



When Can They Juice?
A Theoretical Review and Association of System Justification and
Sports Fan Identity to Doping by Athletes

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Abstract

Within sport management research, the use of performance-enhancing drugs, or activities known as doping, has predominantly been viewed from a preemptive perspective or from the viewpoint of the athletes themselves. Consequently, there appears to be a lack of attention on the auxiliary effects of the overarching sporting domain or the implications of doping by athletes on the fans who follow them. Accordingly, this composition reviews the literature on a prominent theory that may be relevant to this issue, that being: system justification theory. This paper also highlights and briefly examines how social identity theory may play a role in this relationship. In doing so, the current review attempts to both propound potential factors implicated within the effects of athlete doping on sports fans as well as differentiate normative tendencies (i.e., status quo biases) in the various sports domains. In closing, this review calls for and also suggests possible directions for future research on doping in linking these underlying psychological theories to the expansive field of sport management in fan behavior research.

Keywords: doping, sports fans, system justification, social identity, status quo

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Introduction

Across each sports domain, doping by athletes (i.e., the use of illegal or banned substances to enhance athletic performance; Kirby, Guerin, Moran, & Matthews, 2016) seems to have become a commonplace. Although many organizations, such as the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), actively work to test for such performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) and attempt to litigate substance abusers, athletes around the world continue to “taint” their respective sports. As the demand from sports fans dwindles in the presence of uniformity, the pressure to compete and reinvigorate interest in the sport heightens athlete expectations. Instances such as these have been witnessed in society on a number of occasions. For example, throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, professional baseball in the United States (i.e., Major League Baseball [MLB]) faced numerous challenges in attracting fans to stadiums due to both labor strikes by the players as well as the characteristic monotony of the sport itself perceived by the fans. During the late 1990s and early 2000s with the emergence of “long-ball” powerhouses Barry Bonds, Sammy Sosa, and Mark McGwire, who have all since admitted to using steroids at the time, the allure of baseball as a sport was resurrected through the home run (Walker, 2006). Baseball saw a rise back to prominence within the scheme of North American professional sports. Simply put, “steroids saved baseball” (Walker, 2006).

The sports world sees a plethora of athletes engage in doping as a means to dampen external forces, as similarly described in the case of baseball above. Although extant research has placed an emphasis on preventative action (Barkoukis, Kartali, Lazuras, & Tsorbatzoudis, 2016; Patterson, Backhouse, & Duffy, 2016), athlete perceptions on PED use (Alaranta, Alaranta, Holmila, Palmu, Pietilä, & Helenius, 2006; Petróczi, 2007), as well as ramifications on the athlete image (Hong, 2006; Solberg, Hanstad, & Thøring, 2010), the upshots on sports fans along with the fans’ and overall public’s perception toward the sport in contributing to such doping norms have not been well-studied.

Purpose

The intention of this paper is to examine the present perspectives of doping within sport management through selected frameworks established in prior literature in psychology. This review concentrates on theories concerning justification of sport norms as well as the repercussions on sports fans involving doping by athletes. This paper presents a review of the literature from group relations research and highlights the links between sports fans. Specifically, the current paper employs system justification theory as well as facets of social identity theory in explaining potential phenomenon that may transpire following doping by athletes. These two theories can help us better understand fan behavior by illuminating how doping norms in sports can influence the manner in which fans seek out athletes and how fans are affected by such doping. To facilitate this understanding, we provide background on these psychological frameworks and address their application within sports. Ultimately, these models are placed within a sport management context and utilized to explain how doping by athletes can affect fans through the use of societal examples.

Review of Literature

System Justification Theory

Within the literature on intergroup dynamics, research by social scientists has accentuated normative-directed behaviors in various group settings. For instance, Jost and Banaji (1994) proposed *system justification theory* (SJT), which posits that there exist fundamental psychological processes that drive individuals to perpetuate social status quos (i.e., various systems) within personal or group settings. The essential basis of SJT is that individuals are compelled to uphold the system as a function of satiating various needs. Several basic needs that have been identified by prior research as motivating factors include: *epistemic*, *existential*, and *relational* motives (Jost, Ledgerwood, & Hardin, 2007).

