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Toward an understanding of transgressive behavior in sport: Progress and prospects

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ABSTRACT

In this article, research investigating athletes' transgressive behavior in the last ten years is reviewed. The focus is on behaviors that have adverse interpersonal consequences or violate the ideal of fair play, such as aggression, cheating, doping, and antisocial behavior toward opponents and teammates. First, anticipated guilt and moral disengagement are discussed as proximal predictors of these behaviors. Second, person variables that facilitate or inhibit transgressive behaviors are considered, followed by a review of motivational and moral features of the social environment within which these behaviors take place. The article ends with critical considerations of some key issues and directions for future research.

Sport has been heralded as building character for centuries, yet few would argue that negative social behaviors, with adverse consequences for others, are also common in sport. Some publicized examples are the rugby player Tom Williams feigning an injury to his mouth by biting on a fake blood capsule in a U.K premiership rugby-union game, the boxer Mike Tyson biting off part of Evander Holyfield's ear in response to repeated head butting in a heavyweight world title fight, the Australian cricket team player Cameron Bancroft, tampering with the ball, and the state-sponsored doping in Russia. Behaviors of this kind have negative interpersonal consequences and violate the ideal of fair play, which involves abiding by the rules when taking part in sport.

In the sport literature, a variety of terms have been used to refer to such acts. For example, aggression refers to overt behavior (verbal or physical) that is purposeful (i.e., non-accidental), chosen with the intent of causing injury, and has the capacity to cause psychological or physical injury to another (Husman & Silva, 1984). Cheating, involves intentionally breaking the rules of sport to gain an unfair advantage over others. A cheating behavior widely investigated in recent years (see Ntoumanis, Ng, Barkoukis, & Backhouse, 2014) is doping, which refers to the use of banned substances or methods to enhance sport performance. Finally, the term antisocial behavior has been used to refer to sport behaviors intended to harm or disadvantage another, and antisocial behaviors directed toward opponents and teammates have been described and received extensive research attention in the last decade (see Kavussanu, 2012; Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009; Kavussanu & Stanger, 2017).

In this article, the term transgressive behavior is used to collectively refer to acts that have negative interpersonal consequences or violate the ideal of fair play. However, when researchers have measured a specific form of transgressive behavior[1] the precise term referring to the specific behavior is used. For example, the term aggression (or likelihood to aggress) is used when studies have examined a *specific* aggressive behavior (i.e., intentionally injuring an opponent), while antisocial behavior is used when studies have investigated a variety of antisocial acts toward opponents and teammates, typically utilizing the Prosocial and Antisocial Behavior in Sport Scale (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009). There are other forms of transgressive behaviors in sport, such as match fixing, athlete abuse, and harassment. The present article will not deal with the latter behaviors.

Given the amount of research on transgressive behavior in sport, this review is not exhaustive. Rather, its purpose is to provide an overview of research on the variables that have been most consistently associated with such behavior in the last ten years. The article starts by discussing proximal predictors of transgressive behavior, followed by person variables as distal predictors of this behavior. It continues by reviewing aspects of the social environment that are associated with transgressive behavior in sport, either directly, or indirectly via other variables. The article ends by offering some critical reflections and directions for future research.

1. Proximal predictors of transgressive behavior

Researchers have proposed a variety of models in their effort to understand transgressive behavior in sport (e.g., Hodge & Gucciardi, 2015; Kavussanu & Ring, 2017; Lazuras, Barkoukis, & Tsorbatzoudis, 2015). These models incorporate proximal predictors of transgressive

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behavior, which act as mediating variables, assumed to explain the effects of distal predictors on behavior. The two most consistent proximal predictors of transgressive behavior in sport, discussed in this section, are anticipated guilt and moral disengagement. These are hypothesized to act in opposite ways, by decreasing and increasing transgressive behavior, respectively; they are also inversely associated with each other.

