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Sport and Crime

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[–] Abstract and Keywords

Sport and crime possess the power to stir emotion and arouse debate; most people have opinions on both. Many believe a relationship exists between the two but as Francis and Braggins contend, the relationship between sport and crime is complex. For some, sport is a bastion of physical prowess and moral virtue; abiding by the rules and playing fair is considered a vehicle to encourage the wayward to veer from potential deviance or to rehabilitate offenders. A surfeit of programs designed to use sport as a method of crime control currently exist. However, sport itself contains many paradoxes and in some cases has become a realm for criminal behavior: corruption, bribery, doping, discrimination, violence, hooliganism, and a host of other undesirable behaviors are all evidenced in the delivery and practice of sport. Thus, the Hydra-headed character of sport makes the correlate between sport and crime a sometimes controversial milieu.

Keywords: deviance, youth crime, diversion from offending, sports programs, sport philosophy, violent athletes, doping, hooliganism, corruption, governing bodies

The Search for the Game Changer

The terms “sport” and “crime” do not have simple or universally accepted definition, with both changeable across time and distance (Cassell, 1893; Farmer, 2008; Francis & Braggins, 1996; Treadwell, 2012; Walklate, 2011). A sociological definition would view crime as an act of deviance that is detected, violates prevailing rules and norms, and is punishable by the state (Anderson & Taylor, 2009). The search to define what constitutes “sport” does not lend itself to such clarity. Nichols (2007) concludes that sport “involves physical activity with some form of gross bodily movement, or fine psychomotor skills ... it will normally have a competitive dimension, but sports taken part in by oneself, such as weight training and jogging, may also be included.” Regardless of definitions, it is clear that particular sports and the nature of these are more pertinent to an analysis centered on sport and crime. However, what concerns this analysis is what correlations—if any—exist between sport and crime. The statement of Jupp (1996) is useful here:

“On the one hand sport is the context for that which is bad in us and society—sleaze, corruption, fraud, violence and aggression—and at the same time is a model for that which is good and the panacea of social ills”
(p. 4).

Sport is now widely viewed as a microcosm of society. But elite level sport with its burgeoning significance brings with it a widening array of issues. Within the contemporary world of commercialized sport, as large sums of money have become ever-available, increased legal regulation and litigation has become a reality (Anglia Sports Law, 1997; Nafgizer and James 2004). Only a limited number of academic research outputs have emerged in the “criminology of sport” (see Atkinson and Young, 2008; Brooks et al., 2013; Marivoet 2010; Crabbe and Blackshaw, 2004; Kelly et al., forthcoming; Nichols, 2007, for instance). This might reflect the contested terrain of criminology as a (sub-) discipline in which researchers have carried forward theories from a range of disciplines—law, sociology, psychology, history and even biology—but this has not produced a consensus on the ontological basis of crime, how best to study its various phenomena, and whether the main focus of enquiry should be on “rule breakers” or “lawmakers” (see Kelly et al., forthcoming; Walklate, 2011). Sport has been and continues to be the fulcrum of the cure and cause of “crime” debate.

Key questions emerge in this area, namely: Does sport lead to crime because professional athletes have become poor role models and sports organizations are blinded by avarice? Or does sport lead to crime reduction through its ability to promote moral values and concomitantly divert those at risk of offending behavior into more productive avenues? Addressing these questions requires any discourse to draw on direct examples of sporting deviance and illustrate how sport has been used to tackle crime.

Sport: Inherently Deviant?

In recent years, a plethora of deviant and criminal acts have taken place in sport. In line with Taylor's (1999) critical criminological position, which focuses on material inequalities in challenging traditional understandings about the genesis of crime, it is necessary to point out that not all of these acts have been carried out by those in lower socioeconomic locations. High-profile athletes have been arrested for their involvement in criminal activities both within and outside the sporting arena. Doping scandals have smeared the reputation of renowned sportsmen and women, violence on and off the field continues to blight the sporting spectacle, and allegations of bribery and corruption are rife. Despite the finite number of "criminology of sport" pieces sport-crime may correlate: "It is intriguing that some of the core features of sport such as competitiveness, desire to win, desire for success, aggressiveness and assertiveness underpin criminal actions such as violence, assault, sleaze and fraud." (Jupp, 1996: 45). Although sport can be enthralling and enchanting, it does not always paint a pretty picture.

For some, however, sport provides an antidote to deviance. Sport is believed to divert troubled individuals from the lure of crime, teaching them to abide by societal norms and motivating them to pursue more positive futures (see Meek's 2014 research on sport in prison settings). In this area, particular emphasis has been placed on tackling juvenile delinquency through sport. This is reflected in the number of youth sport programs that now form part of the crime reduction strategies of many advanced capitalist societies, including the United States (Witt & Crompton, 1996), Canada (Reid, Tremblay, Pelletier, & McKay, 1994), Australia (Morris, Sallybanks, & Willis, 2003), the United Kingdom (Nichols, 2007), and many more (Chamberlain, 2013; Kelly, 2012). According to Robins, the advocates of sport programs aimed at reducing youth crime are often "propelled by a sort of aggressive optimism which acts as a defence against the helplessness felt when confronting the destructive nihilism of criminalised youth" (Robins, 1996: 26). Alternatively, Kelly (2012) does not wholly dismiss the capacity of sport-based programs to be effective interventions into youth crime but calls first for a deeper consideration of what the potentially catch-all term of "youth crime" might mean (echoing work of other critical criminologists who explore "youth crime" in this area, for instance Muncie 2009) and then, second, calling into the question the validity and rigor of the evidence upon which the allocation of public money into sport-based interventions is premised. Policy in this area appears to be often made on isolated "success" cases (and not isolated "failure" cases) or nostalgic anecdotes rather than rigorous evidence.

Other research has challenged the conventional wisdom that sport can intervene in "criminal" behavior (Robins, 1990, 1996; Anderson, 2010; Coakley, 2011), and research has even found sport to be connected to, or the cause of, violent behavior. In 2007, Penn State criminologist Derek Kraeger examined the extent to which participation in high school interscholastic sport contributed to male violence and found American Football players and wrestlers were significantly more likely to demonstrate violent behaviors than teen peers who did not play sport (Kraeger, 2007). This raises the question: Is sport contiguous with crime and in some cases even a fomenter of deviance?

Fairness Fixing and Funding

The dilemma any analysis faces on this issue stems from claims that sports is inherently noble. Shorn of all sociopolitical influences this argument may hold water. However, sport in its promotion, practice, and performance carries endless potential for deceit. As Vidal (2013) argues: "As corruption erodes the rule of law, so it erodes the spirit of sporting competition, especially the concept of a noble contest based on fairness, respect, and integrity" (p. 22). On one level the issue is whether the individual is the focus of any inquiry about the sport-crime nexus or institutional forces. But of course the individual may be a kernel of something greater. In 1995 Wilson Raj Perumal, a Singaporean Tamil, was jailed in Singapore for match-fixing after being found guilty of paying the captain of a Singaporean soccer team \$3,000 to throw a game (Blake, 2011). Implicated in several match-fixing scandals, Perumal led a criminal network controlling a large share of illegal football betting at the international level (Cantone & Di Feo, 2012).

According to the International Center for Sport Security (ICSS),¹ the principal motivation behind the criminal manipulation

of sport is to cheat gamblers and betting companies by determining in advance the result/or elements of a sports contest. In Perumal's book *Kelong Kings*, written in conjunction with investigative journalists Alessandro Righi and Emanuele Piano,² the text highlights how soccer matches proved particularly fertile ground for match-fixing and the phenomenon known as "spot-fixing," which attempts to determine specific elements of a game such as the number of yellow cards, a method particularly popular among crime syndicates (Conway, 2014). As McNamee (2013) affirms, "the greater the variety of betting practices, the greater the possibility for corruption."

