

Detaching Reasons From Aims: Fair Play and Well-Being in Soccer as a Function of Pursuing Performance- Approach Goals for Autonomous or Controlling Reasons

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In two cross-sectional studies we investigated whether soccer players' well-being (Study 1) and moral functioning (Studies 1 and 2) is related to performance-approach goals and to the autonomous and controlling reasons underlying their pursuit. In support of our hypotheses, we found in Study 1 that autonomous reasons were positively associated with vitality and positive affect, whereas controlling reasons were positively related to negative affect and mostly unrelated to indicators of morality. To investigate the lack of systematic association with moral outcomes, we explored in Study 2 whether performance-approach goals or their underlying reasons would yield an indirect relation to moral outcomes through their association with players' objectifying attitude—their tendency to depersonalize their opponents. Structural equation modeling showed that controlling reasons for performance-approach goals were positively associated with an objectifying attitude, which in turn was positively associated to unfair functioning. Results are discussed within the achievement goal perspective (Elliot, 2005) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Keywords: autonomous and controlled regulation, performance-approach goals, well-being, sportpersonship, soccer, self-determination theory, achievement goal theory

Imagine two football players who face a challenging match. Both are focused on outplaying their direct opponent in the game, yet they have different reasons for doing so. Whereas the one might be focused on outperforming his opponent because he perceives it as a challenge, the other might pursue this goal to prove his worth and impress others. Whereas the former player is likely to experience a sense of choice and volition when trying to outperform his opponent because his

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underlying reason emanates from his sense of self, the latter might be under some psychological pressure because his reason for pursuing the same goal is more external and alien to his “true” self (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Due to the hypothesized pressure to beat his opponent, the latter player might be more likely to engage in unfair behavior (Donahue et al., 2006), such as dangerously tackling and yelling at the referee. In addition, the pressure to perform well might undermine the pleasure of playing and cause irritation, anger, and negative affect. Thus, depending on the reasons underlying their performance strivings, players might display a different set of fair play attitudes and well-being correlates. The present research was set up to precisely examine these hypotheses.

To conceptualize players’ achievement strivings, we relied on the achievement goal perspective (AGP; Elliot & McGregor, 2001), in which the goal of outperforming others is referred to as a *performance-approach* (PAp) goal. In the case of performance goal pursuit, competence and its associated success and failure are defined on the basis of normative standards (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliot, 1999; Nicholls, 1984; Roberts, 2001). To gain insight into the reasons underlying these performance strivings, we made use of the self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). An important question from the SDT perspective is whether the very same performance goals are pursued for autonomous and volitional or controlling and pressuring reasons. This distinction can be formulated in terms of a double question: what are your achievement goals and why are you pursuing them? In trying to seek further integration between the achievement goal perspective (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliot, 1999) and SDT, and similar to a recent study conducted in the general classroom (Vansteenkiste, Smeets, et al., 2009), we examined well-being and fair play as correlates of autonomous versus controlling reasons underlying performance strivings in sport settings.

We focused on well-being because apart from its importance as an index of people’s healthy psychological state, well-being has been extensively studied in both theoretical frameworks (for reviews see Duda & Ntoumanis, 2003; Wilson & Rodgers, 2008). As an index of well-being, we concentrated on positive and negative affect as well as feelings of energy and vigor (i.e., subjective vitality). Similarly, we focused on sportspersonship attitudes, physical and nonphysical antisocial behavior, and aggressiveness as an index of athletes’ moral development, because moral development is often portrayed as a major reason to participate in sport activities in modern societies (Shields & Bredemeier, 2000). In addition, as in most contact sports, in the specific sport context studied in this contribution (i.e., the football field), sportspersonship behavior is easily noticeable, quite salient, strongly evaluated, and may extensively vary from player to player.

Achievement Goal Theory

Achievement Goals, Well-Being, and Moral Functioning

Achievement goals were originally defined as the overarching reasons or purposes for achievement striving (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Two classes of achievement goals—mastery and performance goals—were initially discerned based on the way competence is defined. In the case of mastery goals, competence and the resultant success or failure are defined with respect to self-referenced or task-referenced

criteria, whereas in the case of performance goals, competence and the concomitant success or failure are defined with respect to normative standards, that is, relative to the performances of others (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Nicholls, 1984; Roberts, 2001). Mastery goals focus on the development of competence, on learning and self-improving. Conversely, performance goals aim at the demonstration of competence relative to others, such that one attains favorable judgments from others or a higher sense of self-worth.

Numerous studies in the sports and the physical activity domain have investigated the pattern of relations between mastery and performance goals and outcomes such as morally responsible behavior (e.g., sportspersonship) and well-being (for reviews see Biddle, Wang, Kavussanu, & Spray, 2003; Duda & Ntoumanis, 2003; Roberts, 2001). Concerning moral functioning, Kavussanu and Roberts (2001), for instance, found only performance goals to be positively associated with unsportspersonship attitudes (e.g., intentions to cause injury to opponents, physical intimidation) among basketball players. Similar results have been reported among hockey players (Dunn & Dunn, 1999), handball players (Stornes & Ommundsen, 2004), and athletes from various sports (e.g., Lee, Whitehead, Ntoumanis, & Hatzigeorgiadis, 2008).

As concerns well-being concomitants, mastery goals have been found to be systematically and positively related to well-being outcomes (e.g., Kaplan & Maehr, 1999), whereas the pattern of relations between performance goals and emotional adjustment appeared to be rather weak and inconsistent. For instance, some studies found a positive relation of performance goals to positive emotions such as enjoyment (Wang, Biddle, & Elliot, 2007) and pride (Mouratidis, Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Van den Auweele, 2009), whereas other studies failed to find a relation between performance goals and similar outcomes, such as positive affect (Adie, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2008) or satisfaction in sports (Papaioannou, Ampatzoglou, Kalogiannis, & Sagovits, 2008). Likewise, performance goals have been found to be positively associated with negative affect (Adie et al., 2008; Mouratidis, et al., 2009) but not with specific negative emotions, such as boredom (Wang et al., 2007).

Detaching Reasons From Aims

Within each of the mentioned studies above, individuals' reasons for pursuing PAp goals were intertwined with the assessment of their focus on outperforming others. Specifically, in line with the initial conceptualization of performance goals (Nicholls, 1984), the proposed reasons for outperforming others were considered as homogeneous in nature: one would be focused on outperforming others to demonstrate one's competence to gain favorable judgments and to prove one's ego. Thus, individuals' ego (i.e., self-worth) was said to be directly implicated in the pursuit of normative competence.

Most recently, however, Elliot and Fryer (2008) argued that—given the absence of a consensual conceptualization of the term *goal* in the achievement goal literature—achievement goals (e.g., outperforming someone) should be defined, and, hence, be assessed separately from any purposes or overarching reasons (e.g., proving my competencies) that form the motivational basis for pursuing achievement goals. The conceptualization of goals as aims was deemed necessary only because (a) a diverse set of reasons may undergird the same goal; (b) the detachment of goals from underlying reasons would allow for greater conceptual clarity; and (c)

the empirical disentanglement of goals and reasons would generate more precise empirical insight, as it could be examined whether goals, reasons, or both would yield an association with outcomes.

