



Doping in Sport and Fitness

Edited by
April Henning
Jesper Andreasson

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DOPING IN SPORT AND FITNESS

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INTRODUCTION: UNBINDING DOPING CONTEXTS

April Henning and Jesper Andreasson

ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces the main aims and ambition with the anthology, which is to bring together research from diverse perspectives on doping and Image and Performance Enhancing Drug (IPED) use. The chapter highlights existing but often backgrounded links between sport and fitness doping research and present a re-reading of the cultural history of doping through which simplistic divisions, such as that between sport and fitness, are deconstructed. Further, by unbinding the hegemonic divide between sports doping and fitness doping, new insights (and themes) concerning anti-doping, health and risk, new emerging doping spaces and the gendering of this field of research are brought to the fore. These themes are then used as point of departure when introducing the different chapters and scholars that contribute to the volume at hand.

Keywords: Sport and fitness; doping history; anti-doping; health; doping spaces; gender

Historically, doping and how this practice and phenomenon has been understood has largely been a question of socio-cultural contexts, perspectives and structures (Andreasson & Henning, 2021a). Indeed, users, policymakers, researchers, media stakeholders and others have all taken somewhat different stands towards doping. Their situatedness in varying contexts impacts how they make meaning of doping use and their views on how that use should be handled. In sport, doping has largely been debated in terms of governance and different anti-doping incentives. Among policymakers and health professionals in different countries, developing strategies to prevent people from engaging in doping use and reduce harm if they do so have been the priority. Though situated meaning-making can provide significant insights into particular doping contexts and perspectives, they

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may also serve to background more general trends, missing insights that are relevant across contexts and the people operating in them.

This anthology is titled *Doping in Sport and Fitness*. We chose to include both sport and fitness in order to direct attention to one of the clearest contextual separations found in the field of doping research: doping in formally governed competitions in elite sports known as *sports doping* and doping as a public health issue – that is, as a social problem predominantly connected to gym and fitness settings, also called *fitness doping*. There are clear overlaps in terms of how issues such as anti-doping, health, risk, gender and more are addressed in these contexts. However, this cultural and contextual divide has been drawn, if not sedimented, in research and fuelled for decades both by the scholarly debate and in public discourse. Therefore, sports researchers have tended to pay the most attention to doping in particular sports (such as cycling, weightlifting, American football etc.), the work and significance of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and issues of fair-play, as well as how anti-doping is implemented and understood by professional athletes (Dimeo & Møller, 2018; Henning & Dimeo, 2022). In media and public discourse, sports dopers have been condemned for their (immoral) actions and may continue to be stigmatized by a rules violation even after serving their punishments for doping offences. To this end, anti-doping in sport can be ruthless.

In contrast, somewhat different lenses have often been used in the realm of fitness doping. Zooming in on the development of gym and fitness culture, doping has been debated as semi-legitimized, bound to subcultural and often masculine spaces, but still with some level of cultural acceptance within the broader fitness industry (Andreasson & Johansson, 2020; Christiansen, 2020; Klein, 1993; Locks & Richardsson, 2012; Monaghan, 2001). In this realm, researchers have focused on how individuals – mostly men – engage in doping practices to form bodies and lifestyles. This has included specific topics such as how doping communities and ethnopharmacological cultures develop over time, within spaces like gyms or online communities, and as a subcultural practice (Bilgrei, 2018; Henning & Andreasson, 2021; Underwood, 2017).