Guilt is a self-conscious moral emotion arising from moral transgressions and is a key regulator of moral action (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). It involves unpleasant feelings accompanied by tension and regret, plays a central role in regulating transgressive behavior, and is an adaptive emotion characterised by reparative action tendencies (i.e., making amends) following a transgression (Tangney et al., 2007). The central role of emotion in regulating moral action has also been highlighted by Bandura (1991) in his social cognitive theory of moral thought and action. He stated that people tend to behave in ways that are in line with their moral standards to avoid experiencing negative emotions such as guilt and shame, which result from behavior that violates these standards (Bandura, 1991).

The role of anticipated guilt in transgressive behavior in sport has been examined in previous research. In two studies investigating aggression (e.g., Kavussanu, Stanger, & Ring, 2015; Stanger, Kavussanu, Boardley, & Ring, 2013), university student-athletes from a variety of team sports imagined themselves in a hypothetical situation, where they had to decide whether they would foul their opponent, resulting in the opponent being seriously injured. Participants indicated their likelihood to act aggressively, as well as the extent to which they anticipated feeling guilt, after they had engaged in the aggressive act. In both studies, anticipated guilt was inversely associated with aggression likelihood.

Anticipated guilt has also been negatively associated with doping intention in athletes from a variety of individual and team sports (e.g., Boardley, Smith, Mills, Grix, & Wynne, 2017; Kavussanu & Ring, 2017; Ring & Kavussanu, 2018). Anticipated regret, a variable conceptually similar to anticipated guilt has also been inversely linked to doping intention. For example, anticipated regret from using banned substances emerged as a strong negative predictor of doping intention in several studies of Greek elite athletes recruited from a variety of individual and team sports (Lazuras, Barkoukis, Mallia, Lucidi, & Brand, 2017; Lazuras et al., 2015). Thus, there is consistent evidence from several studies that the stronger the guilt or regret athletes expect to experience, the less likely they are to transgress in sport.

The second proximal predictor of transgressive sport behavior is *moral disengagement*, which refers to eight psychological mechanisms, assumed to reduce the guilt and other negative emotions that inhibit transgressive behavior, thereby facilitating such behavior (Bandura, 1991). These mechanisms operate by cognitively restructuring transgressive behavior and its consequences, minimizing or obscuring one's role in the harm one causes, disregarding or distorting the detrimental consequences of one's behavior, and dehumanizing or blaming one's victim. For example, cheating could be justified as a way of helping one's team (moral justification); athletes may talk about "bending the rules" rather than breaking them (euphemistic labelling); they could compare transgressive behavior with more harmful acts, making bad behavior appear relatively benign (advantageous comparison); displace responsibility for their actions on the coach or support staff (displacement of responsibility); downplay the harm they cause (distortion of consequences); and blame their victim for their own behavior (attribution of blame). It is worth noting that the last two mechanisms (distortion of consequences and attribution of blame) are not relevant to doping (see Kavussanu, Hatzigeorgiadis, Elbe, & Ring, 2016).

Numerous studies have consistently revealed strong positive relationships between moral disengagement and antisocial behavior, particularly toward opponents in British and New Zealand athletes (e.g., Boardley & Kavussanu, 2010; Hodge & Gucciardi, 2015; Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011; Stanger, Backhouse, Jennings, & McKenna, 2018). Several studies have also reported strong positive links between this variable and doping intention in Italian (Lucidi et al., 2008), French (Corrion, Scoffier-Merriaux, & d'Arripe-Longueville, 2017), British (Boardley et al., 2017; Kavussanu & Ring, 2017) and Greek athletes (Ntoumanis, Barkoukis, Gucciardi, & Chan, 2017); in most of these studies, participants were elite athletes. That moral disengagement is a strong predictor of transgressive behavior in so many studies from different countries, attests to the important role of this variable in explaining transgressive behavior in sport.

Bandura (1991) argued that people are able to circumvent the negative emotions that arise from moral transgressions, via the use of moral disengagement, that is, moral disengagement allows individuals to act badly without experiencing guilt. Bandura and colleagues (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996) found that moral disengagement was a negative predictor of anticipated guilt, which in turn negatively predicted aggressive behavior in school children. In the context of sport, moral disengagement predicted athletes' antisocial behavior (Stanger et al., 2013) and doping likelihood (Kavussanu & Ring, 2017) and behavior (Boardley et al., 2017) via reduced anticipated guilt. In all studies, moral disengagement had additional *direct* positive effects on transgressive behavior, suggesting that this variable may regulate transgressive behavior via other mechanisms besides anticipated guilt, and is itself a proximal predictor of transgressive behavior.

