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Elite Athletes' Perspectives on Providing Whereabouts Information: A Survey of Athletes in the Norwegian Registered Testing Pool

Das Meldesystem und die Anti-Doping-Bestimmungen aus der Sicht der Athleten: Eine Befragung norwegischer Athleten

Summary

This paper reports on the perspectives of elite athletes on anti-doping work in general and on the whereabouts system in particular, and uses a figurational perspective to explore the unintended consequences of the planned introduction of the whereabouts system. A cross-sectional survey of all the athletes in the Norwegian registered testing pool (n = 236, response rate = 80.8%) was carried out in 2006, using a structured questionnaire. Overall, 70.6% of the athletes agreed that doping was a problem in elite sport in general, but paradoxically only 17.5% agreed that doping was a problem in their own sport. However, more than four in ten (43%) of the athletes agreed that the whereabouts information system made a contribution to a "cleaner" sport. Some athletes thought the system was unfair. The whereabouts information system had, despite all good intentions, outcomes other than those planned and intended by the WADA. Thus, athletes' views might fruitfully be integrated with other perspectives when anti-doping work is developed further.

Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel beleuchtet die Perspektive der Athleten im Hinblick auf die Anti-Doping-Bestimmungen und das Meldesystem. Auf der Basis figurationssoziologischer Überlegungen werden die unbeabsichtigten Konsequenzen der geplanten Einführung des Meldesystems untersucht. Im norwegischen „Registered Testing Pool“ (n = 236, Rücklaufquote = 80,8%) wurde 2006 anhand eines strukturierten Fragebogens eine Querschnittsumfrage unter Athleten durchgeführt. Insgesamt 70,6% der Athleten stimmten zu, dass Doping ein generelles Problem im Spitzensport sei, aber nur 17,5% gaben an, dass Doping ein Problem in ihrem eigenen Sport sei. 43 % der Athleten stimmten zu, dass das Meldesystem einen Beitrag zu einem „saubereren“ Sport leiste. Ein wichtiges Resultat ist, dass das Meldesystem – trotz guter Absichten – zu anderen Ergebnissen führte als durch die WADA geplant und beabsichtigt. Es könnte deshalb sinnvoll sein, in der Weiterentwicklung von Anti-Doping-Maßnahmen die Perspektiven der Athleten mit zu berücksichtigen.

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1 Introduction

Historically, anti-doping work has been considered ineffective in eradicating the use of performance enhancing drugs by elite athletes (Kammerer, 2000; Houlihan, 2002; Waddington, 2000; Verroken & Mottram, 2005). A number of reasons for this have been identified, which include the poor quality of the tests (Voy, 1991), problems associated with carrying out unannounced tests (Longman, 1995) and the limited involvement of some countries and sport federations (Houlihan, 2002). In order to improve this situation, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) was established in 1999, the aim of which was to develop, coordinate and harmonize anti-doping policy and procedures on a worldwide basis. In 2003, the World Anti-Doping Code (WADA, 2003a) was approved, as the fundamental and universal document upon which the World Anti-Doping Program would be based.⁴ More than 570 sports organizations, including all 35 international federations (IFs) of Olympic sports, all national Olympic and Paralympic committees, the International Olympic Committee, the International Paralympic Committee, and many other sports organizations are signatories to the World Anti-Doping Code (WADA, 2007). A new and updated Code came into force January 1st 2009 (WADA, 2008a).⁵ However, all references to the Code in this paper are to the 2003 version. (The new Code is briefly returned to in the discussion).

One central element of the Code designed to improve the effectiveness of anti-doping work is the requirement placed on federations to establish a registered testing pool. Athletes who are in a registered testing pool must submit information on their whereabouts to their national and/or international federation. In this way, athletes are required to be accessible for no-notice doping tests all year round. If the required information is not submitted, if the information provided is incorrect, or if athletes cannot be found when a no-notice test is supposed to take place (a missed test), the athletes may be given a warning. In most sports and national anti-doping regulations, three such warnings within 18 months may be regarded as a violation of the doping regulations, which may lead to exclusion from competition for a period of between three months and two years (WADA, 2003a, 2004).