The suggestion made by Elliot and Fryer (2008) to detach reasons from aims within the goal construct has important implications about how achievement goals are assessed and, consequently, about how they are associated with motivational outcomes. To date, however, no single study in the sport domain has systematically examined whether the type of reasons underlying one's achievement goal striving differentially affect the associations between achievement goals and outcomes. We choose to focus on one single achievement goal in the present contribution, that is, PAp goals, because this type of goal has been extensively debated, both in the educational (e.g., Harackiewicz, Barron, Pintrich, Elliot, & Thrash, 2002; Matos, Lens, & Vansteenkiste, 2007, 2009; Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001) and sport literature (e.g., Harwood, Hardy, & Swain, 2000; Roberts, 2001; Vansteenkiste, Matos, Lens, & Soenens, 2007). The present research aimed to contribute to this debate by examining whether the reasons underlying soccer players' PAp goal pursuit would help to understand when the pursuit of PAp goals yields positive and negative correlates with affect-based (i.e., well-being) and behavioral (i.e., sportspersonship) outcomes. To conceptualize soccer players' reasons for outperforming their opponents, we relied on SDT's differentiation between autonomous and controlled motivation, as is discussed next.

Self-Determination Theory

Within SDT, it is maintained that depending on whether the basic psychological needs for autonomy (a sense of willingness and self-initiation in one's behaviors), competence (a feeling of effectance when carrying out an activity), and relatedness (a sense of connectedness, closeness, and intimacy) are satisfied rather than frustrated, a more autonomous rather than a controlled regulation of motivation will arise (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004). With respect to the pursuit of PAp goals, *autonomous regulation* refers to a volitional endorsement of PAp goals because athletes find outperforming others enjoyable, challenging, and stimulating (intrinsic motivation); an integral part of their personal system of values and beliefs (integrated regulation); or personally worthwhile (identified regulation). In the case of a controlled regulation of PAp goals, athletes feel forced to beat their opponents to meet internal pressures, such as the avoidance of guilt and shame and the attainment of ego enhancement (introjected regulation), or to comply with external demands such as a promised reward (e.g., a new lucrative contract) or a threatening punishment (external regulation).

An important question then is whether the players' autonomous and controlling reasons for endorsing a PAp goal would yield any incremental predictive power in explaining well-being and sportspersonship outcomes above and beyond the effect of adopting PAp goals per se. Within SDT, it is argued that apart from the content of the goal, autonomous motivation for goal striving fosters growth and mental health (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In line with this claim, many sport-related studies have provided evidence of the positive association between autonomous motivation and well-being, presumably because an autonomous regulation better allows one to meet one's basic psychological needs (e.g., Sebire, Standage, &

Vansteenkiste, 2009; for a recent review see Wilson & Rodgers, 2008). Interestingly, although moral functioning in sport contexts has been extensively studied from the achievement goal framework (e.g., Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001), far less attention has been devoted to this issue from the SDT perspective. In the few studies that have examined this issue, it was shown that autonomously motivated athletes were more likely to report sportspersonship orientations (Vallerand & Losier, 1994) and nonuse of legal or illegal performance-enhancing substances (Donahue et al., 2006; Ntoumanis & Standage, 2009).

Further, a number of previous studies have examined the associations between AGT- and SDT-based concepts (e.g., Ntoumanis, 2001; Standage, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2003). In these studies, autonomous motivation for sports has been found to relate to mastery-approach goals, whereas controlled motivation was associated with the pursuit of PAp goals. Thus, within these studies, concepts from both perspectives were linked to one another such that a more extended motivational framework, comprising concepts of both frameworks, was compiled. We argue that the current contribution allows for a greater sense of integration between both frameworks because SDT-based regulations were directly assessed as reasons that might underlie soccer players' PAp goal strivings. Thus, rather than assessing achievement goals and autonomous and controlled motivation for doing sports completely independently, autonomous and controlling reasons were directly tied to the specific goal of outperforming others.

The Present Research

We aimed to examine whether autonomous and controlling reasons for adopting PAp goals would provide further insight in the relation of PAp goals to well-being and fair play attitudes and behaviors. We studied these two outcomes because they can be conceived as markers of humans' healthy psychological growth. Well-being was assessed with two positive indicators (i.e., vitality and positive affect) and one negative indicator (i.e., negative affect). Further, we considered as sportspersonship those behaviors and attitudes that reflect commitment toward sport participation; respect for social conventions; respect and concern for the rules, officials, and opponents; and abstention from negative or dishonest actions (Vallerand, Deshaies, Cuerrier, Brière, & Pelletier, 1996). Specifically, we made use of validated scales developed by Kavussanu (2006) and Maxwell and Moores (2007) to assess soccer players' attitudes toward immoral behaviors as well as their engagement in prosocial and antisocial (both physical and nonphysical) behaviors.

To date, and to the best of our knowledge, one single study in the educational domain (Vansteenkiste, Smeets, et al., 2009) has directly examined the reasons underlying one's PAp goals. Vansteenkiste, Smeets, et al. (2009) found that inserting autonomous and controlling reasons underlying PAp goals in the regression equation was associated with a significant increase in explained variance in the outcomes, with autonomous and controlling reasons, respectively, yielding a positive and negative relation to various indicators of optimal learning (e.g., concentration, time management, selecting main ideas). PAp goals did no longer yield a unique association with optimal learning when controlling for underlying reasons. More directly relevant to the current study, these authors also included cheating attitude and cheating behavior as moral outcomes, thereby finding that autonomous and

controlling reasons were, respectively, uniquely negatively and positively related to these outcomes. After controlling for underlying reasons, PAp goals were no longer related to any of the cheating outcomes.

We aimed to build on the study by Vansteenkiste, Smeets, et al. (2009) in three ways. First, the role of reasons underlying PAp goals was examined in the sport (i.e., soccer) rather than the educational context. Second, we tested our hypotheses in a highly competitive sport situation, as beating others is of considerable greater importance for soccer players as they all receive a monetary bonus for winning the game. Third, we investigated well-being and a broad set of moral outcomes, instead of learning outcomes, thus testing whether in pure competitive settings PAp goals would yield any unique predictive power (or not) with respect to these outcomes once underlying reasons are also considered.

We formulated the following set of hypotheses. First, we expected that the reasons underlying PAp goals would yield a different relation to well-being and sportspersonship because the functional significance (Deci & Ryan, 1985), or the attributed meaning of PAp goals, would be quite different depending on the reasons underlying their pursuit. Specifically, when one feels pressured (i.e., controlled motivation) to outperform one's direct opponent, the game might be experienced as more need thwarting, stressful, and threatening, which would lead one to adopt less fair attitudes and experience more negative affect. In contrast, when outperforming one's direct opponent represents a challenge and is autonomously motivated, one would want to outperform one's opponent in a fair way and one is likely to experience the game as more need satisfying, and, hence, well-being enhancing. Second, we examined whether the strength of pursuing PAp goals would still yield any unique significant association with the outcomes when PAp goals and their underlying reasons are jointly considered or whether the reasons are more critical than the desire to outperform others. This issue deserves being investigated because, to the best of our knowledge, most previous studies, if not all, that found PAp goals to be associated with unsportspersonship attitudes and well-being outcomes made use of PAp goal measures in which self-worth concerns were intermingled with the aim of outperforming others. Therefore, we deemed it important to investigate whether PAp goals, when detached from self-worth strivings, would still yield any positive association to unsportspersonship attitudes before examining the differential role of underlying reasons to this relation.