Match-fixing has been the object of enquiries and prosecutions in a variety of sports across the world (CBC Sports 2011; McNamee, 2013). However, measuring the prevalence of "white collar crimes" such as match-fixing is difficult as Croall (2001: 22) points out that such acts are largely "undetected and underreported, few [white-collar 'criminals'] are prosecuted and victim surveys are necessarily limited. Even where victims are aware of some harm, it may be too trivial to consider reporting" (see also Kelly et al., forthcoming).

Director of Sport Integrity at the ICSS Chris Eaton claimed in 2013 that international sport was in serious trouble regarding match-fixing, which facilitates bigger crimes, notably betting fraud (cited in Wilson, 2013). This assertion has been reinforced by the scholarly community (see Di Ronco & Lavorgna, 2014; Harberfeld & Sheehan, 2013; Hill, 2010, 2013, 2015). Furthermore, Eaton postulated that although match-fixing was still driven by sporting factors (i.e., the pursuit of promotion and avoidance of relegation), this motivation had been eclipsed by financial incentives linked to gambling (see Brooks et al., 2013). To an extent this has been epitomized by soccer and its match-fixing travails over the past decade (Di Ronco & Lavorgna, 2014; Hill, 2010, 2013, 2015; Manoli & Antonopoulos, 2014). Italian soccer offers a quintessential example. Brooks et al., (2013) highlight that in 2006, a number of prominent clubs in the top division of Italian soccer, notably champions Juventus, were implicated in a scandal that has become known as *Calciopoli* (Football City). Five clubs were accused by prosecutors of the Italian soccer association of rigging games by selecting referees considered favorable to their clubs and therefore officiating to the advantage of their respective teams. Five years later, a new match-fixing scandal emerged, referred to as *Calcio Scommesse* (soccer betting). The police operation—coordinated by the magistrate of the Italian city of Cremona—uncovered a complex gambling network with interest in corrupting games across Europe involving Internet and international criminal organizations from Singapore, Eastern Europe, and Italy (Mensurati & Foschini, 2011; Di Ronco & Lavorgna, 2014).

The illegal sports gambling world was recently estimated to have an economic value of £320 billion per year (Singh, 2013). The potential for profit in this market far outweighs the risks of being caught, and thus match-fixing in football has become an irresistible business proposition for organized crime (Harberfeld & Sheehan, 2013). It is widely held that this endemic problem cannot be managed by sport institutions themselves. This is largely because of a lack of international sports gambling governance (McNamee, 2013).

But despite the pertinence of corruptive malpractices in sport and especially football, there remains a scarcity of criminological literature on this topic. As Italian sociologists Di Ronco and Lavoragna (2014: 2) observe, "The existing studies mainly rely on anecdotal evidence, and episodes of corruption have seldom been analysed against the backdrop of relevant criminological perspectives." Using judicial files from the Criminal Chamber of the Italian Supreme Court and media reports, the pair sought to define and categorize different modalities and patterns of corruption in Italian football while using subcultural and opportunity theories as a prism through which to examine their findings and identify systemic opportunities for corruption (Antonopoulos, 2015). Their analysis identified three main categories of corruptive behaviors: (a) "private-to-public corruption," (b) "financial crimes" and (c) "sportive frauds." Within these three categories, subcategories emerged, including fraudulent bankruptcy, money laundering, illegal betting, doping, and match-fixing. The authors concluded that corruptive cultures pervading football were reinforced by an atmosphere of tolerance (from both peers and the public), in turn justifying and even encouraging corruption (Di Ronco & Lavoragna, 2014).

Research carried out in 2014 by the ICSS in conjunction with the University of Sorbonne, Paris, revealed that 80% of global sport betting is illegally transacted and therefore invisible to regulators and investigators (ICSS, 2014). As part of its findings the report recommended a number of methods that governments, sports organizations, betting regulators, and operators could adopt in order to combat match-fixing and unlawful gambling. These recommendations included creating a sports-betting tax to finance investigations into match-fixing and illegal betting; establishing an integrity risk assessment and management system for sports organizations; and prohibiting players, coaches, and administrators from betting on competitions and matches within their sport (ICSS, 2014).

Organized crime is not new to society, and corruption in many contexts constitutes a criminal offence, if detected (see Croall, 2001). But can—or should—sports governing bodies shoulder the responsibility for such behaviors? Some of the corruption that exists within sport is underpinned by an athlete's or sports corporation's desire for success. To an extent this can explain some of the motives behind match-fixing. In these instances, it could be argued that the importance placed on sporting success and the Lombardian³ "win at all cost" ethic often advocated by sport *aficionados* has driven some athletes and sport club administrators to pursue levels of corruption in pursuit of winning regardless of the ethical issues. Furthermore, this is accentuated by the lack of a lexicon or clear set of guidelines regarding corruption in sport. However the growth of match-fixing in relation to fraudulent gambling and global organized crime makes it hard to argue that sport itself can be held solely responsible.

For instance, investigative journalist and academic Declan Hill (2013) offers that most of the academic research focuses on the response by the authorities to match-fixing rather than the acts themselves. With qualitative evidence he gathered for his D. Phil thesis that was awarded by Oxford University, he seeks to rectify this position by sketching out networks of involvement and activity in this field.

Above all else, Hill argues that match-fixing is not new to football but has been around since sport was first organized. However, he suggests that global interlinkages are allowing a couplet of match-fixing and globalization to emerge. More specifically, he argues that a global market in sports gambling of multiple hundreds of billion dollars is now accessible to almost anybody who wants to make a bet on almost every possible sporting outcome in the world—from the elite to smaller scale. By using a form of qualitative social network analysis, he suggests that many of the match-fixing scandals in football can be traced to a small group of interconnected fixers who live in Singapore/Malaysia/Indonesia and Thailand. Unlike in Croall's (2001) argument about white collar crime more broadly, he points out that the authorities in those countries know the identities of most of these fixers. However, they do not seek to push criminal charges upon them but instead arrest relatively low-level players or referees who are less deeply embroiled in such activities. In some cases, it is very influential and rich people—often closely connected to the government and/or sports governing bodies—who bankroll the match-fixers, and so an incentive is created not to criminalize the "most criminal" (again echoing Taylor's 1999 analysis of crime in market societies). This adds weight to the belief that a culture of tolerance allows match-fixing to thrive within football (Di Ronco & Lavoragna, 2014; Habersfeld & Sheehan, 2013). Hill's latest paper (2015) expands on his previous work by exploring why professional footballers—who earn remunerative wages and enjoy a lofty social status—agree to fix football matches. Based on his findings from quantitative and qualitative data, including interviews with football players with first-hand experience in match-fixing, Hill deduced that "the way to understand why some footballers fix matches for gambling corruptors is to see them as economically motivated criminals who choose to participate in fixing matches for a set of financial reasons" (p. 4).

Regardless, while sport provides the context and setting for such deviance, it cannot always be considered as the cause. The element for which sport might be held accountable is the fact that efforts to counter endemic corruption still remain at a very rudimentary level (Di Ronco & Lavoragna, 2014). As a recent report by Transparency International candidly stated: saving football = good governance + anti-corruption (Transparency International, 2013). It's a message applicable across the board.

Deviance and Teamwork

Another facet of sport corruption to consider is the collusion between sports governing bodies and local/national governments, alluded to in our earlier discussion of Hill's (2013) investigative journalistic and academic work. The close-knit relationship between sporting administrators, politicians, business people, sponsors, and the media can create a high-risk environment for corruption (Schenk and Fagan, 2009). As Jennings (2011) argues, this opacity and lack of accountability in sports global governing bodies goes hand in glove with a propensity for corruption, which can allow criminal activity to go unchecked and unpunished. Bribery and irregularities surrounding a nation's or city's bid to host a major sporting event is a particular hotbed of controversy. FIFA has been mired in allegations of corruption regarding their decision to award the Soccer World Cup to Qatar (see Kelly et al., forthcoming; Tomlinson, 2014; Weinreich 2014; Newell et al., 2014).