In the wake of this hegemonic divide between sport and fitness, doping experiences and doping as a phenomenon have sometimes been reduced to a matter of context. This divide has had a huge impact on how doping has been addressed. But times are changing. Since the turn of the century, this field of research has expanded significantly and the focus has broadened. Doping has increasingly been recognized as a public health issue affecting sport, fitness and society (Bates et al., 2019; McVeigh & Begley, 2017). And while previously understood as a more or less solely male phenomenon, the interest in women's use of Image and Performance Enhancing Drugs (IPEDs) has grown (Andreasson & Henning, 2021b; Germain et al., 2020; Havnes et al., 2020; Henning & Andreasson, 2021; Sverkersson et al., 2020). Further, it has been recognized that there is substantial variation among and between use populations in terms of motives, effects and, more broadly, how the drugs are understood in different cultural contexts (Thualagant, 2012; Turnock, 2021; Van Hout & Kean, 2015). This has led to acknowledgement of the need to explore and analyze alternative

narratives of doping (Mulrooney et al., 2019; Salinas et al., 2019). Indeed, variability has not only been called for in terms of user experiences but also in terms of the diversity of drugs themselves, including the role of poly drug use and how this can be met and dealt with in diverse contexts, as well as its impact on users' health and lifestyles (Henning & Andreasson, 2021b). Feeding on this scholarly zeitgeist, this anthology hopes to further contribute a broadening of the debate on doping in sport, fitness and elsewhere.

ANTHOLOGY AIMS

A central thought steering this volume is that rigid differentiations between doping contexts and perspectives can be misleading. Eager to zoom in and find a focal point, we as researchers sometimes tend to overlook or background commonalities and potential overlaps, favouring strict categories such as sport and fitness, men and women, online and offline. We may also downplay or even ignore the agency and mobility of bodies and lifestyles, which rarely, if ever, operate in one context exclusively. Elite athletes in sport, for example, do not start out as elite athletes. Rather, they go through a process of training that includes various sport-specific skills and drills beginning in a recreational sport context, and there are probably relatively few top-level athletes who do not combine their sport activities with gym workouts to further boost their performance, image or well-being. Hence, the lines between even the highest performing sports stars and everyday gym-goers are less clear in some ways than has been appreciated in the academic literature.

For this anthology, we are proud to have gathered both established and emerging scholars and colleagues in the field of doping research to illustrate that doping experiences, contexts and perspectives are seldom solely a question of either/or – something that can be culturally/contextually pinpointed in time. Challenging the notion of contextual rigidity, *Doping in Sport and Fitness* aims to bring together diverse perspectives and disciplinary research on doping and IPED use and lay a mosaic in which the contributions together bring the debate and field of research forward. In the shadow of the hegemonic sport and fitness divide in this field, we have structured the contributing chapters around four themes: (1) anti-doping; (2) health and risks; (3) doping arenas and spaces; and (4) the gendering of doping and IPED use. We will use these themes as point of departure in our discussion. Rather than using them as ways of dividing up the broader doping topic, we use them as a cross-cutting organizational tool. The themes here function to illustrate, understand and address doping and IPED use in contemporary society. They apply across contexts and other categorizations common in doping research, in effort to spotlight the areas of commonality between and among research topics previously understood as totally separate. Taken together, this volume will allow for a more complex picture and understanding of substance use patterns, behaviours and responses, pointing towards future developments in this field of research.

For us to meet our aim of breaking down some of the persistent divisions related to doping, it is necessary to reconsider how this phenomenon has developed historically. In doing so, we will show the interconnections between various contexts and highlight some of the more general trends. This overview will be necessarily brief, and others have published more extensively on the history of doping (see [Andreasson & Henning, 2021a](#); [Andreasson & Johansson, 2014](#); [Dimeo, 2007](#); [Gleaves, 2014](#); [Henning & Dimeo, 2022](#)). Still, this re-framing of the sport and fitness doping history, in which commonalities and overlaps between and across contexts are emphasized, serves as a suitable foundation for this anthology. We have chosen to frame our discussion around different historical phases. Following this, we will pick up our themes and introduce the contributing colleagues in the next section.