Study 1

Method

Participants and Procedure. Male football players ($N = 304$, mean age = 24.66, $SD = 4.90$) participated in the current study. Participants belonged to 17 different football clubs that played in various leagues varying in level: 50 participants (16.4%) played in the primary or secondary national Belgian league, 15 participants (4.9%) played in the third and 36 (11.8%) in the fourth national Belgian league, 13 (4.3%) played in the first provincial league, 75 (24.7%) played in the second provincial league, and 115 played in the third provincial league (37.8%). On average, participants had been playing soccer for 17.2 years ($SD = 5.63$), had 16.34 years ($SD = 5.69$) of competition experience, had been playing with their current team

for 5.34 years ($SD = 5.53$), and had played 11.18 ($SD = 2.42$) games with the first team in the season during which they filled out questionnaires, 5.87 ($SD = 4.60$) of which they had played as starters. At the lower (i.e., provincial) levels, players were paid between 50 and 300 euros as bonus for each victory and this amount steadily increased within increasing level of the league. At the highest level, the bonus of the professional players was dependent on the professional contract each player had signed with his team. We had no access to this information, as this is considered a highly private issue by soccer players.

Having obtained an institutional approval from the University of Gent, we came in contact with soccer teams through the Royal Belgian Soccer Association at about halfway through the season. Dutch-speaking soccer players who provided an informed consent and therefore agreed to participate in the study filled out the questionnaires in the club cafeteria while a research assistant was available to explain the purpose of the study and respond to questions if needed. Questionnaire completion took about 15 min and players were assured about the confidentiality of their responses and that they were free to deny participation to the study. Participants filled in the following questionnaires, all of which were presented in a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all true of me*) to 5 (*Very true of me*).

Performance-Approach Goals. We adjusted PAp goals (Conroy, Elliot, & Hofer, 2003) to the current soccer context to assess players' achievement strivings relative to their direct opponent in the game (three items; e.g., "It is important for me to perform well in comparison with my direct opponent during the game"; $\alpha = .81$). These items focus on the pursuit of interpersonal standards without making any reference to a particular reason, such as "proving oneself" or "demonstrating one's skills."

Underlying Reasons of Performance-Approach Goals. Immediately after each of the three PAp goal items, we asked players to indicate whether they pursued each of the presented performance goals for (a) intrinsic reasons (three items; e.g., "because this goal is a challenge to me"), (b) identified reasons (three items; e.g., "because I personally value this goal"), (c) introjected reasons, with some of the items yielding a reference to a positive outcome (i.e., approach-oriented; three items; e.g., "because I can only be proud of myself if I do so") and some of the items yielding a reference to negative outcomes (i.e., avoidance-oriented; three items; e.g., "because I would feel ashamed if I wouldn't pursue this goal"), or (d) external reasons (three items; e.g., "because others expect me to do so").¹ Although the chi-square test involved in the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) indicated a significant lack of fit between the observed and model reproduced covariance matrices, Satorra–Bentler (S-B) $\chi^2(80 N = 300) = 140,41, p < .01$, the observed fit indices suggested a reasonable fit of a five-latent-factor model to the data, CFI = .972, SRMR = .039, RMSEA = .050 (90% CI: .036 to .064). This model reproduced to a large extent the expected simplex pattern, with the pattern of correlations become gradually less positive along the autonomy continuum. For instance, whereas the intrinsic motivation latent factor was strongly positively correlated to identified ($r = .57, p < .01$), it was only slightly positively related to external ($r = .19, p < .05$) regulation latent factor. Similar to previous research (Vansteenkiste, Smeets, et al., 2009), we created an autonomous and a controlling goal regulation composite score for pursuing PAp goals by averaging the respective

six autonomous (intrinsic and identified; $\alpha = .83$) and nine controlled (introjection-approach, introjection-avoidance, and external; $\alpha = .86$) regulation items.

Subjective Vitality. Based on a previous sport study (Assor, Vansteenkiste, & Kaplan, 2009), we adapted for the soccer context three most representative items from the general vitality scale (Ryan & Frederick, 1997) to assess players' feelings of vitality in their soccer playing (e.g., "The last few weeks I feel very energetic when playing soccer"; $\alpha = .86$).

Positive and Negative Affect. Similar to Assor et al. (2009), we adapted a shortened form of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) to the soccer playing context to assess participants' positive (five items, e.g., "enthusiastic"; $\alpha = .82$) and negative (five items, e.g., "irritated"; $\alpha = .73$) affect-related experiences.

Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior. We used the 11-item scale developed by Kavussanu (2006) to assess the frequency of engagement in antisocial and prosocial behaviors during the game. Each item was rated on a 5-point frequency scale ranging between 1 (*Never*) and 5 (*Very often*). We created seven additional items so as to cover a broader range of prosocial and antisocial behaviors. Although Kavussanu provided evidence for a two-factor structure separating antisocial from prosocial behavior, a principal component analysis with promax rotation indicated that we needed to retain three rather than two factors. In addition to the prosocial factor (four items), two forms of antisocial behavior had to be distinguished, that is, physical (e.g., tackling with intentions to injure the opponent; six items) and nonphysical (e.g., pretending to be injured; six items) forms of antisocial behavior. As a result, we created three scales, tapping into prosocial ($\alpha = .44$), physical antisocial ($\alpha = .75$), and nonphysical antisocial behavior ($\alpha = .73$), but we excluded the prosocial behavior from further analysis because of its low internal consistency.

Unsportspersonship Attitude. To assess players' sportspersonship we presented to the players three hypothetical scenarios (see also Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001): (a) the "Matterazzi-Zidane" scenario (i.e., when a player is irritating and provoking his opponent), (b) the "*schwalbe*" scenario (i.e., when a player makes a dive in the penalty box while no fault is made upon him), and (c) the "brute tackle" scenario (i.e., where a player tackles on purpose his opponent and not the ball). These three scenarios were chosen because (a) they are quite different, (b) they quite frequently occur during games, and (c) because soccer players directly recognize these scenarios and often talk about these issues among one another. So, in our view, these scenarios have high ecological validity. In line with Rest's (1979) model, three different questions were asked with respect to each of these scenarios. First, players indicated how frequently they might engage in the presented unfair behavior if they would find themselves in a similar situation (intentional engagement). Second, they reported how frequently they had engaged in the unfair behavior that season (effective engagement). Both questions were rated on a 5-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Very often*). Third, they indicated how often the engagement in the presented unfair behavior would be "OK" and, hence, justified on a 5-point scale (1 = *Never correct* to 5 = *Always correct*). Because the three subscales purporting to assess intentional unfair ($\alpha = .59$), effective unfair ($\alpha = .48$), and approval of unfair ($\alpha = .64$) behavior showed low internal consistencies,

we further aggregated these three scores to create a more reliable overall index of unfair attitudes ($\alpha = .90$).

