behaviour in the sport sector (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010). Informal methods, such as ethical leadership and the practical dissemination of core organizational values can be most helpful, next to the fact that sport clubs regularly turn to formal ethical programs, and ethical codes in particular, to deal with unethical behaviour (De Waegeneer, 2015; Thompson & Dieffenbach, 2016). Notwithstanding that higher authorities in sports often encourage the adaptation of an ethical code, its effectiveness in reducing unethical behaviour remains up for discussion (Helin & Sandström, 2007; Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008). Even more, some scholars diametrically oppose the effectiveness of the mere presence of an ethical code, both in- and outside sports (De Waegeneer et al., 2017; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2016; Singh, 2011).

Although this present study does not intend a final settlement of the aforementioned discussion, it does aim to shed light on the potential delayed effect of an ethical code in football clubs. After all, present studies on code effectiveness are characterized by

an approach in which both the ethical code and its assumed effect are measured at the same point in time. However, we argue that the presence and content of an ethical code need a certain time to trickle down to the stakeholders, in particular to the coaches, players and parents, before the ethical code can actually lead to a behavioural and attitudinal shift.

In this study, we have assessed the effectiveness of an ethical code in football clubs by measuring the ethical climate (and its four dimensions) of the football club (Arnaud, 2006). Previous studies have indicated a possible influence of the adoption of an ethical code on the ethical climate, but remain indecisive regarding the long term effect (Peterson, 2002). Additionally, since research has demonstrated that several characteristics regarding the design, implementation, and application of an ethical code in sport clubs may have an effect on the ethical climate, this present study has also considered these structural characteristics (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). In sum, we have examined both the long term effectiveness of the presence of an ethical code in football clubs, and potential code effectiveness determining structural characteristics.

4.2 Theory

4.2.1 Ethical codes

4.2.1.1 Definition and role

Several scientific conceptualizations of the meaning and the defining characteristics of an ethical code exist (Wood & Rimmer, 2003). In line with recent research on ethical codes, this study has opted for the clear, and widely adopted definition of Kaptein and Schwartz (2008, p. 113) as a starting point. Nevertheless, some modifications were made to adjust this definition to the sports context (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). In summary, an ethical code in the sports context is understood as (De Waegeneer, 2015, p. 38):

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

By spelling out a few defining elements, this definition enables us to clarify the distinctness of an ethical code in comparison to other prescriptive documents. First, although ethical codes and mission statements are both internally developed formal documents, they are not the same. While a mission statement expresses the objectives and goals of an organization, an ethical code articulates the value system in which the mission statement should ideally be operating (Stevens, 2008). Also, an ethical code is not the product of an imposed external process, which sets it apart from legislation (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). On the contrary, an ethical code can rather be seen as an internal social contract, between the organization and its members (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016). Lastly, in practice, an ethical code does not differ significantly from a code of conduct, a business code, or an integrity code (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). However, in theory, an ethical code is more general, contains fewer principles, is less compulsory in its language, is directed to more stakeholders, and is clearer and less ambiguous than these other types of behaviour guiding documents (Wood & Rimmer, 2003).

To a large extent, an ethical code is a strategic document, initiated at the top of the organization, in which the organization imposes certain rules from a top-down perspective (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016). It can be argued that the strategic character of an ethical code is twofold, with both an internal and an external focus (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016). On the one hand, the main goal of an ethical code is to preserve the organization from the misbehaviour, and the unpredictability of their members, as a form of internal risk management (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016). On the other hand, an ethical code also functions as some kind of external marketing tool, in which the organization states and documents its preoccupation with ethics (Adam et al., 2004; Adelstein & Clegg, 2016; Schwartz, 2001).

4.2.1.2 Ethical codes in sport clubs: Characteristics and prevalence

Whereas studies on ethical codes represent a major component of the business ethics body of literature, sport management research has not yet entirely acquired this research theme (McLeod et al., 2016). Although the potential of ethical codes in reducing unethical behaviour in a sports context is already acknowledged for more than twenty years, this awareness has not been translated into a well-established research agenda (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 1996, 2010).

For a long period, the rare sport management studies on ethical codes focused mainly on prescriptions for practice, and on code perceptions in the context of North-American intercollegiate athletics (Greenwell et al., 2001; Jordan et al., 2004). However, recent research has strongly enhanced our understanding of the prevalence of the different components of ethical codes in non-American sport clubs, as well in terms of their structural aspects, as in terms of their content (De Waegeneer et al., 2016, 2017).

When it comes to the *structural* aspects, four major insights considering the creation, the implementation, and the enforcement of ethical codes in sport clubs, can be derived. First, several recurring reasons to establish an ethical code are found to be present in a vast majority of sport clubs, namely the motivation to increase the ethical behaviour in the club, the motivation to boost the image of the club, the motivation to comply with external legislation, and the motivation to professionalize (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). For a sport club, the motivation to professionalize can be triggered by different external (i.e. pressure from the government, the federation, sponsors, or the media), and internal expectations (Nagel et al., 2015). Moreover, ethical codes can be seen as an illustration of a professional management tool in sports, adapted from the general business world (Nagel et al., 2015). After all, Nagel et al. (2015, p. 407) understand (the) professionalization (of sport organizations) as “an organisational process of transformation leading towards organisational rationalisation, efficiency and business-like management.”

Second, the importance of the involvement of coaches in the code creation can hardly be overstated (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 1996). After all, coaches are proven to be crucial stakeholders, regarding the promotion of ethical behaviour within sport clubs (Jordan et al., 2004). Coaches are able to promote an environment, which stimulates prosocial, and discourages antisocial behaviour (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009). Existing empirical evidence shows that coaches are involved in the creation process of an ethical code in most sport clubs (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). As further pointed out in the following section, our study assesses if the involvement of the coach also contributes to a change in the ethical climate of football clubs.

Third, communication about the ethical code remains an aspect that could be strongly improved, as sport clubs almost exclusively communicate about their ethical

codes in times of registration, if they communicate about it at all, whereas communication at several times and in several formats should be prioritized (De Waegeneer et al., 2017).

Last, fortunately, code enforcement is an aspect that is not neglected in most ethical codes in sport clubs (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). An exhaustive code enforcement policy, which clearly states the consequences of all possible code violations, is critical (Thompson & Dieffenbach, 2016). After all, if there is no sanctioning of the violation of the ethical code, the ethical code turns into a non-committal and ineffective document (Jordan et al., 2004).

Considering the *content* of ethical codes in sport clubs, three findings are especially worth stating. First, ethical codes in sport clubs should be concrete and unambiguous (Jordan et al., 2004). However, they may also not be too specific, as this complicates the application of the code to the diverse real sport world situations (Jordan et al., 2004). Also, Kvalnes and Hemmestad (2010) warn against codes of ethics that are too detailed in sport clubs, as they believe that this generates a potentially dangerous situation of loophole ethics. Loophole ethics occur when there is a belief that every action that is not explicitly forbidden by the ethical code, is implicitly allowed (Kvalnes & Hemmestad, 2010).

Second, the ethical code should also be clear, in terms of to whom it applies, and in terms of the included statements (Jordan et al., 2004). De Waegeneer et al. (2016) point to the presence of certain recurring themes in the ethical codes of sport clubs. Moreover, their content analysis shows the dominance of solidarity, (physical and psychological) integrity and fair play related statements, whereas references to children's rights in sport, inclusion and diversity are rather uncommon. Also, the ethical codes of most studied sport clubs are characterized by a deontological ethical orientation, with absolute and clear rules as focal points (De Waegeneer et al., 2016). However, it is more effective when sport clubs use a combination of deontological (strict rules), and consequentialist (incorporating the consequences of certain behaviours to decide on its ethical character) statements (De Waegeneer et al., 2016).

Third, there should be a general tendency of code acceptance in the sport club. Clearly, the ethical code can only be successful in a situation in which both the

leaders, and the members of the sport club, are willing to comply with its content (Jordan et al., 2004).

4.2.1.3 Ethical codes in sport clubs: Structural determinants of effectiveness

The literature offers us several insights into the structural determinants of code effectiveness (Kaptein, 2011b; Singh, 2011). In line with De Waegeneer et al. (2017), this present study attributes these determinants to the four stages of ethical code establishment, namely code creation, code content, code implementation and code administration or enforcement (Schwartz, 2002).

Regarding the *code creation* stage in sport clubs, the involvement of the different stakeholder groups (i.e. board of directors, management, players, coaches, parents, fans and sponsors) needs to be addressed (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). Since these stakeholder groups reflect the specificity of the sporting scene – as different stakeholders play their role in comparison to other sectors – the extent to which these stakeholder groups are involved in the code creation is measured (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). Additionally, this study measures the motivation to install an ethical code, or the code purpose. In general, four broader motivations can be identified, namely the motivation to comply with external legislation (e.g. decrees on ethically responsible sporting and/or doping laws), the motivation to promote internal ethical behaviour, the motivation to professionalize, and the motivation to use the ethical code as a public relations tool (De Waegeneer et al., 2017).

With regard to the *code content* stage, the literature supports the idea that the content of the code determines the code effectiveness (Singh, 2011). However, the specificity of sports and its stakeholders should again be taken into consideration. Therefore, this study examines the potential effect of specific statements, related to the needs of the aforementioned stakeholder groups.

The *code implementation* stage contains both determinants, related to communication and other organizational processes (Schwartz, 2002). Stakeholder communication is a critical and complex aspect of an organization's formal ethics program, as the transmission of ethical initiatives to different stakeholder groups, requires distinct strategies (Morsing & Schultz, 2006; Schwartz, 2013). This is definitely not different for sport clubs. After all, reaching fans, sponsors, parents and underage players depends upon customized approaches (De Waegeneer et al.,

2017). An important additional remark is that the quality of the communication is at least as important as the frequency (Kaptein et al., 2011b). This study analyses both the timing (at the registration, in case of violations, in case of complaints), and the format (flyer, workshop, newsletter, poster) of the communication of the ethical code in terms of their influence on code effectiveness. When it comes to the non-communicational aspect of the code implementation stage, it is particularly important that both internal and external stakeholders can raise questions if needed (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). Consequently, this study considers the availability of a helpdesk within the football club, both internally (e.g. a compliance officer or an ethical committee) and externally (e.g. the federation).

As noted earlier, the *code enforcement* stage appears to be a crucial aspect of code establishment. After all, when violations of the code are neither detected, nor sanctioned, the ethical code is likely to turn into an empty and unmaintained document (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2016; McKendall et al., 2002). Thus, this study examines both the support against retaliation for members who want to report any violation of the code – the so-called whistle-blowers –, and the extent to which sanctions are clearly stated. If members feel safe to report violations, a critical step is taken in the translation of the ethical code into actual behaviour (Webley & Werner, 2008).

As current findings on the effectiveness of these structural determinants are cross-sectional in nature, causality cannot be proven. The literature loud and clearly states the need for longitudinal investigation of code effectiveness (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008; Singh et al., 2011). For instance, leading scholars on ethical codes, Kaptein and Schwartz (2008, p. 122) state that “real effectiveness can only be determined after a longer period.” Also, Singh et al. (2011) recommend that there should be paid attention to the longitudinal evolution of this dynamic instrument.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the causal effects of the adoption of an ethical code in football clubs. Our analysis contributes to the literature by its unique longitudinal perspective, which is much-anticipated by scholars interested in ethical codes and their effectiveness (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008; Singh et al., 2011). More specifically, three research questions are taken into account:

RQ1: To what extent does the ethical climate within football clubs change over time?

RQ2: To what extent can this change in ethical climate be ascribed to the presence or absence of an ethical code?

RQ3: To what extent is there a relationship between the structural determinants of the ethical code and changes in ethical climate?

4.2.2 Measuring code effectiveness

4.2.2.1 Shared perceptions approach

In general, studies on the effectiveness of ethical codes present strongly conflicting results. According to the review article by Kaptein and Schwartz (2008), approximately half of the existing empirical studies label ethical codes as being effective, whereas a third indicates a non-significant relationship. Additionally, a small minority presents mixed or even counterproductive results. A part of the explanation for this remarkable finding is rooted in the existence of several research approaches to assess code effectiveness (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008). Two broad types of approaches can be distinguished. On the one hand, objective data, as reported in official reports, are collected, whereas, on the other hand, scholars tend to study collective perceptions of practice (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008). Clearly, as is discussed below, both options have their merits and pitfalls.

This study examines perceptions of practice, since it is believed that (seemingly) objective data are not an ideal reproducer of the actual situations in organizations (Webley & Werner, 2008). Conclusively, these objective data can be interpreted in complete opposite ways. For example, one can state that an ethical code is ineffective when a lot of violations are reported, albeit that this large number of incidents can also be the expression of a good working ethical code, because members tend to feel safe to report any inappropriate behaviour (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). Furthermore, important cultural organizational elements, such as a fear of retaliation or a general apathetic attitude are not taken into consideration (Kaptein, 2011a; Webley & Werner, 2008).

Although the perceptions of practice approach represents certain limitations in terms of social desirability and self-report bias, it remains a widely adopted way to assess code effectiveness (De Waegeneer et al., 2017; Mayer, 2014). We encourage this approach, as it enables researchers to include the viewpoints of several

organizational stakeholders, instead of leaning on centrally collected reports. Also, by aggregating the individual perceptions on the organizational level, it is possible to work with one collective score for each organization. Additionally, Pelletier and Bligh (2006, p. 362) state that “perceptions can provide critical insights into attitudes toward ethical program components and their effectiveness.”

When studying ethical behaviour in organizations with the help of shared perceptions, two research concepts can be seen as predominant, namely ethical climate and ethical culture (Mayer, 2014). Ethical climate is a concept rooted in moral psychology, which analyses the actual operational working of the organization, and the content of the ethical behaviour (Agarwall & Malloy, 1999). To the contrary, ethical culture is often labelled as an anthropological concept, which examines the conditions of the actual and the preferable working of the organization from a procedural angle (Agarwall & Malloy, 1999; Kaptein, 2011a). However, it may be stated that these two concepts contain stronger affinities than differences (Dickson et al., 2001; Schminke et al., 2005; Treviño et al., 1998). This study opts for the ethical climate concept as theoretical background, since it is more strongly elaborated and less splintered than the ethical culture concept (Mayer, 2014). Also, we support the initiative to strive for the transformation of the ethical climate concept into “a mainstream management topic” (Mayer et al., 2009).

4.2.2.2 The “Ethical Climate Index” (ECI)

Ethical climate can be defined as “the shared perceptions of what is ethically correct behavior and how ethical issues should be handled” (Victor & Cullen, 1987, p. 51). Although today, the ethical climate conceptualization of Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988) remains most popular in academic contexts, in our study, the updated and theoretically improved conceptualization of Arnaud (2006, 2010) was chosen.

With the “Ethical Climate Index” (ECI), Arnaud (2006, 2010) developed a new approach, with the necessary attention for all four conditions of ethical behaviour. Drawing on Rest’s (1986) theory of moral development, the “Ethical Climate Index” considers the four stages that an organization, as a social system, has to undergo to become involved in ethical behaviour, namely collective moral sensitivity, collective moral judgment, collective moral motivation, and collective moral character (Arnaud, 2006, 2010). Rest’s (1986) theory of moral development is a predominant and

influential theory, when it comes to the analysis of ethical decision-making (Arnaud, 2006).

Collective moral sensitivity reflects the moral awareness and the empathic concern in the organization (Arnaud, 2010). Moral awareness considers the ability of the organization to grasp the different possible options in a certain situation (Arnaud, 2006, 2010). Empathic concern is an important aspect of emotional intelligence, which addresses the ability to appraise the feelings of those who may be affected by those actions (Sadri et al., 2011; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). For example, when there is moral sensitivity in a football club, then the club is aware that reporting unethical behaviour is an ethical issue.

In the collective moral judgment stage, the individuals within the organization use the internalized moral frameworks of an organization, to judge the situation and the possible actions in terms of their moral appropriateness (Arnaud, 2006, 2010). For example, in this stage, the football club judges about the desirability of whistle-blowing protection.

The collective moral motivation stage assesses the relative weight of moral values in comparison to other values (Arnaud, 2006, 2010). In other words, do moral values, such as honesty and fairness have priority over other values such as financial gain or power (Arnaud, 2010)? We continue with the same example. If the football club judges that whistle-blowers need to be protected from retaliation, then they come into the stage of moral motivation: to what extent does the club think this protection is more important than other interests, such as its reputation?

In the final stage, the collective moral character stage, the ethical values are implemented in the planning and the execution of the action (Arnaud, 2006). Different norms play an important role in this final stage, not in the least norms of self-control and norms of assuming self-responsibility (Arnaud, 2006, 2010). In our example, the club shows moral character by actually executing the intended protection, rather than letting pressure from outside guide their behaviour regarding whistle-blowing.

4.3 Methodology

The majority of the existing research on organizational ethics uses survey-based, cross-sectional study designs (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008, McLeod et al., 2016). Moreover, a review by McLeod et al. (2016) shows that the most popular organizational ethics research themes, namely ethical codes and ethical climate, are studied almost exclusively at only one point in time. Nevertheless, longitudinal research is required, to formulate grounded conclusions regarding the direction of the relationship between an ethical code and its characteristics on the one hand, and the ethical climate of an organization or club on the other hand. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that several leading authors on ethical codes and ethical climate advocate for the repeated measurement over time of these variables, to elaborate our understanding of their operation and interrelationship (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008; Mayer, 2014; Schminke et al., 2005; Singh et al., 2011). Hence, this study has applied a longitudinal study design, to analyse the research questions at hand.

4.3.1 Sample and procedure

The data collection of this longitudinal study consisted of two phases or measurement points, with a three years' time gap in between measurement points (Phase 1: December 2012-March 2013, Phase 2: December 2015-March 2016). The data of the first data collection phase represent a sub sample of the De Waegeneer et al. (2017) study, of which we have subtracted the data regarding football.

At the beginning of the first phase, we contacted all associated field football clubs ($N = 943$) by e-mail, in cooperation with the Football Federation Flanders. The Football Federation Flanders is the Flemish part of the Royal Belgian Football Association. It represents the non-profit and non-professional football clubs of Flanders, which is the Dutch speaking part of Belgium. All these clubs are distributed over seven non-professional league levels. Non-professional means that the internal stakeholders (i.e. players, coaches, and board members) of these football clubs have an additional profession, by which they earn their living.

The contacted clubs were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding the existence and the structural characteristics of the ethical code in their club. Our study posed questions regarding a set of a total of eleven characteristics targeting the creation,

the content, the implementation, and the enforcement of the ethical code. These structural characteristics, potentially determining for code effectiveness, were explained above, and adopted from previous research on ethical codes (in sports) (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). An overview of these determinants and their related questions, can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Structural determinants of ethical code effectiveness. *Source:* De Waegeneer et al. (2017)

Phase of code establishment	Structural determinant	Scale items
Code creation	Motivation to establish an ethical code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical behaviour • Professionalization • Appearance • External legislation compliance
	Involvement stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of directors • Managers • Players • Coaches • Fans • Sponsors • Parents • Others
Code content	Target audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of directors • Managers • Players • Coaches • Parents • Fans • Sponsors

Code implementation	Communication of the code: timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At registration • In case of violations • In case of complaints • In case of questions
	Communication of the code: format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flyer • Workshop • Newsletter • Poster • Website
	Availability internal helpdesk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of directors • Management • Players • Coaches • Ombudsperson • Ethical committee
	Availability external helpdesk	Football federation
Code enforcement	Support for whistleblowers	Support for whistleblowers
	Procedure complaints	Procedure in case of complaints
	Procedure violations	Procedure in case of violation
	Sanctions	Sanctions

Additionally, still during the first phase, we requested all adult members of the participating clubs to complete the “Ethical Climate Index” (ECI) by Arnaud (2006), containing thirty-six Likert-scale questions. Afterwards, we aggregated the individual responses on the ECI on the organizational level of analysis, since ethical climate is a collective measure. After the first phase, we retained seventy-three clubs ($n = 73$), from which we had sufficient response on the ECI. This response rate seems acceptable, considering the fact that at least three responses per club were needed

to include a club in the sample (Arnaud, 2006), and regarding the sensitive nature of the topic of investigation.

After three years, we implemented a second phase, in which we reassessed the ECI of these seventy-three football clubs, minus three clubs that ceased to exist. At the end of the second phase, this study was able to calculate the ECI of forty-seven ($n = 47$) of the remaining seventy clubs. Such a level of attrition is not uncommon when working with longitudinal panel designs, since organizations refuse (renewed) cooperation or cease to exist (Menard, 2002; Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010).

To restrict the effect of common method variance, several mechanisms were included in the study design (Podsakoff et al., 2003). First, the “Ethical Climate Index” (ECI) by Arnaud (2006) is a standardized and validated scale, which was also translated to Dutch according to academic standards. Second, data on the ethical codes and the ethical climate were obtained by different sources. Third, participants anonymity and confidentiality of the data was assured in the cover letter, attached to the questionnaire.

4.3.2 Data analysis

The data analyses regarding this study were conducted using SPSS Statistics 22. Our study evaluated the long term effectiveness of both the existence, and the structural elements of the ethical codes in football clubs by re-measuring the ECI of the football clubs after three years. Three methodological steps were taken to come to the final results.

In a first step, we examined the evolution of the ethical climate between the first and the second measurement point within the football clubs, using a repeated measurements ANOVA. A repeated measurements ANOVA is in this study preferable over an independent ANOVA, since we are more interested in the within-participant variability (the variability of the ethical climate within the football clubs over time) than in the between-participant variability (the variability of the ethical climate between the football clubs over time) (Field, 2009). However, potential interaction effects between clubs, of the (non)existence of an ethical code, and the duration of the ethical code existence, were tested for.

During a second step, we created a new variable containing the residual change scores for the ECI of the football clubs, to address the evolution in ethical climate. Moreover, these residual change scores were calculated by regressing the ethical climate values of the second measurement point onto their respective baseline values (i.e. the values belonging to the first measurement point). These residual change scores can be interpreted as the amount of increase or decrease in the ethical climate of the football clubs, between both measurement points, independent of the baseline scores (Van Dyck et al., 2015). This approach is superior to working with simple change scores, since it erases auto-correlated error and regression to the mean effects (Van Dyck et al., 2015).

In a third, and final step, we analysed the long term effectiveness of both the presence of an ethical code, and the potential determining structural characteristics, using multiple linear regression analyses. Hereby, the residual change scores for ethical climate functioned as dependent variable in each analysis, whereas each structural determinant formed the independent variable (cf. Table 1).

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Descriptive statistics

Sixty-one of the seventy-three participating football clubs had an ethical code during the first data collection phase. Twelve clubs did not have an ethical code. Furthermore, Table 3 demonstrates that the average ECI in football clubs was considerably higher in the second ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.28$) than in the first ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.21$) data collection phase.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics ethical climate football clubs

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ethical climate 2013	73	2.88	3.93	3.45	0.21
Ethical climate 2016	47	3.01	4.16	3.61	0.28
Valid N (listwise)	47				

4.4.2 Repeated measurements ANOVA

The repeated measurements ANOVA shows that there is a significant positive evolution over time of the ethical climates within the football clubs. The partial Eta-squared test, belonging to this analysis, indicates an effect over time of twenty-six percent considering the ethical climates within the football clubs ($V = 0.74$, $F(1, 46) = 15.91$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.26$) (Brown, 2008).

The potential interaction effects of the (non)presence of an ethical code, and the duration of the ethical code existence – tested for, by adding these variables to the repeated measurements ANOVA as between-subject factors – indicated no significant results, leading to their removal from the final analysis model.

4.4.3 Regression analyses

A first regression analysis, with the dummy variable “ethical code” as independent, and the residualized change scores for ethical climate as dependent variable, demonstrates that there is no significant long term effect on the ethical climate due to the mere presence of an ethical code in football clubs. Also, when the potential effectiveness of the ethical codes is analysed on each of the four dimensions of the ethical climate separately, the same conclusion applies.

Further, each structural characteristic of the ethical codes is regressed on the residualized change scores for ethical climate. As shown in Table 4, no significant results are found.

Table 4. Effect of code characteristics on the residualized change scores for ethical climate and its four dimensions

	Standardized Residuals Ethical Climate Index		Standardized Residuals Moral Sensitivity		Standardized Residuals Moral Judgment		Standardized Residuals Moral Motivation		Standardized Residuals Moral Character	
*p < 0.05	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Ethical code	.155	.355	.451	1.043	-.204	-.468	.008	.018	.318	.732
Adjusted R ²	-.019		.002		-.017		.022		-.010	
F-value	.126		1.088		.219		.000		.536	

	Standardized Residuals Ethical Climate Index		Standardized Residuals Moral Sensitivity		Standardized Residuals Moral Judgment		Standardized Residuals Moral Motivation		Standardized Residuals Moral Character	
*p < 0.05	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Motivation										
Ethical behaviour	-.324	-.778	-.439	-1.053	.360	.227	-.050	-.133	-.394	-.915
Professionalization	.339	1.409	.504*	2.093*	.303	1.212	.060	.277	.375	1.509
Appearance	-.138	-.328	.446	1.059	-.040	-.092	-.616	-1.617	.193	.444
External legislation compliance	.051	.282	-.025	-.140	.040	.214	.127	.776	.065	.347
Adjusted R²	-.011		.039		-.046		.069		-.024	
F-value	.917		1.321		.645		1.594		.810	
Extent of involvement in code creation										
Board	.045	.179	-.019	-.077	.023	.088	-.016	-.062	.067	.295
Management	.000	.003	-.069	-.433	-.031	-.184	.088	.520	-.023	-.158
Players	.108	.404	.048	.177	.100	.350	-.042	-.147	.229	.932
Coaches	-.247	-.713	.259	.746	-.528	-1.430	-.187	-.507	-.237	-.745
Fans	-.378	-1.525	-.315	-1.269	-.061	-.232	-.065	-.246	-.329	-1.444
Sponsors	.432	2.039	.536*	2.522*	.215	.952	.047	.210	.509*	2.613*
Parents	.267	.867	-.076	-.245	.414	1.260	.289	.881	-.081	-.288
Others	-.371	-1.872	-.273	-1.377	-.459*	-2.173*	-.238	-1.129	-.498*	-2.739*
Adjusted R²	.092		.134		.010		-.157			
F-value	1.407		1.618		1.040		.457			
Target										
Board	.504	1.435	.602	1.679	.551	1.481	.273	.848	.305	.818
Managers	-.187	-.614	-.411	-1.325	-.344	-1.068	.179	.642	-.148	-.458
Players	.242	.769	.040	.125	.290	.870	.225	.776	.019	.056
Coaches	-.154	-.353	-.014	-.032	-.225	-.488	-.449	-1.122	-.175	-.377
Parents	-.517	-1.386	-.465	-1.222	-.313	-.792	-.239	-.698	-.343	-.865

	Standardized Residuals Ethical Climate Index		Standardized Residuals Moral Sensitivity		Standardized Residuals Moral Judgment		Standardized Residuals Moral Motivation		Standardized Residuals Moral Character	
*p < 0.05	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Fans	.067	.247	.089	.323	.129	.453	-.062	-.251	.071	.247
Sponsors	-.052	-.294	.045	.252	-.071	-.380	-.143	-.890	.095	.509
Adjusted R²	-.029		-.021				.022		-.105	
F-value	.870		.907				1.101		.567	
Communication: Timing										
At registration	-.276	-.417	.097	.143	-.549	-.815	.163	.271	-.192	-.279
In case of violations	-.040	-.076	-.103	-.192	.313	.582	-.407	-.850	.479	.874
In case of complaints	-.245	-.560	-.403	-.904	-.423	-.951	-.153	-.387	-.276	-.608
In case of questions	-.153	-.374	-.086	-.206	.028	.066	-.309	-.831	.045	.106
Adjusted R²	-.085		-.070		-.073		-.002		-.107	
F-value	.376		.475		.455		.984		.225	
Communication: Format										
Flyer	-.261	-.538	-.090	-.181	-.360	-.744	.492	1.109	-.525	-1.069
Workshop	.055	.142	.021	.052	.164	.424	.086	.242	.090	.230
Newsletter	-.312	-.680	-.209	-.446	-.620	-1.357	-.280	-.668	-.367	-.793
Poster	-.277	-.557	-.480	-.942	-.136	-.275	-.366	-.805	.001	.001
Website	.113	.355	.157	.480	.103	.324	-.100	-.344	.206	.637
Adjusted R²	-.144		-.141		-.092		-.078		-.112	
F-value	.193		.210		.463		.536		.353	
Helpdesk										
Board	1.133	1.438	1.715*	2.154*	.920	1.101	.920	1.194	1.265	1.515
Management	-.669	-1.333	-.446	-.879	-.174	-.326	-.654	-1.330	-.123	-.230
Coaches	-.313	-.665	-.009	-.018	-.650	-1.302	-.135	-.292	-.434	-.869
Ombudsperson	-.232	-.585	.024	.059	.048	.114	-.189	-.489	-.027	-.064
Ethical committee	-.533	-.637	-1.150	-1.360	-.569	-.641	-.317	-.388	-.983	-1.107

	Standardized Residuals Ethical Climate Index		Standardized Residuals Moral Sensitivity		Standardized Residuals Moral Judgment		Standardized Residuals Moral Motivation		Standardized Residuals Moral Character	
*p < 0.05	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Football federation	.133	.197	-.505	-.743	.686	.963	.320	.487	-.172	-.241
Adjusted R²	.051		.076		-.023		-.022		-.017	
F-value	1.279		1.422		.883		.887		.913	
Enforcement										
Procedure in case of violation	-.129	-.513	-.219	-.896	-.222	-.936	-.105	-.428	.057	.222
Procedure in case of complaint	-.057	-.243	-.034	-.147	.001	.004	-.007	-.029	-.159	-.654
Protection of whistle-blowers	.228	1.376	.300	1.849	.387*	2.460*	.005	.029	.226	1.325
Sanctions	-.117	-.606	.088	.467	-.203	-1.109	.012	.064	-.082	-.414
Adjusted R²	-.046		.048		.098		-.135		-.057	
F-value	.659		1.391		1.845		.080		.583	

However, Table 4 also indicates that, when each structural characteristic of the ethical codes is regressed on the residualized change scores for each of the four dimensions of the ethical climate, several significant results emerge. First, the involvement of sponsors – individuals or companies that are donating or investing in the club – in the creation of the code has a significant positive effect on both the evolutions of the collective moral sensitivity ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < 0.05$), and the collective moral character ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.05$) of the football clubs. Second, the involvement of other, not specified stakeholders during the code creation has a significant negative effect on the evolutions of the collective moral judgment ($\beta = -0.46$, $p < 0.05$), and the collective moral character ($\beta = -0.50$, $p < 0.05$) of the football clubs. Third, regarding the motivation to establish an ethical code, this study reveals a significant positive effect of the motivation to professionalize on the evolution of the collective moral sensitivity ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.05$) of the football clubs. Fourth, considering internal helpdesk mechanisms, the possibility to ask questions to the board of directors, generates a significant positive effect on the evolution of the collective moral sensitivity ($\beta = 1.72$, $p < 0.05$) of the football clubs. Last, in regard to code

enforcement, there is a significant positive effect of the support for whistle-blowers on the evolution of the collective moral judgment ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.05$) of the football clubs.