⁴ In addition to "the Code", the anti-doping program includes other guidelines: "International Standards" relate to different technical and operational areas within the program which are developed by the signatories and governments and approved by WADA, while "Models of Best Practice" provides state of the art solutions in different areas of anti-doping that are recommended by WADA (WADA, 2003a).

⁵ The Code was revised during the World Congress on Doping in Sport in November 2007. The updates to the Code, which came into effect on January 1st 2009, did not influence the athletes at the point of data collection, and are therefore not treated in detail here. However, it should be noted that many elements that were recommendations in the earlier Code became mandatory in the revised Code.

It is worthy of note at this juncture that the whereabouts system places a *compulsory* requirement on individual athletes who are members of a registered testing pool to provide detailed and specific information such that their personal freedom to act in particular ways is limited. Furthermore, the extent to which personal freedom is limited through the specific requirements placed on athletes varies from country to country. Thus, not only is an individual athlete's freedom to act limited by the system, but not all athletes are treated equally. In this paper, relative autonomy is analysed in sociological terms using key ideas from figurational sociology (Elias, 1978).

To date, athletes' views of the whereabouts system have not been investigated by WADA, sport federations, nation states, or researchers. This is an important omission, if it is assumed that the effectiveness and efficiency of the system will, to some degree, be dependent on the co-operation and compliance of athletes, which is, at least in part, dependent on their belief in the value of the system in protecting them as "clean" athletes, as well as its inherent fairness. This paper makes a contribution to this neglected area, by reporting on the findings from a survey of athletes in the Norwegian testing pool, the aim of which was to explore these athletes' perspectives on anti-doping work in general and the whereabouts system in particular. The paper begins by outlining the whereabouts system in more detail, before going on to present the theoretical perspective underpinning the study, the methodology used and the results. Finally, the findings are discussed in terms of some key ideas from figurational sociology and their implications for future policy and practice of anti-doping work.

1.1 The whereabouts information system

According to the WADA Code (art. 5.1.1), international and national sports federations have to establish Registered Testing Pools of elite athletes and carry out in-competition and out-of-competition testing (WADA, 2003a). In the International Standards for Testing (WADA 2003b) and Models of Best Practice & Guidelines documents (WADA, 2004), WADA leaves it to the individual anti-doping organisation (ADO) to define procedures and systems for

"... collecting, maintaining and monitoring sufficient whereabouts information to ensure that sample collection can be planned and conducted at no advance notice for all athletes in the registered testing pool" (WADA, 2003b, art. 4.4.1, p. 13).

As a minimum, WADA demands that the ADOs collect the following athlete information: a) name, b) sport/discipline, c) home address, d) contact phone numbers, e) training times and venues, f) training camps, g) travel plans, h) competition schedule, and, if applicable i) disability, including the requirement for third party involvement in notification (WADA, 2003b, art. 4.4.2).

An earlier study by Hanstad & Loland (2005) showed that there were variations between ADOs in the way the system was implemented. Among the differences were the criteria for selecting athletes to registered testing pools, details in the information

the athletes were required to submit, procedures to be followed when this information needed to be amended, and the specific requirements on athlete availability for testing. For example, in the United States the athletes in the testing pool had to be available for testing practically 24 hours a day. This situation was different from the United Kingdom where the availability requirement was set to one hour five days a week (Monday – Friday), while Norwegian athletes had to make themselves available for testing one hour a day all year round (Antidoping Norge, 2007).

There are sanctions attached to non-compliance with these requirements. The 2003 Code states that

”...the period of ineligibility shall be at a minimum 3 months and at a maximum 2 years in accordance with the rules established by the anti-doping organization whose test was missed or whereabouts requirement was violated“ (WADA, 2003a, art. 10.4.3, p. 29).