In March 2014 investigative journalists from *The Telegraph* alleged that Jack Warner, the Trinidadian born former vice-president of FIFA, was paid almost \$2 million (£1.2m) from a Qatari firm linked to the country's successful bid for the 2022 World Cup. The payments were made shortly after the decision to award Qatar the 2022 tournament. Such

allegations were not news to British investigative journalist Andrew Jennings, a proven *bête noire* of FIFA and the IOC who has revealed a plethora of their wrong-doings (Jennings, 2007). “FIFA is now a multi-billion dollar business operating under Swiss charitable association rules. That guarantees minimal disclosure about what they do with their money” (Jennings, 2011: 395). One apparent irony, as Jennings points out, lies in the fact that Joseph “Sepp” Blatter (FIFA’s president) is the man charged with leading the organization’s “reform process”:

“It is absurd that Blatter, who has benefited from the explosion of corruption during his tenure as FIFA General Secretary and President ... is controlling this ‘clean-up’ scheme. It is created by Blatter to protect him and those close to him.”

(Transparencyinsport.org, 2012)

The aforementioned allegations compromise arguments about the positive influence of sport on young people, notably in spreading values of sportsmanship and indeed Olympism⁴ (Schenk, 2011). But sport sets itself high standards, none more so than the Olympics. The Olympic Charter consists of a set of rules and guidelines for organizing the Olympic Games and for governing the Olympic Movement.

The Olympics, however, have been embroiled in a number of corruption allegations. In 2002, the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics was embroiled in a bribery scandal after an internal inquiry into the allegations found that the two top officials who led the city’s bid for the Games were guilty of plying more than a dozen IOC members⁵ with some \$1 million in cash, gifts, travel, and other inducements (CNN, 1999; Clare, 2000). This revelation prompted former IOC vice-president, Marc Hodler, to announce that he believed there was large-scale corruption in the IOC and that many other previous Olympic Games had been tainted by such bribery (Kelly et al., forthcoming).

Money and power can distort the simplest of games or purest of values. For good or for bad, television rights, sponsorship, and infrastructure projects have turned sport into a lucrative industry. These epiphenomenons around sport provide various contexts for criminal activities. If such issues are not addressed, people’s trust in sport is not only abused, but the positive impact it is argued to possess is negated. However, when sport takes steps to build integrity, it does more than merely prevent corruption within the sporting context: the positive impact of their example reverberates at many levels (Schenk, 2011).

Equality in Sport: Reality or Romance?

Sport has taken huge strides toward tackling its history of discrimination. In 2007, the European Commission launched the “White Paper on Sport,” a document that stressed the societal role of sport and its role in promoting social inclusion, establishing equal opportunities, and fighting against all forms of discrimination (Marivoet, 2014). However, while sport presents itself as a site that enhances social inclusion by promoting tolerance, respect for others, cooperation, and values associated with fair play (Arnold, 1998; Simon 2004; Mairvoet, 2010), it can still harbor prejudice and some of the most extreme forms of discrimination. Whether it is on the pitch, from the touchline, in the boardroom, or via social media, some sports participants are subjected to discrimination and abuse—ranging from the subtle to overtly aggressive acts of violence and harm, and often of a nature that is illegal or certainly unacceptable (Oliver and Lusted, 2014).

While many associate the issue of discrimination with racism, in reality sport is fighting a battle on multiple fronts, having to tackle prejudice based upon people’s gender, religion, disability, and sexual orientation. High-profile incidents of discriminatory abuse have stirred a furor in recent years while the mishandling and apparent failure to deal with such issues have seen sport suffer the opprobrium of the media, anti-discrimination campaigners, and politicians.

To highlight but a few recent examples: Burdsey (2014) and Garland and Rowe (2014) both draw upon recent cases in English professional soccer, when in the space of one week both Luis Suarez and John Terry were accused of racially abusing opponents; research from UK charity Stonewall (2009) demonstrated that homophobia is still rife within soccer and deters homosexual, transgender, and heterosexual fans from attending and playing the game (see research by Caudwell 2014 for recent research in this area); and notable figures including English Premier League Soccer chief Richard Scudamore and former Sky Sports pundits Andy Gray and Richard Keys found themselves at the heart of a public scandal after they were exposed for making crude sexist comments toward colleagues and a soccer official. Even the positive images of disability displayed during the London 2012 Paralympics failed to curtail increasing anti-disabled abuse during and after the games (Milmo, 2013). Farrington et al., (2014) have pointed out that the evolution of social media

and networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter has also provided a platform for the proliferation of fan-based forms of discrimination, with former England soccer player Stan Collymore bemoaning Twitter because he felt the site was “not doing enough to combat racist/homophobic/sexist hate messages, all of which are illegal in the UK” (BBC News, 2014).

The aforementioned examples demonstrate the continued presence of discrimination within sport cultures, many of which could be construed as behaviors worthy of criminal punishment. In the case of John Terry, despite going to court he was found not guilty of racial abuse, and he escaped legal sanctions. But these problems have led some to question the assertion that sport can tackle discrimination by fostering inclusivism and equality (Kassimeris, 2008; Hylton, 2009; Anderson, 2010; Oliver and Lusted, 2014). It would appear that sport remains behind the times and has failed to address prejudices that continue to blight its reputation. Of course it must be acknowledged that sport reflects the social context in which it takes place, and thus it “is as likely to be shaped by the structural and culturally produced social inequalities as any other social realm” (Oliver and Lusted, 2014: 1). But as a social institution, sport often appears to lack clarity and conviction when handling issues of discrimination. For example, despite the English Football Association’s “alleged” commitment to extinguishing discrimination, they failed to bring sanctions upon Richard Scudamore despite his blatant and offensive sexist remarks in emails.

Therefore, sports organizations, clubs, and officials must strive to map out clear procedures and policies to be followed when reports of discrimination arise. Awareness and knowledge surrounding racism and discrimination must be broadened through education on what is and is not acceptable behavior, so that positive cultures become engrained in sport (Oliver and Lusted, 2014). This must occur at all levels, from players to coaches to referees to administrators. Gradually, sporting organizations are awakening to the fact that the strategies and projects they implement will not succeed unless the perceived barriers to participation are addressed and their sport is seen to be encouraging diversity, providing a welcoming culture, and doing everything it can to stamp out discrimination (AHRC, 2007).

However, as Grange (2013) states, “Sport has in many instances played a role in reproducing violence, division and exclusion along racial, gender and other lines. The reconciliatory role of sport is not automatic, but one that needs to be cultivated.” This is further evidence for the argument that sport has become a configuration in which deviant and criminal practices have been allowed to fester.

The Ends and the Means

A sporting champion, whose feats are lauded as phenomenal, makes a good box-office draw. In the 21st century there was no greater sporting figure than cyclist Lance Armstrong, the seven times winner of the *Tour De France*. His sporting career was considered inspirational. His victories and abilities made him ideal for marketing campaigns:

“This is my body and I can do whatever I want to it. I can push it and study it, tweak it, listen to it. Everybody wants to know what I am on? I’m on my bike busting my ass six hours a day. What are you on?” Lance Armstrong—Nike TV Commercial 2001.