4.5 Discussion and conclusion

As sport in general, and football in particular, are facing many and diverse ethical challenges, an ethical code is often a first step to adopt a formalized preoccupation with ethics. This belief is reflected in the fact that previous studies on ethical codes in sport clubs suggest that ethical codes are present in a vast majority of clubs (De Waegeneer et al., 2016, 2017; Thompson & Dieffenbach, 2016). Nevertheless, it is hardly controversial to state that these ethical codes have not prevented several outbreaks of unethical behaviour in football, of which the far reaching sexual abuse scandal that hit British football in late 2016 is only one striking example.

In spite of their prevalence, uncertainty about the effectiveness of ethical codes in sport clubs remains present (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). Clearly, longitudinal research is required to formulate and support causality claims. Hence, it is reckoned that research on ethical code effectiveness in a sports setting should analyse the capability of ethical codes to influence ethical behaviour over time. Moreover, our adapted longitudinal perspective is a direct response to the broadly formulated recommendations in the field (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008; Mayer, 2014; Schminke et al., 2005; Singh et al., 2011).

Since we analysed the effectiveness of ethical codes in a sample of football clubs twice, with in between a gap of three years, the necessary time was given for a potential longitudinal evolution to make itself identifiable. Thus, a first research question, regarding the evolution of the ethical climate within football clubs, was composed. Consequently, the assessment of this research question, showed a substantial positive evolution of the ethical climate within the studied football clubs.

Nevertheless, at this point, a lack of clarity remains about the reasons to which this positive evolution can be ascribed. After all, the positive evolution in football clubs' ethical climate can be due to many factors. The presence of an ethical code is only one possible explanation, whereas on the other hand, a general cultural shift toward more attention to, and a more profound practicing of ethics, is also plausible.

Possible reasons for this alleged cultural shift can be found in the ever increasing media coverage of sports and its scandals, and the often accompanying public punishment (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007).

Thus, a second research question assessed the explanatory power of the presence or absence of an ethical code, regarding the evolution of the ethical climate within the football clubs. Results revealed no significant effect of the mere presence of an ethical code on the evolution in ethical climate, thereby confirming existing cross-sectional findings and assumptions (De Waegeneer et al., 2017; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2016; Singh, 2011).

Although the ethical code *as such* does not account for the evolution in ethical climate within the football clubs, several structural code characteristics explain a small part of the within-club variance over time. Therefore, a third research question examined (the extent of) the influence of a set of code characteristics, which this study had derived from a previous study on ethical code effectiveness in sport clubs (De Waegeneer et al., 2017). The divergence of our longitudinal results in comparison to the cross-sectional results of this previous study is notable. Next to offering a strong empirical contribution, these longitudinal results also provide a theoretical addition to the ethical code, ethical climate, and sport management literature, enabling causal explanations of the influence of code determinants on the evolution of the ethical climate in football clubs. These results are discussed below.

First, our study marks that the motivation to professionalize generates a positive effect on the evolution of the collective moral sensitivity within the football clubs. This finding is quite remarkable, as it contrasts with the conclusion of the De Waegeneer et al. (2017) study, in which the motivation to professionalize is believed to be a negative factor regarding the collective moral motivation in sport clubs. Whereas De Waegeneer et al. (2017) state that the motivation to professionalize could hide a dangerous agenda, in which a formal ethical preoccupation only represents a tool of appearance, and not a proper intention, we argue that the motivation to professionalize bears in itself the potential to enhance the collective moral awareness in football clubs. After all, in football, striving for professionalization on the one hand, and a preoccupation with ethics and social responsibility on the other hand, should be seen as inextricably connected (Breitbarth & Harris, 2008; Whysall, 2014).

Moreover, as sport organizations are increasingly turning to professionalization processes to tackle existing challenges, an ethical code can be seen as an example of a professional management tool, adapted from the general business world, in sport's endeavour for business-like management (Nagel et al., 2015).

Second, the positive effect of sponsors on the evolutions of the collective moral sensitivity and the collective moral character can be interpreted as a reaffirmation of both the importance of the involvement of different stakeholders in the establishment of an ethical code, as well as the need to consider the specificity of the sporting scene and its stakeholder management when making a profound analysis of ethical initiatives in sport clubs (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). Nevertheless, caution should be paid when involving stakeholders who are not at the core of the club, as our results suggest that the involvement of other, not specified stakeholders (e.g. referees, sports journalists, ...), provokes a negative effect on the evolutions of the collective moral judgment and the collective moral character in football clubs. The inclusion in the code creation phase, of people who are not at the core of the club, seems to endanger several steps of moral development in football clubs.

Third, the conclusion that the presence of an internal helpdesk, in the nature of the ability to reach the board members, has a positive effect on the evolution of the collective moral sensitivity within the football clubs, reinforces the idea that sport leaders are indispensable regarding the construction of an ethical environment in their sport clubs (Burton & Welty Peachey, 2014; Thompson & Dieffenbach, 2016). Moreover, it can be suggested that football club board members should be reachable, and easy to communicate with, to help stakeholders with questions, and to guide their behaviour when necessary.

Last, an important discovery of our study is that the support for whistle-blowers positively impacts the evolution of the collective moral judgment in football clubs. The need for this element is striking and shows once more that supporting guidelines and protection for whistle-blowers are an essential aspect of a sound ethical code and a comprehensive ethics program in sport clubs. This finding underlines existing recommendations, with regard to the necessity of strong efforts to create a safe way for whistle-blowers to speak freely (Singh, 2011). After all, as long as there is a general fear of retaliation and a lack of confidentiality, people will feel inhibited to

report ethical problems, nor to the internal stakeholders of the club (i.e. the coach or the board), nor to external institutions (i.e. the federation or judicial authorities) (Webley & Werner, 2008). Overall, our results implicate that, besides the adaptation of an ethical code, more efforts are needed to enhance the ethical climate and ethical behaviour in football clubs. When our findings are put into a broader perspective, the need for a well-balanced ethical program in football clubs, consisting of both explicit and implicit components, is supported (Brenner, 2002). According to Kaptein (2015), an ethical code is only the first aspect of an ethical program, ideally followed by several other components.

An integration of literature findings, with the results of our study, suggests that football clubs should adopt an ethical code in the first place, as long as effectiveness determining code characteristics are taken into account, and further actions succeed this ethical code (Kaptein, 2015; Singh, 2011). In the first place, we argue that an ethics report and help line is a requirement to enable whistle-blowers to report any ethical issue that occurs, and to offer people with questions a direct communication tool with the football club. Additionally, we intend that implicit components of an ethical program are as important as their explicit counterparts (Brenner, 2002). Therefore, ethical leadership – formed by being a moral person, and acting as a moral manager (cf. Treviño et al., 2000) – in the football club is a strict prerequisite to translate the ethical code into the daily practice of football clubs. Conclusively, there is a need to bridge “the gap between policy and practice” (Webley & Werner, 2008, p. 406).

4.6 Limitations and future research

Although this article adds an important contribution to the ethical code and ethical climate literature, several limitations are present. On the contrary, these limitations can also be translated into several valuable options for future research.

Most longitudinal studies carry out at least three measurements (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010). Therefore, and despite of the fact that this study is to our knowledge the first longitudinal study on ethical code effectiveness, additional measurements could enhance the robustness of the study design. After all, albeit that we believe that our time horizon of three years between both measurements enables a first important look at the long term evolution of ethical codes in football clubs,

future follow-up measurements are encouraged. Measurement error is an additional risk of longitudinal studies, as someone's participation in the first data collection phase can influence his or her perception in the second data collection phase (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010). To appease this concern, two counterarguments can be stated. First, as ethical climate is a group measure consisting of the average score of the individual perceptions, it is not obligatory that the people participating in the second data collection phase are the same people who participated in the first data collection phase. Second, if some participants contributed to both data collection phases, the time gap of three years adds to our belief that an exact recall of the previous participation is unlikely to occur.

Also, whereas this study has embraced a methodological approach, based on statistical analyses, further research should consider the background of the non-existence of ethical codes in certain football clubs in more detail, leaning on a qualitative research perspective. The same qualitative perspective presents itself as most promising, when it comes to the study of the dynamic nature of code content and code violation, two important aspects of code effectiveness, which have largely remained beyond the scope of this study.

As indicated earlier, the approach to study ethical code effectiveness by measure of shared perceptions has its disadvantages in terms of social desirability and non-response bias. It can be argued that only individual respondents with an already formed interest in ethics will participate, and that these respondents will rate the situation in their clubs higher than the actual situation. However, we have strongly encouraged respondents to answer as honest as possible, and if wanted, answering anonymously was possible. Furthermore, one can question if the shared perceptions on the ethical climate in football clubs are a good indicator of the real ethical situations. In spite of this concern, previous research has marked that the ethical climate concept has a good predictable power regarding the actual ethical behaviour in organizations (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012).

Another point of possible criticism is that the football club sample size is rather small, while the variance within the variables is limited. In certain sense, this decreases the power of our findings. Nevertheless, the magnitude of the sample sizes is due to the restriction that only clubs with at least three individual participants could be included

in the study design, and to the matter that attrition is inherent to longitudinal research (Menard, 2002). Furthermore, the football club attrition between both data collection phases can be labelled as unproblematic, both in terms of the extent and in terms of being systematically (Menard, 2002).

Moreover, the scope of the study is somewhat narrow, when it comes to both geographical distribution (only Flemish football clubs) and level of play (only non-professional football clubs). We strongly encourage the thought that the findings of this study could be enriched by the inclusion of football clubs of other countries, albeit that we want to simultaneously warn for the need for the consideration of structural and cultural differences in that case. Future research is encouraged to make the comparison with professional football clubs, as today, business ethics and sport ethics research tend to largely neglect professional sports (Whysall, 2014). It could also be a good opportunity to test the thesis that the moral reasoning process of non-professional football players is different and stronger than that of their professional counterparts (Ødegård & Breivik, 2015).

Notwithstanding the fact that this study reveals a positive overtime evolution of the ethical climate within football clubs, only a small part of this evolution is explained by the structural ethical code determinants that were included in the study design. Obviously, a large part of this trend remains unaccounted for. Therefore, there is definitely room for a research line on other underlying reasons for the increased ethical climates within football clubs.

In regard to this research line on ethical climate, we would like to provide several suggestions. First, De Waegeneer et al. (2016) have indicated that the content, and more specific the ethical orientation and the tone of ethical codes in sport clubs do have an effect on the ethical climates, but future research is encouraged to also test these assumptions longitudinally. Second, ethical leadership is believed to influence the ethical climate of organizations largely, but despite its promising character, empirical evidence from the sporting field remains vacant (Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Nevertheless, as it is indicated that leadership may affect the ethical climate in sport organizations (cf. Burton et al., 2017), we recommend an examination of the impact of ethical leadership on the (evolution of the) ethical climate in sport clubs.

Also, it could be interesting to examine the effectiveness of sport associations' initiatives (e.g. educational programs) to tackle unethical behaviour.

4.7 References

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CHAPTER 5: COACH ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN FOOTBALL CLUBS

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Abstract

Non-professional (amateur) football (soccer) is continuously confronted with a wide range of ethical issues. Since coaches are believed to be potentially effective in counteracting unethical behaviour, this study analyses the influence of coach ethical leadership on a sample of non-professional football players ($n= 436$). As ethical behaviour contains two dimensions, namely an inhibitive, and a prosocial one, this study examines how player-perceived coach ethical leadership affects both dimensions, by respectively assessing its influence on the player-perceived ethical climate of the club, and on the affective organizational commitment (AOC) of the player. Results indicate that the influence of player-perceived coach ethical leadership on the player's AOC is partially mediated by the player-perceived ethical climate of the club. Furthermore, the AOC of the players is also slightly affected by their organizational tenure. Finally, these findings are discussed, next to the formulation of suggestions for practice.

Keywords: Ethics; Leadership; Organizational Behaviour; Organizational Commitment; Sport Clubs

5.1 Introduction

Although media reports often seem to indicate that most ethical issues in football relate to the sport's professional branch, recent examples illustrate that unethical behaviour also expresses itself strongly on-, and off-the-field in non-professional (amateur) football. For example, several sources within European non-professional football relate that referees (match officials) are insufficiently protected from increasing verbal and physical player violence (Krug, 2013). Furthermore, despite several (inter)national anti-racism campaigns, non-professional football is confronted with a steep increase in reported incidents of racism (Conn, 2015). Also, as a final example, non-professional football clubs have a well-founded fraudulent reputation regarding the abuse of voluntary allowances to pay players high amounts of untaxed money (Thibaut et al., 2016).

The aforementioned ethical issues in non-professional football are diverse, far reaching, and deeply rooted. Therefore, the responsibility to tackle these issues is not restricted to any individual or group in particular (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010). Nonetheless, especially people in leading positions are believed to be effective, regarding the creation, and maintenance of a safe and ethical environment in their sport clubs (Burton et al., 2017; DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010; Grange, 2014; Thompson & Dieffenbach, 2016).

Given the potential positive role of leadership in counteracting unethical behaviour in non-professional football, our study focuses on the influence of perceived coach ethical leadership on player-perceived ethical behaviour in non-professional football clubs. The many existing illustrations of unethical coach behaviour (e.g. sexual abuse) contradict with the research findings that coaches are the most critical stakeholder group when it comes to positively impacting the moral reasoning, and moral behaviour of football players (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Chow et al., 2009; Thompson & Dieffenbach, 2016).

Accordingly, by studying the influence of perceived coach ethical leadership in football clubs, this study responds to recent calls by Burton and Welty Peachey (2014), and Constandt et al. (2017) to study the impact of ethical leadership in sport. Although ethical issues clearly emphasize the strong need for ethical leadership in sport, and some sport ethical leadership studies have recently been published,

empirical research on ethical leadership in a sport setting is still in its infancy (Burton et al., 2017; Cotrufo, 2014; Wells & Walker, 2016). In this respect, sport management research contrasts with the general business ethics literature, in which ethical leadership studies continue to rise in number (Bedi et al., 2016). The slow increase in sport ethical leadership research is quite remarkable, considering the current status of both leadership and ethics as important topics within the academic field of sport management (Byers et al., 2012).

The purpose of our study on the impact of coach ethical leadership on ethical behaviour in football is threefold. First, the associations between perceived coach ethical leadership and the perceived ethical climate of the football club is measured from the perspective of the football players, thereby examining the perceived role of coaches in creating an ethical (or unethical) club environment. The ethical climate of an organization is formed by the shared perceptions of what is ethically correct behaviour, and how ethical issues should be handled (Victor & Cullen, 1988). Ethical climate is strongly affiliated with actual ethical behaviour, and can offer members guidance in terms of ethics (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012; Mayer et al., 2010). Ethical climate represents the *inhibitive* dimension of ethical behaviour, as it may prevent unethical behaviour from happening. Second, the effect of perceived coach ethical leadership on the affective organizational commitment (AOC) of the players is analysed. AOC, sometimes also referred to as loyalty towards the organization, is a form of *prosocial* behaviour, which is the other dimension of ethical behaviour (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986; Chow et al., 2009). AOC serves as an important asset for football players, as well for football clubs. Players with a high AOC are more likely to experience benefits such as promotion options and stronger relationships, whereas AOC is also a key success factor within the context of non-professional team sport clubs by contributing to organizational success and long-term sustainability (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001; Park & Kim, 2013). Third, our study tests if part of the influence of perceived ethical leadership on AOC runs via the perceived ethical climate.

5.2 Theoretical framework and hypotheses

5.2.1 Ethical leadership

5.2.1.1 Defining the concept

Ethical leadership is essential for the sustainable well-being of any organization (Mendonca 2001). Moreover, research shows that people in leading positions can have a very strong impact – either positive or negative – on the morality of the members of their organization and on society in general (Langvardt, 2012; Mendonca, 2001). Leaders can influence the conduct of their subordinates through role modelling and operating closely (Brown, 2007).

The seminal work on ethical leadership dates back to Brown et al. (2005). Their construct development is widely used within academia. Brown et al. (2005, p. 120) refer to ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct to followers through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making.”

The distinct nature of ethical leaders is crucial to the conceptualization of Brown and his colleagues (Lawton & Páez, 2015). In fact, ethical leadership consists of two dimensions, namely the moral person, and the moral manager. One should score well on both dimensions, to be perceived as an ethical leader (Treviño et al., 2000).

The moral person dimension of ethical leadership accounts for the personal ethical characteristics of the leader, namely traits (e.g. integrity, trustworthiness, honesty, sincerity, and forthrightness), behaviours (e.g. do the right thing, show concern for people, being open, and personal morality), and decision-making principles (e.g. holding to a solid set of ethical values and principles, being objective and fair, and stressing out concerns about the broader society and community). This dimension can be seen as the “ethical” facet in ethical leadership (Treviño et al., 2000).

On the other hand, the moral manager dimension considers the leader’s efforts to influence the followers’ ethical behaviour, by being a role model through action, setting up a fair reward system, and communicating about ethics and values (Treviño et al., 2000). Further, several authors have pointed to an additional aspect of the moral manager – namely empowerment – in which leaders offer their followers the

possibility to be heard and to develop themselves (Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2009; Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012). Together, all these aspects of the moral manager dimension form the “leadership” facet in ethical leadership.

5.2.1.2 The distinctness of ethical leadership

Within many leadership theories, ethical aspects of leadership behaviour have been studied quite systematically. In the transformational, transactional, servant, charismatic and spiritual leadership theories, many characteristics of the moral person dimension of ethical leadership are acknowledged, such as integrity, trustworthiness, fairness and the concern for others (Mayer et al., 2009). The role modelling aspect of the moral manager dimension in turn, is studied in the context of transactional leadership, a leadership theory in which rewards and punishment are considered in relation to compliance (Giessner & van Quaquebeke, 2010).

Despite the existence of some key similarities among those leadership theories, ethical leadership can be seen as a distinct conceptualization of leadership. Ethical leadership strongly enables the study of (un)ethical behaviour in all types of organizations, by concentrating exclusively on ethics (Bedi et al., 2016; Brown & Treviño, 2006). Thus, ethical leadership involves more than simply combining the existing leadership theories in a new synthesis with a special emphasis on moral dimensions. It draws on a broad theoretical base, in which Brown et al. (2005) and other ethical leadership scholars combine several useful insights to improve our understanding of the mechanisms that determine moral reasoning.

In particular, two theories contribute strongly to the conceptualization of ethical leadership. Social learning theory is one of them. Social learning theory is originated by Bandura (1977, 1986), and stipulates that people learn strongly by the observation and imitation of the actions, attitudes and values of their role models. By expressing trustworthy and credible behaviour and morals, both in communication and in action, ethical leaders are believed to be able to function well as role models for their followers (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Also, followers are likely to turn to their leaders, to experience how certain attitudes and behaviours are rewarded or punished. This observation phase may afterwards be followed by an imitation phase, in which followers model their own actions based on these experiences (Brown et al., 2005).

Besides social learning theory, ethical leadership is shaped by a second theory, namely social exchange theory (Mayer et al., 2009). Social exchange theory approaches social relations by examining social exchange processes, with reciprocity as central concept (Blau, 1964). Reciprocity implies an interdependent relation between two parties. When one of those parties does something favorable for the other party, an obligation to do something in return is created (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This exchange is either transactional, by involving material goods, or socioemotional, which for example concerns respect and trust (Blau, 1964; Miles, 2012). The latter form is particularly important to understand the nature of ethical leadership, since the actions of the leaders are considered to generate trust and positive follower behaviour (Mayer et al., 2009). Clearly, ethical leadership is returned by pro-organizational follower behaviour rather than with material repayment (Kalshoven et al., 2013).

5.2.2 Ethical behaviour and ethical leadership in football

As specified above, ethical leadership matters in any sector. Nevertheless, the topic of ethical leadership in sport has been largely neglected by scholars, although several conceptual contributions concerning the need for ethical leadership in collegiate sport exist (see Lumpkin & Doty, 2014; Roby, 2014; Sagas & Wigley, 2014; Staurowsky, 2014). Despite the value of these conceptual studies, additional empirical evidence is needed to elaborate our understanding of the operation of ethical leadership in sport (Burton & Welty Peachey, 2014; Constandt et al., 2017), and to test the claim that ethical leadership is able to tackle ethical issues in sport (Burton et al., 2017). Recently, Wells and Walker (2016) have shown that transparent communication – as a part of organizational ethical leadership – is a key success factor in times of organizational change in a collegiate athletic department. However, other elements of the two dimensions of ethical leadership remained beyond the focus of this study. Therefore, justification can be found to investigate sport leadership in the light of the integral ethical leadership conceptualization of Brown and his colleagues (2005).

In our study, which can be seen as a direct answer to the perceived need for empirical research on ethical leadership in sport, football functions as the exclusive research subject. This choice is rooted in the thesis that football is a medium contact

sport with many social interactions, and therefore, with many opportunities to engage in prosocial or antisocial actions (Bredemeier et al., 1986; Kavussanu & Ring, 2016; Kavussanu et al., 2006). An exhaustive overview of these ethical issues is not within the scope of our study, but the examples that were outlined in the introduction – referring to violence, racism, and fraud – sketch a rather disconcerting picture of unethical behaviour in football. Also, it is notable that football players are regularly identified with so-called unfair play on-the-field, illustrated by actions including, but not limited to, diving, elbowing, retaliation, and injury pretention (Kavussanu, 2006; Kavussanu et al., 2006).

In sum, ethical issues seem to be spread all over the football world, thereby being reflected in the practices within both professional and non-professional clubs (Cashmore & Cleland, 2014; Kavussanu et al., 2006). Whereas leadership is considered to be able to tackle these ethical issues, research has not yet fully exploited the potential of the evaluation of leadership in football, based on general leadership theories (Crust & Lawrence, 2006).

Within our study of ethical leadership in football clubs, focus is put on the leadership of the coaches, since they function most closely to their players, thereby being particularly able to influence their players' moral behaviour (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Chow et al., 2009; Thompson & Dieffenbach, 2016). Moreover, the important role modelling aspect of the ethical leadership conceptualization expresses itself as most valuable to test in a football coaching and leading setting. After all, current role modelling expectations in football are quite narrowly focused on the athletes (see Kavussanu & Ring, 2016), and despite their influential position, arguably less on the coaches.

Research has extensively indicated that ethical leadership is able to have a broad impact, both on individuals, and on the team and the organization as a whole (Bedi et al., 2016; Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012). However, a meta-analysis of the empirical research on the consequences of ethical leadership on ethical behaviour has shown ambiguous, and sometimes even contradictory results, which can be partially ascribed to the moderating effects of geographical and sector-specific differences (Bedi et al., 2016).

In sport, ethical behaviour can be understood as “a low frequency of engagement in negative social behaviors or unfair play” (Chow et al., 2009, p. 425-426). Although this definition might indicate a rather negative approach of ethical behaviour in sport, ethical behaviour in sport consists of two dimensions, namely an inhibitive one (i.e. refraining from asocial and unethical behaviour), and a prosocial one (i.e. behaving in a social manner) (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Bortoli et al., 2012; Kavussanu et al., 2013). Paradoxically, the inherent social nature of sport in general, and football in particular, adds to an environment in which unethical behaviour can proliferate (Bortoli et al., 2012; Kavussanu et al., 2006). However, in the following paragraphs, we argue that coach ethical leadership in football is able to influence both dimensions of ethical behaviour positively.

5.2.3 Affective organizational commitment in football clubs

Whereas the influence of ethical leadership has been studied extensively in a wide range of sectors, little is known about the specific operation of ethical leadership in the distinct sport sector (Bedi et al., 2016; De Waegeneer, 2015). Next to the high media coverage of the sport product, the specific set of stakeholders, and a focus on results which goes further than the financial aspect, the distinctness of the sport sector is also formed by the presence of almost unconditional passion and loyalty from those involved (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Chadwick, 2009; Smith & Stewart, 2010). Whereas the importance of fan and volunteer loyalty to sport clubs is acknowledged by the literature, attention for the loyalty or commitment of other important stakeholder groups of sport clubs is largely absent (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001; Park & Kim, 2013).

Therefore, our study approaches if, and how ethical leadership can affect an essential club and team sport factor, namely players' organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is a form of prosocial behaviour towards the organization (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). It integrates both attitudinal and behavioural dimensions, and consists of three components, i.e. a desire (affective commitment: the attachment to, involvement in, and identification with the organization), a need (continuance commitment: the perceived cost of leaving the organization), and an obligation (normative commitment: the feeling of an obligation to stay in the organization), to remain a member of the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In what

follows, attention is paid to the affective organizational commitment (AOC) component, as it has been framed as the most essential and strongest organizational commitment component in terms of moral development (Park & Kim, 2013).

Previous research has shown that AOC may lead to beneficial outcomes, both on the individual and the organizational level (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). In line with this finding, it can be argued that a win-win situation can be created for football clubs and their players, when a certain degree of organizational commitment and a supportive club environment are present. Committed football players may benefit from staying within their club, in terms of potential material (e.g. higher allowances) and psychological (e.g. social standing, increased trust, strong relationships) profits (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Additionally, football clubs may prosper in terms of competitiveness and organizational success, as committed individuals are more likely to perform better (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Park & Kim, 2013).

Currently, there is a deep-rooted idea that football players and AOC do not go hand in hand. However, it is often neglected that football players, with and without a contract, can be a pawn in the hands of the leadership of their football club (FIFPro, 2016). The practices of short, often non-written contracts, and forced isolated training sketch a more nuanced view on the troublesome relationship between professional football players and AOC (FIFPro, 2016). Additionally, football players' AOC is also an issue in non-professional football clubs. After all, voluntary allowances are abused within non-professional football clubs to pay players high amounts of untaxed money (Thibaut et al., 2016). Unfortunately, this practice causes a snowball effect with regard to increasing off-the-record payments of non-professional football players, leading to a players' carousel, and endangering the survival of both clubs that are living beyond their means and clubs that are unwilling or unable to go with this trend (Thibaut et al., 2016).

Contrary to this rather negative view on the current state of player AOC in football, research also shows that intrinsic motivation – more than money or any other extrinsic incentive – bears the ability to strengthen football players' AOC (Garcia-Mas et al., 2010). Moreover, when football coaches are capable of developing and successfully communicating a team vision, the commitment of their players can be expected to increase significantly (Molan et al., 2016). Therefore, we believe that

football coaches are able to strengthen the affective bond between their players and the club, when they are able to implement both roles of ethical leadership, namely being a moral person and being a moral manager (Treviño et al., 2000).

Several levels (organizational and supervisory) of ethical leadership, and AOC, have already been positively linked in existing studies in business settings (see Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2009; Hansen et al., 2013; Neubert et al., 2009; Neves & Story, 2015; Ng & Feldman, 2015; Pucic, 2015). However, our study explores the relationship between coach ethical leadership and affective organizational commitment further in the context of non-professional football clubs. Hereby, we enable a much-anticipated cross-sectoral comparison of the effect of ethical leadership (Eisenbeiß & Brodbeck, 2014; Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012). Consequently, a first hypothesis is specified (see pathway C' in Figure 2).

H1: In non-professional football clubs, player-perceived coach ethical leadership is positively related to the player's affective organizational commitment.

5.2.4 Ethical climate

The idea that leaders are crucial regarding the realization, and the maintenance of an ethical environment in their organizations, is supported by research in the context of sport organizations (Burton et al., 2017; Malloy & Agarwal, 2001). Burton et al. (2017) have indicated a positive relationship between leadership and the ethical climate of sport organizations, but related empirical insights remain limited to organizational leadership in the specific situation of North-American athletic departments.

Although research on the ethical climate in sport organizations is lacking to a great extent, its study can provide thought-provoking results (Burton et al., 2017). Next to ethical culture, ethical climate is one of the two most popular scientific concepts to assess the ethical environment in organizations (Mayer, 2014). As reported by the pioneering authors Victor and Cullen (1987, p. 51), ethical climate is defined as “the shared perceptions of what is ethically correct behavior and how ethical issues should be handled.” Albeit that the concept of ethical climate represents perceptions of behaviour, and not actual behaviour, ethical climate strongly relates to ethical behaviour (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012; Malloy & Agarwal, 2001).

Since our study acknowledges the worth, but also the limitations of Victor and Cullen's (1987, 1988) ethical climate framework, Arnaud's (2006, 2010) alternative approach was adopted. The most important argument to justify this choice is that the latter conceptualization offers a more profound explanation of how moral reasoning develops (De Waegeneer, 2015). Whereas Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988) only consider moral judgment as a precondition for ethical behaviour, Arnaud (2006, 2010) argues that the moral reasoning process consists of four dimensions, namely moral sensitivity (i.e. the presence of moral awareness and empathic concern), moral judgment (i.e. using internalized ethical frameworks to judge situations), moral motivation (i.e. the prioritization of moral values over other values when planning to act), and moral character (i.e. the implementation of ethical values when acting) (Schminke, Arnaud, & Kuenzi, 2007). Theoretical support for Arnaud's (2006, 2010) framework is largely found in Rest's (1984, 1986) theory of moral development.

The influence of ethical leadership on ethical climate has been exposed extensively by several studies (Dickson et al., 2001; Grojean et al., 2004; Mayer, 2014; Mayer et al., 2010; Schminke et al., 2005). Clearly, due to their influential position, leaders can contribute to an ethical climate, by behaving in a morally appropriate way (Brown et al., 2005). However, the sport specific analysis of the influence of the distinct ethical leadership conceptualization on ethical climate, has not yet found its entrance in sport management research. Hence, the empirical testing of the following assumption is put forward as our second research hypothesis (see pathway A in Figure 2).

H2: Player-perceived coach ethical leadership is positively related to player perceived organizational ethical climate within non-professional football clubs.