Results

Correlations

Because it is less meaningful to consider the underlying reasons for a PAP goal when a player only half-heartedly endorses this goal, we excluded from the analyses all those players who reported low levels of PAP goals pursuit. Specifically, 16 players (5.3% of the total sample) were dropped because they scored below the midpoint (i.e., 3) on our 5-point Likert scale, leaving the total sample at $N = 288$.

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations between the variables of the study are presented in Table 1. Regarding background characteristics, players' age was negatively related to controlling reasons for pursuing PAP goals. League level was negatively related to autonomous reasons, whereas number of games played and frequency of training were positively related to autonomous reasons underlying PAP goals. Frequency of training was also positively associated with controlling reasons underlying PAP goals. Regarding the motivational measures, PAP goals and their underlying reasons were all positively interrelated. To examine whether PAP goals would yield a unique relation to autonomous and controlling reasons, we conducted a set of partial correlations, examining whether PAP goals would be significantly associated with one type of reasons while controlling for the other type of reasons. PAP goals were significantly positively correlated with autonomous reasons, $r = .59, p < .01$, when statistically accounting for controlling reasons, whereas PAP goals were no longer significantly associated, $r = .10, ns$, with controlling reasons when statistically accounting for autonomous reasons. This suggests that the pursuit of PAP goals were primarily autonomously motivated. Further, with respect to the relation with outcomes, both PAP goals and underlying autonomous reasons were positively related to subjective vitality and positive affect. Finally, controlling reasons were positively associated with unsportspersonship attitudes and nonphysical antisocial behavior.

Hierarchical Regression Analyses

To examine whether PAP goals and underlying regulations were related to the outcomes, we performed a series of hierarchical regression analyses. After we checked for potential outliers and using the rules of thumb for leverage values, external studentized residuals, and standardized difference in fit (DFFITS_{*i*}) as suggested by Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003), we regressed each of the dependent variables on the centered means of the background characteristics (i.e., the team level, players' years of experience in playing competitive soccer,² number of games played during the season of the data collection, and training hours per week) and PAP goal orientation in Step 1. Then, we inserted the centered means of reasons underlying PAP goals in Step 2 to examine whether these reasons would yield any incremental predictive power above and beyond the strength of PAP goals per se. Finally, we entered the interaction between autonomous and controlled regulation (which was created by multiplying their centered means—see Cohen, et al.,

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations Between the Variables of Study 1

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Background Variables														
1. Age	—													
2. League level	.01	—												
3. Years of competing (<i>N</i>)	.69**	-.04	—											
4. Matches played (<i>N</i>)	.25**	-.29**	.24**	—										
5. Training (hr/week)	-.01	-.85**	.01	.29**	—									
Motivation Measures														
6. Performance-approach goals	-.09	.05	.01	.07	.00	—								
7. Autonomous reasons	-.03	-.12*	.10	.22*	.12*	.56**	—							
8. Controlling reasons	-.18**	-.09	-.03	.10	.16**	.30**	.40**	—						
Outcomes														
9. Subjective vitality	-.11	-.06	-.03	.04	.10	.22**	.27**	.04	—					
10. Positive affect	-.11	.00	-.02	.09	-.01	.22**	.30**	.02	.62**	—				
11. Negative affect	-.11	-.06	-.10	.01	.06	-.03	-.08	.10	-.19**	-.27**	—			
12. Physical antisocial behavior	-.07	.02	-.01	-.06	-.01	.06	.05	.10	.13*	.09	.17**	—		
13. Nonphysical antisocial behavior	.01	-.08	.05	-.02	.07	.03	.09	.13*	.10	.09	.19**	.48**	—	
14. Unfair attitudes	-.10	-.02	.00	-.04	.02	.02	.10	.15**	.11	.03	.26**	.61**	.63**	—
<i>M</i>	24.60	5.17	16.29	7.19	5.70	4.43	4.12	2.96	3.83	3.90	2.23	2.64	2.51	2.42
<i>SD</i>	4.91	2.11	5.69	4.48	3.78	0.61	0.65	0.83	0.88	0.66	0.71	0.66	0.66	0.65

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

2003) in Step 3 to test whether the high versus low levels of autonomous reasons for pursuing PAp goals would qualify the relation of controlling reasons (and vice versa) to well-being and moral correlates. No significant interaction emerged for any of the dependent variables. The results are presented in Table 2.

With respect to the well-being outcomes, the overall models in Step 1 were significant for vitality and positive affect but not for negative affect (see Table 2). Specifically, PAp goals were positively related to vitality and positive affect but unrelated to negative affect. Including the reasons underlying PAp goals in Step 2 yielded a significant increase in explained variance in vitality and positive affect, and a marginally significant increase in the case of negative affect. Autonomous reasons were found to be positively related to vitality and positive affect, whereas controlling reasons were inversely related to positive affect and positively related to negative affect. Interestingly, the initially observed significant relations of PAp goals to positive affect in Step 1 disappeared after taking into account the reasons underlying PAp goals in Step 2, whereas the association with vitality largely dropped in magnitude. Concerning moral outcomes, however, and despite the significant bivariate correlations between controlling reasons and nonphysical antisocial behavior and unfair attitudes (see Table 1), none of the models was significant in Step 1 or in Step 2.

Brief Discussion

In Study 1, we found that considering the reasons underlying PAp goals may be useful. First, PAp goals were found to be primarily motivated by challenge, excitement, and personal commitment (i.e., autonomous reasons) rather than by external or internal demands (i.e., controlling reasons). Second, the consideration of reasons underlying PAp goal seems to provide greater insight into the relation of PAp goals to outcomes. This was especially true for well-being correlates, as it was found that considering the autonomous and controlling reasons that a soccer player endorses when pursuing PAp goals yields different associations with affect-based outcomes. In line with SDT and the revised achievement goal theory, which suggests that PAp goals may not always be harmful (but still less beneficial than mastery goals), we found that soccer players who were more autonomously motivated to outperform others were more likely to report positive affect and feelings of vigor, whereas those who felt pressured to beat their opponent reported more negative affect. Interestingly, inserting the reasons underlying PAp goals resulted in a substantial drop in the initially observed association between PAp goals and well-being outcomes, suggesting that the reasons underlying soccer players' PAp goals might be more critical to predict well-being differences than the endorsement of PAp goals per se.

The pattern of relations for the moral correlates was rather weak and in most cases nonsignificant, although in the expected direction. The goal of Study 2 was to further explore this issue. We reasoned that PAp goals and their underlying reasons might perhaps be indirectly associated with immoral functioning through some specific cognitive-based mechanisms. Specifically, they may elicit moral disengagement, which in turn might relate to immoral functioning. A potential mechanism of moral disengagement that might play an intervening role is the tendency to dehumanize others (Haslam, 2006; Weiss, Smith, & Stuntz, 2008).