Epistemic needs implicate the desire to maintain consistency within varying group situations (Bonanno & Jost, 2006). These needs typically function to foster a sense of security within the individual by alleviating pressures from uncertainty in a system through system-justifying beliefs (Jost, Chaikalis-Petritsis, Abrams, Sidanius, van der Toorn, & Bratt, 2012). In the present context, epistemic needs may be exhibited by sports fans through processes involving support for a sports' status quo on athlete doping. As later discussed, when doping serves an overt beneficial function, wherein societal convention would dictate that such usage be condemned, the sports fan would

work to justify that system, even if such behavior entailed derogating an ingroup athlete. Moreover, existential motives concern the regulation of threat (Blasi & Jost, 2006). This management of threat implicates individuals' inclination to actively diminish endangerments to the system. Within sports, these existential motives could manifest as the fans' need to manage threats to policies involving doping (e.g., changes or criticism that undermine the legitimacy of the current system).

Ultimately, relational desires involve the overarching, innate processes that act to coordinate relationships in order to realize shared reality with others (Jost et al., 2007). Through this shared reality, individuals seek out contact with others, in which such associations confirm the constitution of the system. In sports, fans would go about building relationships with other fans of the ingroup and outgroup alike, wherein these interactions would further legitimize the system (e.g., the public perception of doping within a particular sport domain). Each of the aforementioned needs can drive individuals to preserve and follow the status quo. In doing so, fulfillment of these needs serves a palliative function for people by increasing other outcomes related to the self along with the central system (i.e., the social status quo), such as satisfaction with life and contentment (Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003) as well as augmenting affect and increasing favorable attitudes toward the system itself (Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

As Jost (2001) draws attention to, justifying behaviors such as these can be even more prevalent in the most disadvantaged members of the group. It appears that people prefer conservancy of the social ecosystem, even if their personal interests are adjourned (Jost, 2001). Another component of SJT that Jost (2001) puts forward is the notion of outgroup favoritism under extreme circumstances. Despite the fact that individuals may be in positions of low status (e.g., in poverty), they may accept their societal roles as stagnant and work to legitimize their subordination. These findings have been supported in a number of experiments and analyses (e.g., Jost & Banaji, 1994; Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992). To note, even though some of the research in outgroup favoritism by subordinate groups has preceded the theory of system justification itself, the occurrence of these phenomenon may provide greater support of the construct. In fact, many cases of system justification have occurred throughout history, such as in Nazi Germany within the concentration camps as well as in slave trade incidents, as also highlighted by Jost (2001). In present times, however, system justification may be witnessed in the context of social media, religious settings, political situations, as well as

within competitive scenarios (e.g., sports). Thus, system justification provides a suitable framework to explain the behavior of an extensive assortment of groups.

Supplementary Elements of System Justification

Concerning the context of how doping by an athlete may fit into responses by sports fans, SJT offers psychological precedent behind the motivation for various behaviors. For instance, SJT specifies conditions within a larger system (i.e., in this case, status quos in sports) in which such behaviors can occur (e.g., to assuage several inherent needs; Jost, 2001). In pinpointing these motivated activities, the present review contributes to the understanding of fan behavior within the sport management literature by enlightening circumstances wherein innate psychological factors within the fan as well as public perceptions of doping in the sport domain can impact how the fan goes about justifying the norms and status quos within the system.

Nevertheless, prior work has underscored that the manifestation of system-justifying behaviors may be dependent on various contextual factors. Specifically, research by Kay and Friesen (2011) has attempted to delineate supplemental features of system justification and offer an explanation into the contexts in which such behaviors may be more prevalent. They identify four principal components of system-justifying processes, those being: *system threat*, *system dependence*, *system inescapability*, and *low personal control*.

System threats often entail events or factors that pose a danger to the overarching system's legitimacy (Kay & Friesen, 2011). Some examples of these include: terrorist attacks, political uprisings, or legal proceedings directed toward various entities (e.g., corporations, sports teams, or perhaps even individual athletes). As noted by Jost and Hunyady (2005), system threat can enhance the process of upholding norms within the system. As previously alluded to, sports fans may experience system threats when doping policies in a particular sport league (e.g., the MLB) are challenged by external entities (e.g., WADA or USADA; Associated Press, 2010). This opposition toward sport domain norms can generate conflict within the individual. In response, the fan may seek to legitimize the system by rejecting claims by these outside organizations that disturb the current status quo.