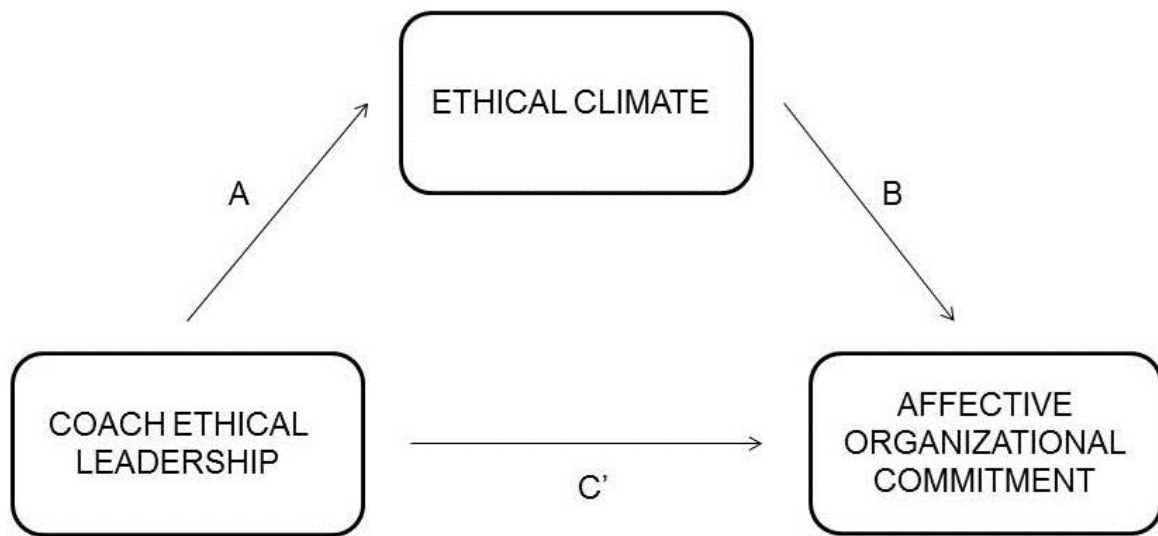
Besides the exploration of ethical leadership as a determinant of ethical climate, ethical climate has also been evinced as a mediating factor when it comes to diverse other outcomes of ethical leadership, such as reduced employee misbehaviour and increased job satisfaction (Lu & Lin, 2014; Mayer et al., 2010; Neubert et al., 2009). Moreover, the ethical climate functions as a provider of guidance for the members of the organization, with regard to the personal determination of the (un)acceptability of certain behaviours and attitudes (Mayer et al., 2010). Thus, by their influential role, leaders impact the ethical climate, which in turn affects the prosocial and ethical actions that take place in the organization (Neubert et al., 2009).

A part of the effect of ethical leadership is therefore demonstrated to take place indirectly, via the ethical environment (i.e. the ethical climate) (Eisenbeiß et al., 2015). This persuasion applies likewise, when the relationship between ethical leadership, and the affective organizational commitment of the followers, is examined empirically (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Neubert et al., 2009). These findings on the interrelationship between ethical leadership, ethical climate, and affective organizational commitment are not at all surprising, given the exposure of ethical climate as an important influencer of organizational commitment (Martin & Cullen, 2006; Schwepker, 2001). In our context, the mediation effect of ethical climate is believed to be partial, and not full, as a certain direct influence between football coach and players can still be expected given the close nature of their relationship (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009). Therefore, a third hypothesis is formulated (see pathways AB in Figure 2).

H3: Player-perceived ethical climate of the non-professional football club partially mediates the relationship between player-perceived coach ethical leadership and the player's affective organizational commitment.

The analysis of this hypothesis is novel, both in terms of its application in sport, and in terms of the use of a multidimensional, and therefore theoretically more valid conceptualization of ethical climate. We support the argument that the moral reasoning process in organizations runs through four dimensions, namely moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character (Arnaud, 2006, 2010; Kalshoven et al., 2013). However, ethical climate is considered one-dimensional in the existing studies on the relationships between ethical leadership, ethical climate, and affective organizational commitment (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Neubert et al., 2009). In these studies, ethical climate is only contemplated in relation to moral judgment, whereas the other moral development dimensions are neglected. In sum, our application of Arnaud's (2006, 2010) ethical climate conceptualization offers a multidimensional perspective on a previously one-dimensionally interpreted process (Newman et al., 2017).

Figure 2. Hypothesized conceptual model



Our study also takes into account that certain personal and organizational characteristics could play their role as antecedents of AOC. Drawing on the work of Mathieu and Zajac (1990) and Meyer and Allen (1991), our study considers the potential effect of the age, sex, and organizational tenure of the football player (personal characteristics), and the league level of the football club (organizational characteristic). As further discussed in the method section, these variables were added as covariates to our model. Specifically, organizational tenure is supposed to have a small, yet significant effect on AOC (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). The argumentation hereabout is grounded in the idea that there is a calculative dimension to AOC. This dimension relates to the fact that people are less likely to leave an organization as their organizational tenure increases, because a lot of perceived benefits (e.g. organizational familiarity, promotion options) are cumulatively linked to a continuing organizational stay (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

5.3 Method

5.3.1 Procedure

Data for this study were collected from December 2015 until June 2016. In cooperation with the Football Federation Flanders, we contacted all associated field football clubs ($N = 943$). The Football Federation Flanders is the Flemish part of the Royal Belgian Football Association and represents all non-professional (amateur) football clubs of the Belgian region Flanders. Within Belgian football, a strict distinction between professional and non-professional football clubs is present. On the one hand, Belgium's professional football consists of two national league levels, in which 24 clubs are active. On the other hand, Belgium's non-professional football is regionally organized. The Flemish region has its own federation, and all associated non-professional football clubs are distributed over seven league levels. Whereas most professional football clubs are limited companies, the majority of the non-professional clubs are non-profit organizations, which heavily rely on volunteers (Balduck & Lucidarme, 2011).

The entitled correspondents of all associated clubs of the Football Federation Flanders were asked to spread the link to our questionnaire to all the adult players of their club. The link to the questionnaire was also dispersed by the official digital newsletter, the Facebook-account and the Twitter-account of the Football Federation Flanders, next to its posting in the available public and private Facebook-groups of the associated football clubs. After four weeks, a reminder was sent through email to the entitled correspondents in every football club. The study protocol, and the corresponding questionnaire were submitted to, and approved by an independent commission of ethics, belonging to the academic institution of the authors.

Several procedural mechanisms were included to reduce the possible impact of common method variance as much as possible (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Spector, 2006). First, confidentiality was guaranteed, and honesty was encouraged to the respondents, by ensuring them that there were no right or wrong answers. Second, the concepts were measured using standardized, validated, and widely adopted scales.

5.3.2 Participants

In total, 436 adult football players ($n = 436$) participated in our study. The mean age of the players was 22 years ($SD = 5.14$), whereas 85% of them was male. The participating players were well distributed over all seven existing league levels, as more players are active as the league level drops. More detail regarding the participants can be found in Table 5.

Table 5. Participant demographics coach ethical leadership study ($n = 436$)

Sex		Age		League Level		Organizational Tenure	
Sex	#	Age category	#	League Level	#	Category (in years)	#
Male	370	≤ 20	196	1	36	< 1	2
		21-25	149	2	24	1-2	145
		26-30	66	3	32	3-4	87
		31-35	17	4	60	5-6	37
		36-40	4	5	65	7-8	31
Female	66	41-45	2	6	124	9-10	33
		≥ 46	2	7	95	> 10	101

5.3.3 Measures

All participants were requested to complete an online questionnaire. The first part of this questionnaire consisted of a few questions targeting control variables (e.g. sex, age, league level, and organizational tenure). Furthermore, the key variables of our study were measured using standardized, validated, and widely used Likert-scales. Coach ethical leadership was measured by the “Ethical Leadership Scale” (ELS, 10 items, 5-point Likert scale) of Brown et al. (2005). The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .92. Ethical climate was measured with the “Ethical Climate Index” (ECI, 36 items, 5-point Likert scale), of Arnaud (2006, 2010). The use of Arnaud’s (2006, 2010) framework to measure ethical climate, is strongly encouraged by recent studies, both in- and outside the field of sport management (De Waegeneer et al., 2017; Kalshoven et al., 2013; Newman et al., 2017). The ECI measures the moral sensitivity (MS, 12 items), the moral judgment (MJ, 10 items), the moral motivation

(MM, 8 items), and the moral character (MC, 6 items) of organizations. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .95, and .85 (MS), .86 (MJ), .95 (MM), and .83 (MC) for the subscales. Affective organizational commitment was measured with the "Affective Commitment Scale" (ACS, 8 items, 7-point Likert scale) by Allen and Meyer (1990), a validated scale to measure people's attachment to, involvement in, and identification with their organization. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .84.

5.3.4 Data analysis

All hypotheses belonging to our conceptual model were executed using linear regression analyses in SPSS 22 software. Hereby, the PROCESS macro for SPSS was used to test the indirect (mediation) effect of ethical climate (Hayes, 2013). Age, sex, league level, and organizational tenure of the football player were added as covariates. Only organizational tenure was indicated to render a significant effect. Therefore, control variables age, sex, and league level were removed from the final model. Moreover, no missing values were present, because only fully completed questionnaires could be sent to the researchers.

The assumptions for linear regression were examined, based on the recommendations of Field (2009). No issues were revealed. Linearity was present. Further, next to the observation that the residuals were normally distributed, the Durbin-Watson test presented a value of 1.72, which is in favor of the conclusion that the residuals were not auto-correlated (Field, 2009). Also, multicollinearity statistics signaled no questionable results, since variation inflation factors (VIF) were around 1, and tolerance values were considerably higher than .02 (Field, 2009).

The trustworthiness of the presumed indirect (mediation) effect of ethical climate was evaluated by bootstrapping, a significance test for mediation. Bootstrapping is preferable to other available tests, due to its high power and control of Type I errors (Hayes, 2009; Hayes & Scharkow, 2013). By bootstrapping, a constant resampling of the actual sample is carried out, whereby the indirect effect is repeatedly estimated (Hayes, 2009). As recommended in the literature, our sample was bootstrapped 10 000 times (Hayes, 2009). The outcome is a bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval, which contains the actual indirect effect with a certainty of 95% (Hayes, 2009).

5.4 Results

Descriptive statistics, related to the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables are provided in Table 6. As the four dimensions of ethical climate appeared to be very strongly correlated, regression analyses were executed with the mean scores for the four dimensions of ethical climate per football player.

Table 6. Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. CEL	3.59	.74	-						
2. MS	3.41	.57	.42*	-					
3. MJ	3.17	.63	.43*	.71*	-				
4. MM	3.34	1.02	.27*	.53*	.69*	-			
5. MC	3.44	.63	.58*	.63*	.61*	.38*	-		
6. AOC	3.48	.82	.39*	.49*	.48*	.51*	.45*	-	
7. OT	6.43	5.67	.00	.02	-.01	.04	.02	.23*	-

Notes. ($n = 436$). * $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$; Abbreviations: CEL = Coach ethical leadership, MS = Collective moral sensitivity, MJ = Moral judgment, MM = Moral motivation, MC = Moral character, AOC = Affective organizational commitment, OT = Organizational tenure

Results indicate that 40% of the variance in the affective organizational commitment of football players is explained by our model (adjusted $R^2 = .40$, $F(3, 432) = 96.61$, $p < .01$).

As depicted in Table 7, player-perceived coach ethical leadership is positively related with the affective organizational commitment of the players ($\beta = .71$, $p < .01$), thereby confirming the first hypothesis.

Supporting the second hypothesis, player-perceived coach ethical leadership is positively associated with the player-perceived ethical climate of the club ($\beta = .38$, $p < .01$) (see Table 7).

Table 7. Regression analyses

	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	95% <i>CI</i>
CEL → AOC (pathway C' in Figure 2)	.15*	.05	3.20	[.06; .24]
CEL → EC (pathway A in Figure 2)	.38*	.03	11.54	[.32; .45]
EC → AOC (pathway B in Figure 2)	.71*	.06	12.09	[.60; .83]
OT → AOC	.03*	.01	5.66	[.02; .04]

Notes. ($n = 436$). * $p < .01$. Unstandardized betas are shown. Abbreviations: CEL = Coach ethical leadership, EC = Ethical climate, AOC = Affective organizational commitment, OT = Organizational tenure

In relation to our third hypothesis, Table 8 endorses the mediation effect of ethical climate. After all, coach ethical leadership affects the affective organizational commitment of the players both directly, and indirectly via the ethical climate of the club. Formulated in percentages, 64% of the total effect ($b = .42$, $SE = .05$, $t = 8.97$, $p < .01$) of coach ethical leadership on the affective organizational commitment of the players, takes place indirectly via the ethical climate. Moreover, the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect of ethical leadership (95% *CI* [.21; .34]), indicates with a certainty of 95% that the actual indirect effect ($b = .27$, $SE = .03$) is between both values of the confidence interval, and therefore above zero.

Table 8. Total, direct, and indirect effects of coach ethical leadership

	<i>Effect size</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% <i>CI</i>
Total effect coach ethical leadership	.42*	.05	[.33; .51]
Direct effect coach ethical leadership	.15*	.05	[.06; .24]
Indirect effect coach ethical leadership**	.27*	.03	[.21; .34]

Notes. ($n = 436$). * $p < .01$. ** Bootstrapped; Dependent variable = Affective organizational commitment; Covariate = Organizational tenure

Finally, related to the control variables, the organizational tenure of the player is shown to influence his or her affective organizational commitment (AOC) positively ($\beta = .03, p < .01$) (see Table 7).

5.5 Discussion

The results of the present study on coach ethical leadership in non-professional football support the idea that the influence of coach ethical leadership on player-related ethical behaviour in football clubs is considerable. After all, coach ethical leadership is indicated to contribute directly to the ethical climate in football clubs, and both directly, and indirectly (via the ethical climate) to the AOC of the players.

5.5.1 Theoretical implications

The finding that coaches are influential sport club stakeholders when it comes to ethics, largely endorses existing research in the fields of sport management and sport ethics (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Chow et al., 2009; Thompson & Dieffenbach, 2016). However, this study contributes to the literature, by showing that the impact of football coaches on ethical player behaviour continues to persist, even when players reach their adulthood. This finding confirms the propositions of social cognitive theory, and social learning theory in the context of the relationship between adult football players and their coaches (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 2002). Bandura (2002, p. 101) argues that individual ethical behaviour takes place, based on “the reciprocal interplay of personal and social influences.” Our results demonstrate that ethical leadership may be one of these social influences. Football players seem to turn to their coaches for ethical guidance, thereby perceiving them as imitable role models. Moreover, Brown et al. (2005, p. 119) have shown that people “can learn what behaviour is expected, rewarded, and punished via role modelling.” Our study shows that football players look up to ethical coaches, and that these coaches may enhance the AOC of their players by giving the “right” example. For example, a player’s AOC might be strengthened, when (s)he notices that co-players who express high levels of AOC are rewarded by their coach in the form of a more prominent role in the team (e.g. as a captain of the team) or via increased playing time. At the same time, no real differences regarding these processes are found in comparison to other non-sport contexts.

Additionally, this study contributes empirically to our understanding of the role of social exchange theory in relation to ethical leadership. As indicated by existing research, ethical leadership is often answered by pro-organizational behaviour, rather than by material reciprocity (Kalshoven et al., 2013; Kalshoven et al., 2016). Our results endorse this thesis, by showing that football players respond to coach ethical leadership by displaying AOC. This finding is not surprising – since football coaches are the nearest and most influential leaders for players (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Chow et al., 2009) –, but the finding that a moral bond between player and coach also positively reflects itself on the organization, offers an interesting new perspective for non-professional football clubs. Furthermore, this finding also contributes to the emerging theory on the (kind of) effects ethical leadership has on athletes. However, caution is in place to extrapolate this finding to professional football clubs and players, because it is shown that the stronger pressure to perform in professional football adds to an environment in which players' levels of moral development are less well developed (Ødegård & Breivik, 2015).

Further, this study illustrates that football coach ethical leadership impacts both dimensions of ethical behaviour, namely the inhibitive one (here assessed by measuring the ethical climate), and the prosocial one (here assessed by measuring the affective organizational commitment of the players) (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009). Demonstrating this dual role of ethical leadership in influencing ethical behaviour is important for several reasons. First, the potential effect of the coaches on the ethical climate of the football clubs implicates an impact on the club as a whole, and on different club members and stakeholder groups. By highlighting the contextual influence of football coach leadership, this study affirms the assumptions (Welty Peachey et al., 2015), and the results (Burton et al., 2017) of previous research on leadership in sport. Second, this study illustrates that the influence of coach leadership on the prosocial part of ethical behaviour partly runs indirectly, via the inhibitive dimension of ethical behaviour. It sounds logical that by discouraging inappropriate behaviour, appropriate behaviour is stimulated. However, although the ethical climate was already outlined to be able to play a major role in sport organizations (see Burton et al., 2017), empirical evidence explicitly affirming the interplay between the inhibitive and prosocial aspects of ethical behaviour, concerning leadership in sport, was still lacking. Despite the fact that unethical

organizational climates are in no sense exclusive attributes of football organizations, our results explicitly emphasize the far reaching value of an ethical climate within football clubs. This comes as no surprise, given the many current illustrations of ethical issues on and around the football field.

Also, additional progress in the research field on ethical climate has also been made. Whereas insights into the influence of ethical climate in sport organizations are currently limited to North American athletic departments (see Burton et al., 2017), this study broadens the scope, by focusing on European non-professional football clubs. Hereby, we meet the suggestion of Welty Peachey et al. (2015) to look beyond North American sport in relation to the operation of leadership in sport, while we also take a step in the direction of enabling future cross-cultural comparisons of ethical behaviour by sport players. Furthermore, the adopted “Ethical Climate Index” (ECI) of Arnaud (2006, 2010) is theoretically more valid than the currently still dominant ethical climate conceptualization of Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988), thereby elaborating current ethical leadership studies, by honoring all four steps of collective moral reasoning (Kalshoven et al., 2013; Newman et al., 2017). After all, Arnaud’s ECI (2006, 2010) takes all four dimensions (i.e. moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character) of collective moral reasoning into account, whereas Victor and Cullen (1987, 1988) only scrutinize moral judgment.

In addition to the exploration of some of the underlying theoretical mechanisms of football coach ethical leadership in relation to ethical behaviour, our study adds to the literature in another way. Namely, it expands the finding of previous sport management research that one’s organizational tenure has an effect on his or her AOC, to the players (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001; Kent & Chelladurai, 2001). From a calculative perspective, it can be argued that the longer one remains in an organization, the more positive aspects (e.g. organizational familiarity, promotion options) are cumulatively associated with a prolonged stay (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Indeed, our results show that organizational tenure accounts for a small part of the variance in AOC, a finding that is in line with existing research (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Furthermore, this study highlights the influence of coach ethical leadership on the AOC of the players. In the dynamic world of sport, AOC is indubitably an important competitive asset for sport clubs, whereas it can also be favorable for the individuals themselves (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001; Park & Kim, 2013).

5.5.2 Limitations and future research

Despite the theoretical contribution of this work, we simultaneously acknowledge that several limitations are inherently linked to our scope and methodology. These limitations, combined with resulting future research paths, are outlined in the following paragraphs.

One of our study's limitations is formed by its scope, which is limited in terms of the number of included sports (only football), leadership focus (only coaches), and geographical (only Flanders) and level-of-play related (only non-professional) representativeness. Accordingly, the generalization of the research findings could be questioned, as cultural and sport-specific differences are not unimaginable. However, as is the case with exploratory research, the aim of our study was to take a first step in establishing a research line, rather than offering a complete and integral overview. Forthcoming ethical leadership research in a sport context is strongly advised to include other sports, nations, and professional clubs. This suggestion is clearly in line with the call of Welty Peachey et al. (2015), to broaden the scope of sport management scholarship on leadership. Doing so, potential interesting cross-cultural and cross-sectoral comparisons will be enabled. These comparisons could shed additional light on the suggestion that ethical behaviour by sport players may differ according to their cultural background (Gee & Leith, 2007).

Moreover, future sport management research on ethical leadership is encouraged to examine different potentially significant ethical leadership outcomes, on both the individual and the organizational level. A recent review article on ethical leadership in business provides several valuable outcome variables to test in a sport context, such as psychological well-being, team cohesion, and team performance (Ko et al., 2017).

Next to the remarks related to the research scope, limitations about the applied design can also be pointed out. In parallel with the existing research agenda on ethical leadership, our study is cross-sectional, since all data were collected at the same point in time. In general, future (sport) ethical leadership research should definitely embody longitudinal study designs, thereby facilitating causality claims (Ahn et al., 2018; Bedi et al., 2016; Brown & Mitchell, 2010; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008).

5.5.3 Practical implications

5.5.3.1 For non-profit football clubs

Overall, the results of this study, combined with literature insights can be translated into several recommendations for football clubs on how to enhance their ethical climate, as well as the affective organizational commitment of their players. Whereas football is struggling with numerous ethical scandals, and sustainable membership issues, our study offers non-professional football clubs a background to shape their policies and practices in an ethically responsible way. As, with regard to coaches and athletes, “the ability to make sound decisions can only be learned through experience and training” (Kvalnes & Hemmestad, 2010, p. 66), resulting suggestions for practice are presented.

The finding that football coaches are perceived to play a major role in influencing the ethical context of the club and the commitment of the players, illustrates that the recruitment and the formation of coaches is not only very important in youth football (see Kavussanu & Spray, 2006), but also applies to the adult variant. In sum, all – and not only youth – football coaches should be trained in moral decision-making, and in sport-specific moral dilemma handling (Kavussanu & Spray, 2006; Kvalnes & Hemmestad, 2010). Besides the belief that football coaches must be (formed as) moral persons, it is also suggested that they ought to act as moral managers. Consequently, it is advisable for football clubs to only attract coaches with strong managerial and communicative skills, which are expressed, among other characteristics, in the ability to develop and reinforce a team vision (Molan et al., 2016).

Furthermore, since a link between organizational commitment and team sport success can be drawn, present results offer football clubs a performance-related incentive – next to an ethical one – to continuously invest in their coaches (Park & Kim, 2000). After all, ethical coaches lead to committed and motivated players, and to a better chance on long term success. Clearly, AOC is important in terms of organizational sustainability, because organizational success of non-profit sport clubs heavily depends on the AOC of their (semi-)volunteers (Park & Kim, 2013).

Additionally, football clubs should also engage and train their players in a conscious manner (Kvalnes & Hemmestad, 2010). Experiences from the field illustrate that

lower division football clubs benefit from the exclusive inclusion of players who have a bond with the municipality, in which the football club is active. Moreover, the custom to use adult players as referees during youth team matches, adds to the commitment of these players, and reduces the continuous change of clubs by players (Muyldermans, 2016). Finally, by reserving a role for ethics and the importance of fair play during and after field trainings, players' moral awareness can be strengthened (see Kavussanu & Spray, 2006), alongside their organizational commitment.

5.5.3.2 For sport authorities

Despite our previous focus on the responsibilities of football clubs, the moral obligation to attract, retain, and train ethical coaches does not lay solely in their hands. The sport authorities are able to play a vital and supportive role in this context, by offering a coherent ethics policy. At least two concrete actions could be part of this policy. First, the sport authorities are encouraged to set up a certificate system for non-professional football coaches. Such system already exists in Flanders on a voluntary basis – corresponding certificates are awarded by the Flemish School of Coaches –, but it should be made compulsory to impose a minimum standard for all football coaches. Second, next to this certificate system, regular and mandatory coach training by federations, or associated Schools of Coaches, is desirable. Moral dilemma training, based on real situations, could constitute an important aspect of this coach training (Kvalnes & Hemmestad, 2010).

5.6 Conclusion

This study offers an important empirical contribution to the emerging study of ethical leadership in sport organizations. Based on the analysis of the data of a large sample of non-professional football players, we highlight the important role of coach ethical leadership in influencing both the inhibitive (measured via the player-perceived ethical climate of the football club) and the prosocial (measured via player's affective organizational commitment) dimensions of football players' ethical behaviour. More precisely, nearly two-thirds of the influence of player-perceived coach ethical leadership on the players' affective organizational commitment runs via the player-perceived ethical climate.

5.7 References

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CHAPTER 6: THE TRICKLE-DOWN EFFECT OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN FOOTBALL CLUBS

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Abstract

Non-profit football clubs are currently facing many ethical challenges, such as abuse, doping and match-fixing. Whereas research suggests that organizational (board) ethical leadership may be effective to tackle these ethical issues, empirical support in the context of sport remains limited. Drawing on the perceptions of a sample of non-profit football players ($n = 438$) and coaches ($n = 106$), we indicate that the coaches play an important mediating role regarding the associations between board ethical leadership and ethical climate. The theoretical underpinnings of ethical leadership – formed by social learning theory and social exchange theory –, and the social distance between the board and the players in non-profit football clubs provide support in this regard. In sum, our results demonstrate that the influence of board ethical leadership in non-profit football clubs partly trickles down to the players via coach ethical leadership. Finally, practical implications for non-profit football club management are discussed.

Keywords: Ethics; Non-profit Leadership; Organizational Behaviour; Reciprocity

6.1 Introduction

Numerous scandals within the international football community illustrate that football offers a setting in which many ethical issues occur. For example, the testimony of a former British professional football player, who was systematically sexually abused by his youth coach, provided inducement for many people involved in football to report about sexual harassment, and subsequent cover-up operations (Bennhold, 2016). A striking element in this cluster of scandals – “one of the biggest crises in the sport’s history,” according to the chairman of the English Football Association – was that its roots stretched from professional football to as far as the lowest non-profit (amateur) levels (Bennhold, 2016).

Albeit that the boards of directors of football clubs bear a substantial responsibility concerning the counteraction of abuse and other ethical issues such as doping and match-fixing, they often react rather passively (De Waegeneer, 2015). This passive attitude is even more noteworthy, given the potential impact of organizational leadership on the ethical climate in sport organizations (Burton et al., 2017; Constandt et al., 2017). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the study of ethical leadership is gaining attention in sport management (Wells & Walker, 2016).

Whereas research indicates that organizational leadership positively affects the ethical climate in college athletic departments (Burton et al., 2017), little is currently known about the operation of this relationship in the specific situation of non-profit sport clubs. The fact that organizational ethical leadership in sport requires support of lower leadership levels to render effect, adds to the idea that at least part of the ethical influence of the board of directors in non-profit sport clubs takes place indirectly (Burton & Welty Peachey, 2014). Organizational research tends to speak about a trickle-down (or cascading) effect in this regard, in which the operation of organizational ethical leadership occurs partly indirectly (partial mediation effect) (Hansen et al., 2013; Ruiz et al., 2011), or entirely indirectly (full mediation effect) (Mayer et al., 2009), via supervisory ethical leadership.

This trickle-down effect of ethical leadership is also suggested – but not empirically demonstrated – to be operational in the context of sport (Burton & Welty Peachey, 2014). Given this, the present study examines the associations between board ethical leadership and the ethical climate in Flemish non-profit football clubs. In a

research area that is dominated by North American scholarship, this specific context could provide additional insights on (the trickle-down effect of) ethical leadership, considering the obvious yet empirically largely unsupported ethical responsibilities of organizational leaders in non-profit sport clubs, and given the many ethical issues that currently prevail in football (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010).

Also, our analysis hereby integrates the role of the coaches in terms of promoting ethics in sport clubs. More precisely, we focus on the potential mediating role of the supervisory level of coach ethical leadership. In fact, we believe that the coaches will be of crucial importance in the process of ethical leadership, due to their proximity towards both the players and the board of directors. Multiple studies indicate that football coaches play a major part in determining and stimulating the ethical behaviour of their players, and the ethical climate within their football clubs (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Constandt et al., 2018; Chow et al., 2009; Delrue et al., 2017). However, current scholarship on the relationships coach-player, and coach-ethical climate, analyses these relationships without incorporating the potential influence of significant others such as the board. Thus, it seems desirable to shed light on the mediating role of the coach in disseminating desired organizational ethical practices on behalf of the board, to the players.

In fact, we extend current scholarship on ethical leadership in sport, by (a) showing how the interplay between different levels of perceived ethical leadership affects the ethical climate perceptions in non-profit football clubs, and consequently, by (b) highlighting the ethical responsibilities of both the board of directors and the coaches in determining the ethical opinions of the players. In line with this scope, the main research question of our work encompasses the following: to what extent do board members and coaches play a role in the formation of the perceptions of ethical practices of non-profit football players?

6.2 Literature review

6.2.1 The nature of ethical leadership

Within organizational research, leadership has always been one of the most studied topics (Ruiz et al., 2011). Nevertheless, empirical ethical leadership studies have only started to grow massively in number since the theory and construct development of Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005) (Bedi et al., 2016; Ko et al., 2018). Building on

the seminal work of Brown and his colleagues, the most recent interpretation of ethical leadership defines the concept as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate and new conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (Kaptein, 2017, p. 12).

The definition of ethical leadership indicates three dimensions, and corresponding roles of ethical leadership (Kaptein, 2017). In the first place, an ethical leader is a moral person, who behaves in an honest and sincere way, thereby adhering to general values and principles (Treviño et al., 2000). In other words, he or she leads by example. Second, an ethical leader is a moral manager, who is also able to promote and to transfer ethical behaviour, through communication about ethics, fair rewarding, reinforcement, and the empowerment of the followers (Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012; Treviño et al., 2000). Third, ideally, an ethical leader also operates as a moral entrepreneur, by creating new and innovative ethical norms (Kaptein, 2017).

Although this conceptualization of ethical leadership has recently been criticized for its vagueness and lack of strong philosophical foundations (Ciulla et al., 2018; Eisenbeiß, 2012), it remains by far the most elaborated tool to empirically study perceptions of ethical leadership. Also, the meaning of ethical leadership resides largely in the “moral eye of the beholder,” indicating that ethical leadership is a relational and co-constructed phenomenon between leader and follower (Giessner et al., 2015). Ethical leadership might have different meanings depending on the follower that is judging (Giessner et al., 2015). Conclusively, throughout our manuscript, we focus on ethical leadership as perceived on an individual, personal level.

Social learning forms one of the central theoretical underpinnings of ethical leadership, by focusing on both the ability of leaders to act ethically, and to transfer this kind of behaviour to those who are engaging with them (the followers) (Brown & Mitchell, 2010; Brown et al., 2005). The application of social learning theory in the ethical leadership conceptualization stipulates that people are likely to adopt and imitate the behaviour of their leaders (Brown et al., 2005; Burton & Welty Peachey, 2014). This idea emphasizes the importance of the role modeling aspect of ethical

leadership (Bedi et al., 2016; Ko et al., 2018). After all, ethical leaders are often seen as role models (examples) by their followers, provided that the behaviour of the leaders is credible and amply visible (Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012; Ko et al., 2018). Followers turn to their leaders to see and learn how the leaders implement and evaluate certain behaviours, in terms of punishment and rewarding (Brown et al., 2005). After this process of observation, followers are likely to adopt and imitate the desirable behaviour themselves (Brown et al., 2005; Ko et al., 2018).

Next to social learning theory, scholars often take into account the insights of social exchange theory to explain the operation of ethical leadership (Hansen et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2009). In social exchange theory, desirable and positive conduct is explained by the norm of reciprocity, indicating that ethical leadership is returned or reciprocated with the same kind of behaviour on behalf of the followers (Hansen et al., 2013; Wo, Ambrose, & Schminke, 2015). Trust – conceptualized as a positive attitude towards the intentions of someone else – is a crucial element in developing and maintaining meaningful social exchange relations in general, and leader-follower exchanges in particular (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Hansen et al., 2013). As supported by many leadership studies, the mutual development of trust between leaders and their followers is a strict prerequisite to enable leadership to be fully effective in terms of navigating the behaviour of the followers (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). After all, trust between leaders and their followers is associated with positive attitudes towards the organization, such as organizational commitment, helping, organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB), and support for innovation initiatives (Burton et al., 2017).