More specific definitions of violation are contained in the Guidelines for Athlete Whereabouts Information (WADA, 2004). Article 6.4 stipulates that an athlete with three warnings for ”failure to provide accurate whereabouts information in a rolling period of 18 months or a combination of failure to provide whereabouts information and missed tests, *may* be subject to an anti-doping rule violation“.⁶

There are several recent examples of athletes being sanctioned for not providing information and/or for missed tests, indicating that, whatever the reason, some athletes do not always comply with the system. Among the athletes who have been sanctioned after violation of the whereabouts information system (missed tests), are, in December 2007, four British athletes who were suspended for between three and 12 months (Knight, 2006). In the US four athletes have been suspended, while Norwegian sport authorities announced their first suspension in April 2007, when a wrestler was suspended for six months. The most high profile suspension for missing athlete information occurred when the Greek sprinters Katerina Thanou and Kostas Kenteris were excluded from the summer Olympics in 2004. Formally, they withdrew from the Games, but they later accepted anti-doping rule violations of three missed tests between 27 July and 12 August 2004, and a failure to provide urine and blood samples on 12 August 2004 (IAAF, 2006).⁷

During the 2007 Tour de France the Danish cyclist Michael Rasmussen received considerable media attention because of his whereabouts prior to the race was ambiguous. He was, as the leader of the race, sacked by his own team. One year later, the Monaco Cycling Federation suspended him for a period of two years for a combina-

⁶ Criteria have been established for each of the three warnings that vary between the different ADOs. In Norway, for example, the athlete automatically receives a sms after three days of not submitting any information. On day four without any information a warning letter that the athlete has to reply to is sent out. Lack of response or an explanation that is not credible will result in one warning.

⁷ There is no central database to acquire an overview of the number of sentenced athletes.

tion of a failure to provide whereabouts information and missed tests (Ferdinand, 2008). At the time of writing, Rasmussen's appeal was dismissed by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

2 Elite athletes in their figurations

The purpose of the whereabouts information system is to protect "clean" athletes, by carrying out more effective doping controls; thus, according to WADA, the system is a contribution to a more effective control of drug use (WADA, 2003a, 2003b, 2004). However, as noted above, the introduction of this obligatory system limits the relative autonomy of the athletes and moreover, is likely to have a number of unintended consequences. Merton (1936) developed the idea of unintended or unanticipated consequences of *individual* social action. However, Elias's (1978) concept of unintended consequences is a departure from Merton's conceptualisation in some important ways. First – and fundamentally – as Dunning, Malcolm and Waddington have pointed out, "Whereas Merton's discussion of unintended consequences was largely individualistic, Elias's focus was on pluralities of people" (Dunning, Malcolm & Waddington, 2004, p. 201). Thus, Elias developed the concept of "figuration" to represent the network of interdependent relationships between mutually oriented individuals. Second, elements of Elias's work on unplanned outcomes are clearly evident in *The Civilizing Process*, first published in 1939.

Elite athletes in the Norwegian testing pool are interdependent with other athletes from within their testing pool, athletes in other testing pools, athletes who are not part of a registered testing pool, with their national ADO, with WADA, and so on, and collectively can be seen in figurational terms. Thus, individuals are not self-contained and separate people, acting in isolation, as Merton propounded (1936) but, rather, their actions can best be viewed in terms of the networks of social relationships of which they are inevitably a part (Green, 2003). Conceptualising networks as "chains" of interdependencies illustrates the Eliasian point that direct contact is not necessary for power and influence to be experienced. Thus, from a figurational perspective, relative autonomy – or human agency – can only be understood in terms of the dependence of any one individual on the surrounding network of social, economic, and political relations (van Krieken, 1998).