There was disbelief when Lance Armstrong was revealed to be the focus of the biggest doping⁶ scandal in sporting history (see Yar, 2014). In October 2012, the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) said Armstrong was part of “the most sophisticated, professionalized and successful doping program that sport has ever seen” (O’Keeffe, 2012). A 202-page report outlined Armstrong’s involvement in a network of support staff—smugglers, dope physicians, and drug runners—which illustrated that Armstrong not only used performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs), but he also supplied them (USADA, 2012). Armstrong was stripped of his *Le Tour de France* titles and his 2000 Sydney Olympics Bronze medal. But the ramifications of this case are far wider than an athlete stripped of his titles.

One might argue that the differentiation between doping in sport and illicit drug use in society is eroding, and there are increasing calls for doping to be criminalized. Maughan, Burke, and Coyle (2004) echo these sentiments, raising the controversial question of why drug-using athletes are not arrested, fined, or imprisoned in countries where possession, distribution, or consumption of illegal substances is a criminal offence (Atkinson & Young, 2008). The World Anti-Doping Agency’s⁷ (WADA) Director General, David Howman, has even accepted that doping has links to organized crime and has admitted the problem is “too big for sport to manage” (Gibson, 2013). The scholarly community has contributed extensively to documenting the culture of doping in sport, particularly in cycling (Hoberman, 2002; Christiansen, 2005; Schneider, 2006; Brissonneau et al., 2008; Paolo & Donati, 2014). However, Fincoeur, van de Ven, and Mulrooney (2014) argue that “Criminology as a discipline has yet to sufficiently explore the problem of doping, and in particular the

role of those who supply performance and image-enhancing drugs (PIEDs)" (p. 2).

The prohibition around, and punishment of, the use of performance-enhancing substances has traditionally been dealt with by sport regulatory bodies, whether via individual governing bodies or WADA, since its inception in 1999. But the prevalence of PED use has led to a growing consensus among policymakers and indeed scholars (e.g., Houlihan and Garcia, 2012; Howman, 2011; Paoli & Donati, 2013) that anti-doping policy focused solely on athletes and testing has failed (Smith & Stewart, 2008). Instead a broad approach is being favored, including instruments of criminal law and, specifically, the repression of "trafficking" (Paoli & Donati, 2013, 2014).⁸

As it stands, under International Olympic Committee (IOC) rules athletes may face disqualification and bans for doping offences, but they are not subject to legal penalties. Within the UK, although some PEDs are controlled and their unregulated usage falls under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, many do not (Parliament Publications, 2007). As explained by UK Sports⁹ former anti-drugs chief John Scott, the government has taken the position that doping "is an issue that should be owned by sport" (Parliament Publications, 2007). However, Michele Verroken, founding director of Sporting Integrity,¹⁰ has suggested that strengthening legislation that may lead to criminal prosecutions for doping offences would demonstrate the UK's commitment to control these substances (Parliament Publications, 2007).

Elsewhere, the situation has mirrored the WADA's belief that law-enforcement mechanisms are imperative to ensure an efficient and effective anti-doping fight. In the White Paper on Sport, the European Commission (Commission of the European Communities, 2007) suggests that the trade of prohibited doping substances should be dealt with in the same manner as trading in illegal drugs throughout the European Union. Italy was one of the first countries to pass legislation making doping a criminal offence (Paoli and Donati, 2013)¹¹; similarly France and Belgium have introduced specialized anti-doping police units while Austria Denmark and Sweden (Christiansen, 2011) have enacted sport-specific laws that criminalize the use of a prohibited substance cited in the World Anti-Doping Code (WADC). Research on Italy's anti-doping criminal law by Paoli and Donati (2013) concluded that "Criminal law enforcement has an unexploited, crucial (though limited) potential role in anti-doping" (p. 41).

However, Fincoeur et al. (2014) argue that rather than bringing "the war on doping" into the realm of law enforcement and social policy, it should remain in the "confines of sport" (p. 9). Drawing on empirical data from two research projects exploring the supply chains of doping substances within elite cycling in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, the scholars contend that punitive anti-doping policy—which has become focused on organized crime organizations controlling the PED markets and characterized by zero tolerance—is exacerbating the problem by pushing the supply chain (as well as the use of doping substances) underground (Antonopoulos, 2015). They add that the unintended negative consequences of the "war on doping" are comparable to those of the "war on drugs." For example, the expansion of anti-doping policy has seen law-enforcement prioritized over health concerns, drug-users stigmatized, and doping markets shift to countries where the regulations are more lax (Koert and Van Kleij, 1998; Fincoeur et al., 2014).

Thus if the law and law enforcement cannot eradicate this need or desire to "dope," what or who will? Growing from work by the sociologist George Homans (1961), rational choice theory/game theory has proved to be an influential perspective to understand "crime." In short, the perspective adopts a utilitarian belief that social actors make reasoned choices based upon means and ends, or around costs and benefits. In criminology, this approach has been adapted by Cornish and Clarke (1987), following the assumption that crime is a purposeful behavior designed to meet the offender's needs and desires for money, status, sex, and excitement. The pursuit involves making "rational" decisions about how to achieve aims with minimal "costs." The theory might be able to be meaningfully applied to law and rule breaking in sport. The realization that the widespread use of performance-enhancing drugs entails a severe health risk for athletes should, ideally, act as a deterrent. This is but one "cost" of taking such drugs. Improved detection methods and more testing have also been implemented by anti-doping agencies, highlighting a second "cost." However, between 2003 to 2011, WADA recorded a rise in the percentage of athletes who tested positive for PEDs from 1.6 to 2% (World Anti-Doping Agency, 2011), thus suggesting that even the increased risk of getting caught is not an effective deterrent. The rewards—money and prestige—outweigh the "costs."

Some have argued that doping is akin to defrauding fellow athletes from an income, and on this premise they feel it should also be considered alongside criminal activities such as financial fraud (Nitz, 2012). However, the Armstrong scandal unveiled a complex and nuanced network, one in which institutional networks place enormous pressures on racers to push past the barriers of human ability in order to establish new records (Atkinson, 2007).

The criminalization of doping suggests a reluctant acceptance from sports administrators and indeed national

governments that sport has become an environment in which this form of deviance is thriving. But as Fincoeur et al. (2014) suggest, moving doping into the realms of law and social policy may not be the most prudent course of action. Instead they advocate an anti-doping movement tailored to education, prevention, and minimization of harm.

The motivations behind doping are well documented. They include financial incentives, a single-minded desire to succeed, and game theory (i.e., the belief that the possibility of getting beat by a doper is more likely than the risk of getting caught by a drugs test; Joyner, 2013). On top of all these motivations come various external pressures from sponsors, coaches, and the media. Some would contend that far from being deviant, doping is a practice grounded in overconformity (Coakley and Pike, 2009). Some athletes accept that doping is a sporting norm. Substance use can often occur among the most dedicated, committed and hard-working athletes. Drug and substance use is not necessarily caused by defective socialization or lack of moral character among athletes. Causation is difficult to pin down.

We thus have to accept that although sport teaches discipline, commitment, and morality, it can also encourage visceral behaviors that normalize deviance in the pursuit of success and in some cases financial reward. Sport, therefore, unearths inherently deviant qualities, thus having a pernicious effect on its role in society. Sport is truly on the fulcrum of the cure and cause debate, a situation captured by journalist Michael Sokolove, who claimed

“There is a murky quality to sport ... The rules are ambiguous. Everything is a little suspect ... A very narrow tunnel leads to success at the very top levels of sport ... The temptation to cheat is human. In the realm of elite international sport, it can be irresistible.

(Sokolove, 2004: 28, cited in Coakley and Pike, 2009)

Violence: Just Part of the Game?

Violence was always part and parcel of the sporting spectacle. The great chronicler of English life, George Orwell, famously observed that, “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 violence” (1950).