6.2.2 Ethical leadership in non-profit organizations

Over the past decade, many scholars have empirically examined the dimensions, the operation, and the consequences of ethical leadership (Bedi et al., 2016; Ko et al., 2018). However, in most studies, results and accompanying understandings are limited to ethical leadership in the context of for-profit, private sector organizations, whereas there is a void of research concerning ethical leadership in the situation of non-profit organizations (Eisenbeiß & Brodbeck, 2014; Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012). Despite this paucity, Heres and Lasthuizen (2012) have extended the view on ethical leadership beyond the dominant focus on the for-profit sector. In their qualitative interviews based work, Heres and Lasthuizen (2012) show that managers involved in

public organizations (such as a municipality or a police department) evaluate some aspects of ethical leadership differently compared to their counterparts in private sector organizations (such as a private bank or a financial firm). More precisely, managers in public organizations put greater emphasis on the external (social) responsibilities of the organization, good governance principles such as transparency and accountability, and explicit – instead of implicit – communication about ethics (Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012).

Moreover, a distinction regarding ethical leadership in non-profit organizations is highly relevant, as ethical leadership can be labelled as a “variform universal phenomenon” (Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012). Here, this type of phenomenon refers to a leadership style that contains a broad common basis, together with certain differences that relate to (the mix of) (a) sectoral and cultural characteristics, (b) the extent of publicness, and (c) prevailing organizational challenges (Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012). In the non-profit sector, most ethical issues and challenges appear when the sector’s core values – namely financial competence, accountability, reciprocity, respect, and integrity – are endangered (Jeavons, 2005; Strickland & Vaughan, 2008). More precisely, non-profit organizations are continuously seeking for a balance between ensuring internal organizational stability on the one hand, and being sufficiently accountable, respectful and open towards the external public on the other hand (BoardSource, 2010).

Additionally, non-profit organizations are increasingly asked to be more efficient (Allen et al., 2018; Miragaia et al., 2016). In general, leaders in non-profit organizations are confronted with strong competition for, and a dependency on (scarce) external funding (Allen et al., 2018; Jurkiewicz & Massey, 1998; Strickland & Vaughan, 2008). Besides that, they are also dependent on the confidence of the public to enable effective organizational functioning (Jeavons, 2005). Hence, this creates a complex situation, in which ethical decision-making and credible ethical leadership are strict prerequisites to convince the broader public as well as the funders that ethical values are honoured within the organization, and that providing public support and financial resources is appropriate (Jeavons, 2005; Jurkiewicz & Massey, 1998). In fact, a culture of reciprocal trust is essential in this regard (Strickland & Vaughan, 2008).

Furthermore, another meaningful variation emerges when comparing the role of ethical leadership in for-profit and non-profit organizations in terms of the follower profiles. A different set of followers is present, which requires different motivation and leading techniques (Allen et al., 2018; Miragaia et al., 2016). For example, leading non-profit organizations implicates engaging and stimulating volunteers (Allen et al., 2018; Bang, 2011). Clearly, the expectations linked to paid staff members in the for-profit sector cannot simply be transferred to volunteers who are involved (almost) free of charge (Bang, 2011). Motivating volunteers requires ethical leadership, through the creation of a shared vision meant to help others, and by establishing a caring environment that offers personal development opportunities for volunteers (Parris & Welty Peachey, 2012). If these criteria are not met, non-profit organizations risk losing (motivated) volunteers, which in turn might endanger the organizational sustainability.

6.2.3 Ethical leadership in sport

As is the case with research studying ethical leadership in non-profit organizations, research on ethical leadership in sport is still in an emergent phase (Welty Peachey, et al., 2015). While leadership as such is one of the most studied themes in sport management, there is definitely room for new theoretical perspectives on leadership in sport (Hoye, 2004). This idea is also reflected in the recent calls to study ethical leadership in sport management, by building on social learning theory and its inherent focus on role modelling (Burton & Welty Peachey, 2014; Welty Peachey et al., 2015).

Moreover, consensus exists about the need for ethical leadership in sport (Burton & Welty Peachey, 2014). In this regard, several conceptual studies have been conducted in recent years (DeSensi, 2014; Roby, 2014; Sagas & Wigley, 2014; Staurowsky, 2014). A common denominator in these studies is the focus on how leadership may help to overcome the many prevailing ethical issues in sport, such as the dominant winning-at-all-costs mentality. In other words, the desired content and the potential of ethical leadership are highlighted, based on the influential position and often pedagogical role of leaders in sport.

Next to these conceptual studies, few empirical studies on perceived ethical leadership in sport exist (Burton et al., 2017). For instance, Cotrufo's (2014)

questionnaire based study has shown that perceived ethical leadership on behalf of athletic directors can lead to positive organizational behaviour from staff members within college athletic departments. Moreover, building on an in-depth case study, Wells and Walker (2016) have delineated the importance of transparent communication towards administrators and coaches in a college athletic department during a period of organizational change. Nonetheless, other aspects of the ethical leadership concept largely remained beyond the scope of their study. Finally, supported by questionnaire data, Constandt and colleagues (2018) have implied a positive link between player-perceived coach ethical leadership and players' affective organizational commitment in football clubs.

In sum, the adoption of the insights of ethical leadership could play a valuable role in an enhanced understanding of sport leading in an ethical manner (Burton & Welty Peachey, 2014). Furthermore, three reasons can be outlined to invigorate our suggestion to study ethical leadership in a European non-profit sport club context. First, while sport clubs represent the most comprehensive non-profit sector category, current sport management leadership research is quite narrowly focused on college sport in North America (Wicker & Frick, 2016). Second, leading a non-profit sport club implicates an intrinsic ethical task, namely to lead in a way in which the interests – and the sporting opportunities – of all club members are honoured (Hoye, 2006). Third, football is currently plagued with a large number of ethical issues, to which the practice of ethical leadership could present an effective answer (Constandt et al., 2017). As the world's most played and watched sport, football illustrates the scale on which many of sport's ethical issues such as doping, match-fixing, and sexual abuse are currently established (Cashmore & Cleland, 2014; Constandt et al., 2017). Also, other ethical issues in sport, such as hooliganism, diving, and elbowing are most strongly present in football (Cashmore & Cleland, 2014; Kavussanu & Ring, 2016).

6.2.4 Ethical leadership effectiveness: Ethical climate

A challenging aspect of studying perceived ethical leadership is the measurement of its effectiveness. In this regard, many ethical leadership scholars advocate for, and use the concept of ethical climate (Newman et al., 2017). The ethical climate of an organization refers to the perception of what ethical behaviour is, and how ethical issues should be managed (Arnaud, 2006). Ethical leadership is seen as a crucial

element in both the creation, and maintenance of an ethical climate (Newman et al., 2017). Although ethical climate thus takes into account perceptions about behaviour, rather than stating what ethical behaviour is or should be, it represents a very powerful concept to study how the ethical environment within organizations is shaped (Malloy & Agarwal, 2010). Actually, positive perceptions of organizational ethical climate are believed to strongly influence actual ethical behaviour, through processes of moral emotion and efficacy (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012; Malloy & Agarwal, 2001).

Moreover, the theoretical foundation of ethical climate contributes to the powerful nature of the concept. Ethical climate scholars have applied several theories of moral development to explain the nature, and the different stages of an ethical climate (Newman et al., 2017). In this study, we draw on the ethical climate conceptualization of Arnaud (2006, 2010), which is considered to be the theoretically most valid ethical climate conceptualization (Kalshoven et al., 2013; Newman et al., 2017).

Arnaud (2006, 2010) takes into account four necessary stages to come to ethical behaviour, based on Rest's (1986) theory of morality. The first stage is called moral sensitivity, which encompasses an awareness that an ethical issue is at hand, next to notions of empathy. The second stage is moral judgment, or the application of normative frameworks to judge the issue, and the corresponding options of action. A third stage, namely moral motivation, represents if ethical motives are prioritized over other motives, such as financial and personal gain. Finally, the last stage, which is called moral character, comprises the actual implementation of the action. This last stage bridges the gap between planning and consideration on the one hand, and the actual ethical behaviour on the other hand (Arnaud, 2006, 2010).

To make these four stages of morality more comprehensible, we include the following illustrative example, based on the perspective of a player of a non-profit football club. Imagine that this football player is offered money to deliberately lose a football match, a phenomenon which is called match-fixing. Moral sensitivity is present when this player realizes this proposal poses an ethical issue to consider. In the moral judgment stage, the player could decide that match-fixing is unethical, based on the principles of fair play. This player would enter the moral motivation stage, when (s)he would decide to enter the field aiming to win the match, thereby prioritizing ethical behaviour over financial gain, or not. Finally, (a lack of) moral character is at hand,

when the player refuses to fix the match and informs the authorities, or when (s)he decides to put the match-fixing into practice.

Whereas the concept of ethical climate was initially dominantly used to study for-profit organizations, several studies on ethical climate in the non-profit sector have been executed over the years (Agarwal & Malloy, 1999; Malloy & Agarwal, 2001; 2003, 2010). One of the main differences between these sectors, is that organizational ethical climates in the non-profit sector face a stronger general trend towards caring for individuals as well as caring related to the broader society (Malloy & Agarwal, 2003, 2010). On the other hand, for-profit organizations are more often dominated by ethical climates focusing on formal aspects, such as following the law and stimulating order (Malloy & Agarwal, 2003; Victor & Cullen, 1988). Besides exploring the main differences between the ethical climates in for-profit versus non-profit organizations, the major contribution of the work of Malloy and Agarwal (2001, 2003, 2010) is located in proposing that research should take into account the potential influence of individual (for example: gender, organizational tenure, and educational level), and organizational (for example: organizational size, organizational leadership style) factors on ethical climate perceptions.

Moreover, Constandt and colleagues (2017) have recently shown that there is a positive evolution regarding the perceived ethical climates within non-profit football clubs. Drawing on a longitudinal study design, and a repeated-measurements ANOVA involving 47 clubs, these authors show that part of this evolution is due to professionalization motives, the consultation of sponsors when designing an ethical program, and the presence of reachable board members and whistle-blowing protection. Moreover, they also suggest that ethical leadership may constitute an important explaining factor in the positive evolution of the ethical climates within non-profit football clubs (Constandt et al., 2017). Yet, the link between organizational ethical leadership and ethical climate in non-profit football clubs remains uncultivated. We argue that this is an interesting line of inquiry, given (a) the many ethical issues that currently prosper within football, and (b) the assumed yet largely unsupported effect of the organizational leadership style on ethical climate perceptions in non-profit organizations (Malloy & Agarwal, 2003). In general, this argumentation leads to the formulation of the first hypothesis.

H1: Positive perceptions of board ethical leadership are associated with positive perceptions of ethical climate in non-profit football clubs (and the reverse)

Next to our hypothesis that board ethical leadership will be associated with the ethical climate in non-profit football clubs, we also believe that this association will be stronger or weaker according to who is judging. After all, research – based on an experimental design with a hypothetical scenario and involving a sample of more than 600 students – has shown that ethical leadership and its effect will be more critically assessed, as the social distance between the leader and who is judging increases (Tumasjan et al., 2011). Argumentation hereabout is found in the idea that a lack of social proximity with someone will lead to a more general and a more abstract – and therefore also a more critical – idea about his/her ethical leadership (Tumasjan et al., 2011). Since coaches operate closer to the board than players, we hypothesize the following.

H2: The associations between perceptions of board ethical leadership and perceptions of ethical climate in non-profit football clubs, are moderated by the function of who is judging (are stronger when perceived by coaches, compared to players)

6.2.5 The trickle-down effect of ethical leadership

The trickle-down effect of role models in sport is often interpreted as the influence of star players and coaches, or well-known referees, on other people aiming to follow in their successful footsteps (Wicker & Frick, 2016). Therefore, these role models have an effect on other people starting an engagement in sport. This type of role modelling effect is assumed to take place across organizational boundaries, through the processes of inspiration and motivation (Wicker & Frick, 2016). Nevertheless, role modeling can actually also take place within sport organizations, relating to the process of leadership. Leaders may provide guidance for their followers in terms of displaying imitable behaviour (Brown et al., 2005). In general, empirical studies on both types of trickle-down effects of role models in sport remain limited in number and scope (Burton et al., 2017; Wicker & Frick, 2016).

When it comes to trickle-down effects within sport organizations, sport leaders are likely to be able to act as role models for other organizational members such as players, especially in relation to ethical behaviour (Burton et al., 2017). Seen from their perspective, players may turn to their coaches for ethical guidance, and eventually imitate ethical behaviour, as impersonated by their coaches. Furthermore, ethical leadership as shown on the organizational level, may also play a role in influencing individual ethical behaviour on lower levels in the organization (Burton et al., 2017). Organizational leaders are believed to set the “moral tone” for everyone involved (Kottke & Pelletier, 2013). In general, the interplay between different levels of ethical leadership may lead to, and strengthen ethical behaviour (Ruiz et al., 2011). Scholars refer to this as the trickle-down (or cascading) effect of ethical leadership, based on the idea that morality as expressed by those with the highest authority, is reflected in the morality of the others (Ruiz et al., 2011).

Mayer and colleagues (2009) first discussed the trickle-down effect of ethical leadership, while building on questionnaire data that were mainly obtained in a wide range of American for-profit organizations. These authors have suggested that the influence of top-level (executive) ethical leadership on group-level deviance and organizational citizenship behaviour, takes place fully indirectly, via supervisory (department level) ethical leadership (Mayer et al., 2009). Supervisors are thus seen as playing a crucial intermediate role in “filtering, interpreting and enacting formal policies” (Ruiz et al., 2011, p. 602). This perspective perceives supervisors as crucial go-betweens between the top and the lower levels of the organization.

Ever since, other scholars have elaborated on the trickle-down effect of ethical leadership on other outcomes, such as organizational commitment and job responses, supported by the analysis of questionnaire data that were collected in American and Spanish waste management, banking, and insurance organizations (Hansen et al., 2013; Ruiz et al., 2011). However, in contrast to Mayer and colleagues (2009), these studies argue that the indirect effect of the supervisor is not full, but partial, thereby suggesting that a direct moral influence between organizational leaders and those on the lower echelons of the organization is still taking place, despite the substantial distance between both (Hansen et al., 2013; Ruiz et al., 2011).

Our study follows this assumption, as we believe that it is reasonable that organizational leaders (the boards of directors) of non-profit football clubs still have a moral influence on football players, despite the fact that there is not a similar proximity as can be noticed between football players and their supervisors (the coaches). After all, the board may influence (the perceptions of) the players through personal contacts. For example, players interact with the board when signing/prolonging their contracts, or when the team is presented to the media, the sponsors, and the fans at the beginning of the season. Furthermore, the players form a certain opinion on the board through their feelings regarding the board's visible decisions, such as those regarding the infrastructure, attracting coaches and sponsors, and external communication.

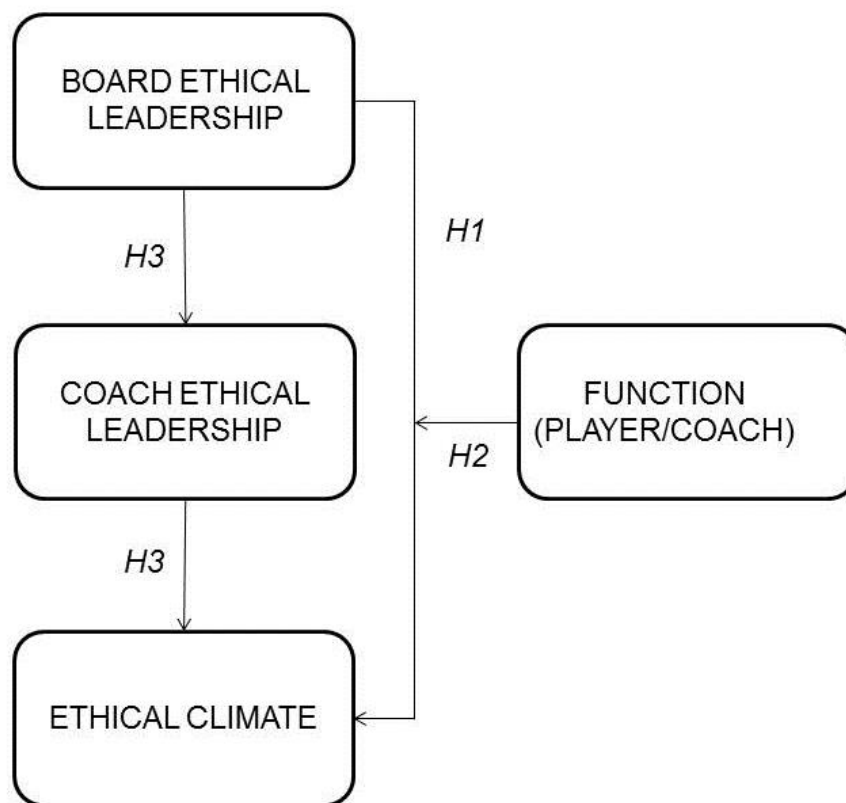
Theoretical roots of the trickle-down effect of ethical leadership are again located in both social learning and social exchange theory (Hansen et al., 2013; Wo et al., 2015). When it comes to social learning theory, the literature indicates that when organizational ethical leaders act as attractive and credible role models, their behaviour and attitudes are likely to be copied by the leaders on the supervisory level (Peiffer et al., 2018). Hereby, processes of observation, emulation, and imitation play their role (Mayer et al., 2009). Additionally, social exchange theory contributes to our understanding of the trickle-down effect of ethical leadership (Hansen et al., 2013; Wo et al., 2015). Seen from this perspective, supervisors "reciprocate the fair treatment they receive by treating others fairly" (Wo et al., 2015, p. 1850). Hence, supervisors who are treated with respect, dignity and trust by their organizational leaders, are likely to reciprocate this kind of behaviour by treating their own followers in a similar way (Kalshoven et al., 2016; Wo et al., 2015).

When comparing the role of a coach in a non-profit football club with the role of a supervisor (mid-level manager) in other organizations with a similar size (rather small) and structure (one intermediate level), a certain parallel can be drawn. One could argue that both act as a mediator or go between to transfer desired organizational behaviour to people involved on lower hierarchical levels. Additionally, non-profit football clubs do not differ compared to other types of non-profit organizations regarding the difficulties in attracting volunteers and keeping them involved (Bang, 2011; Constandt et al., 2018). Many non-profit football clubs are struggling to survive due to a lack of loyal players, while it is at the same time shown

that coaches play a valuable role in terms of stimulating players' organizational loyalty (Constandt et al., 2018). Given the presumed yet empirically unsupported role of the coaches as transmitters of desired organizational behaviour, we present the following and last hypothesis.

H3: The associations between players' perceptions of board ethical leadership and players' perceptions of ethical climate in non-profit football clubs, are partly mediated by (trickle down via) players' perceptions of coach ethical leadership

Figure 3. Hypothesized conceptual model trickle-down effect



Note: All variables as perceived on an individual, personal level.

As reflected throughout the build-up of our hypotheses, coaches and board members of European non-profit football clubs represent two rather distinct and separated functions. Unlike in many American non-profit athletics clubs where board members also step up as coaches, European non-profit football coaches are usually not active in the board. Whereas non-profit football club board members are mainly expected to

make strategic decisions, and plan resources and operations off-the-field, coaches mostly stick to the on-the-field managing and coaching of their teams (Balduck, 2009). In the here studied region of Flanders, most non-profit sport club board members are volunteering, non-paid men with a personal history as player and/or coach (Claes et al., 2017).

6.3 Methodology

6.3.1 Procedure and sample

Data collection was started after obtaining the approval of the independent commission of medical ethics of Ghent University, and of Football Flanders, which is the major non-profit football federation in Belgium. The data collection encompassed an online questionnaire, containing validated 5-point Likert scales on ethical leadership ("Ethical Leadership Scale," one dimension, 10 items, by Brown et al., 2005), and ethical climate ("Ethical Climate Index," four dimensions, 36 items, by Arnaud, 2006). Football Flanders sent the questionnaire to all associated clubs, and asked these clubs to further spread the questionnaire internally. During a period of six months, we also repeatedly contacted as many associated football players and coaches as possible via the public Facebook groups of the football clubs. Further, we sent additional emails ourselves to the contact persons within the football clubs, to ask for further dispersion of the questionnaire.

Whereas the players assessed both the ethical leadership of the board of directors of their club and of their coach, the coaches only rated the ethical leadership of their board of directors. This was done because perceptions of the followers are more reliable than self-perceptions when it comes to ethical behaviour (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). All participants were also asked to provide information regarding their age, gender, level of play, and organizational tenure, since previous research has indicated that these variables could impact ethical climate perceptions in non-profit organizations (Malloy & Agarwal, 2001, 2003, 2010). Although educational level could be a source of influence as well (see Malloy & Agarwal, 2003), we deliberately decided not to include this variable in our questionnaire, due to its sensitive nature and our fear for severe questionnaire drop out. We clearly ensured all respondents that their responses would be dealt with in total confidentiality, and that they would be able to quit the questionnaire at every point in time. In total, 438 players and 106

coaches fully completed the questionnaire. These participants belonged to 209 different football clubs, which presents an average of 2.60 participants (minimum: 1, maximum: 13) for each represented club. Table 9 outlines further information about the demographics of the participants.

Table 9. Participant demographics trickle-down study

Function	Number	Age		Gender		Tenure	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	♂	♀	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Player	438	22.30	5.14	372	66	6.41	5.66
Coach	106	37.96	10.77	102	4	8.62	9.72
Total	544	25.38	9.09	474	70	6.84	6.70

6.3.2 Data analysis

We analysed the collected data in function of our research hypotheses, using IBM SPSS 22 software and Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro. Due to its significance, gender was included in the analyses, while the other insignificant control variables were not withheld. Based on the suggestions of Field (2009), we applied several control mechanisms for linear regression analysis, such as considering the presence of linearity, correlated residuals, and multicollinearity. Furthermore, we tested the trustworthiness of the mediation or trickle-down effect of ethical leadership using bootstrapping, which entails the constant recalculation of the effect.

6.4 Results

Table 10 provides descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and correlations) regarding the measured variables. We decided to work with the average scores for ethical climate, because the correlations between the four dimensions of ethical climate are very high (*r*'s between and .44 and .73).

Table 10. Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. BEL	3.36	.84	-						
2. CEL	3.59	.75	.48*	-					
3. MS	3.42	.60	.57*	.42*	-				
4. MJ	3.24	.68	.60*	.43*	.73*	-			
5. MM	3.44	1.02	.45*	.27*	.56*	.73*	-		
6. MC	3.47	.64	.68*	.58*	.66*	.65*	.44*	-	
7. Gender	-	-	-.14	.07	.11*	.07	.04	.02	-

Notes. * = correlations significant on a $p < .01$ level. Abbreviations: BEL = Board ethical leadership, CEL = Coach ethical leadership, MS = Moral sensitivity, MJ = Moral judgment, MM = Moral motivation, MC = Moral character

The testing of the assumptions for linear regression revealed no problematic results. First, linearity was present. Second, multicollinearity tests, based on the variance inflation factors (VIF), highlighted unproblematic values of around 1 (Field, 2009). Third, the Durbin-Watson tests specified values of circa 2, leading to the conclusion that the residuals of the regression analyses are uncorrelated (Field, 2009). Finally, we applied bootstrapping as a highly reliable control mechanism for mediation analysis (Hayes, 2009).

The results of the regression analyses indicate associations between positive perceptions of board ethical leadership, and positive perceptions of ethical climate in non-profit football clubs (and the reverse) ($\beta = .34$, $p < .01$), thereby offering support for the first hypothesis. Additionally, there is an influence of gender on the perceptions of ethical climate ($\beta = .16$, $p < .01$). The output of the PROCESS macro also indicates that the relationship between perceptions of board ethical leadership, and perceptions of ethical climate is moderated by the function of the rater ($\beta = .32$, $p < .01$), meaning that this relationship is stronger when perceived by the coaches, than when perceived by the players. This finding is in favour of the second hypothesis.

Furthermore, results signal that 42% of the variance in players' perceptions of ethical climate, is due to the associations between players' perceptions of board ethical leadership, and players' perceptions of coach ethical leadership, with gender included in the model (adjusted $R^2 = .42$, $F(3, 434) = 105.01$, $p < .01$). Specifically, the output of the PROCESS macro implies a partial mediation effect, since it demonstrates that part (21%) of the effect of players' perceptions of board ethical leadership on players' perceptions of the ethical climate of the football club, trickles down via players' perceptions of coach ethical leadership. The bootstrapping results suggest with a certainty of 95% that there is an actual indirect effect, which comprises 12-30% of the total effect. Table 11 reveals a more detailed picture of the total effect, and the proportion between the direct and indirect effect of players' perceptions of board ethical leadership. In sum, support to confirm the third hypothesis is present.

Table 11. Total, direct, and indirect effect of players' perceptions of board ethical leadership

	<i>Effect size</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>95 % CI</i>
Total effect	.43	.03	[.37; .48]
Direct effect	.34	.03	[.28; .40]
Indirect effect*	.09	.02	[.05; .13]

Notes. $p < .01$. * Bootstrapped. Dependent variable = Players' Perceptions of Ethical Climate. Gender was added as a control variable to this model.

6.5 Discussion

While the importance of ethical leadership has been documented in a wide range of studies in for profit organizations, this study contributes to our understanding of how ethical leadership is perceived in the distinct situation of non-profit football clubs. This specific focus is important as non-profit organizations are currently operating in a context in which the presence of several organizational challenges implies the inherent necessity of an ethical way of leading (Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012). These challenges partly relate to working with volunteers, and stimulating them in an ethical way (Parris & Welty Peachey, 2012), and more broadly to convincing both the general public and the funders that organizational values are respected and that

providing (financial) trust is appropriate (Jeavons, 2005; Jurkiewicz & Massey, 1998). Moreover, sport in general and football in specific have to tackle multiple ethical issues, of which sexual abuse, aggression, doping, and match-fixing only represent a few examples (Constandt et al., 2017). In the following sections, we emphasize the theoretical and practical implications of this study, as well as its limitations and the corresponding lines of further inquiry we recommend.

This study extends our knowledge on ethical leadership and ethical climate in several ways. First, we show how perceived organizational (board) ethical leadership is associated with the perceptions of ethical climate in non-profit football clubs. Second, this study demonstrates that this association is moderated by the function of who is judging. More specifically, this association is stronger when judged by coaches, compared to players. Part of the explanation for this could be found in the social distance between the board and the players in non-profit football clubs. In terms of ethical leadership perceptions, social distance may lead to less well-informed, and more critical assumptions (Tumasjan et al., 2011).

When considered from a broader angle, these findings contribute to the literature on ethical leadership. In a sense, we meet the call of Brown and Mitchell (2010) to outline the influence of distance on ethical leadership perceptions. Additionally, our results indicate that a broader stakeholder view on ethical leadership is expedient, whereas current research mainly focuses on merely the perceptions of the closest followers (Heres, 2014). Our approach to focus on the individual (personal) organizational ethical leadership perceptions of both players and coaches is in accordance with considering ethical leadership “not (purely) as an objective given phenomenon but rather for what it is – namely, something that exists at least in part in the eye of the beholder” (Giessner et al., 2015, p. 9).

In the situation of non-profit football players, there seems to be a need for a nearer, strongly perceivable level of ethical leadership to enable the effect of perceived board ethical leadership to fully trickle down. We assessed this supervisory level, by looking into the role of perceived coach ethical leadership. After adding perceived coach ethical leadership as a mediator to our model, results present support for a partial trickle-down effect of player-perceived board ethical leadership on player-perceived ethical climate, through player-perceived coach ethical leadership. Thereby, we

enrich current findings on the trickle-down effect of ethical leadership, by showing that – in the context of non-profit football clubs – a considerable direct effect of perceived board ethical leadership remains present. This suggestion is consistent with most recent scholarship on the trickle-down effect of ethical leadership (Hansen et al., 2013; Ruiz et al., 2011). The partial nature of this effect affirms the assumption that “the tone at the top” remains essential, when it comes to perceptions of organizational ethical practices (Ruiz et al., 2011, p. 601). Simultaneously, we extend current knowledge on ethics in non-profit football clubs by indicating that the opinions football players form about the ethical leadership of the board – through their personal interactions with and perceptions of the board –, are reflected in the players’ opinions on the broader meaning of ethical behaviour within the club.

The uncovering of this partial trickle-down effect also offers support for the idea that football coaches are of considerable importance regarding the stimulation of an ethical climate in their club (Constandt et al., 2018; De Waegeneer, 2015). Previous research has shown that coaches – due to their nearby and influential position – are notably able to promote ethical behaviour to their players, both on and off the sporting field (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Chow et al., 2009; Delrue et al., 2017). Nonetheless, we expand these insights by revealing that coaches may be seen as acting as some kind of go-betweens, to transfer perceived organizational ethical leadership to the players. As a consequence, the players might instead partly turn to their coaches for information and advice regarding desired organizational ethical practices. Given the presence of a certain analogy between non-profit football clubs and other small-sized non-profit organizations with one intermediate level, these insights on the important role of the coach might also partly hold for non-profit mid-level managers.

When taking into consideration all above-mentioned contributions, this study highlights that both the board of directors and the coaches in non-profit football clubs could be attributed with a substantial ethical responsibility in terms of influencing players’ perceptions of ethical practices. Besides providing an answer to our research questions, this also implies some practical advices. Following the insights of social learning and social exchange theory, board members and coaches should be aware of their own role modelling influence and the reciprocal character of their actions and attitudes on the leadership perceptions of their followers. However, we suggest that

leaders should also be guided in their quest to discover their own impact, and to develop their ethical leadership skills. The non-profit football federations might play a major role in this regard, by offering tailor made education and training, based on scientific research and realistic scenarios. Also, results of this study emphasize the importance of the coaches within non-profit football club governance. While it is encouraged to include a representation of the coaches at the core of fundamental organizational decisions given their influential position as go-between, good governance principles also warn against the inclusion of active coaches in the board, due to the idea of the separation of powers (Sport Vlaanderen, 2016). Moreover, coaches who would be adopted in the board might risk losing their accessible, and influential relationship with the players.

This study also adds to the literature on ethical climate in the non-profit sector, by displaying that perceptions of ethical leadership are strongly associated with those on ethical climate in non-profit football clubs. Whilst Malloy and Agarwal (2003) have already indicated that perceived organizational leadership style influences ethical climate perceptions in non-profit sport organizations, our results go one step further by demonstrating that the interplay of different levels of ethical leadership affects ethical climate perceptions in non-profit football clubs.