For Elias, the introduction of planned technical developments, such as the whereabouts system, will always have a number of unintended consequences, because they are a "logical outcome ... of the complex interweaving of planned and unplanned social processes" (Dunning, Malcolm & Waddington, 2004, p. 199). This idea can be illustrated with reference to the concept of game models (Elias, 1978). An important aspect of Eliasian game models is that power – which is seen as characterising all social relations – should be considered as relational and as dynamic. In a complex, multi-person game (Elias, 1978, p. 84-100) each player is not in direct contact with all

the other players. In these circumstances, decision making and actions are, to a large degree, based on assumptions of what other players might do and want to achieve. This complex interweaving of the planned and unplanned actions of many people illustrates the point that 'the human world is resistant to direct control (van Krieken, 1998, p. 53).

In this respect, Eliasian games can be contrasted with other – more economic, individualistic and rational – game theoretical approaches, which have formerly been applied to understanding the spread of doping in sport (Breivik, 1987; Eber, 2008), but have not hitherto been applied specifically to the control of doping through the whereabouts system. This study uses a figurational perspective in order to explore and understand the unintended consequences of the planned introduction of the whereabouts system by exploring the perspectives of those athletes whom it was designed to protect.

3 Materials and methods

In 2006, a cross-sectional survey using a structured questionnaire was carried out.

3.1 Participants and procedures

All elite level athletes in the Norwegian registered testing pool were included in the survey. Norway established a testing pool in 1998 and has worked in accordance with the WADA Code since 2004. By November 2006, 292 athletes were in the testing pool, and thus were required to submit their whereabouts information to Anti-Doping Norway.⁸ The survey was conducted between October 11th and November 13th 2006, by using a web-based system, QuestBack. E-mails (286) and postal mails (6) containing information about athletes' voluntary participation in the study, reassurances to athletes that the data would be treated confidentially and reported anonymously, and (in the e-mails) a link to the web site for the survey, were sent from Anti-Doping Norway. QuestBack automatically generated a data file, based on the web-based answers from athletes, thus each athlete's identity was protected.⁹ The survey was approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services, which is the Privacy Ombudsman for research (in universities/university colleges) in Norway.¹⁰ Return of

⁸ An athlete is in the testing pool if s/he receives funding from the elite sport department of the NOC (Olympiatoppen), if s/he belongs to the testing pool for international federations (i.e. the International Ski Federation FIS), or an athlete may be included in the pool after evaluation by the national special sport federations.

⁹ We do not – of course – have any information about whether or not the athletes in the sample were clean.

¹⁰ Explanations for the high response rate may be that the invitation to take part in the survey was sent by email from the Chief Executive officer of ADN, who introduced it as a survey carried out by the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, and that the leader of the Athletes Committee and head

the completed questionnaire was viewed as an athlete having consented to participate in the study.

3.2 Measurements: the questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to gather data on athletes' opinions about anti-doping issues in general, and about the whereabouts information system in particular. In addition to background information relating to gender, age, type of sport and level of achievements, the questionnaire contained questions about the athletes' facilities and routines for sending in whereabouts information and questions about infringement and sanctions (general and personal). The questionnaire also contained Likert response format questions designed to measure athletes' views towards the whereabouts information system. The athletes were asked to indicate – on a 1-6 response format – whether they disagreed (1 or 2) or agreed (5 or 6) with each statement (3 or 4 – unsure). The questionnaire also contained some open-ended questions that allowed the athletes to elaborate on their responses by adding a qualitative comment.

3.3 Analysis of data

Findings are presented in terms of descriptive statistics reporting the percentage of athletes agreeing or disagreeing with specific statements, as well as the median of each Likert scale response (and interquartile range). In order to investigate differences between subgroups (gender, age, type of sport) the Mann-Whitney U test for two independent samples was used.

In places the quantitative data are complemented by qualitative comments from athletes to provide a more detailed illustration of athletes' views in relation to particular issues. Such qualitative comments can be especially valuable when investigating values, attitudes and meanings (Todd et al., 2004). The qualitative statements are presented not as representative of the group of respondents, but rather as illustrative comments of the kinds of issues that preoccupied athletes.