In sum, both anticipated guilt and moral disengagement are proximal predictors of various forms of transgressive behavior in sport, including aggression, antisocial behavior toward opponents and teammates, and doping. Both variables have also been examined as mediators of the effects of person variables on transgressive behavior. Some of this research is discussed in the next section.

2. Person variables as distal predictors of transgressive behavior

A great deal of research has attempted to identify factors that facilitate or inhibit transgressive behavior in sport. The focus of this section is on those person variables that have evidenced the strongest and most consistent associations with this behavior, and those that have received attention in recent research. Variables that are likely to facilitate transgressive behavior (i.e., positive predictors) are discussed first, followed by variables that are likely to inhibit such behavior (i.e., negative predictors).

2.1. Positive predictors

Sport is an achievement context, and individuals take part in sport in order to achieve, thus, competence in this context is important. However, the way competence is construed varies based upon individuals' goal orientation, a construct described in achievement goal theory (Nicholls, 1989). The goal orientation most relevant to transgressive behavior is *ego orientation,* which refers to the tendency to evaluate competence using other-referenced criteria and equating success with normative superiority. Athletes high in ego orientation are more likely to act transgressively, in the pursuit of their ego-oriented goals. They need to win in order to feel competent, thus, they will do anything they can to achieve this goal. Empirical research has consistently revealed strong positive links between ego orientation and antisocial behavior, particularly toward opponents (e.g., Boardley & Kavussanu, 2010).

A second variable relevant to transgressive sport behavior, is *controlled motivation*, a construct of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Controlled motivation is evident when athletes take part in sport for extrinsic reasons, for instance, to obtain rewards and prizes, to show others how good they are, or to avoid feelings of guilt and shame. Athletes with controlled motivation would focus on the outcome of the game or race, and they are more likely to engage in transgressive behavior to achieve their extrinsic goals. Controlled motivation has been

positively associated with antisocial behavior toward both teammates and opponents in several studies (e.g., Hodge & Gucciardi, 2015; Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011; Sheehy & Hodge, 2015).

Narcissism is a complex personality construct that has been examined in one study in relation to antisocial sport behavior (Jones, Woodman, Barlow, & Roberts, 2017). Among other characteristics, narcissists have an inflated sense of self-worth, like to attract attention to the self, overestimate their abilities, exploit others to get what they want, have unreasonable expectations of others, and provided that the task at hand presents an opportunity for glory, they will try to take full credit for themselves. Jones et al (2017) found that narcissism was positively associated with antisocial sport behavior.

Researchers have also tried to understand the process through which ego orientation, controlled motivation, and narcissism influence antisocial behavior. In the studies discussed above, ego orientation, controlled motivation and narcissism predicted antisocial behavior toward teammates and opponents not only directly, but also indirectly through moral disengagement (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2010; Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011; Jones et al., 2017). These findings suggest that athletes, who are preoccupied with winning, take part in sport for controlled reasons, or are narcissists, are more likely not only to display antisocial behavior, but also to morally disengage; in turn, moral disengagement may facilitate this behavior.

Two other variables that have been positively associated with antisocial sport behavior are fear of failure and obsessive passion. *Fear of failure* is the motive to avoid failure in achievement contexts. Individuals high in fear of failure have learned to associate failure with aversive consequences and typically perceive failure in evaluative situations as threatening. Sagar, Boardley, and Kavussanu (2011) found that university team sport athletes, who reported high fear of failure were more likely to also report engaging in antisocial behavior not only toward their teammates and opponents while playing their sport but also toward their fellow students during the academic year. *Passion* is a strong inclination toward an activity that one likes, finds important, and in which one invests a significant amount of time and energy (Vallerand et al., 2003). In obsessive passion, one feels compelled to engage in the activity, experiences conflict, and the activity takes a lot of space in the person's self (Vallerand et al., 2003). Donahue, Rip, and Vallerand (2009) examined the relationship between passion and reactive aggression (e.g., "At times I cannot control my urge to harm an opponent") in basketball players. Obsessive passion for basketball corresponded to higher levels of reactive aggression. This suggests that how athletes approach the activity has implications for their aggressive behavior.