The attraction of sport for millions is the arena of escapism it offers. In a sense sport has long assumed a role akin to the notion of “Bread and Circuses,” the metonymic coined by the Ancient Romans referring to the use of bread and games (sports) to superficially appease the populace. Violence and aggression have played a timeless pivotal role in keeping the masses entertained. As sociologist Dunning (1999) asserts, sport violence remains a vital social issue in modern sports, crucial to which is the creation of tension rather than its relief or discharge. One area of particular interest in the debate surrounding sport as a cure or cause of crime is player-on-player violence.

Sports can be violent and some sports are more conducive to displays of ritualized physical force than others (i.e., boxing, mixed martial arts, rugby, American football, ice-hockey). However, the issue that concerns us here is whether sport leads to aberrant deviance. Any argument around whether sport has become increasingly violent is questionable. If one focused on soccer one would see that the modern game is highly regulated and a far-cry from its medieval mob versions in which high levels of violence were customary (Gardiner, 2000). Today, the media play a key role in analyzing and highlighting violent incidents, which, thanks to 24/7 rolling news, are exposed to the public with more frequency. This can create an atmosphere of “moral panic” around violence in sport (Gardiner, 2000).

That said, high-profile examples of blatant—and violent—disregard for the ethics and rules of sport abound. In 2012, the National American Football League (NFL) uncovered evidence that the New Orleans Saints (a professional American Football team) had been operating a slush fund that paid out bonuses, or “bounties” for in-game performance that violated the NFL rules, namely injuring key opponents through violent “hits” (Ham, 2012). The issue could have gone to criminal court, and both players and coaches potentially faced criminal charges of

1. Battery—The intentional use of force upon another person without that person’s consent, punishable by up to six months in jail under Louisiana law
2. Conspiracy—When two or more persons—such as the defensive coordinator and his players—agree to commit a crime (battery) (McCann, 2012)

Despite what was compelling evidence of criminal behavior, the bounty program was dealt with by the NFL. But one has to question why this conspiracy to assault went unpunished by criminal law. An answer was provided in the *New York*

Times by lawyer Eldon L. Ham, who argued: “American criminal courts have largely adopted a hands-off approach to on-field injuries, because judges deem them too messy to resolve amid the inevitable conflicting testimony” (2012). As Atkinson and Young (2008) state, this reluctance to define a range of sport activities as criminal is an outgrowth of sport being viewed as a separate social world with its own allowable rule violations.

In Britain, litigation issues within sport have been developed through the work of Barrister Edward Grayson, who has consistently argued that the only way to deliver sport back to a halcyon era of Corinthianism¹² is through the rule of law (Gardiner, 2000). In his words: “Without adherence to the rules of play on the field and the Rule of Law off it, anarchy would prevail for sport as well as society.” (Grayson, 1989: 286). The validity of Grayson’s analysis has been challenged notably around the complex issue of consent¹³ and the specific nature of sports-field violence. However, many support the law’s greater involvement as being legitimate on the basis of the state’s entitlement to guard against the dangers of uncontrolled brutality and excessive violence (Parpworth, 2000).

There remain gross inconsistencies when it comes to the law entering the field of play. Never was this better exemplified by two separate incidents that resulted in very different outcomes. In 1994, Scottish professional soccer player Duncan Ferguson was found guilty of assault and served six weeks of a three-month jail sentence after head butting an opposition player during a match. Twelve years later, in the final of the 2006 World Cup, the French soccer maestro Zinedine Zidane was sent-off after he head butted the Italian Marco Materazzi. This behavior off the field of play would be deemed assault, yet for all of the similarities to the Ferguson case, the Zidane head-butt never reached court. Given that the World Cup final was hosted in Germany and played between France and Italy, the boundaries between state law and the national governing bodies were fraught with complexities (Campbell, 2007). Nevertheless some argue that as the number of disputes being resolved by the Court of Arbitration for Sport¹⁴ increases, the need for developing a distinct body of legal knowledge on a global platform is becoming more evident (Nafziger, 2004; Healey, 2005).

It is estimated that around 715 million people watched the 2006 World Cup final in 2006. The failures to bring criminal sanctions upon flagrant abuse of the rules of the game are quintessential examples of what Stebbins (1996) terms *noncriminal tolerable deviance*, a concept he defines as behaviors “that occupy middle ground, both attitudinally and emotionally, between acceptable, normative practices and disdainful, criminal practices” (p. xi; cited in Atkinson and Young, 2008). Some academics have used the concept of tolerable deviance to explain deviance in sport and why it is often overlooked by legal officials (Atkinson & Young, 2008; Fogel, 2013). As Robène and Bodin (2014) contend, “When the prohibited or inadmissible is performed by a sporting ‘hero’ it becomes accepted, possible, justified, reified even culturally re-appropriated and reinterpreted” (p. 1958), and this can normalize violence. If so sport and sport stars carry the potential to teach people, especially children, a warped sense of reality if one accepts that many consider athletes as role models (Coakley and Pike, 2009). Another issue here is the apparent media disgust over excessive acts of violence, which is matched only by their extensive coverage of said acts. This paradox contributes to a feeling of widespread social approval (Young, 2000). Such approval can prove detrimental to an athlete’s behavior, creating an environment in which he or she feels “above the law.” From 2000 to 2011, the *San Diego Tribune* found that 573 NFL players had been arrested (an arrest rate of one in every 45 players) for crimes graver than speeding in a vehicle (ConsumerWebSource, 2011). Sports author Woods (2011) expands on this by stating “common sense suggests that people who become accustomed to using physical intimidation and violence in sport naturally revert to those behaviors when facing conflict outside of sport” (p. 325). In this line of reasoning sport can teach violence and contempt for other people, which can be manifested and utilized outside of the sporting arena.

The aforementioned crimes may not have a direct correlate to on-field deviance but it can be debated whether the normalization of violence on the sports field creates an environment in which athletes feel they can push legal boundaries with impunity. What must be acknowledged in all of this is that athletes may be a product of their social milieu. Some might be considered to have predispositions to violence that attracted them to sport (and maybe sport to them) in the first place (Dunning, 1986; Woods, 2011). Thus, it is possible that sports violence is the reflection of societal violence, but sport does not simply mirror societal trends, it has the capacity to generate its own violence both structurally and socially (Robène and Bodin, 2014). Sport can produce a violent climate; one that is also capable of harboring hostility between spectators and the phenomenon of “hooliganism” is another crucial facet to the sport-crime nexus.

Hooliganism: They Thought It Was All Over

Given that competitive sport is often conducive to—and bound up with—displays of physical force and ritualized violence

(Atkinson and Young, 2008; Fogel, 2013; Robène and Bodin, 2014), it is unsurprising that these behaviors are also present among those who watch sport. As Smith (1983) argued, if spectators perceive players' actions to be violent, they are more likely to engage in violent acts during and after games. This violence is not new. Research suggests crowd violence has been prevalent throughout the ages (Guttman, 1986; Dunning, 1999; Young 2000), indeed the violence at sporting events during the Roman and Medieval periods was considerably more brutal than that witnessed today (Guttman, 2004). Present-day spectator deviance can occur across a number of sports and within various settings, even domestically while fans watch sport on the television (Coakley and Pike, 2009). However, few phenomena in contemporary society have evoked such strong sentiments as that labeled "football hooliganism" (Armstrong and Rosbrook-Thompson, 2015).

"This is the face of football past. We thought we had gone beyond this. People feel very strongly about the derby but it shouldn't end in people brawling in the street or racist abuse ... Football matters deeply but it isn't worth potentially maiming someone for life."

(*Manchester Evening News*, 2014)

The quote was taken from an interview with Tony Lloyd, the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Commissioner, after hooliganism marred the aftermath of Manchester United versus Manchester City in November 2014. The disorder and violence that the term encapsulates has been studied, policed, and legislated against from a variety of starting points (Armstrong and Rosbrook-Thompson, 2015). This has contributed to the construction of a "social problem" that has produced a wealth of theory and literature from academic (Armstrong, 1998; Armstrong and Giulianotti, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2004; De Biasi, 1996; Dunning et al., 1988, 2002; Giulianotti, 1999; Hobbs and Robins, 1991; Millward 2009; Murphy et al., 1990; Roversi, 1992; Taylor, 1969, 1971, 1982, 1999), police, and other commentators (Armstrong, 1998).