4 Results

Out of the 292 questionnaires sent out, 236 were returned completed, a response rate of 80.8%. The sample comprised 84 (35.7%) female and 151 (64.3%) male athletes (one person did not indicate gender.) In terms of age, 24 (10.2%) of the respondents were under 20 years of age, 61 (26.0%) were 20-24 years old. 82 (34.9%) were 25-29 years old., and 68 (28.9%) of the respondents were 30 years or older ($n = 235$). With regard to sports, 183 (78.5%) of the athletes competed in Olympic sports, while 50

coaches in special sport federations motivated the athletes to participate in the survey. In addition, three reminders were sent.

(21.5%) competed in non-Olympic sports ($n = 233$). Table 1 summarises key characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic information about respondents

		Olympic sport	Non Olympic sport
Age: ≤ 24	Female	24	4
	Male	43	13
Age: ≥ 25	Female	45	11
	Male	71	22

Table 2 shows the athletes' responses to two statements relating to doping as a problem in sport. The pattern of responses to these two statements reveal something of a paradox in that most of the athletes (70.6%) agreed that doping was a problem in sport in general (median score 5; IQR 4-6) but less than one in five (17.5%) agreed that doping was a problem in their own sport (median score 2; IQR 1-4). This pattern of responses suggests that the athletes' views on the problem of anti-doping in elite level sport can not be categorised as simply positive or negative.

Table 2: Athletes' attitudes towards doping in sport (% in brackets).

Statement	Values						N
	1 Disagree	2	3 Unsure	4	5 Agree	6	
Doping is a big problem in elite sport in general	4 (1.7)	14 (6.0)	23 (9.8)	28 (11.9)	55 (23.4)	111 (47.2)	235
Doping is a big problem in my sport	79 (33.8)	56 (23.9)	38 (16.2)	20 (8.5)	16 (6.8)	25 (10.7)	234

The statement that doping was a problem in elite sport in general was also investigated in relation to gender differences in response. Males were more likely to agree with this statement than females ($Z = 2.33$; $p < .05$).

4.1 Warnings and sanctions

If the athletes had not registered the required information for the past three days, an automatic notice via email and SMS was sent out. If a further day passed without response from the athlete, a letter was sent via email. If the athlete replied to the letter, Anti-Doping Norway would assess the athlete's explanation in order to decide whether or not a written warning would be given. It is evident that the majority of the sample had not complied with the whereabouts information requirements in some way, and for some – albeit a minority – this had resulted in a written warning. Thus, more than four in five (83.1%) had received a reminder, half (50.4%) of the athletes had received a letter, and about one third (31.8%) had received a written warning. The most common reason for receiving a warning was for omitting details from the submitted information (44.0%), followed by not being able to update their information due to technical problems (34.7%), and not being present when the doping officials arrived to carry out a test (15.0 %).

Three warnings within 18 months were regarded as a doping offence which could have resulted in sanctions. However, most athletes (62.2%) disagreed with the statement that three warnings in 18 months should be regarded as a doping offence, with only a minority (10.6%) agreeing with the statement (approximately one in four were unsure – 27.2%). One of the athletes who disagreed with this rule explained his response thus:

”That athletes could risk exclusion because of this system is completely unacceptable. If one is caught using doping or in any other way tarnishes the reputation of sports, then this should have consequences – not because some of us are distracted and forget to submit changes to our daily plan. It is completely unacceptable and if we are not treated as innocent until proven guilty it will absolutely lead to problems“ (Author's translation).

This comment gives some insight into the ways in which some elite athletes clearly differentiate between the seriousness of using performance enhancing drugs and a failure to comply with the whereabouts system, and take the view that sanctions should be proportionate to the seriousness of the offence.