Another vital feature that may promote system justification is system dependence, wherein individuals perceive a strong reliance on the system itself. Kay and Friesen (2011) note that this perception of dependence could be both psychologically or physically motivated. For instance, citizens receiving welfare may be

at the mercy of the organizations that distribute monetary support (i.e., federal or local governments and similar structural bodies). Furthermore, when individuals perceive conditions of confinement within a system (i.e., system dependence or system inescapability), they may display higher motivation to justify the state of external affairs. In sports, system dependence may involve fans recognizing that the sport holds a unique emotional place within their self-concept. As such, leaving the system would sequester the various enhancing effects on the self-concept (i.e., the hedonic benefits of sports as entertainment; Hightower, Brady, & Baker, 2002) as well as the positive feelings related to connection to a particular team (e.g., emotions involving community, attachment, and fulfillment; Koo & Hardin, 2008). At a more extreme, system inescapability may operate as fans' obsessive connection to a team, wherein the fan feels that ceasing fanship would critically damage their self-concept and position within the social environment. In this manner, fans would go to great lengths by perpetuating the system to allow fanship to persist.

Accordingly, each of the aspects of these system motivating behaviors appears to be related to a seemingly pervasive lack of personal control, in which individuals may exhibit higher inclinations to defend the social system, often termed *compensatory control* (Kay & Friesen, 2011; Kay, Whitson, Gaucher, & Galinsky, 2010). As fans, this inherent lack of personal control is distinguished through the incapacity to truly regulate a player's or organization's actions concerning various events, whether those be tangible performance on the field or doping behavior off the field. Based on these perceptions, people may actively work to legitimize the system when they recognize a threat to the system's consistency, have an inherent dependence on the system, perceive mental and/or physical states of inescapability, and feel low personal control over situational matters.

Although SJT has been studied in a vast array of contexts ranging from gender stereotypes and benevolent sexism (Jost & Kay, 2005) to displacement of the underprivileged following Hurricane Katrina (Napier, Mandisodza, Andersen, & Jost, 2006), applications into a sports context have been scant. However, the relevancy of SJT to such sportive arenas is not distant from the inherent structure of the sports themselves. In other words, sports are quite similar to many other group identification scenarios. Accordingly, prior research within SJT has investigated a wide range of identification settings, such as those involving political (Napier & Jost, 2008), racial (Ashburn-Nardo, Knowles, & Monteith, 2003), and religious affiliations (Laurin, Kay, &

Moscovitch, 2008). Herein, the current review postulates a view of SJT through the perspective of sports fans, or self-identified members of a sports-related entity (i.e., specific teams) as well as the larger sports domain (e.g., a professional sport league). SJT as a theory can advance literature in sport management by elucidating the psychological underpinnings that operate within the identity of individuals as sports fans. Since teams, athletes, related personnel, and fans constitute such sports systems, SJT can further expound how the individual sports fan can be affected by the structure of a sports-based hierarchical system (e.g., norms and status quos within a professional sport league). In relation, identity-governed mechanisms may also play a key role in the processes of SJT within the various sports.

Social Identity Theory

Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed that individuals often construct their self-concepts based on the groups that they affiliate with, thereby arranging other individuals into their ingroup or the outgroup based on numerous features and characteristics. Put simply, Tajfel and Turner offered an explanation of how individuals assemble their *social identities*. Framed as *social identity theory* (SIT), the concept has influenced a vast body of research into the processes by which individuals perceive their social environment and how various factors can affect the social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brewer & Kramer, 1986). While SIT provides a useful model to view the individual as a member of the group, the theory does not fully capture the essence of the group itself being a part of an even greater societal purview. That is, the individual's identified group merely constitutes one segment of a larger ubiquitous group (e.g., one particular sports team in a professional sports league). As also alluded to by Jost, Banaji, and Nosek (2004), SIT fails to address the comprehensive status quo. In contrast, SJT provides an explanation to the psychological processes implicated in how individuals utilize biases to uphold the status quo of a system with the aim of preserving their social identities within a group (Jost et al., 2004).