Table 2 Standardized Beta Coefficients of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Well-being and Moral Indicators on the Basis of Performance-Approach (PAp) Goals and Underlying Reasons (Study 1)

Predictors	Well-Being			Moral Indicators		
	Subjective Vitality (N = 270)	Positive Affect (N = 264)	Negative Affect (N = 260)	Unfair Attitudes (N = 260)	Physical Antisocial (N = 260)	Nonphysical Antisocial (N = 274)
Step 1						
Years of competing (N)	-.06	-.12	-.10	.01	.00	.06
Matches played (N)	-.01	.09	.06	-.06	-.08	-.09
Training (hr/week)	.12 [†]	.02	-.02	.05	.06	.09
PAp goals	.23**	.24**	-.03	.03	.05	.02
<i>F</i>	5.25**	5.23**	0.77	0.35	0.64	0.94
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.06**	.07**	.00	.00	.00	.00
Step 2						
Years of competing (N)	-.08	-.14*	-.09	.01	.00	.07
Matches played (N)	-.03	.06	.07	-.07	-.09	-.10
Training (hr/week)	.11	.00	-.02	.03	.04	.08
PAp goals	.14*	.12	-.01	-.05	.01	-.01
Autonomous reasons	.23**	.30**	-.13	.08	.04	.01
Controlling reasons	-.11	-.13*	.14*	.12	.08	.11
<i>F</i>	5.44**	6.97**	1.52	1.05	0.77	1.08
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.09**	.12**	.01	.00	.00	.00
<i>F</i> change in <i>R</i> ²	5.47**	9.74**	2.98 [†]	0.01	0.91	1.36

Note. [†]*p* = .05. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01.

According to Haslam (2006), dehumanization can take two forms: (a) one can deny uniquely human attributes (e.g., lacking self-control and higher cognition) to others and thus treat them similarly to how one treats animals and (b) one can deny human nature to others (e.g., warmth, emotional responsiveness) and thus view others as objects or automatons.

In a recent study, Boardley and Kavussanu (2007) developed a moral disengagement scale that included the animalistic form of dehumanization as one of its components. In the present research, we focused on mechanistic dehumanization or the tendency to objectify others (Kasser, 2002). We choose to focus on this type of dehumanization because Haslam (2006) suggested that mechanistic dehumanization would especially be operative in interpersonal (rather than intergroup) interactions. Given that the PAp goal in the current study tapped into soccer players' tendency to outperform their direct opponent (interpersonal level) rather than to beat the other team (intergroup level), we included an assessment of an objectifying stance as a potential intervening mechanism. Within the soccer context, such an objectifying stance refers to soccer players' tendency to reduce or treat the opponent as an object or barrier that should be removed to achieve their aims. Such an objectifying interpersonal attitude would constitute the legitimization for soccer players to engage in unfair behavior. Coaches who place their soccer players under pressure to beat their opponents might use such objectifying language when they talk about the opponents in the upcoming game. As a result, those who feel pressured to beat the opponents might adopt an objectifying stance, which functions to justify their aggression toward the opponents. It is also possible that the pursuit of PAp goals in itself might be associated with the tendency to objectify others. To investigate these issues, we set up a second study in which we examined through structural equation modeling to what extent PAp goals and the reasons for which they are endorsed are related to moral functioning through their association with an objectifying attitude.

Study 2

Method

Participants and Procedure. To conduct Study 2, we followed the same procedures as in Study 1 (i.e., an institutional approval from the University of Gent and a written consent from participants). The data were collected in a similar way as in Study 1, with soccer players being asked to fill out a questionnaire in their club cafeteria after training. Two hundred forty-five male football players (mean age = 24.3, $SD = 5.26$) participated in Study 2. Players played in 17 different football clubs, with 25 (10.2%) of them playing in the first and second national league; 41 (16.8%) playing in the third and fourth national league; 36 (14.8%) in the first provincial league; and 32 (13.1%), 76 (31.1%), and 34 (13.9%) playing, respectively, in the second, third, and fourth provincial leagues. On average, participants had been playing soccer for 17.69 years ($SD = 5.30$), had 16.77 years ($SD = 5.26$) of competition experience, had been playing with their current team for 5.20 years ($SD = 4.95$), were selected on average 23.91 ($SD = 9.53$) times to play with their first team, and were in 13.14 ($SD = 11.34$) of the games starters at the time of the data completion.

Measures

Following the same procedures as in Study 1, we asked players to fill in the following questionnaires, all of which were presented with a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all true of me*) to 5 (*Very true of me*).

Performance-Approach Goals. When proposing their revised Achievement Goal Questionnaire, Elliot and Murayama (2008) removed the word *importance*, which was part of some of their original items and made sure that all of the items were goal-focused. We made similar changes to the Conroy et al. items (2003) such that the following three items were used in Study 2: “My aim is to perform well relative to my direct opponent in the game”; “It is my goal to perform better than my direct opponent”; “My goal during a soccer game is to outperform my direct opponent” ($\alpha = .84$).

Reasons Underlying Performance-Approach Goals. After each PAp goal item, we asked them to what extent they pursued the goal for intrinsic (three items), identified (three items), introjected (six items), and external reasons (three items). Although the chi-square test indicated a significant lack of fit between the observed and model-reproduced covariance matrices, S-B $\chi^2(80, N = 239) = 164.16, p < .01$, the observed fit indices suggested a reasonable fit of the model to the data, CFI = .952, SRMR = .055, RMSEA = .066 (90% CI: .052 to .081). As in Study 1, this model contained the self-regulated forms (i.e., intrinsic motivation, identified, introjected-approach and -avoidance, and external regulation) as latent factors and reproduced the simplex pattern. Consequently, we aggregated the intrinsic and identified self-regulated items to create an autonomous motivation composite score (six items; $\alpha = .84$) and the introjected and external self-regulation items to compute a controlling motivation composite score (nine items; $\alpha = .89$) for pursuing PAp goals.

Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior. We used the same scale (Kavussanu, 2006) that we used in Study 1 to assess players’ prosocial and antisocial behavior. Similar to Study 1, the prosocial scale appeared unreliable, but the internal consistency of the physical antisocial (six items; $\alpha = .75$) and nonphysical antisocial behavior subscales were acceptable (six items; $\alpha = .70$).

Sportspersonship Attitude. We employed the same three scenarios that we used in Study 1 to assess (a) intentional unfair behavior (i.e., to what extent players believed that they would exhibit such a behavior in the upcoming games; $\alpha = .58$), (b) effective unfair behavior (i.e., to what extent they showed such an unsportspersonship behavior in games during that season; $\alpha = .55$), and (c) approval of unfair behavior (i.e., to what degree they justified such an unethical behavior when occasion arises; $\alpha = .65$). Because of the low internal consistencies of the three subscales, and to keep the assessment of unsportspersonship behavior analogous to Study 1, we formed a composite score of unsportspersonship attitudes by averaging the scores of the three subscales ($\alpha = .83$).

Aggressive Behavior. We translated the recently developed 12-item Competitive Aggressiveness and Anger Scale (CAAS; Maxwell & Moores, 2007), which assess players’ aggressive behavior (e.g., “I use excessive force to gain an advantage”) and anger (e.g., “I become irritable if I am disadvantaged during a match”) during

games ($\alpha = .84$). Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale varying between 1 (*Almost Never*) and 5 (*Almost Always*).

Objectifying Attitude. In line with Haslam's theorizing (2006), we created five items to assess mechanistic dehumanization, which reflects players' tendency to "objectify" their rivals, that is, the tendency to downgrade their opponents and to perceive them as barriers that they need to be surpassed at all costs to achieve their aim (i.e., winning the game). All responses were given on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all true of me*) to 5 (*Very true of me*) and a sample item of this subscale was, "I consider others as objects that should be removed towards achieving my aims" ($\alpha = .81$).