Since the mid-1960s, incidents in Britain involving soccer spectator disorder and violence have been placed under the umbrella of "football hooliganism." During the 1980s, English soccer had a particularly squalid reputation for hooliganism as English fans were regularly involved in major disturbances in European competitions both at the club and national levels (Giulianotti, 2013). At its zenith, hooliganism was even labeled "the English disease," and the gravest incidents have had harrowing consequences. In 1985, during the European Cup final between Liverpool and Juventus at Heysel Stadium, 39 Italian fans were killed due to crowd-crushing caused by violent clashes between opposition supporters. Four years later the death of 96 supporters after another human crush at Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield compounded English soccer's malaise. This made fan violence the focus for legal intervention, new policing methods, and strict legislation. The transformation of the English game has since been dramatic. In 2012, it was announced that arrests at soccer matches in England and Wales stood at an all-time low, prompting UK Police Minister Damian Green to proclaim: "Where hooliganism was once described as 'the English disease', we now set an example for others to follow" (Giulianotti, 2013).

As a result, the phenomenon has lost its "British" correlate and as the scope for exploration has become international, the locus of analysis has shifted from strictly soccer-related violence to dynamics and agendas far more complex than the impulse to confront rival fans (Armstrong and Rosbrook-Thompson, 2015). Armstrong and Testa's (2010) exploration of Italy's neo-fascist *UltraS* (hardcore soccer supporters) revealed that their soccer loyalties were a subplot to their wider ideological allegiances that were disseminated in the stadium, a de facto 21st century *agora* (Greek: "meeting place") for the fans. Elsewhere in Egypt and Turkey, Dorsey (2013) has explored the role *ultras* play in political protests and has argued that "hooligan" acts must be situated in the context of wider political loyalties and complex sociopolitical machinations (Armstrong and Rosbrook Thompson, 2015). As Coakley and Pike (2009) postulate, "Sports events do not occur in a social vacuum. When spectators attend events, they take with them the histories, issues, controversies, and ideologies of communities and cultures in which they live" (p. 260). Large supporter gatherings such as *ultras* are often a product of the social milieu, movements composed of individuals who are disillusioned with the sociopolitical and economic climate.

That said there is no doubt that much of the behavior exhibited by these fans is criminal: violence, vandalism, and racism being just a few examples. As Armstrong (1998: 123) acknowledges, "football 'fandom' produces people who are generally neither totally rational in their thinking nor polite in their expressions." This makes a compelling case for the argument that in these instances, sport and in particular soccer is the instigator or at least the root of criminal and deviant behavior. "Combine masculinity, physicality, fantasy and local pride with sporting excitement and collective grievances and

the possible outcome since the beginnings of Association Football in the mid-nineteenth century has been partisan spectatorship prone to disorder” (Armstrong and Rosbrook-Thompson, 2015). Perhaps the most surprising reality is that a specific criminal offence of “hooliganism” does not exist (Armstrong, 1998), only a stream of legislation specifically targeted at the perceived problems of “football hooliganism” and the criminal offences it creates (Dunning and Malcolm, 2003). As such, while certain aspects of hooliganism have abated, the battle to extinguish criminal and deviant behaviors related to soccer continues globally.

Sport: Inherently Noble?

There are some benefits provided by sporting participation that have become more or less indisputable. For example, drawing upon existing research, Sport England¹⁵ estimated that if the United Kingdom had an additional one million people participating in sport once a week, it could save £22.5 billion in health and associated costs (Sport England, 2012). Another perceived benefit was the role of sports in reducing offending behavior and crime. This popular belief has a long and persistent history; put simply the idea is that physical activity has moral and redemptive qualities. Such a dualism was inextricably linked with the social reforms of mid-Victorian Britain (Robins, 1996). Thomas Arnold introduced the game of rugby to control bullying, drunkenness, and other anti-social behavior among the boys at Rugby school. During his tenure as headmaster between the years of 1828 and 1842, Arnold believed that cultivating a sporting *esprit de corps* could instill values of discipline, morality, self-esteem, and teamwork.

“A boy’, says Mr. Lyttelton, ‘is disciplined by athletics in two ways: by being forced to put the welfare of the common cause before selfish interests, to obey implicitly the word of command, and act in concert with the heterogeneous elements of the company he belongs to; and secondly ... he is disciplined by being raised to a post of command, where he feels the gravity of responsible office and the difficulty of making prompt decisions and securing a willing obedience.”

(Cited in Blackshaw and Crabbe, 2004, p. 18)

Despite the archaic language it is clear that this didactic ethos resonates. Sport is frequently promoted as a means of directing the physical energy and aggression of the young into socially beneficial channels (Jupp, 1996). It has been utilized in schools and via civil society organizations as contributing to improved educational performance, reduction in anti-social behavior, and to social cohesion (Coalter, 2007). The moral value of sport has become increasingly salient in politics. This was reflected in comments made by the former Minister for Culture, Media, and Sport, Jeremy Hunt, during the run-up to the 2012 London Olympics:

“Of course we want to nurture world-class talent. But above all we want to nurture the values that are common in sport, but perhaps not as common outside sport as they should be.”

(Cited in McMahon and Belur, 2013: 4)

For all of its sins, the majority of people still believe sport can be a panacea for that considered bad in society, particularly for deviant juveniles. However, how precisely might sport tackle crime and anti-social behavior,¹⁶ and what evidence is there to suggest that sport programs are actually having the desired effect? Has the notion of sport as a cure for societal ills become banal and outdated?

Sport, Crime, and Evidence

When it comes to using physical activity as a means to tackle crime the emphasis is very much focused on young “at-risk” populations and young offenders (Kelly, 2012; Nichols, 2007). This may be because modifying a young person’s behavior is considered easier or because, in the United Kingdom, it is estimated that there are around 75,000 new entrants into the youth justice system annually¹⁷ (Nevill & Poortvliet, 2011). Moreover, research has illustrated that 35% of young offenders (i.e., those under 18 years of age) who were given a reprimand or warning, convicted at court, or released from custody are reconvicted within a year (Youth Justice Board, 2014). As sociologist Cox (2012) affirms, “when exploring the issue of young people and crime it’s all about life chances and the sooner changes can be affected the better the overall impact” (p. 112). Furthermore, given there is little evidence to suggest punitive sanctions such as incarceration (time in a youth correction center such as a Pupil Referral Unit), shock incarceration (keeping a young offender in a cell overnight), community service hours, or boot camps have been effective in reducing juvenile crime

(Hoge, 2002), sport's role has been cemented in the crime prevention agenda.

Youth crime is a complex social issue and many risk factors contribute to offending behavior (Cox, 2012). These include social and economic disadvantage, poor parenting, poor health, low educational attainment, living in a deprived area, and poor social and emotional skills (Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Anti-social Behavior, 2010; Stevens, Kessler, and Gladstone, 2006). In response to such "social ills," policymakers and other powerful players within influential decision-making positions have turned to sport for a way of overcoming these barriers (Robson, Simpson and Tucker, 2013). Clearly sport does not have the omnipotence to comprehensively solve such a myriad of issues, but there is evidence to show it can impact youth-crime and deviance in a number of ways. These encompass using sport as a diversion from partaking in criminal behavior, delivering sport as a "hook" to re-engage young people in education, as well as providing them with supportive relationships and opportunities for personal development or through behavior modification and building self-esteem (Nevill & Poortvliet, 2011).