Although SJT has been argued as an alternative to SIT (Jost & Hunyady, 2002), SIT provides groundwork for the development of the processes within system justification. While SIT concerns how an individual views him/herself as a part of a specific group(s) in a social environment (i.e., the social identity), SJT serves to explain how socially-identified individuals utilize psychological processes to maintain the status quo of the specific group(s) within such an environment. Given this, however, from a sporting perspective, SIT has most often been examined through the scope of how fans

interact and perceive their own ingroup as well as the outgroup (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Burgers, Beukeboom, Kelder, & Peeters, 2015; Crisp, Heuston, Farr, & Turner, 2007; Wann & Dolan, 1994). In addition, prior literature has concentrated on how sport fans construct an identity through external entities, whether those be through teams and/or athletes (Berendt & Uhrich, 2016; Heere & James, 2007; Lock & Funk, 2016; Rees, Haslam, Coffee, & Lavalley, 2015; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Nevertheless, the processes of how fans engage in system justification may be contingent on their social identities, or the individual's own perception of their fanship.

Sports Fan Identity

Existing research on sports fan identity has theorized that individuals create such contextual social identities based on the teams they affiliate with and follow. In particular, however, Jacobson (2003) notes that individuals form these identities as a means to be part of a group or a larger domain. This form of group identification with teams has been extensively examined in many different settings. Seminal work by Wann and Branscombe (1993) established a conceptualization of this sports-related group affiliation, termed *team identification* (also known as *fan identification*). This type of identification has been studied from many perspectives, integrating social psychology theories (e.g., the *psychological continuum model* and *social psychological health model*; Funk & James, 2001; Wann, 2006), motivational frameworks (Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002), as well as economic ideologies (Harper, 2008). However, one interesting area of inspection within studies on team identification has centered on the effects of identity threat on sports fan behavior.

Case in point, Wann and Grieve (2005) offer an examination of the effects of threats to the social identity on evaluations of both the ingroup and outgroup. They found that those experiencing higher levels of threat tended to engage in biases toward the ingroup. However, one key facet of Wann and Greive's (2005) findings revolves around the notion of team identification. Herein, the authors reported that fans who felt a fervent closeness to the group and whose identity was under the most threat displayed ingroup biases even when their favorite teams experienced losses. Thus, those higher in team identification, or the extent to which the individual feels that the group is part of their identity, may exhibit certain behaviors to a greater extent.

In relation to the present context, closely identified fans may display more potent reactions to doping scandals involving athletes. These more highly identified fans may engage in more system-justifying behaviors, particularly when system threat casts doubt

upon the legitimacy of the system itself (e.g., how certain sports leagues handle positive tests for banned substances). Taking an outlook on system justification, we may postulate that fans with greater ties to a sport and/or team would segregate or perhaps even derogate athletes that place the system at risk, as seen in previous cases of deviancy in group settings (see Rullo, Presaghi, & Livi, 2015). While it is evident that sports fans do indeed show signs of biases when under threat (e.g., ingroup favoritism; Wann & Branscombe, 1995), a great deal of the research has examined these biases directed toward athletes within the ingroup and outgroup. Accordingly, we propose that there exists a lack of literature on the status quo biases of the sports domain itself in conjunction with the athletes who constitute the various sports systems. Given the fixation and attention that doping draws from the media and fans as well, the present review points out its promise as a potential avenue for future research. Despite this, the notion of the effects of athlete doping on sports fans have not been well-studied from a system justification perspective.

System Justification in Sports

To date, much of the research on system justification has not examined its direct function within sports fans. There seems to be limited prior literature that has diametrically utilized the theory to study possible supporting behaviors that function to uphold the hierarchal norms within a sportive structure. The body of research on hierarchy in sports has predominantly investigated norms and stereotypes within sports, merely utilizing SJT as a potential explanation to related phenomenon as opposed to specifically testing various system-justifying behaviors in fans. Pertaining to studies that have actually examined status quo biases in sports, a great deal of the research has focused on attributional tendencies within fans. For instance, Vandello, Goldschmed, and Richards (2007) examined the effects of status perception of teams on perceived effort.