Days of Suspension Due to Behavioral Misconduct. We asked players to self-report the number of games they were suspended from playing because of receiving a red card during one single match or because of receiving three yellow cards across three different matches. To correct for the number of games each player was selected, we divided the number of suspension days by the number of matches played in order to obtain a relative score. We assumed that the relative number of days of suspension could be considered as a more objective index of players' aggressive behavior.

Results

Correlations

As in Study 1, we first excluded 10 players (4.1% of the original sample) who reported a PAp goal score below the midpoint (i.e., less than 3). Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations of the retained cases ($N = 234$) are presented in Table 3. With respect to the background characteristics, age was negatively related to controlling reasons for pursuing PAp goals and with the exception of nonphysical antisocial behavior to all the self-reported immoral outcomes. League level was negatively related to autonomous reasons for pursuing PAp goals, whereas number of games played was positively related to autonomous reasons as well as to nonphysical antisocial behavior. With respect to motivation measures, PAp goals and autonomous reasons for pursuing them were positively intercorrelated, whereas PAp goals and controlling reasons were unrelated. Thus, similar to Study 1, the pursuit of PAp goals seems to be primarily motivated by autonomous reasons. Autonomous and controlling reasons were positively related to each other and they both were positively related to objectifying stance whereas controlling reasons were also positively related to unfair attitudes and aggression. Objectifying attitude was positively associated to all moral indicators, and suspension was positively related to aggression and unfair attitudes.

Structural Equation Modeling

Similar to Study 1, the pattern of correlations indicated that neither PAp goals nor underlying reasons were systematically and strongly related to the moral outcomes. However, it is well possible that the motivational constructs might be indirectly related to the outcomes through their association with objectifying stance.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Zero-order Correlations Between the Measured Variables of Study 2

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Background Variables														
1. Age	—													
2. League level	.19**	—												
3. Years of competing (<i>N</i>)	.80**	.12	—											
4. Matches played (<i>N</i>)	-.15*	-.17**	-.03	—										
5. Training (hr/week)	-.08	-.68**	-.02	.17**	—									
Motivation Measures														
6. Performance-approach goals	-.01	-.06	-.02	.02	.06	—								
7. Autonomous reasons	-.11	-.15*	-.04	.18**	.18**	.59**	—							
8. Controlling reasons	-.19**	.01	-.14*	.03	.02	.05	.19**	—						
Intervening Variable														
9. Objectifying stance	-.21**	-.02	-.12	.02	-.02	.12	.14*	.30**	—					
Self-Reported Outcomes														
10. Physical antisocial behavior	-.17**	.05	-.04	-.03	-.02	-.05	-.06	.03	.22**	—				
11. Nonphysical antisocial behavior	-.10	.03	.03	.14*	-.01	-.07	-.05	.10	.22**	.51**	—			
12. Aggression	-.23**	-.09	-.10	-.02	.01	.04	.03	.17*	.38**	.54**	.55**	—		
13. Unfair attitudes	-.22**	.08	-.09	.01	-.12	.01	.00	.15*	.33**	.67**	.57**	.59**	—	
Objective Outcome														
14. Suspension (days penalized, <i>N</i>)	-.07	-.05	-.05	-.11	-.04	.06	-.08	-.04	.01	.13*	.05	.19**	.19**	—
<i>M</i>	25.30	5.62	16.77	24.08	4.83	4.41	4.06	2.94	3.10	2.59	2.49	2.86	2.63	0.04
<i>SD</i>	5.25	1.92	5.26	9.42	2.75	0.58	0.65	0.88	0.90	0.67	0.62	0.58	0.69	0.10

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

To test this possibility, we ran a series of structural models in which objectifying attitude was inserted as an intervening variable in the relation between the motivational constructs and moral outcomes. We began by testing the measurement model. In this model, the three indicators (i.e., PAp goals, autonomous, and controlling reasons) and the intervening variable (i.e., objectifying attitude) were defined by their full set of items. Concerning the moral outcomes, we defined the immoral functioning latent factor through unsportspersonship attitudes, aggression, and physical and nonphysical antisocial behavior. The unsportspersonship attitudes and aggression were defined through three parcel indicators and each of physical and nonphysical antisocial behavior latent factors through two parcel indicators. Suspension was defined through a single indicator. We opted for this solution to keep the ratio of free parameters to the number of cases to a reasonable level (Bentler & Chou, 1987; but see Marsh, Hau, Balla, & Grayson, 1998). In addition, we constrained the error variances of the indicators of physical and nonphysical antisocial behavior to properly define the model (Kline, 2005). Inspection of the measurement model in which all the latent factors were set free to covary yielded reasonable fit indices, CFI = .923, SRMR = .062, RMSEA = .057 (90% CI: .047 to .066), despite the lack of fit between the observed and model-reproduced covariance matrices, $S-B \chi^2(242, N = 225) = 416.94, p < .01$.

Next, we proceeded by testing the structural model in which we presumed that objectifying attitudes would serve as an intervening variable in the relation between PAp goals and underlying autonomous reasons and controlling reasons and immoral outcomes, which in turn would be positively related to number of suspension days. Although the chi-square statistic showed a significant lack of fit between the observed and model-reproduced covariance matrices, $S-B \chi^2(268, N = 225) = 455.13, p < .01$, the hypothesized structural model yielded reasonable fit indices: CFI = .918, SRMR = .070, RMSEA = .056 (90% CI: .047 to .064). This model is presented in Figure 1. Whereas PAp goals and autonomous reasons for pursuing them were unrelated to an objectifying attitude, controlling reasons were positively related to an objectifying attitude, which in turn was positively associated with immoral functioning in sports. Moreover, the indirect effect of controlling reasons to immoral functioning through objectifying attitude was significant ($\beta = .15, z = 2.40, p < .05$). Finally, although suspension due to behavioral misconduct during the games was positively related to immoral functioning, the association was only marginally significant ($\beta = .19, z = 1.83, p = .07$).

Brief Discussion

Similar to Study 1, we found that the pursuit of PAp goals was primarily motivated by autonomous rather than controlling reasons. Further, in support of our hypothesis, we found in Study 2 that controlling reasons yielded an indirect relation to immoral outcomes through objectifying stance: To the extent that players felt pressured to outperform their opponents, they were more likely to consider their opponents as a barrier that should be overcome at all costs, which, in turn, seemed to serve as a justification for aggressing their opponents during the game. In contrast to controlling reasons underlying PAp goals, neither PAp goals per se, nor the autonomous reasons underlying them were associated with an objectifying attitude or with immoral outcomes.

