

The Global Governance of Anti-Doping: A View from Two Whistleblowers

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Aim and Background

The Russian Doping Scandal has received considerable public attention ever since the Sundance showing and subsequent Netflix broadcast of *Icarus* in August, 2017. Less prominently, investigative journalists such as Nick Harris and Hajo Seppelt had reported on systemic doping in Russia in July 2013 and December 2014, respectively.

The Russian case is both remarkable and shocking—remarkable in the degree to which doping was an embedded and state sanctioned practice to support the enhancement of athletic performance, and shocking in the initial unwillingness or inability of anti-doping agencies to properly investigate the case. More recently, the WADA commissioned independent examinations (the Independent Commission Report and the Independent Person Report); the IOC set up and concluded disciplinary commissions (The Schmid and Oswald Commissions), ultimately barring the Russian team from the 2018 Winter Olympic Games; and, on February 1, 2018, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) upheld the appeals of twenty-eight Russian athletes. Despite this latter action, the insights concerning the mis-steps and governance failure of WADA are other structures involved in global anti-doping governance appear to have been buried or 'painted over' by recent developments and an overarching concern for impression management and the desire to somehow preserve the much-maligned notion of Olympism (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2012 and many others) and the integrity of the Olympic sport system.

Research Design

At the centre of this case are a small number of whistle-blowers that have shared stories, recorded evidence and made available data that have revealed the true scale and scope of the Russian doping program. Two such whistle-blowers are former Russian 800m runner, Yulia Stepanova and her husband, Vitaly Stepanov. More specifically, it seeks to utilise ethnographic and auto-ethnographic techniques to uncover the realities of the whistle-blower experience.

Theoretical Background

The study is framed by two theoretical concepts. First, principal-agent theory (Mitnick, 1986) and specifically the principal-agent problem whereby the agents (in this case WADA, the IOC and the IAAF) are motivated to act in their own best interests – contrary to those of the principal (in this case the athlete or the athlete representative). There is oftentimes asymmetrical information whereby the agent has more information and is better connected to share the information (than the principal might be) and as a result the principal cannot always ensure that the agent is acting in their (or other agents) best interests. Such situations commonly referred to as moral hazards are frequently associated with cases whereby the information or activities of the principal maybe costly to the agent or where aspects of what the agent does or does not do are difficult for the principal to observe. The second concept relates to organizational impression management. This theory, adapted from the Goffman's micro-level and applied to organizations, is concerned with how people attempt to manage or control the perceptions that others form of them (Goffman, 1959). The purpose of organizational impression management is to steer others' opinions and perceptions by the use of controlling information (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997). Following this, Mohamed, Gardner &

Paolillo (1999) developed a taxonomy of organizational behaviours to support future research. The four types underline direct, indirect, assertive and defensive behaviour (ibid, 1999). Organizations use a variety of direct tactics to present information about their own traits, abilities and achievements. Indirect tactics are utilised to enhance or protect the organizational reputation by managing information about the people and things with which the organization is associated. In contrast, assertive tactics are employed where organizations see opportunities to boost their image and defensive tactics are used to minimise or repair damage to image or reputation.

Methods

Methodologically, the paper employs a constructivist frame and utilises ethnographic and auto-ethnographic techniques to uncover the realities of the whistle-blower experience (Bryman, 2008). Harris will present the literature, methods and discuss the implications of the research. Yuliya Stepanova and Vitaly Stepanov will present on their experiences and insights via video link.

Implications

We aim to deliver a paper that will provide an interesting, first-hand insight into the Russian doping scandal, how the scandal was addressed by WADA, the support offered to whistle-blowers, and the implications for the future governance of both anti-doping and the Olympic sport system.

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