2.2. Negative predictors

Another line of research has focused on identifying factors that inhibit transgressive behavior. Moral identity, empathy, and self-regulatory efficacy are the variables that have received most research attention in recent years and will be discussed in this section. These variables have been associated with aggression, antisocial behavior toward opponents and teammates, and doping intention.

Moral identity refers to the cognitive schema that people hold about their moral character and is a self-conception organized around a set of moral traits, such as being fair, honest, caring, and hard-working (Aquino & Reed, 2002); people who have a strong moral identity, consider being moral a central part of who they are. This construct originated from the work of Blasi (1984), who proposed that a common set of moral traits are likely to be central to most people's moral self-definitions and that being a moral person may occupy different levels of importance in each person's self-concept. Aquino and Reed (2002) identified nine traits (i.e., caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind) as being characteristic of a moral person and found variation in the degree to which these traits were central to one's self-concept. The extent to which the moral self-schema is experienced as being central to one's self-definition has been referred to as the internalization dimension of moral identity (Aquino & Reed, 2002) and has been the main focus of empirical research.

Moral identity has been inversely associated with antisocial sport behavior in both cross-sectional and experimental research (e.g., Kavussanu et al., 2015; Kavussanu, Stanger, & Boardley, 2013). In one experiment (Kavussanu et al., 2015), participants were presented with a hypothetical situation, where they had the opportunity to act aggressively (i.e., foul an opponent). Compared to the control group, the moral identity group (whose moral identity was activated via a priming procedure; Aquino & Reed, 2002) indicated lower likelihood to aggress, viewed the behavior as morally wrong, and anticipated experiencing more guilt, if they were to engage in the behavior. In a more recent study of adult team-sport athletes, moral identity predicted doping likelihood indirectly via both moral disengagement and anticipated guilt (Kavussanu & Ring, 2017). Athletes who have a strong moral identity tend to adhere to their moral standards by not using banned substances. Thus, they seem to have less need to morally disengage and are more likely to feel guilt, if they use banned substances.

Empathy involves the sharing of someone else's emotional experience; people who are high in empathy are able to take another person's perspective and tend to experience concern for unfortunate others (Davis, 1983). Empathy is an other-oriented response, which is congruent with another person's situation or perceived welfare. Empathy has been inversely associated with antisocial behavior in cross-sectional research (e.g., Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009). In one experiment (Stanger, Kavussanu, & Ring, 2012), male athletes, who were assigned to a high-empathy group (i.e., empathy was manipulated via perspective taking instructions) reported lower likelihood to behave aggressively toward an opponent in a hypothetical situation than those assigned to a low-empathy group. The inhibiting effects of empathy on aggression were partially mediated by anticipated guilt.

It is worth noting that the effects of empathy on aggression are not universal and do not occur similarly in men and women: Specifically, in men they are moderated by provocation. In an experiment that manipulated provocation, Stanger, Kavussanu, McIntyre, and Ring (2016) examined the effects of empathy on aggression, operationalized as the electric shock intensity administered to a (fictitious) opponent, when the participants "lost" a trial in a competitive reaction-time task. Provocation was manipulated by administering low or high intensities of electric shock to the participant, when he/she "lost" a trial. Although empathy suppressed aggression, in both men and women, at low provocation, this effect was evident only in women at high provocation.

These findings highlight the important moderating role of sex and provocation on the empathy-aggression relationship. Men appear to react to provocation differently to women, such that the reaction may be so strong, that the typical effect of empathy on aggression is overridden. Therefore, strategies aimed to reduce aggression by enhancing empathy need to be tailored specifically for men and women.