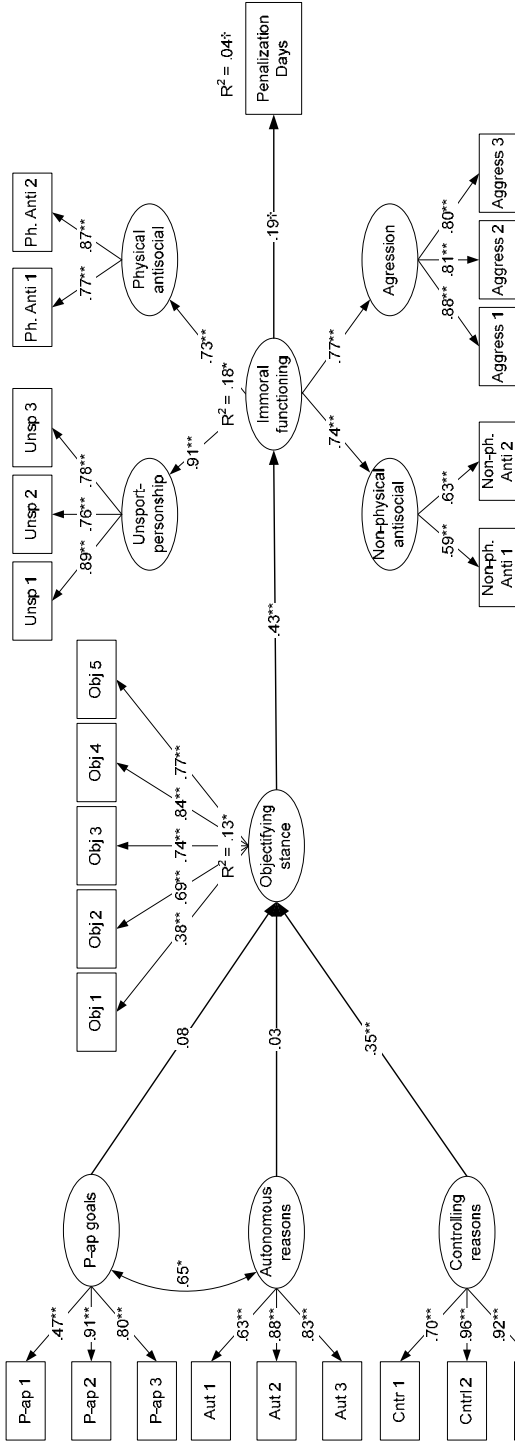


Figure 1 — Standardized path coefficients for the model predicting relationships between performance-approach goals and underlying reasons, objectifying stance, and moral outcomes. † $p < .07$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

General Discussion

Building on previous work on the intersection between achievement goal perspective and self-determination theory (e.g., Standage et al., 2003), we examined in the present research the relation of PAp goals and their underlying autonomous and controlling reasons to well-being and moral functioning. The consideration of the qualitative reasons underlying one's performance strivings is consistent with Elliot's claim (2005) that achievement goals should be conceptualized as aims only that might be undergirded by different reasons (Urda & Mestas, 2006). The conceptual and empirical separation between aims and underlying reasons enables researchers to investigate whether reasons proposed within other motivational theories would enhance the understanding of the effects associated with particular achievement goals. Because SDT provides an adequate explanation for the "why" of behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000), we considered soccer players' autonomous or volitional and controlling or pressuring reasons for being PAp oriented.

The present set of studies reveals a number of interesting findings that (a) have to do with the way reasons and aims are related; (b) address the question whether PAp goals, assessed as pure aims, have any significant associations with outcomes, even after taking into account the reasons underlying PAp goals; and (c) deal with the question whether autonomous and controlling reasons explain additional variance in outcomes beyond PAp goals, and, if so, which pattern of findings emerged. We structure our discussion below around these three issues.

The Link Between Performance-Approach Goals and Underlying Reasons

Previous research (e.g., Ntoumanis, 2001) on the intersection between AGT and SDT has shown that controlled motivation is associated with the pursuit of normative goals that yield a self-validating character, whereas autonomous motivation is associated with a task-focused approach. Within most, if not all, of these studies, however, the used operationalizations of achievement goals were not unambiguous as aims and reasons were not disentangled. Indeed, performance goals were said to be invariantly driven by concerns of ego-involvement and impression management. In the present research, we empirically disentangled aims, which yielded a reference to the desire to outperform one's direct opponent during a competition game, and the underlying reasons for doing so.

Based on previous studies (e.g., Ntoumanis, 2001), one might expect that the pursuit of PAp goals would be primarily motivated by controlling reasons such that both would be positively related. However, in both studies we found a consistent positive association between PAp goals and autonomous reasons, whereas pursuing PAp goals and controlling reasons were unrelated. These results indicate that PAp goals may well be pursued for reasons other than ego threatening ones. Aligned with Elliot and Fryer's theoretical suggestion (2008) and Urda and Mestas (2006) empirical findings who revealed different reasons for endorsing performance goals, the current results show that athletes may well embrace PAp goals because they find competition challenging, or personally meaningful and important. Thus, a diversity of reasons might undergird the pursuit of PAp goals.

The fact that PAp goals were primarily autonomously regulated seems in line with the more commonsense assumption that competition cannot only be pressuring and exhausting, but can also be experienced as stimulating and challenging. Indeed, it is likely that when soccer players step on the field, they consider their opponent as a challenger they *want* to outperform during the game. In addition, most, if not all, soccer players *choose* to become part of a soccer team and all know that competition forms an integral part of playing soccer. The association between PAp goals and underlying reasons deserves further investigation given that this association might be sample or sport specific. It is possible that in some sports or in some contexts the pursuit of PAp goals might be motivated by more controlling reasons, for instance, when an enormous pressure is placed upon sporters to win the game.

The Link Between Performance-Approach Goals and Outcomes

The present findings further showed that when PAp goals are measured as pure aims they are slightly positively related to desired outcomes such as positive affect and feelings of vitality and unrelated to negative outcomes such as negative affect and immoral functioning. These findings are not consistent with previous studies as in those studies the authors found a definite positive association between performance goals and immoral functioning (e.g., Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009; Kavussanu & Ntoumanis, 2003; Kavussanu & Roberts, 2001). Most likely, the discrepancy between the findings reported in previous studies and the current findings is due to the way PAp goals were assessed. Recall that in our study we assessed PAp goals only as aims whereas in those previous sport studies overarching reasons were intertwined with aims in the assessment of performance goals. It appears then that when PAp goals are “purely” assessed (i.e., without being intermingled with underlying reasons) they do not yield any independent association with moral outcomes. Indeed, in studies where PAp goals had been construed independent of underlying reasons, PAp were not necessarily found to yield maladaptive correlates (Elliot & Moller, 2003).

Another explanation for the discrepancy between the current findings and previous work is that we did not control for mastery goals in our analyses. It is well possible that the observed positive relation between PAp goals and positive well-being outcomes might disappear after controlling for mastery goal pursuit, which has been found to be a stronger predictor of well-being (e.g., Mouratidis, et al., 2009). The present results suggest that the association between PAp goals and well-being outcomes is not very robust, as entering the reasons for pursuing PAp goals in the regression equation largely reduced the initially observed association between the strength of endorsing PAp goals and well-being outcomes to nonsignificance. These findings are in line with a recent study in the educational domain by Vansteenkiste, Smeets, et al. (2009), who found that PAp goals accounted for little if any independent variance in learning outcomes (e.g., concentration and time management) after taking into account learners’ underlying reasons for being performance oriented. Finally, it is noteworthy that the lack of systematic positive correlates of PAp goals contradicts the selective goal hypothesis (Barron & Harackiewicz, 2001), which suggests that the pursuit of PAp goals should yield *positive* correlates (rather than null relations) under performance-oriented and competitive circumstances, like playing soccer.

