



Patterns in the situated activity of substance use in the careers of elite doping athletes



D. Hauw*, S. Mohamed

Group of Research of the Institute of Sport Science of the University of Lausanne (GRISUL), University of Lausanne, Switzerland

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 19 December 2012
Received in revised form
11 September 2013
Accepted 15 September 2013
Available online 18 October 2013

Keywords:

Situated activity
Dynamics
Meaning
Substance use
Doping
Elite performance

ABSTRACT

Objectives: This article presents a psychological approach to substance use in sport using a dynamic and situated activity framework. The aim was to analyze the various relationships between activity and the consumption of substances during the sporting life course of athletes who recognized doping violation. **Design:** Data were collected from secondary sources and biographical and self-confrontational interviews to build traces of the past activity.

Method: Twelve doping athletes or those admitting to having used banned substances volunteered to participate. The data were coded and compared to identify typical activities and their intrinsic dynamics. **Results:** Six activities were identified: “Agree to use,” “Drop out of a non-viable state,” “Return to a former state,” “Prevent a potential deficiency,” “Maintain an acquired state,” and “Balance the sporting life with substance use,” comprising 11 patterns.

Conclusions: The athletes’ activity embedded substance use in reciprocal relationships that consisted of freezing, exploring and exploiting fields of possible actions created and offered by the situation dynamics. Recommendations for situated and dynamic prevention are provided.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Doping has generally been studied in psychology as a discrete behavior arising from a series of cognitive and decision-making processes (e.g., Donovan, Egger, Kapernick, & Mendoza, 2002; Kleinert & Jüngling, 2007; Strelan & Boeckmann, 2003). This has led to a focus on the transformation of normative behaviors (i.e., safe and clean) into deviant behaviors (e.g., risky and cheating). The influence of such diverse factors as representations, knowledge, attitudes, personality and motivation, has been examined, as well as the mediation by variables like the power of the group, significant others, and the culture of practice (e.g., Lazuras, Barkoukis, Rodafinos, & Tzorbatzoudis, 2010; Lucidi et al., 2008; Mazanov, Petróczi, Bingham, & Holloway, 2008; Petroczi, 2007; Zelli, Mallia, & Lucidi, 2010). The results have shown that doping emerges within a broad and complex set of psychosocial configurations, which has been analyzed in depth by several researchers. Yet despite the growing body of knowledge on the factors that influence this behavior, many researchers are convinced that our understanding of drug use and doping in sports and our capacity to

implement efficient prevention program remain limited (e.g., Backhouse, McKenna, Robinson, & Atkin, 2007; Hauw & Bilard, 2012; Laure, 1997; Mazanov et al., 2008). The conclusions and practical implications of many studies have indeed remained general, as the focus has been on the intention to dope and not the action of doing so, and this has resulted in tentative attempts at prevention that have been difficult to manage.

Several authors have noted that these limitations are in part due to the research paradigms (e.g., Brissonneau, Aubel, & Ohl, 2008; Hardie, Shilbury, Ware, & Bozzi, 2012; Hauw & Bilard, 2012). These criticisms principally point to the psychological analysis of doping as a two-step process, by which athletes are pushed from no substance abuse directly to prohibited substance intake. From these cognitivist and mechanistic perspectives, the investigations have sought to determine the causal agents of this shift in behavior and the deterrent or compliance factors that influence the doping decision (e.g., Clark, 1997; Juarrero, 1999; Varela, 1980; 1989). The practical and paradigmatic criticisms have therefore offered alternative perspectives (Hauw, 2013a).

Recently, research programs have emerged that take into account these criticisms and new perspectives. Using a dynamic and autonomous epistemological approach, the studies investigate the transformation in behavior as it occurs over time, rather than as two theoretically discrete steps, and assume that the reasons for doping are not “outside” but “inside” the activity in which it took

* Corresponding author. Institut des Sciences du Sport, Faculté des Sciences Sociales et Politiques, Université de Lausanne, Quartier UNIL-Mouline, Bâtiment Géopolis, bureau 5441, 1015 Lausanne, Switzerland. Tel.: +41 021 692 3605; fax: +41 021 692 3293.

E-mail address: denis.hauw@unil.ch (D. Hauw).