In his social cognitive theory, Bandura (2001) highlighted the importance of self-efficacy as a self-regulatory mechanism for behavior. *Self-regulatory efficacy* refers to the confidence in one's ability to resist temptations and pressure from others, and its role in transgressive behavior in sport has been investigated in several studies, which have also examined moral disengagement and anticipated guilt as mediators. In these studies, self-regulatory efficacy has been inversely associated with doping likelihood or use via moral disengagement alone (Ring & Kavussanu, 2018) or via both moral disengagement and anticipated guilt (Boardley et al., 2017); in some cases, self-regulatory efficacy also predicted doping likelihood directly (e.g., Ring & Kavussanu, 2018). In another line of research (e.g., Mallia et al., 2016), self-regulatory efficacy of the team was examined, and this variable also negatively predicted doping intention.

Affective self-regulatory efficacy (i.e., the ability to regulate affect) has also been investigated in relation to transgressive behavior in sport. In the first study to examine this relationship, d'Arripe-Longueville

et al. (2010) asked adolescent students to respond to scenarios describing hypothetical situations in team sports in which they may be tempted to cheat (i.e., break a rule in basketball); participants indicated whether they thought it was okay to cheat and how likely they would be to cheat if put into the protagonist's position. Affective self-regulatory efficacy had a negative effect on moral disengagement, which in turn predicted acceptability and likelihood of cheating. This variable also appears to play a role in explaining doping intention. In a study of French elite athletes, it was a positive predictor of resistive self-regulatory efficacy (i.e., the ability to resist social pressure to use banned substances), which in turn negatively predicted doping intention indirectly via moral disengagement (Corrion, Scoffier-Meriaux, & d'Arripe-Longueville, 2017).

In sum, moral identity, empathy, and self-regulatory efficacy, appear to inhibit transgressive behavior in sport directly or indirectly via their effects on moral disengagement and (in some studies) anticipated guilt. These findings point to the important role both guilt and moral disengagement play on transgressive behavior in sport, and enhance our understanding of the process through which such behavior could be inhibited or facilitated. That these variables predict doping intention in a similar manner they predict other forms of transgressive behavior, underlines the importance of considering moral variables in our understanding of doping.

3. The social environment

The social environment of sport can have a profound influence on athletes' behavior. Coaches and teammates are the most significant individuals within the athletes' social environment. Through their behavior, coaches communicate to athletes what they think is important in sport, while teammates could influence athletes via a contagious effect. Parents and teachers are also significant social agents, and play an important role in shaping athletes' behavior. The social environment could influence athletes' behavior directly or indirectly via person variables (e.g., motivation, moral disengagement). Moreover, it has "motivational" and "moral" features. In this section, research pertaining to these features and their relationship with transgressive behavior is discussed.

3.1. Motivational features

One motivational feature of the social environment of sport is the *motivational climate*, which involves the criteria of success communicated to athletes by significant others such as coaches; these individuals determine the evaluation procedures and distribution of rewards, and, via their behavior, convey to the athletes what is valued in that context (Ames, 1992). For example, coaches can create a performance motivational climate – where normative ability is valued - by rewarding only the top athletes and giving primarily normative feedback, or a mastery climate – where personal progress is valued - by rewarding individual effort and improvement and creating opportunities for everyone to succeed. Several studies have shown that when athletes perceive a performance motivational climate in their team, they tend to report more frequent antisocial behavior (e.g., Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009; Stanger et al., 2018; van de Pol, Kavussanu, & Claessens, 2018), whereas mastery climate has been inversely – and less strongly - associated with this behavior (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2009).

Another motivational feature of the social sport environment is the *interpersonal coaching style* or coaching climate. This is a construct derived from self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which has distinguished between controlling and autonomy-supportive interpersonal coaching styles, that are evident in coach behavior. Coaches who exhibit a *controlling* coaching style use coercive practices and pressure participants, for example, by using controlling language and extrinsic rewards for performance. They behave in an authoritarian way, and employ strategies such as manipulation, obedience, guilt induction, controlling competence feedback, and conditional regard to impose a specific and preconceived way of thinking and behaving on their athletes (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, & Thogersen-Ntoumani, 2011). Perceived controlling coach behaviors in university athletes positively predicted moral disengagement, which in turn positively predicted antisocial behavior toward opponents and teammates (Hodge & Gucciardi, 2015).