Finally, we shed additional light on the much-debated relationship between gender and perceived ethical climate (Luthar et al., 1997; Malloy & Agarwal, 2003). Whereas Malloy and Agarwal (2003) report no gender differences, the work of Luthar and colleagues (1997) states that females attach more importance to a well-established organizational ethical climate compared to males. Our results demonstrate that female coaches and players rate the ethical climate of their football club significantly higher than their male counterparts, which could imply a stronger inclination towards a caring and ethical organizational environment. Nonetheless, this area of study certainly deserves further scrutiny, since our research data point to these gender differences, but they are also largely unable to provide an in-depth explanation for their occurrence. However, previous research in sport has shown that (part of) the explanation could be due to the fact that females are less likely to accept unethical behaviours on the sport field, such as violence, and deliberate cheating (De Waegeneer, 2015; Shields et al., 2007).

Although we believe that our study contributes to the literature on non-profit organizations, business ethics, and sport management, we realize that certain limitations simultaneously originate from our approach. First of all, our scope is limited in terms of geographical distribution and the type of non-profit organizations, thereby presenting a warning on the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Perceptions of ethical climate may differ between distinct types of non-profit organizations, albeit that research still has to empirically confirm this proposition (Malloy & Agarwal, 2003). Thus, we encourage scholars to compare the ethical climate perceptions in non-profit sport organizations with those in other types of non-profit organizations, such as educational or religious organizations.

Second, we looked at perceptions of ethical climate to scrutinize the effectiveness of ethical leadership. On the one hand, research has shown that there is a very strong link between ethical climate perceptions and actual (un)ethical behaviour, and ethical climate is considered the most powerful tool to measure the effectiveness of ethical leadership (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012; De Waegeneer, 2015). However, on the other hand, future research would benefit from applying a more complete view on ethical behaviour, by also analysing official reports and integrating observational measures.

Third, any statements about the causal nature of our proposed trickle-down model would require a longitudinal approach, while we collected our data at only one point in time. Therefore, applying a longitudinal methodology would yield even richer results, and thus, would be of great value to our knowledge on ethical leadership (Bedi et al., 2016). More precisely, a longitudinal study design would allow researchers to formulate well-grounded statements about the direction(s) of the associations between ethical leadership and ethical climate (Mayer, 2014). As suggested by recent scholarship, both variables are believed to mutually affect and reinforce each other (Mayer, 2014; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the empirical testing of the reciprocity of the relations between leadership and climate has yet to find its entrance in sport management research (Welty Peachey et al., 2015).

Moreover, a further in-depth analysis of the link between social distance, and the interplay between several organizational levels of ethical leadership, represents a worthwhile line of inquiry. For example, one could broaden the scope to professional

football clubs, and integrate the level of the management, or research could extend the scope to other sports or countries to enable relevant comparisons. Additionally, we encourage future research to look into the influence of ethical proclivities, educational level and socioeconomic status on trust, and thus on ethical leadership and ethical climate perceptions (Malloy & Agarwal, 2003).

Finally, we are in favour of applying a stakeholder approach to the study of ethical leadership, thereby widening the focus to everyone that impacts or is impacted by the policies and practices of the organization (Heres, 2014). In relation to our context of non-profit football clubs, it could be very interesting to scrutinize the expectations and leadership perceptions of, for example, the government, the sport federation, the sponsors, and the fans.

6.6 Conclusion

This study provides “much-needed empirical scholarship” on ethical leadership in sport (Burton & Welty Peachey, 2014, p. 7), supported by the analysis of the perceptions of a large sample of non-profit football players and coaches. In more detail, we show that there is an effect of perceptions of organizational (board) ethical leadership on perceptions of ethical climate in non-profit football clubs. Moreover, we highlight that this effect partly (for 21%) trickles down via (is mediated by) perceptions of coach ethical leadership. Finally, we demonstrate that this effect is moderated by the function of who is judging, meaning that the effect is stronger when judged by coaches compared to players.

6.7 References

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CHAPTER 7: FOOTBALL FANS' PERCEPTIONS OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

Ethical leadership is increasingly studied in the context of football clubs, as it is believed to represent an effective answer to football's "dark side." However, current academic understanding is limited to key internal stakeholders' perspectives, such as coaches and players. A highly relevant stakeholder group that is still largely neglected is fans, as they are believed to be uniquely able to influence leadership in sport clubs, while some of football's ethical issues, such as violence and discrimination are strongly associated with fans. This study highlights this duality by referring to fans as "stakeowners," namely legitimate stakeholders with certain rights as well as responsibilities. Moreover, the authors examine whether ethical leadership by football club leaders really matters to fans. Drawing on a qualitative case study in a Belgian professional football club, findings indicate fans care mainly about those aspects of ethical leadership that impact their own position, such as clear communication and fan empowerment. On the other hand, findings suggest fan influence on the leadership of their club should not be exaggerated. After all, the club's leadership questions the critical importance of fans as being core to (football) management's activities and leadership.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership; Fans; Reciprocity; Football Clubs; Stakeholder Management, Stakeowner

7.1 Introduction

In football clubs, the positive influence of ethical leadership – understood as personally implementing ethical behaviour, while at the same time promoting it to others (see Kaptein, 2017) – has been emphasized as important for rendering positive consequences, such as players' organizational commitment (Constandt et al., 2018). However, in general, existing empirical work on ethical leadership remains limited with respect to the scope of analysis, as it only takes into account perceptions of key internal stakeholders (Heres, 2014). With regard to football, to date, the focus has been put solely on coaches and players (Constandt & Willem, 2019; Constandt et al., 2018).

To enable a more in-depth view on the meaning and expectations related to ethical leadership within an organization, Heres (2014) suggested broadening the scope to include relevant external stakeholder groups and thus to take a broader stakeholder view on ethical leadership. After all, (external) stakeholders co-construct the meaning and interpretation of ethical leadership in general (Heres, 2014) and of leadership in sport in particular (Ferkins et al. 2018; Kihl et al., 2010; Parent et al., 2009). Moreover, a broad view of the expectations related to ethical leadership would enable managers to gain an enhanced understanding about expected leadership practices (Heres, 2014).

In the context of understanding leadership within football clubs, fans represent a highly relevant external stakeholder group (Cleland, 2010; García & Welford, 2015). Today, fans are seen as legitimate stakeholders to their football clubs due to their involvement, loyalty, passion, excitement, physical presence, and economic impact on football clubs' revenues (Anagnostopoulos, 2011; Biscaia et al., 2018; García & Welford, 2015; Senaux, 2008; Van Eekeren, 2016; Zagnoli & Raddichi, 2010). Moreover, fans co-determine and guard the cultural values in soccer clubs by paying extensive attention to traditions with regard to such aspects as the stadium atmosphere, club logos, and team colours (Biscaia et al., 2018; Van Eekeren, 2016). Given this unique combination of features, fans are often not only passively heard, but increasingly actively engaged in shaping the structures and dynamics of the game (García & Welford, 2015; Ziesche, 2017). This way, soccer clubs are also

better positioned to learn and integrate fans' expectations in their operation, which is beneficial for the harmony in the club (Biscaia et al., 2018; García & Welford, 2015).

In general, during the last decades, soccer fans have been moving away from being merely external, to a situation in which their strong identification with the club has led to more active – and sometimes also internal – roles (García & Zheng, 2017; Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997). We argue football fans have become “stakeowners” of their clubs, meaning they are legitimate stakeholders with certain rights, but also with certain moral duties and responsibilities (see Fassin, 2012). More precisely, fans are allowed to demand a say in club-related decisions, but at the same time, they should adhere to certain moral standards, such as not engaging in violence or discriminatory chants. Although little doubt remains about the importance of football fans to their clubs, limited knowledge is present about the relevance both fans and football clubs attach to the role of fans as “stakeowners,” that is, as stakeholders with certain rights as well as responsibilities (Bowen et al., 2017).

Scant understanding exists about the fans' opinions on the management of football clubs in general, and ethical leadership in particular (Cocieru et al., 2018; García & Welford, 2015; Zheng & García, 2017). Despite research suggesting fans “may uniquely influence leadership at the organizational level in sport management” (see Welty Peachey et al., 2015, p. 580), do fans care if their club's leadership engages in and promotes ethical behaviour? Football clubs are arguably stimulated to remodel their leadership practices when faced with fan discontent, which often originates from feeling insufficiently respected (García & Welford, 2015). Fans are able to make their voices heard, and affect decision-making and financial processes, by protesting, disturbing training practices, and staying away from games (Biscaia et al., 2018; Gammelsæter, 2010; Lumpkin & Doty, 2014; Senaux, 2008). As a consequence, fans can strengthen or weaken the position of the leadership of their club, which makes it meaningful for football clubs to gather knowledge about how fans behave, what they desire, and if ethical leadership or a true “stakeowner” relationship may stimulate positive fan behaviour.

As such, the purpose of this study is to improve our understanding of (a) the value fans attach to ethical leadership within their club; and (b) the support for fans' reciprocal, moral relationship with their club. Gaining knowledge on these aspects is

useful for managers and board members aiming to incorporate fans' expectations to realize broad support for their leadership (García & Welford, 2015; Koenigstorfer et al., 2010). The application of the "stakeowner" concept in this study – in relation to fans' perceptions of ethical leadership – offers new insights about the support for and the meaning of both concepts by bridging "the two perspectives of the fan's responsibilities and the fan's expectations" (Bowen et al., 2017, p. 74).

7.2 Literature review

The literature review will guide the reader through what is understood by ethical leadership in football clubs, the conceptualization of football fans as "stakeowners," and how both aspects are connected.

7.2.1 Ethical leadership in football clubs

Ethical leadership entails "the demonstration of normatively appropriate and new conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (Kaptein, 2017, p. 12). This definition reflects three distinct roles, which should be combined to achieve a desirable level of ethical leadership. Within the definition, demonstrating normatively appropriate conduct refers to the idea of being a "moral person," namely someone who combines values, characteristics, and traits such as honesty, fairness, and empathy in his/her personality and actions (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). In addition to this first role, the reference to the promotion of such conduct indicates that a leader is expected to act as a "moral manager," as the leader should invest in the transaction of desired conduct to followers through role modelling, communication, enforcement, and empowerment (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Finally, ethical leadership also requires being a "moral entrepreneur," by implementing not only morally appropriate, but also new conduct (Kaptein, 2017). This last role emphasizes the value of innovation, and is especially relevant when current organizational norms are insufficient to face certain and often new challenges (Kaptein, 2017).

Whereas ethical leadership is a well-established line of research within the business ethics literature (Kaptein, 2017; Ko et al., 2018), its application in the field of sport management is novel (Burton & Welty Peachey, 2014). Notwithstanding, scholars

have highlighted the relevance of ethical leadership by sport leaders as a promising countermeasure for sport's many ethical issues (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010). In conceptual studies, the focus is put on the potential of ethical leadership to balance sport's dominant win-at-all-cost mentality (Roby, 2014), honoring athletes' rights (Staurowsky, 2014), and strengthening sport leaders' pedagogical and values-centred role (DeSensi, 2014). Furthermore, recent empirical work has highlighted the fundamental role of coaches in stimulating ethical climate perceptions and the organizational commitment of football players (Constandt et al., 2018).

Yet, what is largely missing from the general literature on ethical leadership, so far, is how relevant external stakeholders perceive ethical leadership (Heres, 2014; Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012). Most often, research attention is exclusively paid to ethical leadership understandings of internal stakeholders, such as employees (outside the sport literature), and players and coaches (inside the sport literature) (Constandt & Willem, 2019; Constandt et al., 2018; Heres, 2014). These understandings are essential due to the role internal stakeholders have within their organizations. But widening the scope to external stakeholders would enable researchers to consider the expectations of external stakeholders on ethical leadership (Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012), thereby providing a more holistic view on the subject. Moreover, such a perspective is in line with the consideration of ethical leadership as a socially constructed and context-dependent phenomenon, of which the meaning largely resides in the individual, "moral eye of the beholder" (Giessner, Van Quaquebeke, van Gils, van Knippenburg, & Kollée, 2015). Given this context, a plea has been made to examine what these external stakeholders value and care about in terms of leadership, as they are often impacted by leadership decisions (Heres, 2014).

One important external stakeholder in sport is fans. Fans are arguably the stakeholder group that best illustrates the uniqueness of sport (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009). Thus, we focus on (football) fans' perceptions of ethical leadership. A lack of clarity is present concerning the perceptions and expectations of the football fans, especially with regard to key aspects of the game they support, such as its management and leadership (Cocieru et al., 2018; García & Zheng, 2017). Fans are nonetheless essential to the process of leadership in sport organizations, given their support may help – and even be necessary for – sport leadership to prosper (Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Gaining knowledge when it comes to whether fans care about

ethical leadership may help football clubs foresee powerful expressions of fan discontent (Biscaia et al., 2018). These expressions often originate from a perceived lack of respect, trust, and involvement regarding organizational decisions – such as selling the club to foreign investors – in which certain moral values are at stake (García & Welford, 2015). Given this context, the following research question is put forward:

RQ 10: To what extent do football fans care about ethical leadership in their club?

7.2.2 Football fans as “stakeowners”

Whereas a legitimate claim can be attributed to many stakeholder groups in football, the fan stakeholder group demonstrates the specific nature of sport (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Van Eekeren, 2016). Fans impact a club’s revenues directly through the purchasing of tickets and merchandise, and by paying to watch games online or on television, as well as indirectly through fostering the interest of sponsors and (local) governments (Biscaia et al., 2018; Koenigstorfer et al., 2010; Van Eekeren, 2016).

Furthermore, numerous illustrations of fan behaviour in football stadia, as well as previous academic research, have evinced that fans’ loyalty, commitment, devotion, and emotional involvement often reach extensive proportions (Koenigstorfer et al., 2010; Samra & Wos, 2014; Tapp, 2004; Van Eekeren, 2016). For example, sport fans in general, and football fans in particular, are characterized by a degree of brand loyalty that is unique compared to other industries (Anagnostopoulos, 2011). Fans will not easily change their favourite club for another club, as they would do regarding clothing, food, or other brands (Anagnostopoulos, 2011; Gammelsæter, 2010). Moreover, fans remain loyal “in both good and bad times” (Koenigstorfer et al., 2010, p. 649).

Brand loyalty to their football club has also been a key criterion of most football fan typologies (Giulianotti, 2002; Samra & Wos, 2014; Tapp & Clowes, 2002). These typologies share a similar approach, in which fans are located on a continuum of both behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. However, this two-dimensional view of loyalty does not fully reflect the multifaceted relationship fans have with their club, as it does not take into account several other potential explanations for their behaviour and expectations, such as motivational, cultural, and social elements (Fillis & Mackay,

2014; Koenigstorfer et al., 2010). Thus, we support the idea of adding social integration – considered as the extent of social involvement in the context of the football club (e.g. going alone or with friends to watch games, being a member of fan groups, and engaging in pub or social media conversations) – as an extra criterion (Fillis & Mackay, 2014).

By merging loyalty (attachment to the team) and social integration, Fillis and Mackay (2014) presented four types of fans: “casual followers,” with limited attachment, both in terms of attending matches and in terms of social connections with others; “fans” with attachment concerning attending matches and purchasing merchandising, but not in terms of social connections; “social devotees,” with attachment regarding both aspects, but with a focus on social connections; and “committed supporters” who are willing to sacrifice themselves for the club, as well as strongly socially connected. Whilst such fan typologies enhance our comprehension about the existence of different fan sub-groups, they remain ideal types that require further scrutiny in terms of the unique position of the fans as individuals, and their expectations in relation to crucial aspects of the game, such as their own involvement (Cocieru et al., 2018; Dixon, 2013).

Apart from these fan typologies, researchers have increasingly acknowledged that football fans are genuine stakeholders of their clubs (Biscaia et al., 2018; García & Welford, 2015; Senaux, 2008; Van Eekeren, 2016). García and Welford (2015) named this trend a “governance turn” within football. These authors also suggested football clubs engage in this turn, as their active investment in fans allows them to better understand the needs and demands of their fans, and thus, be better placed to face the challenging future of football club management when it comes to keeping fans pleased (García & Welford, 2015).

Linked to this “governance turn,” stakeholder theory has been applied to highlight the abovementioned relevance of football fans to their clubs (see Biscaia et al., 2018; Senaux, 2008). Drawing on Mitchell, Agle, and Wood’s (1997) stakeholder attributes framework, fans are shown to be salient and prominent stakeholders, as they combine a legitimate stake in the organization with a certain power to express this stake (Biscaia et al., 2018; Senaux, 2008; Zagnoli & Radicchi, 2010). In fact, fans

strongly impact the dynamics and culture of their soccer club (Van Eekeren, 2016; Zagnoli & Radicchi, 2010).

Most researchers consider the responsibility related to this relationship as being unidirectional, implying football clubs bear the responsibility towards their fans (see e.g. García & Welford, 2015; García & Zheng, 2017). Yet, some researchers argued fans also have a responsibility towards their clubs, implying a reciprocity of ethical duties (Bowen et al., 2017; Smith & Lord, 2018). While many football fans may see themselves as legitimate stakeholders (see Biscaia et al., 2018), there is currently no empirical work exposing the opinions of fans regarding (the bi-directionality of) the ethical duties regarding their relationship with their football club (Cleland, 2010; García & Welford, 2015; Ziesche, 2017). These duties can be interpreted with the lens of the bureaucratic logic in soccer clubs, which implies that rules, duties, and controls are required to create a fair and balanced environment within the club (Gammelsæter, 2010). Moreover, the “stakeowner” concept presents itself as interesting for the present study, as it emphasises the reciprocity inherent to stakeholder management within organizations (Fassin, 2012). Whereas stakeholder research has classically interpreted stakeholder management as a responsibility of the organization towards its stakeholders, the “stakeowner” concept draws explicit attention to this responsibility working in both directions (Fassin, 2012).

Fassin (2012) claimed the “stakeowner” concept is especially relevant when applied to prominent and legitimate organizational stakeholders, those from which loyalty may be expected. Given the abovementioned position of the fans as legitimate, loyal, and increasingly active stakeholders of the football game, this study argues fans can be considered as “stakeowners” from a normative point of view. Ferkins and Shilbury (2015) stressed the relevance of the “stakeowner” concept to the field of sport management, thereby advocating for its broad application. The present study supports this statement of relevance by scrutinizing fans’ support for considering themselves as “stakeowners.” Therefore, a next research question is formulated as follows:

RQ 11: To what extent do football fans consider themselves as “stakeowners”?

In the context of this research question, attention is paid to potential differences according to the type of fans, namely “casual followers,” “fans,” “committed

supporters,” and “social devotees.” The prospects regarding ethical duties and responsibilities of a “casual follower,” who rarely attends games, can be expected to differ significantly from those of a “social devotee,” who is willing to sacrifice him/herself for the club. Whereas a “casual follower” may be less interested in the nature of his/her personal bond with the club, a “social devotee” may be more aware and interested in this regard.

7.2.3 Ethical leadership and fans as “stakeowners”

Linking ethical leadership and “stakeownership” in the context of professional football is worthwhile. More precisely, both concepts have an inherent normative dimension, and combining the concepts meets the call to apply a broader stakeholder view on ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005; Fassin, 2012; Heres, 2015).

As previously illustrated, being a “stakeowner” comes with certain ethical duties. Although we do not believe in the existence of universal ethical duties, it is reasonable to argue that certain fan duties are broadly accepted, determined by legislation, soccer regulations, and behavioural norms (Bowen et al., 2017). For instance, fans are expected to abstain from violence and discriminatory chants. Nevertheless, a small but important minority of football fans continues to engage in unethical behaviours (i.e. hooliganism) in, around, and beyond the football stadium, related to, for example, homophobic and racist chants, damaging property, and violence against rival fans (Cashmore & Cleland, 2016a; 2016b; Rookwood & Pearson, 2010). On the other hand, football club leadership does not always adequately respond to fans’ expectations (García & Welford, 2015). Fans who do not feel sufficiently valued may express their frustrations in the form of unethical behaviour (Smith & Lord, 2018). Therefore, Bowen and colleagues (2017, p. 74) claimed “the questions of what ethical duties fans owe others and how responsible leadership shapes those duties loom larger.”

While the first part of this sentence refers to the role of fans as “stakeowners,” the second part implies that football club leaders are encouraged to showcase ethical leadership to promote fans’ “stakeownership.” After all, football club leaders are encouraged to point out the (in)appropriateness of certain fan behaviours, while aiming to empower fans with respect to taking responsibilities for their actions (Bowen et al., 2017). Besides highlighting these responsibilities, research indicates

football clubs' leaders should implement the expectations of their fans in their policies and practices, to increase the likelihood of being successful in the long run (Koenigstorfer et al., 2010). However, little is currently known about how football clubs' leaders think about the role of their fans, and if they believe ethical leadership might stimulate fans' "stakeownership," or if they are inclined to show more ethical leadership towards fans being aware of the fact that fans might be "stakeowners." Hence, a last research question is presented:

RQ 12: To what extent does football club leadership support the ideas that fans are "stakeowners" and that ethical leadership might promote fans' "stakeownership"?

7.3 Method

A single case study of one Belgian professional football club was chosen to address the stated research questions (Creswell, 2013). This club is considered a top club in Belgium's highest football league division, illustrated by recent title and cup wins and participation on the European (Champions League and Europa League) level. This specific club was chosen due to its structure as a cooperative company with limited liability and social aim, which implies that the social anchoring of the club is a major organizational objective. In sum, the club strives to generate positive outcomes for their fans and the broader society, besides pursuing sporting excellence for all their teams (i.e. first, second, youth, female, and homeless teams).

However, the focus on the social dimension of the club has not led to an active fan role within the club's management in reality (Van den Broeck, 2018). Fans are, nonetheless, represented through the federation of supporters in the general assembly of the club. However, in practice, the supporter federation has very little say regarding important organizational decisions, which remain the exclusive jurisdiction of the president of the board and the general manager. Generally, Belgian football clubs do not embody a strong tradition regarding fan representation in organizational decision-making (Van den Broeck, 2018). This finding stands in contrast to certain other European countries, such as Germany and England (García & Welford, 2015; García & Zheng, 2017; Ziesche, 2017). Broadening the scope of fan research beyond these two countries is strongly encouraged (García & Welford, 2015). Belgium is an interesting case, as Belgian football clubs appear susceptible to

foreign acquisitions, causing an increased gap between boards and fans (Smith, 2017; Vandewalle, 2018).

7.3.1 Data collection overview

To assess the three research questions, 20 interviews were conducted along with analysing the club's website and policy documents. More precisely, interviews were held with the coordinator of the club's foundation ($n = 1$), a sample of fans ($n = 17$), the supporters' liaison officer (SLO) of the club (i.e. the person who connects the fans and the federation of supporters with the club leadership) ($n = 1$), and one of the club's directors ($n = 1$). This study included a heterogeneous sample of interviewed fans, representing all four previously listed types of fans, namely "casual followers," "fans," "social devotees," and "committed supporters" (Fillis & Mackay, 2014). A similar approach was used by Cocieru and colleagues (2018) to analyse how football fans' opinions vary regarding fans' formal ownership of football clubs.

As can be seen in Table 12, the sample of fans is diverse in terms of age (age range 24-70), whereas it also represents both genders (14 men and three women). Finally, the interviewed fans were physically spread out all over the football stadium. This dispersion is important as different tribunes in a football stadium house different types of fans. In the end, fan interviews were stopped when no new viewpoints were presented and data saturation was reached.

Table 12. Overview of fan interviews ($n = 17$)

No.	Age	Gender	Season ticket holder	Type of fan
1	53	Male	Yes	Social devotee
2	28	Male	Yes	Fan
3	70	Male	No	Casual follower
4	54	Male	Yes	Fan
5	45	Male	Yes	Social devotee
6	49	Female	Yes	Committed supporter
7	29	Male	No	Casual follower
8	53	Male	Yes	Fan
9	45	Male	Yes	Social devotee

10	32	Male	Yes	Committed supporter
11	37	Male	Yes	Committed supporter
12	24	Male	Yes	Social devotee
13	46	Male	Yes	Social devotee
14	26	Male	Yes	Social devotee
15	34	Female	No	Casual follower
16	38	Male	Yes	Fan
17	42	Female	Yes	Committed supporter

In addition to these interviews, the study examined the mission statement and values mentioned on the club's website, as well as the 2017-2020 strategic policy plan of the club's foundation (a total of 183 pages). The foundation organizes social activities on behalf of the club, such as supporting a homeless team, implementing talent identification initiatives targeting socially disadvantaged youth players, and engaging in actions aiming to raise fan awareness regarding homophobia and racism. Moreover, the foundation encompasses a cooperation between the club, the city, the social services of the city, and the supporters' federation of the club. Unlike the foundations of many professional sport clubs operating independently from their associated clubs, the present foundation is dependent on club funding and expectations (Kolyperas et al., 2016).

7.3.2 Data collection procedure

First, an interview appointment was made with the head of the club's foundation. This open interview (lasting one hour and a half) yielded a general view on the club's operation, and was meant to inform the club about our study project and to ask for their cooperation.

After the club had given their formal approval, the first author attended a home match of the first team of the club, accompanied by two research assistants. Before this match, fans were accosted in and around the stadium to inform them about our study project, and to ask to leave their personal information and contact details. This step was included to add a randomness factor regarding fan selection. Afterwards, willing fans were contacted by e-mail and telephone to schedule an interview in their preferred setting (i.e. in our institutional building, at their home, or in a public place).

Before recording the interviews, all respondents were asked to provide their informed consent.

The semi-structured fan interviews used a non-compulsory interview protocol and lasted 37 minutes on average. To become more acquainted, each interview started with a short introduction of the interviewer and the purpose of the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Additionally, questions (targeting e.g. the age, gender, social connections, tenure, location in the stadium) were posed to get a clear picture of the fan's type and background. Thereafter, the interview protocol continued with certain themes (e.g. moral person, moral manager, and moral entrepreneur) and subthemes (e.g. leader characteristics, ethics communication, and CSR). Each subtheme contained the main questions, follow-up questions, and probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). These questions were partly based on the few existing qualitative studies on ethical leadership (see Bischak & Woiceshyn, 2016; Frisch & Hupenbauer, 2014; Heres & Lasthuizen, 2012), but also on the specificity of the professional soccer club scene and the "stakeowner" concept. At first, questions remained rather open to guarantee that fans could provide their genuine interpretation. If needed, clarification was given, for instance, in the form of examples. To ensure the abstract ethical leadership and "stakeowner" concepts were made comprehensible, the study relied on three vignettes to embed the targeted variables in actual and concrete contexts (Bryman et al., 2011). These vignettes referred to ethical issues that had previously occurred within the club. Each interview ended by presenting these three vignettes and asking the fan to (a) comment on these ethical issues, and (b) evaluate the way in which the club had dealt with these issues.

The first vignette referred to a situation that took place during the previous season, in which a well-known player of the first team publicly confronted the fans of a rival club in quite explicit terms. The club reacted by demanding public apologies of the player, and got rid of him during the next transfer period. The second vignette asked for fans' opinion on a situation that also happened the season before, in which a group of fans personally threatened a player of a rival club at his home. The club publicly condemned this behaviour but did not start an investigation on its own. The third vignette was also linked to a set of real events that occurred during the previous season. More precisely, the head coach of the first team of the club repeatedly criticized the referee during and after matches, and was occasionally removed from

the dugout. The leadership of the club did not condemn the behaviour of their head coach, and even supported him by levelling severe critiques on the general level of the referees.

After the fan interviews were completed, the SLO of the football club was contacted to schedule a face-to-face semi-structured interview (which lasted 55 minutes) targeting his opinion on ethical leadership and the consideration of fans as “stakeowners.” Finally, one of the directors of the club was interviewed by phone for 15 minutes to analyse the club leadership’s view regarding the role of the fans.

7.3.3 Data analysis

All interviews – except the open interview with the head of the foundation and the telephone interview with the club director – were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim, after which their content was analysed using NVivo 11 software. The first author executed and analysed the interviews in Dutch, which is the mother tongue of all respondents, as well as of the first and third author. The transcribed interviews were read multiple times by the first author to grasp the formulated opinions, and before starting the actual data analysis (Braun et al., 2016). A sample of the interviews was also coded by two research assistants, after which the coding outcomes of all interviews (done by the first author) and the subset of interviews (done by the two research assistants) were debated and compared to guarantee a correct interpretation of the data. Before the manuscript was written, a report in Dutch was sent to the participating fans. As such, fans could (but did not) make adaptations to ensure a correct interpretation of the content of their interview and the quotations that were pulled out of them (Silverman, 2011). Relevant quotations were only translated into English in the writing phase, and checked by both bilingual authors, to safeguard the quotations’ accuracy (Parent et al., 2009).

The categories as well as the codes were based on the existing ethical leadership conceptualization and its three roles (Kaptein, 2017). Although we initially applied a rather deductive, codebook/coding approach, new codes were added to the codebook each time new elements emerged from analysing the interview data. While the coding process in NVivo was executed by Bram Constandt, new codes were added and discussed collectively to reduce bias (Silverman, 2011). The trustworthiness of the data analysis was further guaranteed by sending the

abovementioned report to the fans (i.e., respondent validation) and by comparing the interview and document data (i.e., triangulation) (Silverman, 2011). After all interview data were coded, thematic analysis was used to consider potential explanations regarding the research questions (Braun et al., 2016; Fox, 2004). A Matrix Coding query was applied to cautiously examine potential differences between types of fans. The steps of *open*, *axial*, and *selective* coding were an iterative process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

7.4 Results

We present the findings in two separate sections. First, with regard to fans' perceptions of ethical leadership (*RQ10*), the data analysis supported the existence of three main roles (i.e. moral person, moral manager, and moral entrepreneur). These roles are used to structure a first section on ethical leadership. Within this section, fans' reactions on the way the club dealt with recent ethical issues – provided to them as three vignettes – are also integrated. Moreover, the references to the fans as “stakeowners” (*RQ11*) and how the leadership of the football club perceives ethical leadership and fans' “stakeownership” (*RQ12*) are analysed within a second section.

Throughout, the study looked into potential differences depending on the type of fan, being a “casual follower,” “fan,” “social devotee,” or “committed supporter” (Fillis & Mackay, 2014). However, as fans were not purposively sampled based on their type, some types are only represented by a few fans. Therefore, we have been particularly careful with generalizing findings of individual fans to the types they represent.

7.4.1 Ethical leadership

A considerable portion of the interviewed fans was unable to distinguish between the management and the board of their club. The differences between both positions only started to emerge when the interviewer explained who is on the board and who represents the club's management. Consequently, upcoming references to the leadership of the football club make no distinction between both positions, unless explicitly mentioned.

