



Influence of perceived and preferred coach feedback on youth athletes' perceptions of team motivational climate

Jonathan Stein, Gordon A. Bloom*, Catherine M. Sabiston

Department of Kinesiology & Physical Education, McGill University, 475 Pine Avenue West Montreal, Quebec H2W 1S4, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This study examined youth ice hockey players' perceptions of individual feedback received from their coach, and the agreement and discrepancies between preferred and perceived coach feedback patterns, on athletes' perceptions of team motivational climate. The following research questions were answered: How does agreement in perceived and preferred coach feedback relate to task- and ego-involving motivational climate? How does the degree of discrepancy between perceived and preferred coach feedback relate to motivational climate? How does the direction of the discrepancy between perceived and preferred coach feedback relate to motivational climate?

Design: This study used non-probability based sampling within a cross-sectional (survey) design.

Method: Athletes ($n = 70$) completed a self-report survey comprised of measures of coaching feedback and motivational climate. The data were examined using polynomial regression and response surface analysis.

Results: Linear associations were observed between coaching feedback and motivational climate, and unique associations between the perceived and preferred coach feedback discrepancies were distinctly related to increased perceptions of both task- and ego-involved motivational climates.

Conclusions: The type of feedback, purpose of the feedback, and agreement or discrepancy in perceptions and preferences for different feedback styles are important to understanding task- and ego-involved motivational climate in youth sport. Coaching programs should assist coaches in learning their athletes' preferences for positive and negative feedback in sport and matching these preferences with their individual feedback styles.

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The youth sport coach is responsible for helping athletes develop their skills, enjoy their experiences, and pursue performance standards (Smith & Smoll, 2002). As such, the coach has a strong influence on whether athletes maintain participation long term or drop-out of their sport (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009; Weiss & Gould, 1986). Motivational climate is a key coaching variable that may relate to athlete sport experiences and attrition (Ames, 1992).

Motivational climate can be perceived as being predominantly focused on personal mastery and learning (i.e., task) or social comparison and performance outcomes (i.e., ego) (McArdle & Duda, 2002; Newton, Duda, & Yin, 2000). Coaches can create a task-involving climate by reducing the importance of winning and focusing on other participation motives such as skill development, effort, and affiliation with teammates. Ego-involving climates are created when the coach promotes intra-team rivalries, favors the most talented players, and punishes players for making mistakes

(McArdle & Duda, 2002; Newton et al., 2000). Many positive outcomes have been identified as resulting from a task-involved team motivational climate, including increased levels of sport competence (Halliburton & Weiss, 2002), sport self-confidence (Magyar & Feltz, 2003), team cohesion (Heuzé, Sarrazin, Masiero, Raimbault, & Thomas, 2006), and collective efficacy (Heuzé et al., 2006; Magyar, Feltz, & Simpson, 2004).

Players within a team do not always share the same perceptions of the team's motivational climate (e.g., Cumming, Smoll, Smith, & Grossbard, 2007; Magyar et al., 2004). Athletes may be less aware of how the coach interacts with other team members, thus limiting their perceptions of the team climate to their own personal exchanges with the coach (Cumming et al., 2007). As such, individual perceptions of coach behaviors, such as the individual feedback that coaches provide, have been proposed as important factors associated with motivational climate (Duda, 2001).

Coaching feedback can be viewed as generally encouraging, supportive, and instructionally-based or punishment-oriented feedback and ignoring strategies (e.g., McArdle & Duda, 2002;

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 514 398 4184x0516; fax: +1 514 398 4186.
E-mail address: gordon.bloom@mcgill.ca (G.A. Bloom).