Using SIT and research on inequality as a basis, Vandello and colleagues (2007) sought to answer why sports fans may selectively identify with disadvantaged groups. They found that those who viewed video clips involving lower status teams, or “underdogs,” perceived that these lower status teams exerted a greater deal of effort in their play compared to elite teams, or “top dogs.” In other words, these fans tended to uphold the status quo bias of lower status teams possessing less ability and thus, needing to engage in more laborious efforts in order to compete. However, it must be noted that participants tended to support the underdog more frequently as opposed to

the more elite team. While this effect could be unique to the context of sports, other studies of hierarchal biases have yielded similar results concerning team performance (Halevy, Chou, Galinsky, & Murnighan, 2012), price disparity with regards to gender inequality (Hebl, Giuliano, King, Knight, Shapiro, Skorinko, & Wig, 2004), as well as stereotype activation involving Native American mascot logos (Freng & Willis-Esqueda, 2011), wherein stereotypes regarding lower status groups (e.g., varying wages and participation in team sports; women within sports; mascots depicting disadvantaged groups) were upheld. Table 1 provides a summary of the characteristics of status quo studies in sport.

Table 1. Aspects of Selected Sport-Related Status Quo Studies.

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Sport Setting</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Findings</i>
Hebl, Giuliano, King, Knight, Shapiro, Skorinko, and Wig (2004)	Basketball	– Gender inequality concerning team valuation and ticket purchase by sports fans	– Maintenance of the status quo – Fans were more likely to report watching, attending, and paying higher prices for men’s basketball compared to similar women’s events
Vandello, Goldschmed, and Richards (2007)	Aquatics	– Rivalry and competitive parity of opponents	– Support for an “underdog effect” (i.e., favorability and stereotyping of low-status groups)
Freng and Willis-Esqueda (2011)	Baseball	– Activation of stereotypes following presentation of mascot logos	– Using the logo of the Cleveland Indians as a prime, fans were stimulated to negatively typecast Native Americans (i.e., increased outgroup derogation)
Halevy, Chou, Galinsky, and Murnighan (2012)	Basketball	– Differing levels within team hierarchy in relation to performance	– Positive hierarchal differentiation (e.g., variances in pay or intragroup collaboration) amongst teams could enhance team performance

Discussion

Influential Variables and Future Directions

Given the state of the system justification literature and its applicability to sport management, we call for future research to examine the theory within sports fans.

Specifically, we suggest that investigations focus on the manner in which fans uphold the status quo of doping within the larger domain of the sport itself (e.g., the overarching sport of baseball). For example, the status quo of doping in various sports may be widespread prevalence amongst athletes. While athletes who are caught doping are often penalized or banned from the sport, the perceptual biases (i.e., system-justifying behaviors) by sports fans is of emphasis in this proposed context. To provide a guide to future research, we present both the apparent norms (see Table 2) and reactions to such substance usage as well as a series of potential variables that could influence these processes.

Table 2. Observed Norms, Policies, and Testing within Selected Sport Domains.

<i>Sport Domain</i>	<i>Norms</i>	<i>Governing Body Policies*</i>	<i>Recent Testing**</i>
American Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Professional leagues provide anti-doping stance^a – High prevalence of doping within players^b 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Suspensions from competition for incidental use^f 	17
Baseball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Anti-doping stance^a – High prevalence within players^b 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Range of suspension from play to lifetime bans^g 	31
Basketball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Anti-doping^a – Low incidence within players 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Suspensions from competition for incidental use^f 	37
Cycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Anti-doping^{a, b} – Higher incidence in cyclists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Range of suspension from competition to lifetime bans; may strip titles from cyclists^h 	221
Football (Soccer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Anti-doping^c – Low incidence within players^c 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Suspension from play; disciplinary actions may be inconsistent^b 	144
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Anti-doping^d – Fan perception of PED usage may be lax – Testing may be insufficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Range of suspension from play to lifetime bans^g 	41
Track and Field (Athletics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Anti-doping^e – Higher incidence in athletes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Range of suspension from competition to lifetime bans; may strip titles from competitors^h 	261

Note. ^aBurns (2006). ^bYesalis and Bahrke (2002). ^cDvorak, Graf-Baumann, D'Hooghe, Kirkendall, Taennler, and Saugy (2006). ^dInternational Ice Hockey Federation (2015). ^eBersagel (2012). ^fDolich (2013a). ^gDolich(2013b). ^hWall Street Journal (2009). ^{*}Referring to policies of professional sports leagues and/or international committees. ^{**}Cases of positive doping tests, as per the World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA) Anti-Doping Figures Report (2014); Adverse Atypical Findings (AAFs) are included.