place (Hauw, 2013a). Athletes are assumed to be in a continuous process of development, and the focus has been broadened to take into account the progressive emergence of doping behavior (e.g., McGee, 2005a, 2005b, Robbins & Aydede, 2009). Attention is given to the specificity of context (Doris, 2002) in relation to the dynamics of individual life events (Bruner, 1990; Maturana & Varela, 1987), based on the assumption that human activities generate individual experiences that progressively transform meaningful relations into events (Kirshner & Whitson, 1997; Reed, 1993). Hence, a range of results has been provided, as each study focuses on certain aspects of this framework (e.g., Brissonneau et al., 2008; Hauw & Bilard, 2012; Lentillon-Kaestner & Carstairs, 2010). For example, Brissonneau et al. (2008) identified specific periods in cyclists' careers, over the course of which their identities were transformed as they "learned the trade" and discovered legal substances (e.g., magnesium, iron, vitamin B12) and proceeded to "doing the trade" and "becoming a champion," which was characterized by their use of the professional pharmacopoeia (i.e., amphetamines, cortisone, anabolic steroids) and, eventually, substances specifically to win (e.g., erythropoietin, growth hormone). They also identified a final step of reconversion associated with the use of substances to overcome the distress associated with the end of the athletic career (e.g., amphetamines, Belgian pot). These results have been confirmed by other studies comparing elite and junior cyclists (Lentillon-Kaestner & Carstairs, 2010). Hauw and Bilard (2012) used the "course of action" framework (e.g., Theureau, 2003) to analyze the dynamics of doping by comparing the courses of action in the sporting careers of doping and non-doping elite track and field athletes. They showed that doping appeared after a specific number of years of sporting activity and when a specific path had been followed: doping athletes had spent a shorter time in an "open focus" state during the development of their careers than non-doping athletes, which corresponds to the "years of specialization" in the model of talent development from Fraser-Thomas, Côté, and Deakin (2005). They also observed that doping athletes had regularly used legal substances for at least two years and had profoundly changed their training regimen. Last, they found that these doping athletes had experienced specific periods of personal distress. Recently, Hauw (2013b) studied elite athletes from a variety of sports who had had positive doping controls or who had admitted to having used banned substances. In this work, the focus was on the athletes' actions during the doping period and the meaning they attributed to these actions. Four typical activities, all describing autonomous and emergent organizations of activity, were identified: (a) the actions of doping had a dual relationship with other actions composing the sporting activity; (b) the actions of doping occurred within a set of coordinated actions common to a group of athletes and was hierarchically managed; (c) the actions of using banned substances were dissociated from the sport, despite having consequences with regard to doping violations; or (d) the actions of doping were part of a more general activity of drug use, with the consumption of banned substances being unintentional.

To summarize these findings, many states and transitions were associated with the act of doping and differentiated non-doping and doping athletes. These investigations thus provide theoretical insight into the multiple, multiphasic, and situated nature of the changes over the sporting life course of athletes. Nevertheless, knowledge is still lacking on the micro-organization of the activity associated with these changes in their substance use. Knowing that doping athletes are also licite substance users, pointing differences between the activities associated to banned or to licite substance would be relevant for a better understanding of doping in context. Rather than searching for the external factors related to doping and isolating the consumption of doping substance from the licite one, our aim was to focus the analysis on situated and dynamic activity

in order to provide a deeper insight into the interactions between athletes, substance and doping. This approach would also offer a developmental view of vulnerability. This might help professionals to build more effective prevention policies and improve the methods of supporting and guiding athletes in relation to specific identified activities.

Activity theory provides an umbrella framework that can unify these lines of investigation, as it incorporates psychological analyses of actions, situations, meanings and experiences (e.g., Engeström, Miettinen, & Punamäki, 1999; Kirshner & Whitson, 1997; Sannino & Sutter, 2011; Theureau, 2003). Activity theory and mainly "course of action" analysis have shown their usefulness in ergonomics (e.g., Theureau, 2003), social science (e.g., Durand, 2013) and sport psychology research, with analyses of performance (e.g., Hauw & Durand, 2008; Hauw, Renault, & Durand, 2008), competition (e.g., d'Arripe-Longueville, Saury, Fournier, & Durand, 2001; Hauw & Durand, 2007), training (e.g., Hauw, 2009; Saury & Durand, 1998) and doping (Hauw & Bilard, 2012) in the latter field. These activity approaches analyze how humans build relationships and interact with their own environment by creating fields of promoted actions and fields of free actions (Reed, 1993; Valsiner, 1997, 2001). Starting from the assumption that the degrees of freedom for human activity are much too extensive to allow for the control of each one independently, these studies have sought to identify and explain the patterns of coherence emerging from a range of variations (Lawrence & Valsiner, 2003; Reed, 1993; Valsiner, 1997). Activity is considered as a dynamic stream of actions that coordinates all the elements of a situation into a global form (Theureau, 2003). Regularities are patterns of activity that describe a viable organization of the interactions between humans and their environment. This means that a pattern of activity emerges in relation to the circumstances or the available opportunities that provide functional organization, which may not be completely efficient but is sufficiently satisfying for the given situation. For the case of doping, the viability of consumption should be linked to the entire activity in which it takes place. Research has suggested that this viability would be somewhat constrained by the distinction between legal and illegal substances, based on several observations: (a) athletes still lack knowledge on dietary supplements and the side effects of performance enhancement substance (e.g., Morente-Sánchez & Zabala, 2013), (b) the WADA list of banned substances remains very enigmatic for athletes because it is composed only of the chemical names of substances (Lentillon-Kaestner & Ohl, 2011), and (c) the banalization of doping substances in certain sport cultures is such that it possible to consider a doping substance as normal for an athlete (e.g., Brissonneau et al., 2008). Nevertheless, distinctions can be made between substances for such studies. According to athletes' experiences as reported by the hotline Ecoute Dopage, a meaningful distinction is made between the use of vitamin C and heavy performance-enhancing nutritional supplements (Ecoute Dopage, 2009, 2010, 2011). Thus, the examination of the viability of using substances in an athlete's activity should not be conducted only on the basis of an objective distinction between the legal and illegal status of a substance, but also by taking into account three behavioral criteria: the substance use is (a) targeting the effects on performance or training, (b) excluding current, well-known and low-risk substances of everyday life (e.g., vitamin C, magnesium, calcium) and (c) presenting a real risk of including an active substance that could be considered as banned on the WADA list. Using this definition of substance use, we can analyze the viability of using not only illegal substances, but also substances whose status is not widely known and potentially illegal.

To summarize, the aim of this study was to refine the analysis of doping in elite athletes by focusing on the shifting relationships

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/894353>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/894353>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)