There are an abundance of sport-crime initiatives but one of the first and most renowned was the Midnight Basketball League (MBL) Program, which begun in the United States in 1986. The project was pioneered by Mr. G. Van Standifer (a Town Manager of the Glen Arden area, in Maryland), who believed that basketball could reduce inner city crime by providing poor, young men (aged predominately between 17 and 25) with a safe and constructive activity between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m.—the time considered to be "high crime" hours (Cox, 2012). In short, it was believed that sport could stymie deviance at its origin and divert youth from partaking in crimes that were likely to take place during those hours (Sailes, 1999). During its first three years Van Stadifer credited MBL for a 30% drop in Crime in the Glen Arden neighborhood. The reported benefits of participation included general enjoyment, reduced intergang violence, the forming new relationships, and the acquisition of new skills (Derezotes, 1995). However, evaluations of the program's economic and social success produced mixed reviews, with various projects reporting as much as a 60% reduction in rates of youth offending to none at all (McCann and Peters, 1996; Farrell, Johnson, Sapp, Pumphrey, and Freeman 1996; Hartmann and Wheelock 2002; Hartmann and Depro, 2006). This prompted MBL to offer a more rounded intervention through the development of workshops that centered on life skills and educational opportunities. This has seen a dissemination of the program in one guise or another from the United Kingdom to Australia (Cox, 2012).

The MBL's expansion to include a more holistic approach to young offender's lives reflects the recognition that sport can have a positive impact on behavior when used as part of a wider program of education and support (DCMS and Strategy Unit, 2002). The *Kickz* initiative in the United Kingdom is a quintessential example. Funded by the English Premier League and Metropolitan Police, *Kickz* uses soccer to work with young people aged 12 to 18 in deprived areas who suffer high levels of anti-social behavior and crime (Nevill & Poortvliet, 2011). The project is delivered by staff employed by professional soccer clubs on three or more evenings a week. Central to these sessions is soccer coaching, but other sports and a range of workshops are provided, including addressing issues around drug awareness, healthy eating, volunteering, careers, and weapon carrying. While examining the relationship between organized sport participation and youth crime, sociologist and criminologist Carmichael (2008) argued that sport-based interventions were most effective when used as a distraction from anti-social activities, such as gang or drug involvement. Thus, the *Kickz* project works as a diversion as well as a "hook" because soccer is used to attract troubled individuals who can then, ideally, develop positive relationships with soccer coaches, youth workers, the police, and other young people, as well being provided with opportunities for attaining qualifications, work experience, and employment (Cox, 2012).

A study conducted by Project Oracle¹⁸ evaluating sports-based programs aimed at reducing crime in London found that on days the *Kickz* sessions were running, crimes associated with young people were reduced by 23% in the case of robbery, 13% for criminal damage, 8% for anti-social behavior, and 4% for violence (McMahon and Belur, 2013). Further analysis on one specific *Kickz* project in Elthorne Park (North London) revealed that every £1 invested in the program generated £7 of value for the state and local community (Cox, 2012). The New Philanthropy Capital's¹⁹ evaluation of *Kickz* in 2011 discovered a 66% reduction in youth crime within a one-mile radius of Elthorne Park since the initiative's inception (Nevill & Poortvliet, 2011). Without a doubt team games can foster values of teamwork and discipline, as well as build confidence and self-esteem. Of course such a project has little to offer those who avoid sport. Teaching those engaged in sports projects the dangers of crime and changing attitudes and aspirations can effect a long-term change. But for these interventions to be successful, the social context in which they occur (i.e., dynamics of mental and physical health, tendencies toward violence, gang tensions, racial and ethnic diversity, and economic deprivation) must also be taken into an account. American sociologist Trulson (1986) was thus cautious in suggesting that only certain types of sport and sports participation can lower offending rates among young people. His research showed that aggressive tendencies among juvenile males decreased after they were trained in the philosophy and techniques of *Tae Kwon Do*

(Coakley and Pike, 2009).

Although several research reviews examining the acclaimed benefits of sport have recorded positive impacts on youth crime (Hartmann and Depro, 2006; New Philanthropy Capital, 2011; Sport and Recreation Alliance, 2012; Project Oracle, 2014), according to Coalter (2007; Nichols, 2007), existing research is characterized by methodological problems and a complex relationship explaining cause and effect. This makes establishing “what works best?” across a wide range of projects a complex task. Put simply, there is a lack of controlled monitoring and evaluation of outcomes (McMahon and Belur, 2013), which makes it difficult to understand the *real* impact that sport interventions have on offending and reoffending. This paucity of concrete evidence means that practitioners, funders, and governments need to do more to evaluate sport-based projects established to reduce crime.

Proof of Prevention?

While the preceding research recognized a relationship between sport participation and reduction in recorded crime, others remain deeply skeptical about the sport-crime prevention correlate. According to sports sociologist Coakley, the supposition that sport programs bring about positive changes for individuals and communities is more mythical than factual, with no empirical support (cited in De Leon, 2012). This standpoint is grounded in previous research that has also failed to uncover a causal relationship. English sociologist Robins (1990) evaluated projects seeking to use sport as a method of crime prevention and concluded that there was no sound theoretical basis for the use of sporting activities to combat or prevent juvenile crime. This conclusion has gained credence from similar research (Farrington, 1990; Anderson, 2010; Robène & Bodin, 2014)). Expanding on his initial work, Robins stressed that despite greater investment in sport, there were no concomitant reductions in juvenile crime (Robins, 1996). More recently, sociologists Robène & Bodin (2014) challenged sports’ “virtuous” reputation, arguing that it can “arouse impulse to ‘win’ and incites ever more athletes to engage in doping or cheating ...” while also being a world in which “... the limits of decency, morals, ethics and shame are no longer recognized ... producing climates of such hate and tension that it is sometimes necessary to stop a game in order to separate players or prevent spectators from killing each other” (p. 1957).

This statement ties into the argument that, far from ameliorating criminal behaviors, sport can be a cause. Criminologist Farrington (1990) of Cambridge University questioned the very nature of sporting ideals, suggesting that sport provided a hyped-up, delinquent individual with a “socially approved” outlet for deviance. In a study on youth and sport aggression, Gardner and Janelle (2002) found that acts of violent and aggressive behavior were considered acceptable within sporting environments. This could explain why Ekholm’s (2013) review of literature focusing on the sport-crime prevention discourse revealed that rather than invariably reducing delinquency, sport was in some cases a responsible factor in generating crime, public order offences, and hooliganism.

Furthermore, when writing about the French urban riots of 2005,²⁰ political scientist Sebastian Roche stated: “the practice of sport never reduces the number of crimes, furthermore, sports can even give the opportunity to develop physical abilities used for street crime: running, how to use impulsive behaviour, how to master the use of force” (cited in Dubner, 2006). Roche’s provocative argument is based on two surveys carried out in Grenoble and St. Etienne. The first in 1999 used a sample of 2,288 teenagers aged between 13 and 19 years old. In the second, conducted in 2003 with 1,614 participants, Roche and colleagues argued that increasing participation in sport did not result in a contraction of juvenile offending but instead an increase in criminal behavior for certain categories of teenagers, notably working class. In addition, sporting events were identified as the primary setting in which violence occurred, before and above the contexts of school, night-clubs and bars. Many took umbrage at these findings. The French Minister of Sport Jean-Francois Lamour attacked Roche when interviewed by the French daily newspaper, *L’Equipe*, labeling the study a “witch-hunt based on unproved assertions” (Dubner, 2006). Policymakers are rarely in tune with such views, and thus sport largely retains its reputation as an unquestionable antidote for crime.

The famed statement of Nelson Mandela that “sport has the power to change and inspire” holds true in many instances. When used well sport can be the first step to effecting change in people’s lives, especially offenders or those who are at risk of offending. However, it is clear that further research is required to understand what interventions work and via which sports change might occur.