Taking into consideration the norms and policies as delineated in Table 2, the type of sport may play an integral role into how fans go about justifying doping within sports. First and foremost, the composition of the sport itself could affect the function of system justification in fans. To be precise, not all sports are created equal. Many sports are set on the individual-level, such as cycling or track and field, as opposed to the team-level, as in baseball, American football, or hockey. With this, individuals may direct fanship toward certain entities, or sports teams, thus facilitating the derogation of doping by a single athlete. For example, if one player on a team engages in PED use, it may be easier to dissociate oneself from the individual player. However, in the case of individual-level sports, wherein the fan follows a specific athlete, rationalization of doping may prevail over derogation due to greater difficulty in transferring fanship. Yet, another factor to consider may be the frequency of doping amongst athletes in a particular domain.

For instance, doping may be more prevalent in some sports than in others. One prominent example of this may lie within the comparison between baseball and basketball. In basketball, doping may not serve a substantial, or beneficial, function simply due to the nature of the sport (Benson, 2013). As a result, the fans' initial perception of doping by basketball players may be that of indifference or confusion, as opposed to harsh criticism. While doping may enhance the overall strength of an athlete in basketball, the measurable differences in utilizing PEDs for such an athlete may not be explicitly impactful on actual performance (e.g., translating to direct increases in points scored or steals per game). Although PEDs may fuel quantifiable differences in performance in sports like baseball (e.g., accumulating more hits and/or home runs), the benefits of doping within sports that require more agility or finesse may be impeded by doping. However, this does not assert that doping merely entails the usage of muscle enhancing drugs (e.g., anabolic steroids). Rather, drugs that increase awareness and energy, such as amphetamines, may create more stringent barriers for athletes to circumvent during drug tests.

Considering this, reactions by fans may be subject to the possible advantages of using PEDs within the sport. If this holds true, we may expect sports such as baseball,

track and field, and cycling to receive doping as even more deviant compared to other sports. However, one interesting area wherein doping usage seems to be disregarded may be in American football. For years, athletes have admittedly utilized PEDs within the sport, yet many continue to be heralded as generational talents. As an example, former player, Bill Romanowski, has openly admitted to using steroids during his 16-year NFL career, noting that he actively sought supplements that were not yet banned and justified this use with higher performance as a rationale (Associated Press, 2005). In fact, a confidential survey conducted by Horn, Gregory, and Guskiewicz (2009) revealed that approximately 9.1% of respondents (i.e., 233 of 2,552 retired NFL players) reported to using steroids during their careers. However, doping in these players was found to be significantly associated with ligament or joint damage ($p < .05$). With regards to fan perceptions, it may be that the usage of PEDs in sports as a means for recovery from injury may spur less system-justifying attitudes and behaviors, seeing as the assumed purpose of doping may be healing-related rather than deliberate exploitation of anabolic steroids for performance enhancements, as in the case of Bill Romanowski.

Taking this into account, fans may tend to uphold the status quo when the norms of the system, or in this case sport, may treat doping behaviors more lightly or when the behaviors are more easily rationalized. However, another variable to consider in this relationship may be the level of identification with the group. As discussed previously, team identification has been linked to various outcomes, including those related to more subjectivity concerning team opinions (Wann & Branscombe, 1995) as well as increased stimulation by outcomes related to the individual's identified team (Madrigal & Chen, 2008). Given the effects of higher team identification, system justification may be more prevalent in fans who experience more potent levels of threat to their social identities as fans of a certain team. While this may appear as system threat, it may also be construed as ingroup threat. Thus, the convergence of these types of threat may further the emergence of system justification. As an example, in the sport of baseball, although steroid use is widely condemned, fans of such players who engage in doping may experience threat toward their identities of fans of such players. Consequently, these fans may exhibit a proclivity to legitimize the player's use of steroids as a means to cope with endangerments toward their identities. Given the unique nature of the issue, this justification may take the form of both system as well as group justification due to the inherent attachments that one feels toward the team.