An *autonomy-supportive* coaching style is one in which athletes are provided choice and a rationale for tasks, opportunities to show initiative and independent work, non-controlling competence feedback and acknowledgement of their feelings, combined with a lack of guilt-inducing criticism and overt control. In an important intervention study, Cheon, Reeve, and Ntoumanis (2018) implemented an Autonomy-Supportive Intervention Program to help physical education teachers become more autonomy-supportive and less controlling toward their students and examined whether changes in teachers' teaching styles influence students' behaviors during physical education. Teachers who took part in the program increased their autonomy support and became less controlling, and their students' antisocial behavior decreased over time; these decreases were due to declines in psychological need frustration (Cheon et al., 2018).

An interesting study was conducted by Del Rue et al. (2017), who examined whether coach behavior fluctuated from game to game, across five soccer games. Players completed measures both prior to and following each game, assessing pre-game and on-game perceived coaching, as well as athletes' antisocial behavior toward opponents and teammates. Variation in pre-game need-thwarting coaching behavior was positively linked to variation in objectifying stance (viewing others as objects), which was in turn positively related to variation in antisocial behavior toward opponents and teammates. Variation in perceived on-game need-supportive and need-thwarting coaching behavior was also related to antisocial teammate behavior in the expected direction.

In the context of doping, Ntoumanis et al (2017) examined the role of coach interpersonal style on athlete doping intention and behavior using a prospective design. Male and female adolescent and adult Greek athletes completed questionnaires at the beginning and end of a sport season. Athletes who perceived their coach to be controlling reported more thwarting of their psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. In turn, need thwarting corresponded to higher moral disengagement and acceptance of cheating, both of which positively predicted the intention to use banned substances. Thus, controlling coach interpersonal style was indirectly related to doping intention via need thwarting, moral disengagement, and acceptance of cheating.

3.2. Moral features

The sport context also has "moral" features, manifested via coach and athlete behavior. Coaches have choice points, and their behavior reflects what is important to them when choices compete with each other, and they have to make a decision. Acting in an ethical manner is often in conflict with winning. Coaches who prioritize winning over sportsmanship (a concept with moral connotations) are more likely to lead athletes to display antisocial behavior toward teammates and opponents, while modelling good sportsmanship could lead to fewer antisocial behaviors (Bolter & Kipp, 2018).

One moral feature of the social environment of sport is the *moral atmosphere* of the team, also known as team norms, defined as a set of collective norms regarding moral action on the part of group members (Shields & Bredemeier, 1995). The concept of moral atmosphere was first described by Kohlberg and his associates (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989), who investigated the influence of group norms on moral reasoning and behavior of the group members in school and prison environments. They showed that group members over time develop a shared understanding of what constitutes appropriate behavior in that context. This shared understanding of appropriate action is the

defining characteristic of moral atmosphere (Power et al., 1989).

Moral atmosphere has been investigated in numerous studies in relation to aggression (e.g., Stephens & Bredemeier, 1996). Although the construct refers to the "shared understanding" of moral action, sport researchers have typically measured perceived teammate behavior as an indicator of moral atmosphere. Studies have shown that athletes, who perceived that a large number of their teammates would behave aggressively in a hypothetical situation, also indicated greater likelihood to behave aggressively (e.g., Chow, Murray, & Feltz, 2009). Similar findings have been reported in other studies, which have examined not only perceived teammate but also perceived coach behavior. Football players, who thought that their coach would encourage cheating and aggression in hypothetical situations, and that their teammates would engage in the described behaviors if it was necessary for the team to win, also reported higher frequency of these behaviors (e.g., Kavussanu & Spray, 2006). Thus, the moral atmosphere of sport teams is important in determining the behavior of its members.

The terms *descriptive norms* and *practice norms* have been used in recent research to refer to a construct similar to moral atmosphere. Benson and Bruner (2018) asked adolescent hockey players to complete over a 10-day period, daily diaries related to their experiences of their teammate behavior and their own behaviors toward their teammates. Daily experienced antisocial behavior from one's teammates predicted self-reported antisocial behavior toward teammates (Benson & Bruner, 2018). In another study, athletes who perceived that their teammates engaged in antisocial behavior toward one another during practices, also reported antisocial behavior toward their teammates (Benson, Bruner, & Eys, 2017). It may be that features of the social environment that are undesirable and contribute to a negative sport experience also bring the worst in athletes by leading them to act in an antisocial manner.