7.4.1.1 Moral person

When it comes to the football club leaders' personal characteristics, fans expected decisiveness above all. In the current complex and quickly evolving international football context, fans expected the football club's leadership to react quickly and adequately to all challenges. Next to these general characteristics of being strong and decisive, fans especially valued reliability, honesty, and integrity. Many fans argued they prioritize these moral characteristics above the club's performance on the field. Fan n° 12 phrased this as follows:

Honesty and reliability are most important to me. Even if my club would be relegated to the second division. That would be very regrettable, and it is difficult to choose, but I would in that case prefer that my club performs less on the field, as long as they have an honest and reliable board of directors.

All fans interviewed endorsed the four values the club states in its mission statement, namely excellence, sportiveness, family-orientation, and wilfulness. However, some fans looked beyond the mere presence of these values, perceiving the mission statement as some kind of image building instrument. Fan n° 4 formulated this opinion in the following way:

I can agree with that. I guess this is a good summary. In my opinion, certain things such as wilfulness are some kind of marketing concept with which you identify yourself, rather than a real mission statement, but that is ok.

Besides the four values included in the mission statement, the fans specified a plethora of values in relation to their club. Most values were positively associated with the club, such as its local and national anchoring. Nonetheless, representatives of all types of fans criticized their club for lacking a focus on certain values, such as health and affordability. More precisely, many fans argued for a smoking ban throughout the stadium, whereas other fans would love to see healthy alternatives for the hamburgers and fries served in the stadium. With regard to affordability, many of the interviewed "fans" and "social devotees" feared the ever-increasing costs related to being a fan would lead to the repudiation of football as a "working class sport."

Next to the characteristics and values mentioned during the interviews, allusions were specifically made to decision making and leader behaviour. All fans stated they

attach a certain importance to fan involvement within the club. They considered a form of dialogue to be a minimum requirement. Regarding this dialogue, fans acknowledged a positive historical evolution towards more club interest in the fans, but they remained indecisive as to how far this dialogue should go from their point of view, and on how this dialogue should take shape. In general, fans wanted to feel appreciated, as they experienced a need for a respectful relationship with the club leadership.

7.4.1.2 Moral manager

A key aspect of the ethical leadership conceptualization is that leaders should act as reliable and visible role models, so that people can observe and imitate their behaviour (Kaptein, 2017). Our findings indicate fans do not consider the club leaders as role models for their own behaviour. In fact, fans looked up to the players, not to the board members or managers. Fan n° 7 stated he would not hang up a poster of the board or the management in his bedroom, and fan n° 14 formulated the idea as follows: “No, my role models are the players. The board must ensure that the players are on the field, that is it.” Moreover, the fans we interviewed did not aspire to follow in the footsteps of their club’s leaders. Arguments for renouncing ambitions in this regard are the stress, workload, and inherent ingratitude associated with board and management positions.

Furthermore, nearly all fans emphasized the importance of an approachable club, which is transparent in its communication. In general, fans strongly desired to be informed about fan initiatives, player transfers, and the values and slogan of the club. Fans appreciated the communication of their club, but at the same time, they also realized that total transparency and openness are not desirable in some situations, such as year-end accounts and negotiations about player transfers. Fan n° 10 expressed these expectations in a striking manner:

I find the club to be very open and transparent concerning the aspects that they should communicate about. Of course, they should not engage in revealing their year-end accounts and such. As a supporter, I have the feeling that I know what I have to know. The club always provides an explanation about certain aspects. For example, if they have bought a new player, they will always explain why.

Mixed feelings were present when it comes to the reinforcement element of ethical leadership. On the one hand, fans regarded correct behaviour on behalf of the fans as no less than being the norm. On the other hand, most fans argued they would love to see the club taking actions to reward the fans for their exemplary behaviour, in the form of, for example, free beer or lower season ticket prices. Regarding the punishment of unethical and criminal fan behaviour, fans supported a strict approach to punishing hooliganism and discriminatory banners or chants, although they also claimed there should be room for second chances. Fan n° 17 formulated her concerns in the following manner:

The club approaches this very well. [...] Also with regard to certain banners. You cannot tolerate such things if your aim is to attract families to football. I consider a stadium ban to be a correct decision in that case. However, I also find it good that they pronounce conditional stadium bans, as this shows that you have to do penance for your actions, but this also shows that you do not have to do penance for the rest of your life if it only happens once.

The same “carrot-and-stick” approach was also preferred by the majority of fans when presenting them with the three vignettes. All fans credited the club in fining and suspending the player who had insulted (the fans of) a rival club. However, most fans argued the club’s rhetoric of naming and shaming, and eventually getting rid of the player, went too far. These fans referred to the player’s young age, to claim that the club should have offered him yet another chance, out of some kind of pedagogical responsibility. Interestingly, some fans – such as fan n° 12 – pointed to the player’s irrefutable talent, to suggest the club also damaged its own potential:

The punishment he received was appropriate, but I find that the club should not have been so severe in the media. They have dragged him through the mud, and that was exaggerated. Personally, I would not have put him on loan. With regard to performing on the field, he could definitely still have offered added-value to the club.

The reactions of the fans on the situation described in the second vignette – referring to the player of a rival team who was threatened at his home – supported the inappropriateness of these acts. Furthermore, the interviewed fans fully agreed with how the club had actually dealt with this situation.

Moreover, the third vignette – regarding the critique of the coach on the referees – demonstrated that fans’ moral principles are bendable in situations in which a perceived competitive disadvantage occurs. More precisely, all “casual followers” and “fans” we interviewed, felt the critique of the coach on the referees – and the support of the club’s leadership for the coach’s critique – was justified, although perhaps a little exaggerated due to its timing in the “heat of the moment.” The main argument was that the performances of these referees endangered the sportive ambitions of the club. Whereas many of the interviewed “social devotees” and “committed supporters” agreed with this argument, some judged the reaction of the leadership as too strongly and too emotionally worded. They – such as fan n° 12 – pointed to the exemplary function of the club’s leadership:

This statement took place in the heat of the moment. The president is of course someone who deeply cares for the club, but someone so high in the hierarchy of the organization should not say such things. He may comment, but this statement was very explicit. He has, just like his players, an exemplary function. [...] It is basically about the manner in which the statement has been made.

7.4.1.3 Moral entrepreneur

The role of the football club in terms of moral entrepreneurship was assessed by looking into the fans’ perceptions of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities of the club. The CSR activities of the focal club are implemented by the foundation of the club, and are generally considered to be operating on a very high, innovative, and visible level. It is thus quite surprising that many of the interviewed “casual followers” and “fans” seemed unaware about the several CSR activities. The same limited knowledge appeared when interviewing most “social devotees,” who declared to be uninterested in the CSR activities of the club. Also, they considered it to be a “peripheral” task of a football club. Fan n° 13 explained:

It is even totally unimportant for me, as I perceive it to be a peripheral issue. A football club is a football club. Do not get me wrong, I am not against it and it is a nice initiative, but it is not necessary for me.

Despite the general CSR unawareness applicable to most (types of) fans, the “committed supporters” we interviewed, explained they are well aware of the CSR

activities of the club, which they also regarded to be of considerable importance. In particular, “the committed supporters” in our interview sample acknowledged CSR to be advantageous in terms of the reputation and general appearance of the club.

7.4.2 Fans as “stakeowners” and ethical leadership

In general, fans supported the idea that being a fan entails a relationship with the club which is characterized by certain rights as well as responsibilities. This supports fans’ experience as having a stake within their club, whilst it also suggests they see themselves as “stakeowners.” However, fans remained somehow indecisive in terms of how far this stake should go. Is some kind of passive dialogue sufficient, or do fans require a formal stake and actual participation? It seems the vast majority of fans preferred respect and a willingness to listen on behalf of the club, over actual participation and a formal fan position within the club’s leadership. Next to representation issues (i.e. which fans (not) to include?), fans emphasized the strength of their own emotional involvement and lack of experience for not claiming a formal position. Fan n° 2 formulated this idea as follows:

I think that the voices of the fans should be heard, but being part of the board, that is something else. I think that fans will act too soon when decisions are to be made, and that they will not think about underlying principles.

Additionally, several fans raised concerns about the feasibility of making certain fans (i.e. hooligans) responsible and accountable for their behaviour. In particular, they claimed that the urge to fight and to clash with fans of other clubs would prevent hooligans from being genuinely open to the idea of shared responsibilities.

When it comes to the opinion of the club’s leadership regarding considering fans as “stakeowners,” mixed signals were found. On the one hand, interviews with the head of the foundation and with the club SLO – as well as the study of the foundation’s policy plan – indicated the club is thinking about assigning a formal position to the fans. The foundation’s policy plan explicitly stated that offering fans a formal position would increase their engagement and responsibility, whilst also decreasing chances of fan protest and violence.

The club director was positive about the responsibilities between the club and fans needing to go both ways, but he also expressed a number of reasons for not offering

fans a formal position within the club at this point in time. First, he claimed there has to be a broad representation of the fans – some kind of overarching organization of all fans, instead of a federation of supporters' clubs – so the club has a clear conversation partner. Second, he stated that, due to the specific structure of the club as a non-commercial business, board members are unable to sell their shares or to make a profit. Consequently, he perceived the current board members to be a kind of fan, instead of mere businessmen looking for profit, so he argued fans were already somehow represented in the board. Third, he declared the club believes in transparency and dialogue, while at the same time referring to the limited interest and knowledge of the fans about the complex mechanisms of today's football world. He seemed to suggest that most fans do not have the skills, nor the interest, to lead a football club:

Without wanting to be irreverent, I guess that the interests of the fans mainly focus on the prices of the match day tickets and the merchandising, and on sportive aspects such as player transfers and performances on the field. I believe that only five percent of fans are interested in aspects that go beyond these things.

Moreover, the club's leadership did not see assigning a formal role to the fans as an aspect of ethical leadership on their behalf.

7.5 Discussion and conclusion

This study's purpose was to improve our understanding of (a) the value fans attach to ethical leadership within their club; and (b) the support for fans' reciprocal, moral relationship with their club. Specifically, the study sought to gain insights whether fans cared about ethical leadership (*RQ10*) and being a "stakeowner" to their football club (*RQ11*), paying particular attention to any differences between types of fans. Additionally, this study considered if the football club's leadership supported the conceptualization of fans as "stakeowners" and if it believed ethical leadership might promote fans' "stakeownership" (*RQ12*).

As discussed below, findings showed fans care about certain aspects of ethical leadership – especially if it directly concerns them – whereas they care less about other aspects, such as CSR. Although this finding raises important questions whether

the fans we interviewed really care about ethics at all, or whether they are just self-interested, more research on fans' general moral intentions (outside a soccer context) is required to answer these questions (Smith & Lord, 2018). Moreover, fans indicated support for their own role as "stakeowners." Regarding *RQ10* and *RQ11*, only small differences according to the types of fans were discernable. Finally, although the implementation of football club ethical leadership in the form of strengthening fans' participation could positively impact fans' behaviour (see García & Welford, 2015; Smith & Lord, 2018), findings indicated the club's leadership put more emphasis on fans' responsibilities than on their "rights" and expectations. In sum, these findings enhance our understanding on the value fans attach to ethical leadership, and the perceptions of both fans and football club leadership on their respective roles (Constandt & De Waegeneer, 2018; Zheng & García, 2017).

As such, this study's findings provide a multifold contribution to at least three research domains. First, an addition to the broader literature on ethical leadership is offered, by drawing on an external stakeholder perspective. Although the focus was on football fans, this study meets Heres's (2014, 2015) call to examine how external stakeholders determine relevant content related to ethical leadership. It is important to realize that ethical leadership renders effects beyond the internal operation of the organization, as external stakeholders can experience "direct and tangible effects on how ethical leadership is understood and practiced" (Heres, 2015, pp. 175-176). On the other hand, it also seems that social distance adds a certain carelessness factor to stakeholders' expectations about ethical leadership. To wit, this study's findings showed how some fans did not seem to care about ethical leadership aspects that did not directly influence their own lives or experiences. This finding will be further discussed in the next paragraphs.

Although certain general trends were observable among all interviewed fans, this study indicates there is no one idealized view on ethical leadership that suits the expectations of all fans. This finding supports the idea that the meaning of ethical leadership is dynamic and largely individually depending on "the moral eye of the beholder" (Giessner et al., 2015; Heres, 2015). Furthermore, the findings support the argument fans are a heterogeneous stakeholder group (Biscaia et al., 2018; Gammelsæter, 2010).

In spite of these individual differences, one general trend found in the present study was that the vast majority of fans wish to see honesty and reliability in the club's leadership, supplemented with open and effective communication in the form of an established dialogue with the fans. These findings are consistent with Cleland (2010), whose fan questionnaire signalled recurring themes such as "listen to the fans," "respect the fans," "keep fans better informed," and "more openness and honesty." Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean fans want to be represented in the board. Rather, fans' opinions concurred with a recent practical suggestion of *Sportwereld*, one of Belgium's main sport newspapers. Based on an investigation involving all of Belgium's highest division professional football clubs, *Sportwereld* argued the harmony and sustainability of the relationship between clubs and fans would increase when clubs invest in transparency and dialogue (Vandewalle, 2018; Van den Broeck, 2018). Furthermore, the highlighted relevance of communication to fans is strongly consistent with the proposition that football fans who feel sufficiently informed are more likely to experience an intimate and truly reciprocal relationship with their club (Koenigstorfer et al., 2010). Finally, findings related to the need to communicate about ethics and the desirability of reasonable reinforcement also support the empirical work conducted by Heres and Lasthuizen (2012).

Moreover, a second general trend encompassed certain aspects of the ethical leadership conceptualization as not being strongly valued by fans. For example, most fans – except the "committed supporters" we interviewed – were not aware, nor interested when it came to their club engaging as a moral entrepreneur. This study approached the role of moral entrepreneurship by asking the fans about the innovative CSR activities of the club. Remarkably, these CSR activities were not deemed to be a priority by fans, in contrast to the sporting performances of the club. This finding displays the relative importance of some principles (e.g. social support) in cases in which the support of these principles is compared with other principles, such as sporting success. This is also a more realistic understanding of the situation, which can help managers set priorities (e.g. sporting success over CSR) when resources are limited.

This finding regarding fans not caring about CSR contradicts the study by Walker and Kent (2009), which demonstrates that club reputation as well as fans' patronage intentions are stimulated if the club engages in CSR. Given the limited

generalizability of the present study's findings, more research is needed to examine the linkages between ethical leadership and CSR (De Roeck & Farooq, 2018). It may be an issue of the context or differences when drilling down on specific different aspects of specific concepts. Moral entrepreneurship could be an interesting concept to bridge the gap between both research domains (Kaptein, 2017).

A second contribution of the study resides in its focus on fans with respect to leadership in sport management. As indicated by Welty Peachey and colleagues (2015), fans are uniquely able to impact organizational leadership in sport organizations, albeit their expectations of and actual impact on leadership are rarely mapped. While this study's findings concord with the assumption that the meaning of leadership in sport is socially constructed and context-dependent (see Billsberry et al., 2018), they also highlight that fans' actual impact on the studied football club's leadership should not be exaggerated. It was clear in this study that many fans were not informed about the differences between the board of directors and the management of their club, let alone that they felt able to influence their decisions. Thus, the actual importance of fans, previously assumed as critical in football's management, should be further investigated (García & Welford, 2015; García & Zheng, 2017).

Similarly, some fans experience difficulties in forming an opinion on their football club's leadership, which suggests they are operating too distantly from the leadership to make a personal assessment. Moreover, this indicates fans should not be featured as followers in a classical dichotomous relationship between leader and follower. In contrast, a broader stakeholder view on leadership in sport is strongly encouraged to be able to scrutinize the exact relevance of the fans in the leadership process (Kihl et al., 2010; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). As such, leadership is suggested to be a relational and interactions-based phenomenon, whose desired meaning is co-constructed by the leader as well as the stakeholders impacted by the leadership's decisions (Ferkins et al., 2018; Kihl et al., 2010).

Third, the study also contributes to the literature on the relationship between sport organizations and their fans, by connecting the expectations and perceptions of the fans with their duties and responsibilities (Bowen et al., 2017). Through the presentation of empirical findings on the (limited) support for the consideration of fans

as “stakeowners,” this study addressed the suggestion made by Ferkins and Shilbury (2015) to broadly apply the “stakeowner” concept in sport management research. Empirical findings demonstrated that both fans and club leadership regard fans as “stakeowners” to a certain extent. This supports the idea that an open, bidirectional relationship can enhance fan satisfaction (see Cleland, 2010) and the image and success of football clubs (see Koenigstorfer et al., 2010).

Nonetheless, from the interviewed fans’ perspective, it remains largely unclear how this bidirectional relationship – characterized by rights and responsibilities going both ways – should actually be implemented. Interviewed fans explained they endorse the need to have representation in or close to the club’s leadership, but all of them – except one – clearly stated they would not step up as a board member or manager given the opportunity. This demonstrates a disconnect between what fans want in “theory” and what they are willing to do “in practice,” a disconnect which should be further explored. This also highlights a “consumerist” attitude. Ethical leadership by soccer club leaders – especially communication about responsibilities – could help convincing fans that their involvement could (and perhaps should) go further than buying match day tickets and merchandising. As such, fans might get persuaded that they are real “stakeowners,” including the responsibility to display active involvement when given the chance. However, further examination is recommended to offer more nuance on these terms and their application in real-world settings.

Furthermore, fans raised concerns regarding how all fans – especially hooligans – could be made responsible and accountable, and regarding if and how fans without season tickets should and could be given a voice in the decision making process of the club. We suggest investing in official fan forums and organizing regular and open fan consultations or conferences could be worthwhile to give all interested fans a voice.

Fans’ concerns were echoed by the club’s leadership, albeit not without raising additional apprehensions. On the one hand, the leadership endorsed fans’ relevance. In fact, they dedicate a full chapter on the “next game: the fan as part of the club” in the club foundation’s policy plan to demonstrate their reflections regarding fans’ future role in the club. On the other hand, interviews with the head of the foundation and with one of the club’s directors yielded additional reservations. The idea of giving

fans an active and more formal position within the club seemed to be a suggestion without an actual timeline (Van den Broeck, 2018). Thus, the football club's leadership valued fans' responsibilities rather than their expectations.

Without aiming to generalize, these findings indicate that the idea of assigning football fans with an active and formal role within a club entails a lengthy reflection and planning process. Nonetheless, that the studied club – like many others – is thinking about showing a more formal appreciation to their fans evinces the idea that “fans can be a force for the good” in football (García & Zheng, 2017, p. 3).

While some avenues for future research are already reflected in the discussion above, the main limitations of this study, along with some derived future research ideas, are discussed below. Certain criticism could be raised about the nature of the study design (a single case study). Although García and Welford (2015) advocated using multiple case studies, these authors also suggested applying a stakeholder perspective to study fans, drawing on empirical samples from outside the UK, as was the case in the present study. Nonetheless, additional studies that included multiple football clubs from different countries would facilitate further cultural comparisons between clubs of countries with and without established fan involvement (García & Welford, 2015). Another interesting avenue for future research would be to focus further on the differences between the types of fans regarding ethical duties and “stakeownership,” thereby building on a large sample of fans of more than one soccer club. As such, analyses would be enabled whether these fan types differ concerning their relationship with the club, their expectations, and the value they attach to ethical leadership. Institutional pluralism could hereby provide an interesting angle to consider how fans are carrying different institutional logics, not only relating to identity, but also to bureaucracy (i.e. referring to rules, controls, and duties) (Gammelsæter, 2010).

Furthermore, another limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the study, as the interviews were conducted during one time period. In contrast, longitudinal research allows an analysis of how fan expectations and the characteristics of club-fan relationships may vary over time (Biscaia et al., 2018) and potentially influenced by club activities and performance. One way would be to use innovative, qualitative methods, such as smartphone apps, to examine how fans' perceptions of ethical

leadership are versatile, dependent not only on time, but also on the sporting success of the club (García et al., 2016; Welford et al., 2015).

Finally, the present study addressed the calls of both ethical leadership research (see Heres, 2014, 2015) and sport management leadership research (Ferkins et al., 2018; Kihl et al., 2010; Parent et al., 2009; Welty Peachey et al., 2015) to apply a stakeholder perspective. Nevertheless, the study focused on fans. As football clubs engage with many relevant (external) stakeholder groups (e.g. the media, sponsors, the government), we suggest broadening the perspective to these stakeholders as well (see Constandt & Willem, 2019). Another likely contribution to the study of ethical leadership in sport management could be the exploration of the presence of two distinct types of role modelling in the context of soccer clubs. In addition to an *internal* type (i.e. board → coach and coach → player) that was recently highlighted (see Constandt & Willem, 2019; Constandt et al., 2018), an *external* type (i.e. player → fan) was showcased by our findings. However, future research is needed to examine how organizational boundaries shape these two types of role modelling. From a theoretical perspective, it could be interesting to further expose the links between strongly connected concepts such as leadership, governance, and stakeholder management to scrutinize their overlap and distinctness (Ferkins et al., 2018). Furthermore, we advocate future sport management research on leadership to examine how using different conceptual lenses (e.g., ethical leadership, servant leadership, transformational leadership, and authentic leadership), might lead to complementary or additional results in regards to leadership outcomes that relate to ethical behaviour

7.6 References

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PART III: GENERAL DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 8: MAIN FINDINGS AND OVERALL DISCUSSION

8.1 Overview of the main findings

The main objective of this doctoral dissertation is to provide insight into the influence of ethics management in football clubs. Building on the four distinct empirical studies that were outlined in Chapters 4-7, we are able to display innovative findings concerning two aspects of ethics management, namely ethical codes and ethical leadership. In the forthcoming paragraphs, these findings will be sketched in relation to the research questions that were listed in Chapter 3.

With regard to ethical codes, our research on the effectiveness of ethical codes in football clubs (**Chapter 4**) is the first study to examine the effectiveness of structural determinants of ethical codes longitudinally in any context. Longitudinal work on ethical codes is much-anticipated, as it is the only appropriate way to enable causal claims (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008; Singh et al., 2011). We use a so-called “shared perceptions” approach to study ethical code effectiveness. Based on a repeated-measurements ANOVA of the ethical climate of 47 football clubs, our research indicates a positive evolution of the ethical climate in these football clubs of 26% over three years’ time (*RQ 1*). Furthermore, our research showcases that the mere presence of an ethical code does not contribute to this positive evolution (*RQ 2*). However, certain structural determinants of an ethical code are contributing to this evolution (*RQ 3*). These determinants are: (a) the motivation to professionalize when creating the code, (b) the involvement of sponsors when designing the code, (c) the presence of a helpdesk for people having questions or issues (provided by the board of the club), and (d) whistle-blowing protection. In contrast to these positive determinants, the involvement of other stakeholders rather than the board members, management, players, coaches, fans, sponsors, or parents, is shown to have a negative effect on the evolution of the football clubs’ ethical climate.

In the three empirical studies that succeed our work on ethical codes, we elaborate on the influence and the perceived meaning of ethical leadership in football clubs. In a study focusing on coach ethical leadership (**Chapter 5**), we draw on the perceptions of 436 football players – and on regression analyses – to demonstrate that player-perceived coach ethical leadership is positively related to players’ affective organizational commitment (*RQ 4*). Moreover, the same study pinpoints that player-perceived coach ethical leadership is positively related to the player-perceived

ethical climate in football clubs (*RQ 5*). A final finding of this study highlights that the effect of players' perceptions of coach ethical leadership on players' affective organizational commitment is largely indirect and runs for 2/3 (64%) via the ethical climate of the football club (*RQ 6*). In addition, this study also reveals a small yet significant effect of the player's organizational tenure on his/her organizational commitment. This means that players who have been involved with their football club for a long time experience a higher extent of loyalty towards the club compared to colleagues who joined more recently.

In a third empirical study (**Chapter 6**), we build on the position of the coach as an ethical leader in football clubs. Next to the role of the coach as both an enhancer of the ethical climate in football clubs and as a stimulator of players' commitment, we hypothesized that the coach is also able to fulfil an indirect role. Based on regression and mediation analyses of the perceptions of 438 players and 106 coaches, this study reveals that the effect of board ethical leadership on the ethical climate of the football club is partly indirect and runs for 1/5 (21%) via coach ethical leadership (*RQ 7* and *RQ 9*). Formulated differently, the coach seems to act as a go-between to transfer (or to translate) ethical leadership of the board to the rest of the football club. Moreover, the effect of board ethical leadership on the ethical climate of the football club is moderated by the function of who is judging, meaning that this effect is stronger when perceived by coaches than when perceived by players (*RQ 8*). A final finding of this study is that female players and coaches rate the ethical climate of their football club significantly higher than their male colleagues.

In a fourth and last empirical study (**Chapter 7**), we expand our view on ethical leadership in football clubs beyond the perceptions of important internal stakeholders, such as the players and coaches. More precisely, with the help of interviews and document analysis, we look into the opinions of the fans on ethical leadership in football clubs to enhance our understanding about why and how ethical leadership might (not) work. To highlight the importance of fans, we first argue that fans have become "stakeowners" of their football club, being legitimate stakeholders with certain rights and responsibilities (Fassin, 2012). Our fan interviews imply that fans care about ethical leadership in their football club, but mainly about the aspects that impact themselves, such as clear communication and fan empowerment (*RQ10*). Moreover, our research yields findings indicating that fans consider themselves to be

“stakeowners” of their club (*RQ 11*). However, fans put more emphasis on their rights (i.e. to be respected and to be heard) than on their responsibilities (i.e. to behave according certain standards). On the other hand, the leadership of the club shows a certain interest in their fans, but not really considers them as “stakeowners.” The club’s leadership questions the critical importance of fans as being core to football club’s leadership and activities (*RQ 12*).

8.2 Overall discussion

The empirical work reported in this dissertation offers an important theoretical and methodological contribution to different fields of study. In what follows, we will discuss the dissertation’s main findings in relation to the existing sport and business ethics, (non-profit) leadership, moral sport psychology, and sport management literature. We will thereby highlight how we believe these findings extended on existing theory and/or generated sport management specific theory (Doherty, 2013).

8.2.1 The positive evolution of the ethical climate in football clubs

In the first three empirical studies of this dissertation (Chapters 4-6), we turn specifically to the ethical climate of football clubs to assess the influence of ethics management (i.e. ethical codes and ethical leadership) in these clubs. With the choice to rely on ethical climate, we support the suggestion to turn ethical climate into “a mainstream management topic” (Mayer et al., 2009). The concept of ethical climate is rightfully gaining popularity as an area of study, due to its strong theoretical base and its ability to predict (un)ethical behaviour (Arnaud & Schminke, 2012; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Newman et al., 2017).

This dissertation meets the suggestion to study the evolution of the ethical climates in organizations (Newman et al., 2017). More precisely, our study on the effectiveness of ethical codes in football clubs (Chapter 4) shows a considerable positive evolution of the ethical climate in football clubs over three years’ time. This evolution cannot be ascribed to the mere presence or absence of an ethical code, and the five significant code determinants we will discuss in more detail in the following section only account for a small part of this evolution. Hence, the quest to discover other factors that contribute to this evolution remains open. Founding fathers Victor and Cullen (1988, p. 119) argue that an ethical climate within an organization is quite stable and robust,

as “those who fail to fit in an organization’s climate probably turn over.” Following this line of thought, potential disruptive individuals will rather leave the football club than stay and alter its ethical climate.

Although we are not able to provide empirical support for the influence of social norms, it is likely that the positive evolution of ethical climate is partly caused by a broader, societal trend of increased public attention on ethics in sport (Devisch, 2012; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). Another explanation could be the presence of strong and stable ethical leadership in football clubs, given the presumed, yet largely unsupported positive effect of ethical leadership on the ethical climate in sport organizations (De Waegeneer, 2015; Burton et al., 2017; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Leadership in general has been shown to be fundamental in realizing positive change in the culture and climate of an organization (Schein, 2010; Wells & Walker, 2016). In light of this assumption, we empirically tested the effect of both coach and board ethical leadership on the ethical climate in football clubs. Accompanying findings support the positive effect of both levels of ethical leadership. These findings will be discussed in more detail in a forthcoming section. Yet, it is important to stress that this research on ethical leadership was cross-sectional, and thus, cannot be used to explain the positive evolution in ethical climate.

Other important considerations related to the theoretical and methodological choices we have made should also be put into perspective. Whereas it is still most common to use Victor and Cullen’s (1988) “Ethical Climate Questionnaire” (ECQ) when measuring the ethical climate in organizations, recent work highlights the availability of a more advanced alternative in the form of Arnaud’s (2006, 2010) “Ethical Climate Index” (ECI) (De Waegeneer, 2015; Kalshoven et al., 2013; Newman et al., 2017). With the ECI, Arnaud (2006) developed and validated an improved measure of ethical climate. As discussed in detail in the general introduction of this dissertation, Arnaud’s (2006, 2010) ECI draws on Rest’s (1986) theory of moral reasoning to integrate all four steps of collective moral reasoning (i.e. moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character). The ECI thus offers a multidimensional measure of ethical climate. However, although our study on ethical codes (Chapter 4) specifies effects of code determinants on the four dimensions of ethical climate, our two quantitative ethical leadership studies (Chapters 5-6) were

unable to make such a fine-grained analysis. In these studies, the four dimensions appeared to be too strongly correlated to permit separate statistical analyses.

8.2.2 Ethical codes in football clubs: Necessary but not sufficient

The effectiveness of ethical codes in any type of organization is still heavily debated (Downe et al., 2016; Helin & Sändstrom, 2007; Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008). Although this dissertation does not aim to settle this debate once and for all, our longitudinal study on the structural determinants of ethical codes in football clubs sheds additional light to give this debate a new impetus. Empirical findings confirm that the mere presence of an ethical code in an organization is not sufficient to have a positive effect on an organization's ethical climate, which is the concept we used to assess ethical code effectiveness (De Waegeneer et al., 2017).

Although having an ethical code *as such* is not sufficient to have a positive effect on the football club's ethical climate, we still encourage football clubs to compose an ethical code. Composing an ethical code is a major step in shaping a formal ethics programme, and therefore, also of investing in ethics management (Downe et al., 2016; MacIntosh & Burton, 2019; Schwartz, 2013). At first glance, it is a seemingly easy step as many generally applicable ethical codes are available to find inspiration. For instance, research indicates that 9% of the sport clubs in Flanders replicated the Panathlon Declaration on Ethics in Youth Sports as their sole ethical code (De Waegeneer, 2015). However, caution is needed to make sure that adopting an ethical code goes beyond copying and pasting an existing one. An ethical code has to be tailor made, depending on the context and needs of the organization in question (De Waegeneer, 2015; Leigh, 2013). Hence, we believe that the adoption of an ethical code is recommended, but football clubs should bear the three following precautions in mind:

1. An ethical code has a dual function. The primary function is as a tool to prevent unethical behaviour committed by organizational members (MacIntosh & Burton, 2019). However, an ethical code also functions as a public relations tool to document the ethical policies of the organization to the external public (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016). Despite the importance of external communication of ethical policies, caution is in place to ensure that the ethical code is not simply a marketing instrument to *sell* the football club (i.e. to convince outsiders of the

club's integrity). The creation, content, implementation, and reinforcement of the ethical code are at least as important as its external communication (De Waegeneer, 2015).