Considering a well-known case of this occurrence in society, these types of system-justifying behaviors may have been strongly experienced by fans of the San Francisco Giants following the revelation of doping by the renowned MLB home run leader, Barry Bonds. In the wake of the Bay Area Laboratory Co-operative (BALCO) scandal, many fans who were informed of Bonds' admitted usage of a topical steroid, known as "the clear" (Fainaru-Wada & Williams, 2006), may have experienced a great deal of threat toward their fan identities. Even though Bonds was incriminated with various charges related to doping and potential perjury, fans could have rationalized his usage to cope with the newfound cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962; Jost et al., 2003), given that the community of baseball began to label Bonds as a reprobate. It is also possible that Bonds' status as an elite player made him a target for such condemnation due to his success in the sport. For some fans, his success in baseball may have been directly attributed to his usage of PEDs.

In view of baseball's norms and positions of steroid use, the type of sport, level of team identification, as well as the perception of social identity threat may affect the processes of system-justifying behaviors of fans. As noted previously, assuming lax regulation of PEDs in certain sports (i.e., the implicit norm), justifying the system in this situation may entail ignoring or rationalizing drug use in order to vindicate the athlete's actions. Due to a lack of research considering these notions, we call for future examinations to evaluate the effects of each of the aforementioned factors. We may expect that the type of sport as well as level of team identification would positively contribute to system justification and status quo perpetuation. Concerning identity threat, experiments may witness that higher identity threat would be associated with tendencies to rationalize doping by athletes, particularly within individual sports compared to team sports, given the disadvantaged position fans would be in (Jost & Hunyady, 2005).

Additional Considerations and Manifestations in Sports

In examining other variables, as commonly witnessed in past research on system justification, sex, gender, and race may also play strong roles in these processes (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2003; Glick & Fiske, 2001; Jost & Kay, 2005). For instance, the use of steroids in men may be perceived as a more severe deviation from the status quo in comparison to usage by women, who are often falsely perceived as frail and requiring greater exertion in a sport to succeed (Wolf, 2010). One recent case of this may involve the events surrounding Maria Sharapova's admitted use of meldonium, a banned performance enhancing substance, in March of 2016 (Rovell, 2016). While many critics

have expressed punitive notions toward Sharapova, the attitudes of Sharapova's fans may reflect more rationalizing attitudes regarding the tennis stars' PED use. These opinions by fans may be reminiscent of an explicit or implicit bias related to her sex as a female or perhaps even her ethnic group (i.e., of White European descent). On the matter of race, however, system justification may be strengthened when a member of a stereotyped racial group utilizes PEDs. Case in point, African Americans are often perceived as being better athletes than members of other races (Azzarito & Harrison, 2008). As such, if an African American athlete violated a norm regarding PED use, we may expect a greater tendency for fans to disparage the athlete due to underlying racial biases.

Drawing from the tennis example with Maria Sharapova, another renowned female player has often been linked, albeit erroneously, to steroid use. Serena Williams, one of the greatest tennis players in the world, has been the subject of scrutiny over the years due to her body type. Williams, being quite robust and well-built for a woman, has been accused of using steroids to attain her physique. In the conjectural instance that Williams tests positive for PEDs in the future, we may see a spell of fans derogate Williams as a result of her race, whereupon she would be infringing the "Black athlete" stereotype (Price, Farrington, Kilvington, & Saeed, 2012) by furthering her supposed racial advantages through the use of PEDs.

One of the key features in SJT concerns the notion of outgroup favoritism, wherein members of a lower status group may perceive the outgroup as superior to their own (Jost, 2001). While this perspective may be applicable in certain contexts, the field of sports is unique given the immense competition between teams. As a result, this notion may not be fully apt in describing the processes of system justification in a fan-player interaction setting. Namely, fans may not display outgroup favoritism toward a player from a rival team who engages in doping, unless the fan feels that they are a marginal part of their current ingroup. To be specific, the level of team identification may dictate the manner in which a fan engages in this particular facet implicated in SJT. Nonetheless, whereas doping may not be sufficient to produce outgroup favoritism in some fans, higher team and player performance linked to overt cheating may influence how lower identified fans go about supporting an outgroup. In fact, prior research by sport scholars has found that lower identified fans may dissociate from failures by their identified team (Wann & Branscombe, 1990) and conceivably commit allegiance to another team, often known as "jumping on the bandwagon" (Burger & Walters, 2003).