4.2 Technical capability of the whereabouts system

As indicated above, it is a precondition for the whereabouts information system that the athletes are able to submit the required information to the anti-doping organisation, sometimes at short notice. Thus, it is crucial that the system is effective from a technical point of view. Most athletes (68.5%) said they had confidence in the technical aspect of the system, however, just under one in five (19.1%) stated that they did not have confidence in the system. One athlete added a qualitative statement that illustrated the importance of effective technology in allowing athletes to submit their whereabouts information and how confidence could be undermined if technological problems were regularly experienced:

"The system for registration is not good enough. I have experienced approximately 5-10 times during the last year that the login on the web does not work. SMS is problematic to send from abroad. It is difficult to reach people to register over the phone because of opening hours, breaks and meetings" (Author's translation).

In addition, just over one third (34.7%) stated that they were not able to update their whereabouts information due to technical problems (see below). If the technology to support the whereabouts system is inadequate, athletes may be put at risk of receiving warnings, which may lead to an anti-doping rule violation verdict. This may account, at least in part, for why athletes develop negative views of the whereabouts system.

4.3 International variations

Athletes were asked for their views on the international variations in the implementation of the WADA code. Just under one in ten (9.4%) agreed with the statement that athletes in other countries were subject to equally comprehensive controls as themselves, while just over half (52.8%) disagreed (median score 2; IQR 1-3). More than one third (37.7%) were unsure, which might suggest that some athletes were unfamiliar with the policies and procedures of other countries.

Table 3: Athletes' attitudes towards international variations in anti doping work (% in brackets).

Statement	Values						N
	1 Disagree	2	3	4	5	6 Agree	
Athletes in other countries in my sport is subject to as comprehensive controls as I am	85 (36.5)	38 (16.3)	63 (27.0)	25 (10.7)	11 (4.7)	11 (4.7)	233
It is unfair that not all athletes from all sports and nations provide whereabouts information	19 (8.1)	13 (5.5)	34 (14.5)	36 (15.3)	32 (13.6)	101 (43.0)	235

Table 3 shows the athletes' responses to statements relating to international variations in the implementation of the whereabouts information systems in other countries and other sport federations. All in all, over half (56.6%) of the Norwegian athletes in this study saw the system of whereabouts information as unfair because it was established in only a few nations and within only a few international sport federations. A small minority of the sample (13.6%) disagreed. Almost one third (29.8%) were unsure (median score 5; IQR 3-6). There were no significant differences by age, gender, type of sport suggesting that views about the unfairness of the system because of variations in implementation were fairly consistent across these sub-groups. One of the re-

spondents who agreed with the statement that it was unfair made the following comment:

”What disappoints me is that the system doesn’t work in other countries. Competitors can tell they [foreign competitors] are not tested outside world-cup competitions. A change has to take place“ (Author’s translation).

In terms of athletes’ views on sources of information, ADN was more likely to be seen as an adequate source of information compared to their international federations. Thus, about one in four (26.8%) thought that their international federations provided adequate information about doping, while three out of four (75.7%) thought that ADN did so.

4.4 Is it worth the cost?

One way of considering the question of the value of the whereabouts system is in terms of whether or not the end (less doping in sport and protection of ”clean“ athletes) justifies the means (the requirements specified by WADA and ADN in respect of the whereabouts information system), provided that harms are minimised and benefits are maximised. Although about half of the athletes stated that the joy of being an elite athlete had not been affected by the establishment of the system, one in four athletes in the Norwegian testing pool reported that the whereabouts information system did indeed affect their every day life as an elite athlete. Some, like this athlete, expressed this sentiment in the following terms:

”The anti-doping work is very important, but the requirement to report, and the risk of a doping verdict when the doping control officer shows up and you are not there, I think is wrong. It will be a relief to escape this the day I retire“ (Author’s translation).

The expressed views of the athletes presented above may go some way towards explaining why just 43% agreed that the whereabouts system was necessary to carry out efficient doping controls.