2. Caution is also advised with regard to the occurrence of loophole ethics due to the existence of an ethical code. Loophole ethics refers to the risk that people presume anything not explicitly forbidden by the ethical code as implicitly allowed (Kvalnes & Hemmestad, 2010). For example, if a football player passes on confidential information about his/her team to an external party so this party can bet on football matches with prior knowledge, and the ethical code, nor any external legislation, stipulates that this is forbidden, it can be difficult for the club to enforce a change. The solution to loophole ethics may be to include a few general principles which leave room for interpreting case by case, rather than making an ethical code too detailed, including too many specific statements (Kvalnes & Hemmestad, 2010). In other words, the spirit of the code should be prioritized over the letter of the code (De Waegeneer & Willem, 2019).
3. On the other end of the continuum of loophole ethics is the risk of "hiding behind the rules" (Kihl, 2007). An ethical code is, in fact, a social contract between the organization and its members (Adelstein & Clegg, 2016). Adhering to the rules stipulated in the ethical code is required to be a member of the football club. However, people in sport organizations may "hide behind the rules" to avoid taking their responsibilities (Kihl, 2007). This expression means that, when a moral dilemma occurs in which a person has to choose between his/her own personal values and the values/rules as described in the ethical code (or in other formal documents), the "easy" option is often to deactivate personal concerns and to adhere to the written rules (Kihl, 2007). An example may clarify this abstract phrase: code regulations in a football club stipulate that everyone engaging in aggressive behaviour should be dismissed, but you know, as a board member of the club, that a particular case of aggression by a minor player is due to a combination of personal problems and being bullied. The easy decision is to dismiss the player, because to consider all facts first would require more effort; however this consideration may be "the right" pedagogical thing to do. A final thought hereabout is that we believe "hiding behind the rules" can be a form of moral disengagement in the sense that one denies or shifts responsibilities for his/her own actions to the organization as an abstract entity (Kvalnes, 2014).

Alongside the general remarks on the effectiveness of the ethical codes in football clubs, there are five significant findings on the effectiveness of structural determinants of the ethical code, offering theoretical insights into which formal aspects of an ethical code (and ethics management) are (not) effective. First, it was found that a football club that creates an ethical code with the motivation of professionalizing, is expected to experience an increase in its collective moral sensitivity. This was surprising due to the contradiction with previous research (see De Waegeneer et al., 2017). However, this finding can be explained because investing in ethics and professionalization is seen to go hand-in-hand in football clubs (Whysall, 2014). Second, the positive effect of sponsors on the increase in the collective moral sensitivity of football clubs reinforces the assumption that important stakeholders should be consulted when establishing an ethical code. However, a third finding highlights that the involvement of stakeholders who are not at the core of the club (such as referees or sport journalists) has a negative effect on the increase in the collective moral judgment and moral character in football clubs. Thus, the input from distant stakeholders in the code creation phase might endanger several levels of collective moral reasoning in football clubs. Fourth, the presence of an internal helpdesk – in the form of reachable board members – has a positive effect on the evolution of the collective moral sensitivity in the football clubs. This finding confirms the importance of ethical leadership in sport clubs, understood as the crucial nature of leaders to create an ethical context within sport clubs (Burton & Welty Peachey, 2014; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Fifth, the finding that whistle-blowing protection has a positive influence on the collective moral judgment in football clubs is strongly consistent with the advice to offer a safe haven for people who want to report unethical practices (Singh, 2011).

In sum, an ethical code should be seen as a necessary, but insufficient, first step of an ethics programme and, as a consequence, of ethics management in football clubs (De Waegeneer et al., 2017; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2016; Kaptein, 2009, 2015; Leigh, 2013). While an ethical code raises awareness for ethics, and certain structural determinants of an ethical code are helpful to stimulate the four dimensions of the ethical climate in football clubs, a few general precautions need to be considered. Moreover, ethical leadership is needed to translate the ethical code into practice, by demonstrating how the ethical code should be interpreted (Downe et al.,

2016; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2016). This also limits the chances that the code reinforcement rules – potential sanctions – have to be activated (Downe et al., 2016).

8.2.3 Ethical leadership in football clubs as a subjective phenomenon

We examined ethical leadership in football clubs in three empirical studies, thereby drawing on the perceptions of different types of stakeholders (i.e. players, coaches, and fans). The first ethical leadership study centred on the coach as ethical leader. Findings indicate that coach ethical leadership influences both the ethical climate of the football clubs and the affective organizational commitment of adult players. We thereby expand current insights in the ethical impact of the coach. For example, we indicate that the influence of the coach on player's (un)ethical behaviour is not limited to minor players (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Chow et al., 2009). Moreover, our emphasis on ethical climate and affective organizational commitment as outcomes of ethical leadership supports the suggestion to investigate specific and relevant consequences of moral behaviour in sport (Kavussanu, 2008).

When it comes to our second ethical leadership study, important contributions to the non-profit management literature are provided. In particular, our findings that the effect of board ethical leadership on the ethical climate runs partly through coach ethical leadership suggests that the trickle-down effect (or cascading or waterfall effect) of ethical leadership is also present in non-profit organizations (Hansen et al., 2013; Mayer et al., 2009; Ruiz et al., 2011). In football clubs, top-level ethical leadership appears to be contagious (in a positive way), by influencing ethical leadership on behalf of the coach and the ethical climate of the football club. Or, formulated differently, the organizational level of board ethical leadership seems to need the nearby level of coach ethical leadership to fully trickle-down to the players and the organization as a whole. Again, this reinforces the importance of the coach, not only as a direct influence on the players, but also as a mediator to translate formal, organizational ethical policies to the players.

Moreover, our follower-centric approach (see Fehr et al., 2015; Heres et al., 2017) to analyse the perceptions of ethical leadership in football clubs of players, coaches, and fans is an asset to the sport management literature. It is also in accordance with the suggestion to examine sport leadership as a socially constructed and stakeholder-dependent phenomenon (Kihl et al., 2010; Welty Peachey et al., 2015).

Our qualitative study on fan perceptions of ethical leadership broadens the view of what relevant external stakeholders think about ethical leadership (Heres, 2015; Heres et al., 2017). Consequently, this dissertation extends current ethics management theory, introducing stakeholder theory to supplement and enrich the theories that are currently still dominant to explain the management of ethics in organizations, such as Rest's (1986) theory of moral decision making and Bandura's (1986) social learning theory (Ho, 2011).

Although fans are increasingly valued in professional football, there is still a lack of empirical evidence of their opinions and of their potential impact on football club leadership (García & Welford, 2015; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Interestingly, ethical leadership in football clubs does not seem to have much impact on the fans we interviewed. The fans were mainly interested in the aspects that impacted their own lives, such as fan empowerment and clear ethics communication, which brings the question: are fans only concerned with their self-interests? This finding also confirms the concept that perceptions of ethical leadership are strongly dependent on the distance (both physically and mentally) between the leaders and who is judging (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Tumasjan et al., 2011). Football clubs' boards of directors and management are operating quite distinctly from the fans, which adds to a rather indifferent fan view of their leadership.

As such, the reported trickle-down and fan studies shed theoretical light on the boundary conditions of ethical leadership, being the conditions that might alter, hinder, and/or nullify the effects of ethical leadership (Neves & Story, 2015). More precisely, both studies contribute to explaining when and under which conditions ethical leadership might be effective in rendering positive consequences. After all, important information on the role of (social) distance, or the presence/absence of a direct connection between leader and observer (i.e. follower/stakeholder) on being susceptible for ethical leadership is shown: (a) board ethical leadership in football only fully trickles down to players when supplemented or translated by coach ethical leadership, and (b) fans do not really seem to care about (most aspects of) ethical leadership. These findings also highlight how social distance may pose a certain limitation regarding the explanatory power of social learning theory when it comes to the effect of leadership on more distinct observers.

Additionally, our fan study on ethical leadership not only contributes to the small yet growing qualitative body of literature on ethical leadership, it also is one of the first studies to empirically assess the moral entrepreneur role of ethical leadership. Next to the heavily analysed moral person and moral manager roles of ethical leadership, Kaptein (2017) recently argued to scrutinize moral entrepreneurship as a third important role of ethical leadership. Moral entrepreneurship refers to the fact that an ethical leader should also be innovative, by implementing new ethical norms when current norms appear to be insufficient to tackle ethical issues (Kaptein, 2017). We asked fans what their positions towards moral entrepreneurship in their football club were. The purpose of this was to conceptualize moral entrepreneurship as the social activities of the club, for example, the support for a homeless team or talent identification initiatives in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Most fans did not really care about these initiatives, and considered them to be of secondary importance compared to the performances on the sporting field of the club. This finding is contrasted by the work of Walker and Kent (2009), which displays that the reputation of the club, as well as fans' consuming patterns, might be stimulated if the club engages in these kind of activities.

Along with the discussion of these empirical and theoretical results on ethical leadership, we would like to offer some concluding remarks about defining ethical leadership. We recognize this does not overcome all conceptual vagueness, however, we support two recent additions to the dominant ethical leadership definition of Brown and colleagues (2005, p. 120). While Kaptein (2017, p. 12) proposed to include the aforementioned moral entrepreneur dimension of ethical leadership, Frisch & Huppenbauer (2014, p. 37) recommended to emphasize that ethical leadership should not be limited to influencing employees or internal stakeholders only. Given this, we suggest defining ethical leadership as (additions of both studies in bold): "the demonstration of normatively appropriate **and new** conduct **towards all stakeholders** through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication and decision-making."

Finally, when positioning our research on ethical leadership within the general leadership literature, it is in line with what "future" leadership research should display (Yammarino, 2013). Prominent leadership author Yammarino (2013) distinguished

six major areas of future leadership research. We adhere explicitly to at least three of his recommendations. First, our approach to integrate both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interviews and vignettes) methods to study ethical leadership underscores the importance of mixed-methods leadership research. Second, our research assesses specific mediators (e.g. ethical climate) and moderators (e.g. type of stakeholder that judges) impacting the outcomes of ethical leadership, which supports the suggestion to look into the underlying processes of leadership. Third, our approach to analyse perceptions of both leaders (board members and coaches) and a wide range of followers (from players to fans) meets the call to study leadership as an interactive phenomenon.

8.2.4 Ethical behaviour in football: A nuanced story

Our research sheds important empirical light on the two dimensions of ethical behaviour in sport, (a) the *prosocial* (i.e. engaging in prosocial behaviour) and (b) the *inhibitive* dimension (i.e. refraining from antisocial behaviour) (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009). More precisely, we show how coach ethical leadership affects the ethical climate in football clubs as perceived by the players (considered as part of the inhibitive dimension of ethical behaviour) and players' affective organizational commitment (considered as part of the prosocial dimension of ethical behaviour). An ethical climate may inhibit (prevent) unethical behaviour, because it provides guidance and support in terms of desired behaviour (Dickson et al., 2001; van Gils et al., 2017). Moreover, affective organizational commitment is an important form of prosocial behaviour in football, given that football clubs on all levels of play are struggling to survive due to a lack of (committed) players (Thibaut et al., 2016). The public perception is that football players are switching clubs regularly because of financial motives, whereas our research suggests that coach ethical leadership stimulates their commitment to the club.

Furthermore, our research contributes theoretically to the literature on bracketed (context dependent) morality in sport, considering the application of lower norms and moral development levels when engaging in sport compared to daily life (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986; Kavussanu & Ring, 2016; Kavussanu et al., 2013). Recent work indicates that bracketed morality in sport does not only exist in relation to athletes' (players) moral development, but also with regard to ethical behaviour of minor

athletes and fans (Kavussanu et al., 2013; Smith & Lord, 2018). Nevertheless, our research presents a certain, yet modest, nuance regarding the existence of bracketed morality in football, by indicating that coach ethical leadership leads to a similar extent of affective organizational commitment in football clubs compared to ethical leadership in business contexts. Therefore, as far as we can judge, no real differences between sport and other contexts seem present in the context of the influence of ethical leadership on affective organizational commitment.

Besides the empirical insights on ethical behaviour and bracketed morality in sport, our research also builds explicitly on two of the most widely adopted theories to study ethical behaviour in sport, namely Bandura's (1986, 1991) social cognitive theory and Rest's (1986) theory of moral development (Chow et al., 2009; Kavussanu, 2008). When it comes to social cognitive theory, we indicate that coach and board ethical leadership both function as important social influences through which players learn and model their own behaviour. Moreover, our multidimensional approach used to measure ethical climate through the ECI (Arnaud, 2006, 2010) reflects the importance of considering all four steps of moral development that are needed to come to ethical behaviour (Rest, 1986).

This dissertation's findings on ethical behaviour also raises the concept of how different sport is compared to society at large. Despite research highlighting how bracketed morality may turn people into less admirable versions of themselves when engaging in sports, it should be noted that sport is not distinct to, or separated from, broader society (Boxill, 2003). Sport philosophy conceptualizes sport as a *microcosm* – or miniature – of society, in which human behaviours are actively reflected, enlarged, and exaggerated (Boxill, 2003). The omnipresence of sport in today's society (i.e. the *sportification* of society, see e.g. Heere, 2018) may contribute to the abundant public covering of sport's ethical issues (Cronin, 2014). Some ethical issues in sport, such as match-fixing and doping seem sport-specific, but if one digs deeper, the underlying activities of corruption and performance enhancement are present outside sport as well. In the end, sport is perhaps not worse than the rest of society (see e.g. the similar presence of the #MeToo Movement in sport compared to

the broad leisure industry.)⁶ Notwithstanding that we cannot prove these assumptions based on the data we collected, it certainly provides food for further thought.

8.2.5 Football fans as “stakeowners”

In the last empirical study of this dissertation, we focused specifically on the fans and their opinions of ethical leadership in the professional football club they support. In this study, which can be seen as the first step in the direction of a broader stakeholder perspective on ethical leadership in football clubs, fans were chosen as subject of analysis due to their unique position. Football fans are arguably “one of the most important stakeholders” with regard to football club management (Biscaia et al., 2018, p. 460). Fans are influential because of to the combination of physical presence, economic and cultural value, and extensive loyalty (Biscaia et al., 2018; García & Welford, 2015). As a consequence of their unique position, fans are more and more actively involved in football club management (García & Welford, 2015; Ziesche, 2017).

Moreover, we consider fans as a very interesting stakeholder group when taking a normative point of view. We argue that fans have become “stakeowners” to their football club, meaning that they can be attributed with both rights (i.e. the right to be protected, respected, informed, and engaged) and responsibilities (i.e. the responsibility to behave according to certain behavioural standards). Or, as formulated by Bowen (2017) fans are entitled to have expectations, but they should at the same time be aware of their responsibilities. The “stakeowner” concept was developed as an elaboration of the “stakeholder” concept by Fassin (2012), and highlights the reciprocal nature of the responsibilities of stakeholder relationships. After its conceptual introduction in the field of sport management by Ferkins and Shilbury (2015), our empirical application of the “stakeowner” concept to fans is highly innovative. Findings suggest that both fans and club leadership regard fans as “stakeowners” to a considerable extent. This underscores the idea that a reciprocal relationship stimulates fan satisfaction (see Cleland, 2010) and the image and success of football clubs (see Koenigstorfer et al., 2010).

⁶ For an in-depth discussion on interpersonal violence in sport in general, and sexual abuse in sport in particular, please see the work of Tine Vertommen (2017), in which she compares the prevalence and nature of interpersonal violence in- and outside sport.

Nevertheless, despite the importance of fans as “stakeowners” to their club, it was interesting to find that many fans did not have high awareness of the distinctness between the board of directors and the management of their club. Moreover, fans did not have an interest in having a formal role within their club, nor did they feel they had an ability to influence the clubs’ decisions. Therefore, the actual importance of fans, previously assumed as critical in football clubs’ management, is a point for further examination.

8.3 Strengths and limitations

In addition to the aforementioned strengths and weaknesses in previous sections of the discussion, we would like to highlight the following additional points.

As already discussed at length, our longitudinal approach to study ethical codes and ethical climate in football clubs is innovative because it responds to explicit calls for longitudinal business ethics research (McLeod et al., 2016). In addition, applying a longitudinal instead of a cross-sectional study design to examine ethical leadership would have enabled much-anticipated causal claims regarding the directions of the relationships between ethical leadership and ethical climate (Ko et al., 2018; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). A longitudinal design to study ethical leadership in football clubs would therefore be an ideal avenue for a postdoctoral research phase.

Additionally, we decided to focus solely on the descriptive research line on ethical leadership, enabling to scrutinize how ethical leadership *is* characterized and perceived, and how it relates to certain outcomes (Bedi et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2005). As such, we did not foster knowledge regarding the latter, philosophical line of ethical leadership research, which considers what ethical leadership *should* look like (Ciulla et al., 2018; Flanigan, 2018). Hence, our research is not well-positioned to prescribe what the desired content of ethical leadership is, or in other words, to clarify what “normatively appropriate conduct” means in the context of football club leadership (Brown et al., 2005). On the other hand, the empirical work reported in this dissertation generates important knowledge about the mechanisms and outcomes of ethical leadership, while it also responds to recent calls to study ethical leadership in sport contexts in an empirical and descriptive manner (Bedi et al., 2016; Burton & Welty Peachey, 2014; Ko et al., 2018; Welty Peachey et al., 2015).

Moreover, a possible critique when assessing this dissertation is linked to how wide its angle or scope is. This dissertation scrutinizes the influence of ethics management in football clubs in a focused manner, but while doing so, it applies a rather isolated perspective. By isolated, we mean the role and support of the authorities and football federations is not included. A cynical individual could argue that as long as there is no institutional change at the top of the seemingly corrupt football world, no substantial improvement at the grassroots levels will occur. However, we argue that football clubs have the ability to make a change by investing in ethics management, even if there is no support on behalf of the federation, or despite the existence of institutional or national corruption. In sum, we support the assumption that change can also happen bottom-up.

Within our ethical leadership research, emphasis is put on individual perceptions of ethical leadership. We underscore this suggestion to consider ethical leadership as something that mainly exists “in the eye of the beholder” (see Giessner et al., 2015) or “rests within the observer” (see Billsberry et al., 2018, p. 175). As such, we support the idea that the influence of leadership on a follower’s behaviour will be influenced by the individual leader perception of the follower rather than by the shared leader perception of all followers (Giessner et al., 2015). It is logical to argue that individual behaviour is influenced by what the individual thinks rather than by what the average perception of a group or organization is. Therefore, we regard ethical leadership as a largely subjective process between leader and follower, of which the meaning depends on the personal ideas of who is judging (Fehr et al., 2015; Heres et al., 2017; van Gils et al., 2015). Although the survey instruments we used in two of our three ethical leadership studies are rooted in a (post)positivist research tradition, we believe that leadership is a socially constructed and context-dependent process between leader and follower (Billsberry et al., 2018; Fehr et al., 2015; Kihl et al., 2010). In fact, we drew on a pragmatic stance to study ethical leadership. As such, we believe preferred methods are not settled in stone, but depend on “the problem” of study, and on the questions asked regarding this problem (Creswell, 2013). Future research is advised to further expose the influence of context on leadership in sport with qualitative methods, given the social and cultural embeddedness of ethical leadership (Kihl et al., 2010).

Additionally, future quantitative sport management research on ethics management is encouraged to develop sport-specific measurement scales to study ethical leadership and ethical climate. Despite that the ELS and the ECI we applied in a slightly adapted form (see Appendix B) are coherent, reliable, validated, and popular scales, the use of sport-specific measurement scales could have helped to provide a stronger contribution to sport management theory (Doherty, 2013). A more profound integration of the context-specificity of sport and football in our questionnaires could have facilitated a stronger contribution to the sport management literature (Doherty, 2013). In spite of the clear merits of the ELS and the ECI, one could also question the extent to which these relative short scales are able to represent the full theoretical wealth and complexity of the underlying theories (i.e. social cognitive theory, social exchange theory, and Rest's (1986) model of moral decision making).

Next to the limitation posed by our general (not sport-specific) measurement scales, it should also be noted that our samples bear a restricted representativeness. For example, due to logical attrition between measurements and the fact that we partly built on an existing sample, our longitudinal study (reported in Chapter 4) only included 5-8% of all associated amateur football clubs in Flanders. However, this particular study is a much-anticipated first longitudinal study on ethical climate in any setting (Newman et al., 2017). Moreover, given the sensitive nature of questions targeting ethical themes, reported response rates are in line with what is considered as "reasonable" by the business ethics literature (Ruiz et al., 2011). Anyhow, as convincing football stakeholders to participate in research can be challenging, future work is prompted to contemplate about strategies to obtain larger sample sizes.

Furthermore, in contrast to our approach to study leadership based on individual perceptions, leadership in sport could also be analysed as a collective and shared phenomenon (Ferkins et al., 2018a). Therefore, we would like to advocate future research to apply multilevel study designs (Yammarino, 2013; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Through multilevel analyses and the aggregation of leadership perceptions, results about the nested structure of different leadership levels within football clubs would be facilitated (Welty Peachey et al., 2015). By proposing the combination of quantitative and qualitative research (i.e. mixed-methods research) on sport leadership, we also underscore the suggestion that both are complementary traditions instead of two irreconcilable extremes (Bryman, 2004).

A final reflection we would like to make relates to unethical behaviour in football. Ethical issues in football clubs are believed to be present on all level of play, ranging from the lowest amateur (i.e. grassroots, nonprofessional) levels to top-level professional football (Gardiner, 2018). Whereas this dissertation offers insights in ethics management in amateur (Chapters 4-6) as well as professional (Chapter 7) football clubs, most (all quantitative) empirical data were collected in amateur clubs. Accordingly, caution is in place to generalize results of our quantitative work on amateur football clubs to professional clubs. Interesting to note, however, is that regression analyses did not yield significant differences between the distinct levels of amateur clubs involved. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to centre more research attention on professional football clubs in the future, given that business and sport ethics research tend to largely neglect professional sport (Whysall, 2014). Moreover, the claim that the moral reasoning process of amateur football players is different and stronger than that of their professional counterparts asks for additional empirical verification (Ødegård & Breivik 2015). There is more at stake at the professional level (e.g. money and fame). Therefore, we estimate that the nature of the correlations between the studied variables may be distinct when tested in a professional football context.

8.4 Future research

Besides the specific avenues for future inquiry that were briefly touched upon in the previous chapters and paragraphs, we would like to make a plea for both empirical and conceptual research on these – and a few other – topics. We sincerely believe research on these topics would further move the field of ethics management in sport forward. The forthcoming overview is of course not exhaustive.

First, a holistic perspective on ethics management in football is strongly encouraged. By holistic, we mean a perspective that integrates not only the level of the football clubs, but also the political level and the level of the (inter)national football federations. Such a perspective would enable analyses of the extent to which top-down support is present for football clubs to deploy ethics management policies and practices. Expanding this research would help to analyse whether another type of trickle-down (cascading) effect exists, namely one in which ethics management by football federations trickles down to the football clubs. This holistic perspective would

not only provide a rich and contextualized view of ethics management in football, but it would also yield more conceptual clarity about strongly related concepts, such as ethics management, shared leadership, and good governance (Ferkins et al., 2018a; Tomlinson, 2014). Besides focusing on the influence of policy and structure, it would be worthwhile to look into the role of culture to consider potential differences between countries with regard to ethics management in football clubs.

If the scope, however, remains directed towards the level of the football clubs only as object of analysis, we would like to advocate future research to apply a stakeholder perspective to study ethical leadership in football clubs. Also, stakeholder theory could benefit from explicitly broadening its lens with ethical leadership insights. A stakeholder perspective on (ethical) leadership is strongly encouraged by recent academic work inside (see Kihl et al., 2010; Welty Peachey et al., 2015) and outside (see Heres, 2014, 2015) the field of sport management. Such a perspective is recommended to scrutinize how stakeholders impact ethical leadership and co-construct its desired meaning (Ferkins et al., 2018b; Heres, 2014; Kihl et al., 2010). This present dissertation examines the perceptions of the fans on ethical leadership in their football club. However, other important external stakeholder groups, including (national, regional, and local) governments, media, and sponsors are also able to influence leadership practices in football clubs (Welty Peachey et al., 2015). For example, the governments and sponsors can link behavioural standards or other conditions to subsidies and sponsor fees, while the media can draw specific public attention to certain issues. Nevertheless, knowledge is scarce around whether these stakeholder groups really care about ethical leadership in football clubs. It could also be interesting to examine if perceptions of ethical leadership in football clubs change due to scandals, such as the match-fixing and fraud scandal that shocked Belgian football in the fall of 2018 (Casert, 2018).

As indicated once more by this particular scandal, high-profile and mediatized incidents generate attention and public discontent for unethical behaviour in football, such as match-fixing, violence, doping, and sexual abuse. We would like to advocate to study the influence and reactions of ethical leadership, on different levels in football clubs, on these specific incidents. Ethical leadership is often portrayed as part of the solution to incidents of unethical behaviour, but empirical support is largely absent (Burton & Welty Peachey, 2014). This present dissertation is also limited in

this regard. While this dissertation enhances our understanding of the influence of ethical leadership on football players' affective organizational commitment and football clubs' ethical climate, it does not provide knowledge about the specific influence of ethical leadership on the most pressing forms of unethical behaviour in sport (e.g. match-fixing, sexual abuse, doping).

Moreover, if the aim is to make a contribution to the field of moral sport psychology, we suggest further exploration of how certain cognitive mechanisms are hindering ethical leadership. It would be interesting to evaluate how the effect of ethical leadership on ethical behaviour might be weakened by followers' moral disengagement. As discussed earlier, moral disengagement encompasses the cognitive neutralization of unethical behaviour, so one can engage in unethical behaviour without feeling bad about it (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2011; Kavussanu & Stanger, 2017). Moral disengagement might mediate or moderate the outcomes of ethical leadership, but empirical support is missing to a large extent (Kavussanu, 2008). It could also be interesting to investigate how some leaders in football express moral hypocrisy, by feeling ethical and appearing as an ethical leader to the outside world without being one in reality (Watson & Sheikh, 2008).

Additional research on ethical codes in football clubs is also strongly encouraged. This dissertation presents an innovative contribution to the ethical code literature, by examining the effectiveness of structural determinants of ethical codes in a longitudinal manner. It is also important to analyse the effectiveness of the content of ethical codes in football clubs, for example, to what extent does the tone of, or do certain statements in ethical codes have an impact (De Waegeneer et al., 2016)? Additionally, future research must make a clearer distinction between the different types of ethical codes when analysing their effectiveness. It is possible that on- and off-field ethical codes in football clubs will be characterized by distinct content and different determinants of effectiveness, compared to the good governance ethical codes of football federations (De Waegeneer & Willem, 2019).

A combination of different methods to study the influence of ethics management is a final recommendation for future research. Although we strongly believe in our approach of looking into the ethical climate of football clubs to study the influence of ethics management, we acknowledge that the integration of other methods could be

beneficial for a more integrative view. In particular, we would like to make a plea for mixed-methods case studies in football clubs, in which measuring (a) the ethical climate is combined with (b) the study of official reports of incidents and (c) with observation or an experiment. An integrated approach would incorporate the strengths of the three dominant methods to study ethics management, while at the same mitigating their weaknesses (Kaptein & Schwartz, 2008; Kavussanu, 2008).

8.5 The future of football imagined: The role of ethics management

In the forthcoming decades, the sustainability and attractiveness of football will be largely dependent on football's ability to deal with its ethical issues (Vanden Auweele et al., 2016). As argued by Vanden Auweele and others (2016), ethics management should be at the center of attention when imagining the future of sport. In this dissertation, innovative empirical results on the influence of two important tools of ethics management in football clubs (i.e. ethical codes and ethical leadership) are presented. Our results indicate that having an ethical code as such is not sufficient to realize a positive change to the ethical climate of a football club. If the ethical code is not the result of a well thought out process, the risk is present that the code is just a form of window dressing.

Accordingly, the real potential of an ethical code only emerges when the content and the spirit of the code are translated into practice by different levels of ethical leadership in a football club. Despite the value of ethical leadership in stimulating ethical behaviour in football, not all relevant stakeholders of football clubs – at least the majority of the fans we studied – are already convinced about its necessity. This marks an interesting tension between the focus on performances on the sporting field and the search for light entertainment, versus the pedagogical potential of sport to highlight and stimulate Olympic values such as respect, fair play, and friendship. Given this context, the first step needed for a general cultural change in football is the stimulation of moral awareness of all stakeholders involved. Being aware that ethical issues – such as match-fixing and abuse – undermine not only the integrity of and in football, but also its attractiveness and credibility, is required to forestall that football even further degenerates. Hence, ethics management in football clubs is needed to restore football as what it is claimed to be: a beautiful game.

8.6 References

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CHAPTER 9: PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

9.1 The importance of policy support

In Belgium, the social and political interest in sport ethics has been steadily increasing since the 1970s (Constandt, 2013; Maebe, 2012). Formal legislation on “healthy and ethical responsible sport” has been implemented on a regular basis, often in reaction to mediatized scandals, and thanks to the efforts of several awareness-raising organizations, such as Panathlon (Constandt, 2013; Maebe, 2012; Vertommen, 2017). However, in the aftermath of a wide-ranged sexual abuse scandal that hit Belgian society in 2010, it was shown that little tools were available in sport clubs to report ethical issues and to manage complaints (Vertommen, 2017). Under the impulse of the Belgian Olympic and Interfederal Committee (BOIC) and the Flemish Sports Council, policy changes (e.g. the installation of a central helpdesk and welfare officers) have been implemented since (Vertommen, 2017). An important facilitating role is thereby dedicated to ICES (Center for Ethics in Sport), an organization funded by the Flemish government. The task of ICES is to operate as a knowledge centre, translating research on sport ethics into practical suggestions, for example by offering tools and training for federations and clubs (Vertommen, 2017).