Beyond Performance-Approach Goals: Looking at the Underlying Reasons

The most critical question in this contribution was whether the assessment of the reasons underlying soccer players' PAp goal pursuit would help to better understand when the pursuit of PAp goals is adaptive or detrimental. The analyses in Study 1 showed that soccer players' reasons for pursuing PAp goals explained additional variance in their well-being above the strength of their striving for PAp goals per se. Specifically, soccer players reporting more autonomous or volitional reasons for endorsing PAp goals were more likely to feel energized and to report more positive and less negative affect, whereas soccer players who felt psychologically pressured or controlled to outperform their opponent during the game reported somewhat more negative affect.

These findings are interesting because they indicate that the observed well-being differences among soccer players may not be a function of interpersonal differences in PAp goals but rather a function of the reasons for which these goals are endorsed, an issue that has received little attention before. In our view, these findings help to shed light on the ongoing discussion about when PAp goals are adaptive or maladaptive (e.g., Brophy, 2005; Harackiewicz et al., 2002; Midgley et al., 2001). In line with the recent work reported by Vansteenkiste, Smeets, and colleagues (2009) in the educational domain, the present results suggest that the pursuit of PAp goals might be adaptive, provided that soccer players find competition to be challenging and stimulating or in accordance with their personal values and beliefs. Indeed, if one perceives competition as fun or as a means to stretch one's skills, one is more likely to experience a sense of freedom and choice during the competition, which might evoke positive feelings and a sense of vigor. In contrast, the current results imply also that PAp goals could be less adaptive if athletes compete because they stand under pressure to do so, for instance, because big monetary bonuses are made contingent upon winning the game or because players hang their self-worth upon the outcome of the game. If they feel the pressure to beat their opponent, they might especially be prone to report more negative affect.

Further, PAp goals were positively associated with some aspects of immoral functioning when soccer players felt controlled in their pursuit of PAp goals, for instance because they need to prove their self-worth. In that case, it seems that they are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors. Nevertheless, the direct associations of controlling reasons underlying PAp goal pursuit were rather weak and inconsistent throughout the two studies. A possible explanation might reside in the narrow scope of the referenced persons in the current assessment of PAp goals as they referred to players' aims at outperforming their direct opponent, while players could also adopt a PAp goal orientation vis-à-vis their own teammates.

Study 2 was set up to explain the absence of strong associations and to examine whether moral disengagement processes would possibly serve as an intervening variable. Among a set of possible relevant processes (Weiss et al., 2008), we focused on what Haslam (2006) called *mechanistic dehumanization*. It refers to the tendency to reduce one's opponents to objects instead of perceiving them as individuals. We found that the more players experience internal or external psychological pressure to beat their opponents, the more likely they perceived their opponents as plain obstacles that need to be surpassed to achieve their goal of beating their opponent.

This perception likely provided them with a justification for engaging in unethical behavior such as physical and nonphysical antisocial behavior. Said differently, it lowered soccer players' threshold for acting defensively toward their opponents (Hodgins, 2008). This finding is noteworthy because it sheds some light on a potential mechanism that leads athletes who feel pressured to outperform their opponents to exhibit sport-related misbehavior.

Limitations

The present research contains several limitations. To mention a few, the data are cross-sectional and correlational in nature, precluding the possibility to infer causal relations. For instance, it is possible that an objectifying stance vis-à-vis one's opponent serves as a post hoc justification for one's aggressive behavior on the field rather than as an antecedent attitude of aggressive behavior. Longitudinal studies are needed to sort out whether the motivational predictors, objectifying stance, and aggressive behavior form a mutually reinforcing set of processes (e.g., Sage & Kavussanu, 2008). In addition, experimental work (e.g., Sage & Kavussanu, 2007) would allow one to examine whether inducing a PAp goal in a controlling—relative to an autonomy-supportive way—would cause differences in moral outcomes.

Also, some of the observed associations might be driven by common method variance, as almost all the assessed measures were self-reported. For instance, as in previous research (Vansteenkiste, Zhou, Lens, & Soenens, 2005), it was found that autonomous and controlling reasons underlying PAp goals were most predictive of positive (i.e., well-being) and negative (i.e., negative affect, immoral behavior) outcomes, respectively. We undertook a first attempt to overcome the complete self-report nature of the data in Study 2 by assessing the number of penalization days. Immoral functioning tended to be positively related to number of penalization days, although this association was only marginally significant. This might be due to the fact that players underreport their aggressive behavior, that the referee does not always notice the aggressive behaviors of the players on the field, or that we failed to measure the whole range of behaviors that can get penalized by the referee. Future research might obtain other objective measures, for instance, through the rating of players' aggressive behavior by observers along the pitch (see Kavussanu, Seal, & Phillips, 2006; Rasle, Coulomb-Cabagno, & Delsharte, 2005).

Further, despite the use of a validated questionnaire to assess prosocial and antisocial behavior (Kavussanu, 2006), we failed to assess prosocial behavior in a reliable way. Future research might try to remediate this lacuna, for instance, by including a broader range of prosocial behaviors (see Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009). We should also note that future research might also consider the role of intrinsic versus extrinsic goals (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006) in addition to reasons underlying PAp goal pursuit; include a measure of integrated regulation, as we did not do so in the current contribution; and examine, following the achievement goal research tradition (e.g., Elliot & McGregor, 2001), the role of need for achievement and the fear of failure as potential antecedents of PAp goals and their underlying reasons.

Finally, in the current study, we made use of an integrated measure such that soccer players' motives were directly tied to the pursuit of PAp goals per se. It is, however, also possible to measure participants' PAp goals and their autonomous and controlled motives for their sport participation independently. Person-centered

analyses (e.g., cluster analysis) could then be used to examine whether different groups of performance-oriented players emerge, with some of them being more autonomous and others being more controlled in their playing (see Vansteenkiste, Sierens, Soenens, Luyckx, & Lens, 2009). A comparison of these different groups in terms of outcomes would then allow examining whether players combining PAp goals and autonomous motives would display more optimal functioning when compared with players who combine PAp goals with controlled motives.

Conclusions

The present research underscores the claim by Elliot (2005) to separate aim from underlying reasons within achievement goal research. In our view, disentangling both allows for a greater insight into the specific factors that are associated with soccer players' well-being and moral functioning. Specifically, in line with SDT, an autonomous regulation of PAp goals is conducive to adjustment because the PAp goal will then likely be perceived as challenging and growth promoting, whereas the pressing and threatening perception of PAp goals when controlled regulated seems to make one more prone to dehumanize one's opponent, which, in turn, lowers the threshold to exhibit immoral behavior. Future research is needed to examine the generalizability of the current findings.

Notes

1. Although integrated regulation is an important aspect of internalization of extrinsic motivation, we did not assess it in the current study because integrated regulation seems a little bit elusive with respect to the issue at hand and because implicit measures rather than explicit self-report measures might, in our view, be a better way to reliably and validly assess it.
2. We did not include players' age as an additional predictor next to players' experience in competitive soccer to avoid multicollinearity problems with competition experience. Similarly, we excluded league level because of its high correlation with hours of training. For the purposes of our study, we considered that players' competition experience and hours of training per week were more valid and useful predictors.

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