RE-READING DOPING HISTORY

Though people's efforts to boost performance using different means stretch back to ancient cultures, a more contemporary discussion on sports and fitness doping connects to the early twentieth century. During this time, various stimulants were introduced to the consumer market and became available without prescription ([Courtwright, 2009](#)). Initially, the use of cocaine, amphetamine and other drugs was largely unrelated to sport and physical culture. These were often used medicinally or even recreationally. However, as there were no rules against their use, it is hardly surprising that they soon bled into performance cultures of the time ([Andreasson & Henning, 2021a](#); [Rasmussen, 2008](#)). In the 1950s, these and other forms of drugs also started to appear on the bodybuilding and gym scenes, including early synthetic forms of testosterone, though use of animal testosterone extracts had been tried earlier ([Yesalis & Bahrke, 2005](#)). Consequently, during large parts of the early twentieth century, roughly up until the 1960s, stimulants and synthesized testosterone in sport and fitness contexts were met by curiosity and a lust for experimentation. This mirrored social use and views of these substances at the time. The drugs were debated roughly in terms of their potential usefulness for enhancing or restoring human capacities in different social and cultural spheres of society (increasing workplace productivity, improving soldiers' stamina, treatment for frigidity, and more). Gradually, this rhetoric changed. Concerns about the negative effects of doping substances were raised in the broader social context, with similar concerns within sport following closely behind. At this point, the idea of some form of organized anti-doping began to gain ground ([Dimeo, 2007](#)).

In the mid-1960s, the question of doping became an issue on the sport agenda. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) set up a Medical Commission in 1967 with remit for developing anti-doping, including drawing on and developing the appropriate scientific methods and tools ([Henne, 2014](#)). Sports officials knew athletes were using steroids at this point, yet the Medical Commission was reluctant to prohibit them without a way of enforcing such a rule, namely in the form of a scientific test. Reliable tests for stimulants were used for anti-doping in

competitions by then, but a similar test for steroids took several more years to develop. Once this became available, the IOC formally prohibited steroids in 1974 and began full testing at the 1976 Olympics. The anti-doping movement in organized sport was also boosted by a more general concern about drugs in society and the initiation of the ‘war on drugs’ in the United States and elsewhere in the 1960s and 1970s. In bodybuilding and gym culture, however, a somewhat different atmosphere prevailed. Here, the effects of steroids became visible on the bodies of gym-goers – mostly bodybuilders – and there was a move towards extreme muscle mass and definition (Locks & Richardson, 2012). This became evident via the body of Arnold Schwarzenegger, world famous bodybuilder of the 1970s who remains a beacon of bodybuilding culture. Schwarzenegger used steroids as part of his training to achieve the ideal gym look of the era, which made him a movie star (Andreasson & Johansson, 2020; Schwarzenegger & Petre, 2012). As in the era of organized sports before anti-doping, there were no prominent reasons for bodybuilders to not engage in doping practices presented in public discourse or by policymakers. Steroids and other IPEDs were legal in most countries, and in contrast to the sport context, their use was largely situated as part of the medicalization of society, instead of a concern related to the war on drugs. It was also near the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s that women began entering gyms in greater numbers (Fair, 1999), beginning the re-gendering of this culture.

Whereas the 1970s were marked by rudimentary anti-doping work and cultural acceptance of doping, we can see how the views of doping and IPED use began shifting in both sports and fitness during the 1980s and early 1990s. Within bodybuilding, the use of steroids was gradually problematized as it was linked to ideas about fragile men and masculinities, insecurities and health issues (see Klein, 1993). Testosterone-fuelled bodies were thus painted in a more negative light, and reports on steroid abuse and eating disorders were published. Different autobiographical publications focusing on the dark sides of IPED use also reached the public (see Fussell, 1991). This was also connected to different drug scandals in sports, such as the infamous Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson and his 1988 positive test for steroids at the Summer Olympics that highlighted the issue of doping in sports for spectators around the world. The aftermath of the Johnson scandal saw investigations into doping in several countries and national level policies prohibiting or further restricting IPEDs (Henning & Dimeo, 2022). In parallel with these scandals and policy shifts, there remained an ongoing interest in the impact of doping on the body that echoed interest from earlier decades. Dedicated international bodybuilders exceeded their genetic maximum and broke records for muscle mass, symmetry and vascularity, while elite sports athletes continued to break world records. To a certain extent, the dark sides of use (obsessive behaviours, psychological impacts etc.), existing prohibitions and harsh judgements of doping could co-exist with a cultural attraction to the extreme and to the idea of spectacular – and potentially doped – bodies (Andreasson & Johansson, 2019).