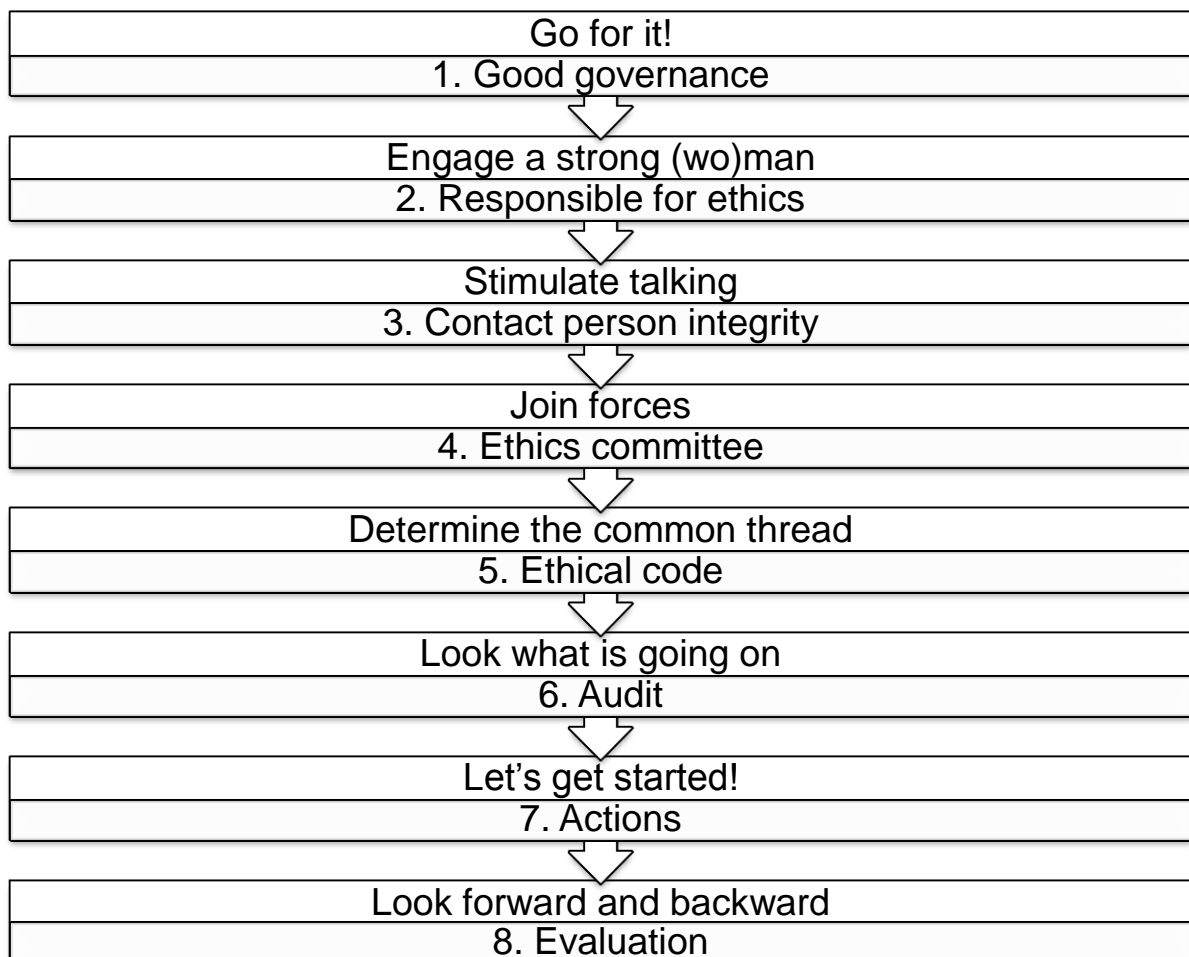
This dissertation showcases a positive evolution in the ethical climate of football clubs. However, we feel policy-driven initiatives by the abovementioned organizations are more than ever needed to stimulate – and if required, to coerce – football clubs and federations to take their role in tackling unethical behaviour in football seriously. The recent and internationally covered financial fraud and match-fixing scandal in Belgian football has illustrated that many key stakeholders in football are still lacking a certain degree of moral awareness. Therefore, it is likely that not a lot will change for the better if the football sector remains as deregulated as today.

9.2 An integrative form of ethics management in football clubs

This dissertation makes an appeal to football clubs to actively apply ethics management – and to not rely solely on the initiatives of the football federations – to tackle ethical issues they (might) experience. Football clubs on all levels of play have the ability to invest in creating an ethical code and turning this code into a lively document with the help of ethical leadership by both coaches and the board of directors. An interesting tool, available for football (and other sport) clubs that aim to strive for an ethical climate in their club, is offered by ICES in the form of an eight-

steps plan. This plan is based on the research of Willem and colleagues (2014) and sketches the ideal road to come to an integrative form of ethics management in sport. The eight steps of the plan are illustrated in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. The road to an integrative form of ethics management (source: based on, and translated from the website of ICES: www.ethicsandsport.com)



While the first four steps offer the foundation (i.e. the basics) of ethics management (Steps 1-4), the last four steps (Steps 5-8) contain the concrete, tangible steps. The ethical code (Step 5) has been discussed at length throughout this dissertation, so we will here limit ourselves to providing some additional information on the audit (Step 6), actions (Step 7), and evaluation (Step 8). An ethics audit is a tool of good governance, meant to evaluate which ethical themes are topical and relevant within the club, and how these themes can be addressed in the policies and practices of the club, such as communication and recruitment (McNamee & Fleming, 2007). Ideally, an audit precedes the implementation of new actions (e.g. rules on similar play time

for all youth players), to consider their desirability and feasibility (Willem et al., 2014). Finally, an evaluation of implemented actions is needed to consider whether they are successful (Willem et al., 2014). A good idea is to evaluate each year, around the same date. The only remark I would like to add to this very useful plan is that, although the steps are presented in a logical and chronological order, this order is not set in stone.

9.3 Ethics training in football clubs

In addition to the eight-steps plan presented above, we would like to make a specific plea for ethics training in football clubs, given that we have shown throughout this dissertation that ethical behaviour (a) can be learned, and (b) starts with being morally aware. Therefore, we would like to echo the suggestion that “the ability to make sound decisions can only be learned through experience and training” (Kvalnes & Hemmestad, 2010, p. 66). More precisely, we argue that training on ethics can help to raise awareness of ethical issues, which is the first step in the direction of moral decision making (Vertommen, 2017).

Experience is something that has to grow, but ethics training – dedicated to all stakeholders involved – can start as of the moment someone joins the football club. Since the creation of an ethical climate is a shared responsibility, all stakeholders involved should receive some kind of training on what the behavioural norms within the football club are. With the help of hands-on examples and dilemma's, football clubs can easily provide this training. Training and communication about ethics are key to recognize moral issues and to raise feelings of empathy, which in turn are the first steps in the direction of engaging in ethical behaviour (Kaptein et al., 2005; Kvalnes & Øverenget, 2012; Rest, 1986). Moreover, ethics training offers advantages for the leaders within the football club as well. It is shown that stakeholders perceive leaders to be ethical if they meet the stakeholders' expectations, but to meet these expectations and to be trusted, leaders need to know what these expectations are (van den Akker et al., 2009). In sum, ethics training – and the information thereby provided in two directions – can be enlightening for both football club leaders and relevant stakeholders.

9.4 The Sport Ethical Leadership Game (SELG)

The results of this dissertation are also integrated in a business game, called The Sport Ethical Leadership Game (SELG). The SELG is currently developed under leadership of Ghent University colleague dr. Mathieu Marlier. The game aims to help sport organizations and sport managers to tackle sport specific and non-sport specific ethical issues, by using good governance (e.g. transparency, accountability, and democracy) and ethical leadership (e.g. role modelling, ethics communication, empowerment) principles. The SELG wants to help sport management students and managers of sports organizations (i.e. federations, sport clubs, and sport administrations) in applying ethical leadership and good governance in a realistic context, taking into account financial and political pressures that will influence ethical decision-making. As a consequence, participants of the game have to find a balance between successfully and efficiently completing their sport project, and adhering to good governance and ethical leadership principles.

In summary, the SELG has three main objectives:

1. Raising awareness about the importance of good governance and ethical leadership to tackle sport specific and non-sport specific ethical issues.
2. Transfer knowledge on good governance and ethical leadership.
3. Help sport organizations to apply a better good governance and ethical leadership policy through a Sport Ethical Leadership Action Plan.

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APPENDIX A: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Acknowledgments: The end of the game

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Westende

Maart 2019

APPENDIX B: GOOD PRACTICE ETHICAL CODE

BOKA UNITED

Source: <http://detofstevoetbalclub.be/info/reglement.html>

1. ALGEMEEN:

Een voetbalploeg kan niet zonder regels en richtlijnen. BOKA United wil een correcte en positieve uitstraling hebben. De eerste vereiste is dat de regels voor iederéén duidelijk zijn. Zowel van de spelers, de ouders en de begeleiders verwachten wij een constructieve houding.

2. ALGEMENE REGELS:

- Bij aankomst en vertrek van wedstrijden of trainingen groeten de spelers steeds de trainers, afgevaardigden en ouders.
- Sieraden worden niet gedragen tijdens training of wedstrijd.
- Zorg goed voor je voetbaluitrusting. Zorg voor schoeisel dat aangepast is aan het veld.
- Iedere speler is verplicht zich te douchen na een wedstrijd of training.
- De kantine wordt niet betreden met voetbalschoenen.
- Roken in de kantine is niet toegestaan.
- Waardevolle voorwerpen worden niet achtergelaten in de kleedkamers.
- De club is niet verantwoordelijk bij diefstal.
- Studie en voetbal gaan samen. Zorg dus voor een goede planning en stel je prioriteiten. Breng je trainer/afgevaardigde op de hoogte.
- Onbeschofte taal is verboden.
- Ga je niet akkoord, word je gepest of heb je andere problemen, kaart het aan, dit kan via je trainer, afgevaardigde of onze ombudsman/vrouw.

3. TRAININGSDISCIPLINE:

- Het trainingsschema moet gevolgd worden. De trainer zal iederéén persoonlijk verwittigen bij eventuele wijzigingen in zijn schema.
- Consulteer regelmatig de website voor eventuele wijzigingen.
- Actief deelnemen aan de trainingen zal een belangrijk element zijn in de evaluatie van de jeugdspeler. Ten laatste 15 min voor de aanvang van de training zal de speler aanwezig zijn. Verhinderd door ziekte of andere reden = tijdig melden aan de trainer.
- Breng steeds aangepaste kledij mee in functie van het veld en/of weersomstandigheden.
- De spelers wachten in de kleedkamers tot ze de toestemming krijgen van de trainer om zich naar het speelveld te begeven.
- Douches en kleedkamers worden proper achtergelaten.
- Steeds respect hebben voor de personen die de infrastructuur uitbaten en onderhouden.

- Enkel met toestemming van de trainer wordt het trainingsveld verlaten tijdens de training.

4. WEDSTRIJDDISCIPLINE:

- Voor en na iedere wedstrijd is elke jeugdspeler gekleed in wedstrijdtraining.
- Bij de wedstrijden zijn alle spelers aanwezig op het tijdstip en plaats meegedeeld door de trainer of afgevaardigde.
- Iedere speler, vanaf U14, moet zijn identiteitskaart bij zich hebben, indien niet mag betrokkene niet deelnemen aan de wedstrijd.
- Wedstrijduitrusting is eigendom van de club en is “je” identificatie met de club ... draag er zorg voor !!
- Fair play is van groot belang, zelfs al “vecht” je voor de overwinning tijdens een wedstrijd.
- Tijdens de wedstrijden zijn er geen discussies toegestaan met trainers, scheidsrechters, publiek, medespelers of tegenstanders.
- Discussies op het terrein zullen door de trainer onmiddellijk en gepast aangepakt worden.
- Elke speler legt zich te allen tijde neer bij het gezag van de trainer.

5. REGELS VOOR OUDERS:

Niet alleen aan de spelers en staf vragen wij een deontologische code te volgen. Ook de ouders moeten zich houden aan enkele regels.

a) Opvoeding.

De ouders hebben de belangrijkste maar tevens ook de moeilijkste taak: de opvoedkundige taak. Wij verwachten daarom dat de ouders mee waken over het naleven van de gemaakte afspraken.

b) Prioriteiten.

Studies hebben altijd voorrang op voetbal !

Wij vragen wel dat elke afwezigheid tijdig aan de trainer of jeugdcoördinator wordt gemeld. Meldt ons ook problemen op school zodat desgevallend een aantal gepaste afspraken kunnen gemaakt worden met de speler om de studie en sport te combineren.

c) Voorbeeld.

Uiteraard mag er gesupporterd worden langs de lijn. Geef daarbij als ouder wel het goede voorbeeld. Toon respect voor ieders eigenheid: het gebruik van obscene,

beledigende of racistische taal is ten strengste verboden. Als club zullen wij bovendien enkel positieve aanmoedigingen toelaten.

d) Overleg.

De trainer is verantwoordelijk voor de sportieve beslissingen. Laat je waardering voor de trainer blijken door je niet te mengen in de opstelling, speelwijze en coaching. Kunt u zich niet vinden in bepaalde beslissingen, dan is de jeugdcoördinator bevoegd.

e) Eerbied voor 'het kind'.

Dwing kinderen nooit om uw ambities waar te maken. Laat je kind gewoon kind zijn: het moet nog veel leren. Help ze vertrouwen te krijgen, benadruk het plezier en vermijd prestatiedruk. Geef steun bij tegenslagen en relativeer goede prestaties.

f) Deelnemen.

Help de trainer en afgevaardigde(n) waar je kan. Steek ook een handje toe bij extra sportieve activiteiten en moedig je kind aan dat eveneens te doen. Voetbal bij BOKA United is naast een sportief evenzeer een sociaal gebeuren.

g) Interesse.

Toon belangstelling en ga regelmatig mee naar een training of wedstrijd.

h) Niveau.

Laat de kinderen sporten op hun niveau. Heeft je kind talent, dan merkt iemand het wel op. Blijf zelf realistisch!

i) Groepsgeest.

Leer kinderen groepsinzet: voetbal is een teamsport. Maak je kind duidelijk dat sport meer is dan winnen of verliezen: het gaat om teamspirit, vriendschap en samenwerking. Straf daarom je kind niet door het bijwonen van trainingen en/of wedstrijden te verbieden.

j) Positief.

Blijf te allen tijde positief tegenover scheidsrechter en lijnrechters. Ook al maken ze misschien fouten, respecteer hun beslissingen. Blijf tijdens de wedstrijd op veilige afstand, achter de omheining of binnen de afgebakende zone.

6. FAIRPLAY CHARTER:

De spelers beoefenen op een gezonde manier hun sport. Ongecontroleerd geweld of overdreven agressie worden bestraft met onmiddellijke verwijdering van de trainingen, wedstrijden of club. Wij wensen te accentueren dat onze club Fair-Play hoog in het vaandel draagt. Daarom kunt u op onze website het Fair-Play Charter van de FIFA en UEFA vinden welke wij als club onderschrijven:

- Respect voor de spelregels
- Respect voor de scheidsrechter en de officials
- Respect voor je eigen club
- Respect voor de tegenstrever
- Respect voor je medemaats
- Respect voor ALLE collega voetballers
- Respect voor de supporters van andere ploegen
- Respect voor jezelf (geen alcohol en drugs, niet roken)

7. PANATHLON VERKLARING:

Ook de club en medewerkers dienen zich te houden aan regels.

“Ludis lungit” (sport verbindt mensen). Als club heeft BOKA United de Panathlon verklaring over “Ethiek in de Jeugdsport” ondertekend.

Daarmee verklaren we dat we:

1. Positieve waarden nastreven. Als club zullen we de positieve waarden in de jeugdsport actiever, met volgehouden inspanning en met goede planning nastreven.

2. Discriminatie bannen. We zullen onze inspanningen voortzetten om alle vormen van discriminatie uit de jeugdsport te bannen.

3. Kinderen beschermen. We erkennen en aanvaarden het feit dat sport ook negatieve effecten kan veroorzaken en dat er preventieve en curatieve maatregelen nodig zijn om kinderen te beschermen.

4. Steun verwelkomen. We verwelkomen de steun van sponsors en de media, maar we geloven dat die steun in overeenstemming moet zijn met de hoofddoelstellingen van de jeugdsport. Daarom onderschrijven we formeel het: ‘Panathlon Charter over de Rechten van het Kind in de Sport’.

5. Alle kinderen hebben het recht:

- Sport te beoefenen;
- Zich te vermaken en te spelen;
- In een gezonde omgeving te leven;
- Waardig behandeld te worden;
- Getraind en begeleid te worden door competente mensen;

- Deel te nemen aan training die aangepast is aan hun leeftijd, individueel ritme en mogelijkheden;
- Zich te meten met kinderen van hetzelfde niveau in een aangepaste competitie;
- In veilige omstandigheden aan sport te doen;
- Te rusten;
- De kans te krijgen kampioen te worden, of het niet te worden.

8. SOCIAAL ENGAGEMENT:

Omdat spelers heel wat tijd op de club doorbrengen, is een goede informatie--uitwisseling essentieel. We verwachten dat ernstige problemen thuis of op school, eventuele medische dossiers met de trainer of met iemand van het bestuur worden besproken. Op die manier kan de club een ondersteunende rol spelen naar de ouders toe. Bovendien heeft BOKA United oog voor ondersteuning aan spelers uit kansarme gezinnen. Voor dergelijke spelers wordt in alle discretie naar een oplossing gezocht in onderling overleg tussen de jeugdcoördinator en/of ombudsman/vrouw en de desbetreffende ouders. Als club zijn we ons tenslotte bewust van het nut van deelname aan sociaal maatschappelijke initiatieven en dragen ook daar actief ons steentje aan bij.

9. AMBASSADEUR:

Als club zijn we een ambassadeur voor het voetbal en waken we erover de hierboven vermelde principes correct toe te passen.

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRES

Below, an overview of the main scales used in our questionnaires, can be found. These scales are included in their original, English form. However, in this dissertation, we used a translated version (in Dutch). This translation was executed by the Language Center of Ghent University, by means of a “back and forward” translation. The questionnaires were slightly adapted to be relevant for the studied football context:

- In the ELS, the word “employees” was changed into “players” (when completed by players) and “coaches” (when completed by coaches).
- In the ECI, the word “department” was changed into “football club.”
- In the AOC, the word “organization” was changed into “football club.”

➔ **Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS) – Brown et al. (2005) – 10 items**

My coach (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$) / the board of directors (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .95$) of my football club:

1. Conducts h/h personal life an ethical manner.
2. Defines success not just by the results but also the way that they are obtained
3. Listens to what employees have to say
4. Disciplines employees who violate ethical standards
5. Makes fair and balanced decisions
6. Can be trusted
7. Discusses business ethics or values with employees
8. Sets an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics
9. Has the best interests of employees in mind
10. When making decisions, asks “what is the right thing to do?”

➔ **Ethical Climate Index (ECI) – Arnaud (2006) – 36 items** (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .96$)

The original ECI, as developed by Arnaud (2006) and measured with a five-point Likert scale, is included below. However, in this dissertation, we used a translated version (in Dutch). This translation was done by the Language Center of Ghent University, by means of a “back and forward” translation. Moreover, the word “department” was changed into “football club.”

○ *Collective Moral Sensitivity (12 items)* (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .87$):

1. People in my department sympathize with someone who is having difficulties in their job.
2. People around here are aware of ethical issues.
3. For the most part, when people around here see that someone is treated unfairly, they feel pity for that person.
4. People in my department recognize a moral dilemma right away.
5. People around here feel bad for someone who is being taken advantage of.
6. Sometimes people in my department do not feel very sorry for others who are having problems.

7. If a rule or law is broken, people around here are quick to notice.
 8. Others' misfortunes do not usually disturb people in my department a great deal.
 9. People in my department are very sensitive to ethical problems.
 10. When people in my department see someone being treated unfairly, they sometimes don't feel much pity for them.
 11. People around here do not pay attention to ethical issues.
 12. In my department people feel sorry for someone who is having problems.
- *Collective Moral Judgment (10 items)* (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$):
 1. People around here protect their own interest above other considerations.
 2. In my department it is expected that you will always do what is right for society.
 3. People around here have a strong sense of responsibility to society and humanity.
 4. What is best for everyone in the department is the major consideration.
 5. People in my department are very concerned about what is best for them personally.
 6. The most important concern is the good of all the people in the department.
 7. People around here are mostly out for themselves.
 8. People in my department think of their own welfare first when faced with a difficult decision.
 9. In my department people's primary concern is their own personal benefit.
 10. People in my department are actively concerned about their peers' interests.
 - *Collective Moral Motivation (8 items)* (Cronbach's $\alpha = .96$):
 1. In my department people are willing to break the rules in order to advance in the company.
 2. Around here, power is more important than honesty.
 3. In my department authority is considered more important than fairness.
 4. Around here, achievement is valued more than commitment and loyalty.
 5. In my department personal success is more important than helping others.
 6. In my department people strive to obtain power and control even if it means compromising ethical values.
 7. Around here, people are willing to tell a lie if it means advancing in the company.
 8. In order to control scarce resources, people in my department are willing to compromise their ethical values somewhat.
 - *Collective Moral Character (6 items)* (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$):
 1. People around here are confident that they can do the right thing when faced with moral dilemmas.
 2. People I work with would feel they had to help a peer even if that person were not a very helpful person.

3. People in my department feel it is better to assume responsibility for a mistake.
4. No matter how much people around here are provoked, they are always responsible for whatever they do.
5. Generally people in my department feel in control over the outcomes when making decisions that concern ethical issues.
6. When necessary, people in my department take charge and do what is morally right.

➔ **Affective Organizational Commitment (AOC) – (Meyer en Allen, 1990) – 8 items** (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$)


1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization.
2. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it.
3. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
4. I think I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one.
5. I do not feel like "a member of the family" at this organization.
6. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization.
7. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
8. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to this organization.

APPENDIX D: CURRICULUM VITAE

Bram Constandt

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Education

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 2015 – 2019 | Ph.D. in Health Sciences – Ghent University (Belgium)

<i>Concentration:</i> sport management (ethics)

<i>Doctoral dissertation:</i> 'Ethics management in football clubs' (prof. dr. A. Willem) |
| 2018 | Postgraduate in Olympic Studies – International Olympic Academy (Greece) |
| 2013 – 2015 | M.Sc. in Public Management & Policy (Cum Laude) – KU Leuven (Belgium)

<i>Master thesis:</i> 'Parking at the coast: An evaluation of the coherence and consistency of the coastal parking policy in Flanders' (in Dutch) (prof. dr. M. Brans) |
| 2012 – 2013 | M.A. in History (Magna Cum Laude) – Ghent University (Belgium)

<i>Concentration:</i> sport history

<i>Master thesis:</i> 'The Flemish doping battle (1965-present). A socio-political history of the current anti-doping decree' (in Dutch) (prof. dr. J. Tolleneer) |
| 2009 – 2012 | B.A. in History (Cum Laude) – Ghent University (Belgium)

Minor in Political and Social Sciences |

Experience

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 2015 – present | Ph.D. Researcher Team Sport Management – Ghent University (Belgium)

Ph.D. research on ethics management in football clubs (sport ethics), granted by the Fund Baillet Latour. <u>Main tasks:</u> research projects on the Olympic Chair Henri de Baillet-Latour–Jacques Rogge; supervision and evaluation of master students; support of, and teaching in several courses on sport ethics and sport history; and the organization of the yearly Olympic Week event. With this event, we try to reach the people working in/on sport outside academia. On average, 60-70 people participate in this event, with which we aim to bridge the gap between theory (research) and practice. |
|----------------|---|

- 2018 **Visiting Research Fellow** – University of Ottawa (Canada)
- Research stay of one month (May 1 - 31, 2018) at the School of Human Kinetics of the University of Ottawa. The research stay was directed towards an in-depth research collaboration with prof dr. Milena M. Parent, as well as towards the establishment of an Erasmus cooperation to exchange sport management staff and students between the University of Ottawa and Ghent University.
- 2008 – 2014 **Student Job** – Municipality of Middelkerke (Belgium)
- Annual paid student jobs of one month each within several local services (culture, prevention, youth, and library). Main tasks: execution of the 'Zon Zee Zorgeloos' project to make the Belgian coast more accessible for disabled people, implementation of prevention projects to counteract antisocial behavior, supply management of youth camps, and library front- and back-office services.
- 2012 **Internship** – National Cycling Museum Roeselare (Belgium)
- Non paid internship of three months, related to research and public history. Main tasks: research on the history of the first Tour of Flanders and the link between religion and cycling, next to several tasks related to exhibitions and the general operation of a museum.

Publications & Presentations

International peer reviewed journal articles

- Schuyvinck, C., Naraine, M., **Constandt, B.**, Marlier, M., & Willem, A. (2019). Network structures and governance in cause-related marketing collaborations in professional soccer: A social network analysis. *Journal of Sport Management* (revisions requested) (2017 Impact Factor: 2.169 – Q2 in 'Sport Sciences')
- Van der Hoeven, S., De Waegeneer, E., **Constandt, B.**, & Willem, A. (2019). Match-fixing: Moral challenges for those involved. *Ethics & Behavior* (revisions requested) (2017 Impact Factor: 0.942 – Q3 in 'Ethics')
- Constandt, B.**, Parent, M.M., & Willem, A. (2019). Does it really matter? A study on soccer fans' perceptions of ethical leadership and their role as "stakeowners." *Sport Management Review*. Accepted for publication. (2017 Impact Factor: 3.516 – D1 in 'Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism')
- Constandt, B.**, & Willem, A. (2019). The trickle-down effect of ethical leadership in nonprofit soccer clubs. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 29(3), 401-417. doi: 10.1002/nml.21333 (2017 Impact Factor: 1.633 – Q2 in 'Public Administration')

Constandt, B., De Waegeneer, E., & Willem, A. (2018). Coach ethical leadership in soccer clubs: An analysis of its influence on ethical behavior. *Journal of Sport Management*, 32(3), 185-198. doi: 10.1123/jsm.2017-0182 (2017 Impact Factor: 2.169 – Q2 in 'Sport Sciences')

Constandt, B., De Waegeneer, E., & Willem, A. (2017). Ethical code effectiveness in football clubs: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Business Ethics*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1007/s10551-017-3552-0 (2017 Impact Factor: 2.917 – D1 in 'Ethics')

National peer reviewed journal articles

Constandt, M., & Constandt, B. (2019). Tennissport in Oostende (1890-1914) [Tennis in Ostend (1890-1914)]. *de SPORTWERELD*, 89, 4-9.

Constandt, M., & Constandt, B. (2018). Tennis aan zee tijdens de belle époque: een vergeten geschiedenis? [Tennis at Belgium's seaside during La Belle Époque: a forgotten story?]. *Brood & Rozen*, 23(2), 56-65.

International academic conference presentations

Constandt, B., & Willem, A. (2018). *The influence of board and coach on the ethical climate perception of soccer players*. Presented at the 2018 North American Society for Sport Management conference (NASSM 2018). Halifax, NS, Canada.

Constandt, B., De Waegeneer, E., & Willem, A. (2017). *Fans as stakeowners?: An analysis of their perceptions on organizational ethical leadership in professional football*. Presented at the 25th European Association for Sport Management conference (EASM 2017). Bern, Switzerland.

Constandt, B., & Willem, A. (2017). *Fans as stakeowners: A case-study analysis in professional club football*. Presented at the 14th European Association for Sociology of Sport conference (EASS 2017). Prague, Czech Republic.

Constandt, B. (2016). *Coach ethisch leiderschap, ethisch klimaat en spelersbetrokkenheid binnen voetbalclubs* [Coach ethical leadership, ethical climate, and player commitment in football clubs]. Presented at the Dutch National Day of Sport Research (DSO 2016). Groningen, The Netherlands.

Constandt, B., De Waegeneer, E., & Willem, A. (2016). *The effectiveness of ethical codes in football organizations: A longitudinal analysis*. Presented at the 24th European Association for Sport Management conference (EASM 2016). Warsaw, Poland.

Constandt, B., De Waegeneer, E., & Willem, A. (2016). *Coach ethical leadership and players' commitment in football organizations: The mediating role of ethical climate*. Presented at the 13th European Association for Sociology of Sport conference (EASS 2016). Copenhagen, Denmark.

Invited presentations and lectures

Constandt, B. (2018, April 27). *Coach ethical leadership in soccer clubs*. Lectured at the seminar on 'Integrity in Sport: Policy, Practice and Research. The Case of Flanders' within the Erasmus

Mundus Master of Arts in Sports Ethics and Integrity (MAiSI). Flemish Parliament, Brussels, Belgium.

Constandt, B. (2014, March 13). *The history of doping policy in Flanders*. Presented at 'The International Expert Seminar on Performance Enhancement, Science, and Ethics'. KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium.

Constandt, B. (2013, December 6). *The history of doping policy in Flanders*. Lectured at 'The Interuniversity Seminar on Ethics, History, and Comparative Studies'. KU Leuven and Ghent University, Belgium.

Opinion articles

Constandt, B., & Zeimers, G. (2018, October 13). Une gestion éthique dans le football est plus urgente que jamais [The need for ethics management in football has never been more pressing]. *Le Soir*, s.p.

Press references

Martin, M. (2018, October 12). Vier vragen. Wat nu voor KV Mechelen? 'Degradatie betekent wellicht game over' [Four questions. What now with KV Mechelen? 'Relegation most likely means game over']. *De Morgen*, p. 11.

Planeet Draulans (2018, February 28). Coach als rolmodel [Coach as role model]. *Knack*, p. 90.

Clynckemaillie, A. (2016, March, 25). Verdediger SC Lombardsijde onderzoekt ethisch leiderschap in het voetbal [Defender SC Lombardsijde studies ethical leadership in football]. *De Zeewacht*, p. 64.

Funding

2019	Doctoral Schools Ghent University € 500 funding for the "Meet the PhD Jury" visit of prof. dr. Lisa A. Kihl
2018	Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) € 2 600 funding for a research stay abroad at the University of Ottawa (Canada)
2017	Mobility Fund of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences of Ghent University € 700 funding for conference participation at EASM 2017 in Bern (Switzerland)

Professional Service & Professional Memberships

Reviewing

2019	Ad hoc reviewer for <i>Nonprofit Management & Leadership</i> (2017 Impact Factor: 1.633) and <i>Sport in Society</i> (2017 Impact Factor: 0.667)
2018	Ad hoc reviewer for <i>Ethics & Behavior</i> (2017 Impact Factor: 0.942)

Professional Memberships

2019 – present	Board Member of ICES, Center for Ethics in Sport
2018 – present	General Assembly of ICES, Center for Ethics in Sport
2018 – present	International Network of Doping Research (coordinated by Aarhus University)
2018	North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM)
2017 – present	Fan Researchers Network
2016 – 2018	European Association for Sport Management (EASM)
2016 – 2017	European Association for Sociology of Sport (EASS)

Additional Training

2015 – 2018	Doctoral Training Program – Doctoral Schools Ghent University (Belgium) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advanced Academic English: Presentation & Writing Skills in English• Applied Linear Regression & Multilevel Analysis for Grouped and Longitudinal Data• Applying for a Postdoctoral Job & How to Grow your Future Career• PhD Seminar 24th European Association for Sport Management Conference in Warsaw (Poland)• Project Management• Teaching at Ghent University: The Basics• Writing Successful Grants & Grant Winning Day• Writing for Non-Peers and Press
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Languages & Software

Languages

Dutch: mother tongue
English: very good (both in speaking and writing)
French: good (both in speaking and writing)
German: moderate (both in speaking and writing)

Software

Microsoft Office: very good
SPSS: good
NVivo: good
HLM: basic