A social environmental construct examined in relation to doping in sport is the construct of *subjective norms*, which refer to the perceived social pressure one experiences to perform a behavior. In doping research, this construct has been typically measured by asking participants to indicate the extent to which important others in their environment would approve the use of banned substances to enhance their performance (e.g., Barkoukis, Lazuras, Tsorbatzoudis, & Rodafinos, 2013; Lazuras et al., 2015, 2010; Lucidi et al., 2008). Given that doping is cheating, perceived approval of this behavior by significant others can be viewed as a "moral feature" of the social environment. Subjective norms have been found to positively predict doping intention in several studies (e.g., Lazuras et al., 2015, 2010; Lucidi et al., 2008). Thus, there is a consistent link between perceptions that significant others would approve doping and reported intention to use banned substances. It would be interesting for future studies to unpack the relative role of various significant others on doping in sport.

In sum, the social environment of sport consists of both motivational and moral features that could facilitate or inhibit transgressive behavior, either directly or indirectly via other variables (e.g., need thwarting, moral disengagement). This kind of behavior is likely to occur in sport, when coaches create a performance motivational climate, adopt a controlling interpersonal coaching style, prioritize winning over sportsmanship, and reward aggression, as well as when teammates engage in, and significant others approve, athletes' transgressive behavior. In contrast, mastery motivational climate, autonomy supportive coaching style and coaching behaviors that model sportsmanship are likely to reduce transgressive behavior in sport.

4. Key issues and future research directions

As the literature reviewed in the previous sections indicates, much progress has been made in our understanding of transgressive behavior in sport in the last ten years. During this period, a few key issues have emerged and are worthy of future research attention. In this section, some of these issues are discussed, and future research directions are provided.

One issue is the distinction between different types of antisocial behavior. Most studies assessing this behavior in sport have utilized the PABSS (Kavussanu & Boardley, 2009), which measures behavior toward opponents and teammates. However, antisocial opponent behavior could be further subdivided into aggression, gamesmanship, and cheating. Lee, Whitehead, and Ntoumanis (2007) differentiated between cheating, which is behavior that is against the rules, and gamesmanship, which is behavior that is within the rules but against the spirit of sport. Gamesmanship and mild aggression could be considered acceptable behaviors, whereas cheating is typically frowned upon. More research is needed, building upon the original work of Lee and colleagues, to better understand the different types of antisocial behavior, as well as their antecedents and consequences. Promising efforts toward this direction have already been made by some researchers (e.g., Kaye & Hoar, 2015; Yukhymenko-Lescroart, 2015). Similarly, understanding the relationship between the different types of transgressive behavior is important (see Graupensperger, Jensen, & Evans, 2018).

A consistent finding in several studies is the strong link between self-reported behavior toward teammates and perceived behavior from one's teammates (e.g., Benson & Bruner, 2018; Kavussanu & Spray, 2006; Stephens & Bredemeier, 1996), referred to as team norms, moral atmosphere, or descriptive and practice norms. Although the assumption is that teammate behavior influences individual athlete behavior, the direction of causality is not clear. It may be that athletes who transgress perceive their teammates in a similar way to them, that is, they may project their own behavior onto their teammates. People tend to perceive higher similarity between themselves and others, and social projection is one explanation for this similarity (Cho & Knowles, 2013). Longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to shed light on this issue.