Conclusion: Crossing the Line?

The notion that sport is a ready-made solution to anti-social behavior is naive. Given that sport has become a nexus for criminal activity, it could be argued that introducing it into the lives of young people inadvertently offers them avenues to entertain criminal or at least anti-social and ethically questionable behaviors. In some cases, the win at all costs atmosphere combined with the normalization of practices such as match-fixing, doping, and violence suggest that the fulcrum appears to be weighted toward sport as a cause of offending rather than a cure. But this argument is simplistic due to the range of risk factors and social contexts that can contribute to deviant behavior (Cox, 2012; Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Anti-social Behavior, 2010; Stevens, Kessler, and Gladstone, 2006). Indeed, rather than focusing on whether sport can control crime, research might better explore the role that sport plays in contributing to deviance. Instances of match-fixing, political corruption, discrimination, doping, hooliganism, and violence can go a long way to negating sport's associated benefits. There is certainly evidence to suggest sport can be an effective vehicle to alter the lives of disillusioned individuals; however, it may be that sport per se does not cause change, but the wider package of mentoring, education, and support that comes with it might (Nevill & Poortvliet, 2011). Thus more methods for evaluating the sport-crime intervention nexus are needed. But most important, if policymakers and administrators harbor further ambitions for the role of sport, then affirmative action must be taken to ensure that sport at all levels is, at the very least, taking positive steps to tackling aberrance.

The once-ubiquitous view that sport can lead to crime reduction is no longer unchallenged. Sports governing bodies and national governments must look to purge sport of its ills before it can truly be considered a societal panacea. For how can we expect to counteract deviance with sport programs if sport itself is riddled by deviant behaviors?

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Notes:

(¹) The International Center for Sport Security is a Qatar-based organization that aims to be "a global hub of security, safety and integrity expertise" for sport (<http://www.theicss.org/>).

(²) Perumal claims to have tried to influence football soccer games at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. He details how he influenced qualifying for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa and alleges that he duped the South African Soccer Association into allowing him, through one of his companies, to organize several warm-up friendlies for their national

team in order to rig elements of the games (Conway, 2014).

(³) The 'Lombardian Ethic' is a term named after the successful American Football coach of the Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi. His belief was that winning meant everything; it didn't matter how you won, as long as you won. This attitude is epitomized in one of Lombardi's renowned quotes, "winning isn't everything, it is the only thing." Such was Lombardi's success and popularity that the Super Bowl was named in his honor (Maraniss, 2000).

(⁴) Put succinctly, Olympism is stated to be:

A philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles. (www.olympics.org, 2013).

(⁵) As part of the investigation the IOC recommended expelling six IOC members: Agustin Arroyo of Ecuador, Zein El Abdin Ahmed Abdel Gadir of Sudan, Jean-Claude Ganga of the Republic of Congo, Lamine Keita of Mali, Charles Mukora of Kenya, Sergio Santander Fantini of Chile, and David Sikhulumi Sibandze of Swaziland (Sibandze resigned during the investigation). Ten members of the IOC were eventually expelled and another ten were sanctioned.

(⁶) In World Anti-Doping Agency code, doping is defined as breaking one or more anti-doping rule(s). These include the presence of a prohibited substance in an athlete's sample, the use or attempted use of a prohibited substance or method, refusing to submit to sample collection after being notified, failure to file athlete whereabouts information and missing tests, tampering with any part of the doping control process, possession of a prohibited substance or method, trafficking a prohibited substance or method, and administering or attempting to administer a prohibited substance or method to an athlete (WADA, 2003).

(⁷) The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) was created in 1999, after major doping scandals hit the world of sports. It is an independent international organization created to promote, coordinate, and monitor the fight against doping in sport around the world (WADA, 2003).

(⁸) Trafficking is defined as dealing or trading in something illegal, in this case any performance-enhancing substances or methods banned by WADA. The anti-doping movement faces significant challenges in relation to the trafficking of doping substances as great inconsistency exists among countries in the treatment of production, use, and distribution of doping substances. In some countries, for example, the distribution of anabolic steroids is illegal, while in others no such law exists. This hinders international efforts to curtail the trafficking of banned substances (WADA, 2013).

(⁹) Established in 1997, UK Sport is the lead organization for high-performance sport in the UK. It invests Exchequer and National Lottery funds in Britain's best Olympic and Paralympic sports and athletes to maximize their chances of success on the world stage (<http://www.uk sport.gov.uk/pages/about-uk-sport/>).

(¹⁰) Sporting Integrity was set up in 2004 and offers consultancies in sports governance and integrity issues advising clients in sport and business on the adoption and maintenance of best practice procedures relating to ethics and integrity standards. (<http://www.sportingintegrity.com/4466.html>).

(¹¹) If we look at the Italian model, the *Disciplina della tutela sanitaria delle attivita' sportive e della lotta contro il doping* (Law number 376 of 2000) establishes three types of criminal doping offences. The first two offences are concerned with athletes and support personnel acquiring, administering, consuming (or even encouraging the use of) World Anti-Doping Code (WADC) Prohibited Substances or Methods, in order to improve an athlete's competitive performance or alter the results of an anti-doping test (Paoli and Donati, 2013). Imprisonment from three months to three years and a fine from €2,580 to €51,645 are sanctions for these offences. The third offence aims to tackle illegal suppliers who trade in WADC Prohibited Substances outside official distribution channels. Incarceration from two to six years and a fine from €5,164 to €77,468 are sanctions for this offence (Murphy, 2013).

(¹²) The 'Corinthian' spirit harks back to the days of mid-Victorian Britain in which sport was practiced for its moral and character-building qualities. In the sporting sense, a Corinthian denotes the highest standards of amateur sportsmanship.

(¹³) Consent in the context of sports field violence relates to the permission given by an athlete to receive a harm-inducing behavior that remains in the boundaries of the rules that govern the sport (Morgan, Meier and Schneider, 2001).

(14) The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS; French: *Tribunal arbitral du sport*, TAS) is an international quasi-judicial body established to settle disputes related to sport.

(15) Sport England was formed in 1997 and is the brand name for the English Sports Council. It is a public body that currently sits in the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport. Its aim is to build the foundations of a community sport system by working with national governing bodies of sport, and other funded partners, to (1) increase the number of people practicing sport, (2) sustain participation, (3) help more talented people from diverse backgrounds excel by identifying their talent and helping them progress to elite level (www.sportengland.org).

(16) There is no precise definition of anti-social behavior. Broadly speaking, it is acting in a way that lacks consideration for others and causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress to one or more people, whether intentionally or through negligence. To be anti-social behavior, the behavior must be persistent (Citizens Advice, 2014).

(17) Stats retrieved from the Department for Children, Schools and Family, 2009
http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2009_0225

(18) Project Oracle is an organization that aims to improve chances for children and young people in London. It attempts to achieve this objective by supporting youth organizations to evaluate their projects and creating a source of independently assessed and evaluated projects. It provides a Children & Youth Evidence Hub that can inform decision making when assessing whether to fund projects (Project Oracle, 2014).

(19) The New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) is a charitable organisation based in London. Its aim is to direct more funding to effective charities and help sponsors make more informed decisions on how to donate. NPC's research projects cover issues within community, education, and health and disability.

(20) In the October and November 2005, a series of riots occurred in the suburbs of Paris and other French cities, involving the burning of cars and public buildings (Canet, Pech & Stewart, 2008). The reasons behind the events included youth unemployment and lack of opportunities in France's poorest immigrant communities. It was also reported that French society's negative perceptions of Islam and social discrimination toward immigrants had alienated some young French Muslims and may have been a factor in the causes of the riots (BBC, 2005).

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