As an example, take the case of a lower identified New York Mets fan. While the Mets' recent dominant performance within the last two seasons, as illustrated by their capture of the National League pennant and appearance in the 2015 World Series, may attract fans to begin following them, the more prevalent series of events surrounding doping may call into question their appeal. Over the past decade, the New York Mets have seen four different players suspended by the MLB for testing positive for PEDs, accounting for one of the highest doping incidences by a team across the MLB in that span (Gehring, 2015; Rohan, 2016). Most recently, Mets' pitcher Jenry Mejía made history by becoming the first major league player to receive a lifetime ban for multiple doping incidents (Rubin, 2016). A lower identified fan may perceive the frequency of Mets players receiving suspensions as incompetence on the part of Mets leadership and potentially, system threat from the organization due to such prevalence. Consequently, such a fan may even shift allegiances from the Mets to a more principled team, such as one that actively seeks to preserve the status quo of anti-doping in baseball. To be specific, system permeability (i.e., the impression that individuals can advance or move to another entity within the system; Wilkins & Kaiser, 2014) may play a large role in this occurrence. The shifting of loyalties for the fan may be facilitated in a location where there are multiple professional sports teams within the same sport. Accordingly, we may predict that these fans who are met with such conditions would be more likely to display an outgroup favoritism effect in the context of sport situations involving performance, but may also engage in such when doping is involved with the newly committed team.

Further research into how the operation of system justification of doping in fans must be conducted in order to come to more viable conclusions regarding such behaviors. Findings from such studies in sport management could further the conceptual understanding of how sports fans perceive doping by athletes. In doing so, practitioners and managers from professional sports leagues, teams, or perhaps even corporations could utilize results from these theory-driven studies to handle various incidents of doping by athletes. Taking into consideration the norms and status quos of sports, sport managers could selectively employ various athletes who have engaged in such transgressions in advertising campaigns. Seeing as system-justifying behaviors and reactions by fans may vary from sport-to-sport, future research should also be conducted to distinguish these variances to effectively account for situational aspects implicated in different sports.

Conclusion

The SJT literature has been primarily focused on examining status quo biases within group dynamics. While research in sport management has made use of the construct to explain certain phenomena, the literature has not fully expanded into expounding pressing issues within the field. Nevertheless, research on status quo maintenance has contributed a great deal in the understanding of the functional norms in fans. However, the assembly of both sport management and psychological concepts has been limited. The present review offers a conduit between the two fields regarding one of the most critical matters in sport and the overarching society today (i.e., doping by athletes). We suggest a number of variables to consider in the processes of athlete doping, such as the level of team identification, social identity threat, gender, and race. If future investigations consider these factors, we may be able to shed light upon how fans are affected by PED usage. As such, many questions about fan behavior on the whole, such as how fans go about supporting athletes following PED scandals, could be better understood. Such answers to these inquiries may provide useful applications for the field of sport management and psychology as well as corporations and teams alike.

From an applied sport perspective, the examination of doping and system justification in fans could inform managers and practitioners in how to effectively manage PED scandals in athletes. This would also allow corporations, teams, as well as the comprehensive professional sports leagues to weigh the costs and benefits of signing a player with a record of doping. While usage of PEDs may ostracize some players, those athletes who continue to perform at elite levels may be able to shroud prior transgressions. Considering psychological contributions, research on system justification in fans would extend the theory itself and allow for increased applicability in an even more unique setting. In addition, future research could differentiate the unique contextual factors, such as personal participation by the fan, rivalry between teams, or even the history of the team itself, involved within the sports, which may further parse out features of SJT that may be distinct in sports fans. This could potentially even incite further investigation into the linkages of other psychological theories to the realm of sports.

Overall, doping in sports, while prevalent among athletes, has not been recognized as a norm across the various sport domains. As the drug policies within each sport shift toward strict anti-doping, athletes will need to adapt to prevailing conditions as a means to simultaneously appease their teams, fan bases, the media, and others. As doping becomes more sophisticated, we may see fans disregard the advantages in

doping, as in sports like American football. As this progresses, the individual sport systems may spur unique settings for rationalizing such PED usage. As we have seen throughout history, fans seek out enjoyment through sports and in some cases, utter physical dominance brings out the most gratification. While sports like baseball tout that the proverbial “steroid era” during the late 1990s and early 2000s may have salvaged the entire sport itself, doping will be continued to be frowned upon by society as a whole. However, as doping usage becomes more frequent, fans of such domains will work to justify the overarching system to not only vindicate their fanship and identity as sports fans, but also avert change that upsets the legitimacy of the entire system itself.

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