The 1990s constituted a pivotal era in the history of doping. During this time, several events coincided to change the face of IPED use across contexts. For

example, natural bodybuilding, done without the use of drugs, emerged around the time when steroids became more heavily regulated in some countries (Liokaftos, 2019). This also related to the broader health and fitness focus of the fitness revolution, a transformation in which a previously exclusive masculine basement culture gradually became a more gender inclusive fitness culture for the masses (Andreasson & Johansson, 2014). These updated ideas of fitness were much more commercialized and ‘clean’ than the previous iterations of bodybuilding gyms that tended to be exclusive masculine and homosocial spaces (Sassatelli, 2010). The wave of women becoming more engaged in fitness pursuits occurred alongside changes in women’s bodybuilding, as the sport itself opened up new competition disciplines that encouraged less muscular forms and prioritized what were considered to be more traditional and accurate feminine forms (Andreasson & Johansson, 2020). This wave of change was situated alongside the theoretical developments of feminist theory in the 1990s. Academics and scholars such as Judith Butler and Donna Haraway helped to fuel the intellectual debate on the gendering of bodies. In general, we can see an increasing fascination on how people with modern body techniques may stretch the limits of what is humanly possible to reshape bodies, and to the reach or challenge the bodily ideals of the time.

Sports also undertook a clean sweep of doping in this period, not least through the development of international anti-doping policies, often led by the IOC. A watershed moment came in 1998 when French border guards found IPED substances and paraphernalia in a search of a car belonging to the Festina cycling team. Though it is likely that cycling officials had some idea of the doping occurring in cycling, French police oversaw the investigation. The investigation expanded to include and then implicate several other teams set to compete in that year’s Tour de France (Dimeo, 2014). The ensuing scandal and pressure from media and national governments led to the IOC convening a 1999 meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland, to strategize a path forward. The result was the agreement to establish the WADA, the body that would be charged with policymaking and harmonization of global anti-doping efforts. Across sport and fitness in the 1990s, there was a strong push towards the idea of clean and doping-free contexts. Previously secluded and subcultural spaces were opened and ideals of health and inclusion were brought to the fore in the debate. These changes did not mean that the use of doping decreased. Rather they suggest that the social, cultural and demographic landscape of doping was about to change.

Entering the twenty-first century, the demographics of doping and IPED use appear to be evolving further. Doping is still commonly associated with bodybuilding and elite sports, especially as high-profile scandals continue to haunt events like the Olympics (McLaren, 2016). At the same time, scandals have not prevented the spread of doping among recreational sports athletes (cf. Henning & Dimeo, 2015; Seifarth et al., 2019). Similarly, fitness doping is adapting to demographic changes within the fitness industry (Andreasson & Johansson, 2020). New groups of users, including women and other more routine gym-goers, have opened new markets and new online spaces for doping (Bates & McVeigh, 2016; Hanley Santos & Coomber, 2017). The market and distribution for IPEDs

have also followed a roughly similar route as the overall development of the doping landscape. Between the 1970s and 1990s, the IPED market tended to follow a more social and less commercially driven model (van de Ven & Mulrooney, 2017). In this system, experienced users or coaches ‘helped out’ and mentored newbies on how to use IPEDs. The enforcement of anti-doping policies in sport and laws in some countries has diminished the level of sociability among both users and suppliers as a way to protect against discovery of their activities. As such, the emergence of the online doping space is unsurprising. This new virtual meeting place and trade route has fostered an ever-growing doping market and the development of online doping eco-systems and communities (Fincoeur et al., 2015; van de Ven & Mulrooney, 2017). What we see today is the initiation of a new phase in the historical development of doping and IPED use. Increasingly, critical debates on the effectiveness of various drug control systems in both sport and fitness and the medical curiosities found in the early twentieth century also seem to be reappearing in discussions on human enhancement drugs and ideas about safer or less harmful doping.