It is evident from the studies reviewed in this article that moral disengagement is a popular mediator between distal predictors and transgressive behavior in sport. This trend to investigate moral disengagement as a mediator, follows the seminal work of Bandura and colleagues (Bandura et al., 1996), who first examined this variable as a mediator. However, it is equally plausible that moral disengagement is the outcome of transgressive behavior. That is, repeated engagement in such conduct, driven by the factors discussed in this article, could increase the need to justify this type of behavior, to alleviate feelings of guilt, thereby leading to moral disengagement. Support for this argument comes from a three-wave study of academic cheating and moral disengagement (Fida, Tramontano, Paciello, Ghezzi, & Barbaranelli, 2016). In this study, moral disengagement influenced cheating, when controlling for its prior levels, and cheating affected moral disengagement one year later, controlling for its prior levels. These findings suggest that wrongdoing could gradually lead to further normalizing bad behavior and morally desensitizing individuals to misconduct. It would be interesting to determine whether these findings are replicated in the context of sport, particularly in research that involves doping, where individuals consciously engage in the behavior for extended periods.

Researchers have started to investigate doping likelihood and intention as proxies for doping. Although some predictors of doping (e.g., moral identity, moral disengagement, anticipated guilt) are the same as those associated with antisocial behavior, others are not consistently linked to doping variables. For example, ego orientation has been positively related to antisocial sport behavior in numerous studies (for reviews see Kavussanu, 2012; Kavussanu & Stanger, 2017), but the link to doping intention and behavior is weak (see Ntoumanis et al., 2014). This suggests that doping is viewed by athletes as a more serious transgression that is not equivalent to antisocial behavior toward teammates and opponents. It may be that moral variables (i.e., moral identity, anticipated guilt) play a significant role in deterring athletes from using banned substances and gaining an unfair advantage over

their opponents. Future research needs to better understand how predictors of doping vary from predictors of antisocial behavior that takes place during a game.

More work is needed to understand the moral dimensions of coaching behavior. Bolter and Weiss (2012) developed an instrument that measures the different ways coaches promote sportsmanship, for example, by modelling, teaching, and reinforcing sportsmanship. However, other aspects of coaching behavior could be investigated, such as the degree to which coaches act in an ethical manner, are fair, and treat players with respect, that is, the degree to which coaches are ethical leaders. Displaying ethical behavior in one's coaching interactions should influence athlete behavior. Ethical leadership could shape athletes' moral decision making and subsequent behavior, in line with the findings of a recent study that ethical leaders reduced employees' deviant behavior via a reduction on their propensity to morally disengage (Moore et al., 2019).

We also need more studies that assess the moral dimensions of the sport experience in the real world of sport. Even though experimental studies reveal interesting findings and have high internal validity, like any laboratory study, they cannot capture the real-world sport experience and the dynamics that develop in teams over time. Field studies employing different methodologies are needed. Some nice examples are the daily diary study by Benson and Bruner (2018) and the study by Delrue et al (2017) who have obtained repeated measures of coach behavior before and after a game across a number of games. We also need more qualitative studies to help us better understand the moral dimensions of the sport experience from the perspective of the participants. For example, athletes may view minor aggressive acts as part of the game, and therefore acceptable, but they may consider doping or cheating unacceptable as these are more severe forms of transgressive behavior. In sum, employing a variety of research methods, that are appropriate for the research questions asked, would further our understanding of transgressive behavior in sport.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, athletes from different sport types, competitive levels, and nationalities engage in transgressive behavior, which is manifested in various ways, including aggression and cheating. Certain athlete variables (e.g., ego orientation, controlled motivation, narcissism) are likely to facilitate transgressive behavior, whereas others (e.g., moral identity, empathy, self-regulatory efficacy) are likely to inhibit such behavior. In addition, a social environment that puts too much emphasis on winning and is controlling could increase transgressive behavior. These facilitating and inhibiting effects tend to occur both directly and indirectly via moral disengagement and anticipated guilt, as well as other variables (e.g., need thwarting, controlled motivation), highlighting the important role of both cognition and emotion in transgressive behavior in sport.

Endnote

[1]In most studies discussed in this article, researchers have measured behavior by asking participants to indicate the frequency of their past behavior over a specific period of time (e.g., antisocial behavior toward teammates and opponents during a season), or the likelihood or intention they would act in a certain way if they were in a hypothetical situation (e.g., aggression, doping likelihood, doping intention). Although these assessments represent proxies of behavior, in this article, the term behavior is often used to refer to this work for the sake of conciseness and simplicity. The reader is encouraged to consult specific studies to gain a better understanding of measures used in each study.

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