5 Discussion

The WADA introduced the system of whereabouts information to protect ”clean“ athletes in sport. The aim of the whereabouts information system is to ensure that elite athletes would be available for testing at specified times, resulting in a more effective control system than had hitherto been the case. In sum, the system should contribute to less doping in sport by acting as a deterrent to athletes because of the increased likelihood of being caught because of the possibility of no-notice out of competition -testing, and is therefore in the best interests of ”clean“ athletes. With regard to the individual ”cost“ for each athlete, it has, from the WADA perspective, been seen as a cost one has to pay in order to expose those who ”cheat“. However, for athletes, the ”cost“ of the whereabouts system is a more complex matter. The

survey data revealed that the athletes in the Norwegian testing pool perceived the system as necessary in order to carry out doping tests efficiently and effectively. However, in addition to the planned outcome of the system – an improvement in anti-doping work because of the increased ability to perform out-of-competition testing – the system has generated some consequences that can be viewed as unplanned or unintended. In particular, the survey revealed that some of the athletes had developed negative attitudes towards anti-doping work because they perceived parts of it, such as the whereabouts information system, to be frustrating and unfair. These attitudes were related to:

1. the technical challenges faced by athletes in sending and amending the required information if they were to avoid violating the whereabouts requirements,
2. athletes' perceptions of the system being unfair because of the discrepancy between an infringement and the resulting sanction, and
3. athletes' perceptions of the system being unfair because of too much variation in implementation across nations.

Figurational sociology provides a vehicle for developing a more adequate understanding of these consequences. According to Elias (1978) attempts to manage processes of change through the growth of institutional forms of social planning – such as the development and implementation of the whereabouts system – always result in unplanned developments and unintended consequences. He emphasised that the outcomes of these complex processes will include those which no single group intended or considered (Elias, 1978). In the case of the athletes in the Norwegian testing pool who responded to this survey, there is a belief that the whereabouts system contributes to a drug-free sport. However, at the same time, some athletes have become alienated by the particular form the system has taken, with a lack of harmonisation and standardisation across nation states and a perception that it is unfair and unnecessarily punitive. This is important because such alienation may lead to less compliance with the system.

Some of the negative responses of athletes related to the technical part of the system. Whether the technical problems were caused by limitations of the web-based system, by problems with internet access at various training venues, or by athletes' lack of computer competence, is not the most important issue. The main point is that some athletes had *experienced* technical problems, and that such an experience appeared to have influenced their attitudes towards anti-doping work.

It is debatable whether or not a doping verdict is an appropriate sanction for an infringement of the whereabouts system itself. In this respect, there are – according to ADN – no evidence of athletes in the Norwegian testing pool who have consciously or deliberately avoided a doping test. But many athletes who responded to the survey

had received warnings, putting themselves at risk of receiving a doping verdict at some point in the future. It was probably not WADA's planned intention that "clean" athletes should be labelled "guilty" for doping when the system was established. This issue was the one that athletes in the Norwegian testing pool reacted most strongly against. On the other hand, it has always been the case that no-show or run-away has resulted in a doping verdict.

Taking into account the main aim of WADA – to harmonise and standardise anti-doping work on a worldwide basis – this planned outcome has not been reached. Many of the Norwegian athletes in this study believed that elite athletes in other countries were not under the same obligation of having to submit such whereabouts information to national anti-doping agencies or to their international federation as the athletes were in Norway. This they perceived as unfair. Furthermore, the feeling of lack of control over other members of the figuration, such as their international competitors – the other players of the game – is relevant to understanding situations where there are players at several levels (Elias, 1978). Anti-doping work in general and the whereabouts information system in particular, can be considered as such, because the "game" comprises all the athletes of the national testing pools as well as anti-doping organizations.