In this section, we have illustrated that though the sport and fitness contexts may not always move in lockstep, there is a historical link in approaches and responses. This is exemplified not only through how anti-doping has been implemented but also how questions concerning health, gender and performance manifest. This points to future doping and anti-doping developments potentially becoming even more intertwined than in the past, an idea this volume will investigate further throughout.

THEMES AND CHAPTERS

For much of the twentieth century, sports and fitness doping could be understood as a rational choice for individuals to make. The drugs that many anti-doping policies would eventually prohibit were originally introduced to the public as technologies for improving and enhancing minds, bodies and lifestyles. Such ideas have, of course, lingered, despite the emphasis on health risks and anti-doping heavily promoted by policymakers and other stakeholders. Even after different policies and laws prohibiting their use were implemented, opportunities for use have continued and the range of use populations has grown. Though any number of examples or illustrations might work to describe the global doping milieu, we would like to draw on the idea of nesting dolls. Nesting dolls are a set of dolls that fit one inside the other in descending order of size. A complete set may look like the dolls separated and lined up next to each other as individual dolls, or in their nested state, it may appear as a single doll, the largest obscuring the others. Each doll plays a part in creating the whole in either state, as it would be incomplete if any were to be missing. Similarly, doping is an issue composed of multiple layers. It is possible to take the topic apart and focus on a single layer – say, specific policy strategies or the experiences of a single user group – as much research in this area does. Individually, these provide in-depth looks at discreet pieces of puzzle and improve our understanding of these

important component parts. We are fortunate here to have a range of topics covered in a single place, allowing us to see how the topics and themes nest together to form a whole. Even as this picture will be necessarily incomplete, it offers a way to understand how these themes are inextricably linked and how each discreet piece fits within the higher order themes we have used here.

The blurring of doping in sport and fitness also spotlights other themes that have come to form our understandings of the doping phenomenon, such as the development of both anti-doping and new doping arenas and spaces, as well as how IPED use is understood in relation health and gender. These four themes – or layers to our doll – are inextricably linked to one another and seemingly cut across the history of fitness and sport doping. As such, we have chosen to use them as a way of framing this volume’s contents. However, these themes are not intended as a way to once and for all systematize this field of research and establish new divides. Instead, the themes serve as an analytical and organizational point of departure. They will help us arrange the contributed chapters for clarity and to dig more deeply into this phenomenon, helping to widen and develop our understanding. Surely, the themes are constructs and there will be overlaps between themes. In the concluding chapter, we will foreground the interconnections between each theme to bring the picture together.

Part I: Anti-Doping Approaches

In this introductory chapter, we have provided an overview of the topic area, the aims of this volume and given an updated historical outline of doping and anti-doping in sport. This historical foundation foreshadowed some of the contemporary debates around IPEDs and doping, as well as some of the considerations key to painting a fuller picture of doping and anti-doping. One of the first considerations relates to the rules and approaches to addressing doping, which often take the form of anti-doping. Doping, and the way it is defined legally and by many researchers, is directly related to questions of governance and how it is regulated through anti-doping (or anti-drug in some contexts) policies. Rather than more ‘common sense’ understandings of doping as using a substance to enhance performance, doping under WADA’s Code, the central policy document for Olympic and member sports, is defined as a violation of its rules. As these policies are the foundation of both individual experience, public perception and research in this field, our first theme includes multiple perspectives on anti-doping law and governance.

In Chapter 1, Lovely Dasgupta considers the implications of the WADA Code for athletes, particularly those from developing countries, from a legal perspective. Exploring the relationship between athletes’ rights and sports law within the anti-doping narrative, Dasgupta’s chapter argues for revising existing anti-doping legal procedures to improve their impact on athletes’ rights. Also taking a critical approach, in Chapter 2 Helen Lenskyj focuses on who has power in anti-doping and how that power translates into rights and responsibilities for both athletes and sport-governing bodies. Lenskyj shows several instances in which athletes have received varying outcomes under the WADA Code, calling into question