The feeling of unfairness can be understood in terms of what the athletes see as restrictions on their personal freedom and the notion of equality. In that respect, it should be emphasized that the concept of fairness is more strongly linked to equal opportunities than to non-doping. The whereabouts information system constrains athletes' freedom, by requiring them to behave in particular ways, but, because the system has not been universally and consistently applied this constraint is unequally felt. Thus, rather than the system being a vehicle for ensuring all athletes are treated equally and fairly with regard to constraint on their personal freedom, the system has – unintentionally – generated inequality because every athlete's personal freedom has not been constrained or regulated to the same degree. In other words, an interpretation of the results of the present survey is that it is not only doping rule violations which are perceived as unfair, but also the unequal application of the system at a global level.

When the Code was implemented in 2004 (the 2003 version came into force January 1st 2004), it was nations with a clear anti-doping profile that required compulsory submission of information from the athletes. Among nations that have introduced the system, there are significant variations with respect to what is required of athletes, and the criteria that are used for warnings. The Norwegian athletes found this situation unfair in that it contradicted the fundamental principles of WADA (namely the principles of harmonisation and standardisation).¹¹ Although the assessment of the

¹¹ For a more detailed overview, see (Gilberg et al., 2006).

whereabouts information system is apparently negative, the need for it to be obligatory will not be contested here. However, although there may be a principal necessity for the whereabouts information system, in order to protect clean athletes, this sociological contribution may be taken into account by governing bodies (especially the WADA). And some of the concerns raised here, have been changed in the new Code (of 2009). For example, the new Code has created a standard set of whereabouts requirements, applicable to all sports. These set out definitively what whereabouts information must be filed, what constitutes a missed test, and when and how ADOs should recognize missed tests declared under the rules of other ADOs (WADA, 2008b).

This kind of standardizing and harmonization was requested by the Norwegian athletes. On the other hand; while most of them disagreed with the statement that three warnings in 18 months should be regarded as a doping offence, the WADA has increased the minimum sentence for violating the whereabouts system from three months to one year (WADA, 2008a). The revision of the Code has resulted in comprehensive changes. Many elements that were recommendations in the earlier Code are now mandatory in the revised Code. Regulations regarding Registered Testing Pools and Whereabouts Information is detailed in the International Standard for Testing (WADA, 2008b).

In sum, despite all good intentions, the system of whereabouts information has generated some unintended consequences, which may have some implications for future anti-doping work. A recent study showed that many anti-doping organisations have not managed to establish a testing pool at all (Hanstad & Loland, 2008). The Norwegian athletes' views need to be understood within this wider network of social relations. Furthermore, it is likely that their views differ from athletes in other countries, depending on the stringency of the whereabouts system implemented.

This paper has also shed some light on the developmental nature of policy implementation and how a figurational perspective can provide a more adequate understanding of the policy process. As far as the whereabouts system is concerned, it is worthy of note that it was relatively new in 2006 when the survey took place. For example, the sanctions attached to the system were new for Norwegian athletes as well as the procedures for providing information to the relevant organisation. Since the survey took place, ADN has introduced the WADA electronic system (The Administration Management System [ADAMS]) with the intention of improving the ease with which athletes can provide and amend their whereabouts information and, as noted previously, the Code has been revised in some fundamental ways. Future research might explore how athletes respond to these changes.

Given the global debate about doping and anti-doping work, the findings presented in this paper have relevance for a number of groups, including those working in major sport organizations and public authorities, as well as those with medical expertise.

However, if anti-doping work is to be further developed in an effort to improve its efficiency and effectiveness in controlling doping in elite sport, then the views of the Norwegian elite athletes presented in this paper may be relevant in informing how such developments are taken forward. For example, the WADA might want to explore how best to achieve harmonisation and standardisation of practice across nation states in order to create a fairer whereabouts information system, which might, in turn, improve athletes' compliance with the system. Thus, this article makes some contribution to revealing athletes' views, which, might fruitfully be integrated with other perspectives which have been more dominant in shaping the WADA's policy and procedures to date.

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