

Moral disengagement and doping

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The use of Performance Enhancing Drugs (PEDs) or doping is a pervasive phenomenon in sport; doping examples are numerous in elite sport with Lance Armstrong, Marion Jones, and Tyler Hamilton constituting just a few of the many high profile cases of athletes, who have admitted to, or have been found guilty of, doping. Doping constitutes one of the dark sides of sport with potentially important negative consequences not only for athletes' health but also for the integrity of sport. It is a behaviour, which breaks the rules of sport participation; given that athletes do not openly admit to doping when taking part in sport, doping is cheating, thus it is a moral issue. Its study, like the study of morality, has inherent challenges not present in other areas of inquiry. Specifically, researchers ask people who cheat to tell the truth about cheating. Despite its challenges, this is an important area of research, and understanding why some athletes dope and what enables them to act in this way has received considerable attention in recent years (see Ntoumanis, Ng, Barkoukis, & Backhouse, 2014).

A number of social psychological factors have been associated with doping. A recent meta-analysis of psychosocial predictors of doping identified moral disengagement as one of the strongest predictors of doping intention (Ntoumanis et al., 2014). Moral disengagement is a construct described by Bandura (1991) in his social cognitive theory of moral thought and action. The focus of this chapter is on this construct as applied to doping. The chapter starts by briefly outlining the main tenets of social cognitive theory as they pertain to moral disengagement and describes the moral disengagement mechanisms. Next the instruments that measure this construct and have been used in doping research are briefly discussed, followed by a review of quantitative studies examining moral disengagement and doping

variables in athletes. Finally, qualitative studies in bodybuilders are reviewed, and the chapter ends with some concluding remarks.

Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement

Moral disengagement is a central construct in Bandura's (1986, 1991) social cognitive theory of moral thought and action. Bandura (1986, 1991) proposed that in the course of socialization, individuals develop moral standards from a variety of influences, such as observation of others, approving and disapproving reactions of their behaviour by others, and direct tuition. These moral standards regulate behaviour through evaluative self reactions: People feel good when behaving in ways that match their moral standards, and experience self reproof when their actions violate their moral standards. These evaluative self reactions regulate conduct anticipatorily: People do things that give them satisfaction and a sense of self worth and refrain from behaving in ways that bring self condemnation (Bandura, 1991, 2002). Thus, anticipated self-sanctions in reaction to one's behaviour, keep behaviour in line with moral standards.

Even though moral standards are assumed to guide behaviour, people do not always act in accordance with these standards. They are able to disengage moral self sanctions from reprehensible behaviour, through the use of one or more of eight psychosocial mechanisms, collectively known as moral disengagement. This allows different types of behaviour from individuals with the same moral standards (Bandura, 2002). The mechanisms operate by cognitively restructuring transgressive behaviour and its consequences, minimizing or obscuring one's role in the harm one causes, disregarding or distorting the detrimental consequences of one's behaviour, and dehumanizing or blaming one's victim. The mechanisms act on different aspects of the process of moral control (Bandura, 1991), and have been grouped into four sets.

The first set operates on detrimental conduct and includes three mechanisms: moral justification, euphemistic labelling, and advantageous comparison. *Moral justification* entails the cognitive restructuring of harmful behaviour into praiseworthy one, making it appear acceptable by portraying it as facilitating a valued social or moral purpose (Bandura, 1991). For example, doping could be justified as a way of helping one's team. *Euphemistic labelling* involves the use of language to disguise transgressive behaviour as less harmful (Bandura, 1991). In sport, athletes may talk about "bending the rules" rather than breaking them (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2007). An example of this mechanism among athletes who dope is when they refer to illegal substances as "juice" (Boardley & Grix, 2014). *Advantageous comparison* involves comparing transgressive behaviour with more harmful acts, making the behaviour in question appear relatively benign (Bandura, 1991). For instance, athletes could compare doping to physical violence and conclude that it is not that bad.

The second set operates on the agency of action by obscuring or minimising one's role in the harm one causes (Bandura, 1999), and includes two mechanisms: displacement and diffusion of responsibility. *Displacement of responsibility* occurs when people view their behaviour as resulting from social pressures or dictates of an authority figure rather than something for which they are personally responsible (Bandura, 1991). For instance, athletes may displace responsibility for taking illegal substances to their coach, who may have asked them to dope. *Diffusion of responsibility* occurs through group decision making (when everyone is responsible, no one feels truly responsible), division of labour for tasks that appear harmless on their own but are harmful in their entirety, and group action, which involves attributing the harm done by the group to the behaviour of the other group members (Bandura, 2002). An example of group decision making is when athletes attribute their doping behaviour to a collective team decision to engage in such behaviour.

The third set of moral disengagement mechanisms operates on the consequences of detrimental behaviour and consists of only one mechanism: *distortion of consequences*. This entails avoiding or downplaying the harm caused by the individual's transgressive behaviour on others (Bandura, 1991). Individuals who can avoid finding out or minimize the harm caused by their behaviour, are more likely to continue the harmful behaviour. An example of distortion of consequences in sport is when athletes deny the seriousness of the injuries they have caused (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2007).

The final set acts on the victim of the act and consists of dehumanisation and attribution of blame. *Dehumanisation* involves cognitively divesting victims of their human qualities or attributing animal-like qualities to them (Bandura, 1991), while *attribution of blame* occurs when people view themselves as faultless victims, who are forced to injurious behaviour by their own victim or the circumstances (Bandura, 1991). Clearly, these two mechanisms are not relevant to doping: Individuals who dope do not actively harm another person, thus in the absence of a victim there is no one to dehumanize or blame for doping behaviour. Indeed, these two mechanisms have not emerged in qualitative doping research (e.g., Boardley & Grix, 2014; Boardley, Grix, & Dewar, 2014; Lucidi et al., 2008).

The construct of moral disengagement was originally developed to explain inhuman acts such as terrorist acts, war atrocities, and aggression (Bandura, 1990, 1991; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). However, selective disengagement of moral control is not confined in aggression (Bandura, 1990). People often experience conflicts, when behaviours they do not value can help secure benefits that they value. Often, these conflicts are resolved by selective disengagement of moral self-sanctions thereby enabling otherwise considerate people to act in ways that are self-serving and have detrimental consequences for others (Bandura, 1990). This makes doping, a behaviour that is intended to benefit oneself but at the same time breaks the rules of sport (and is therefore cheating), a

prime candidate for the effects of moral disengagement. Indeed, in previous sport research, moral disengagement has been positively associated with cheating (d'Arripe-Longueville et al., 2010). Numerous studies have also reported links with antisocial sport behaviour (e.g., Boardley & Kavussanu, 2007; Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011; Kavussanu, Stanger, & Boardley, 2013a; Stanger, Kavussanu, Boardley, & Ring, 2013; Traclet, Romand, Moret, & Kavussanu, 2011). Thus, moral disengagement is highly relevant to understanding doping behaviour in sport.

Measures of Moral Disengagement

One of the first steps toward examining a new construct is the development of a valid and reliable instrument to assess the construct. Several measures of moral disengagement have been developed over the years. In this section, instruments that have been employed in doping research are reviewed, in the chronological order they have been developed.

The first ever measure of moral disengagement was constructed by Bandura and his colleagues (Bandura et al., 1996) to measure the eight mechanisms in school children. Four items were developed for each mechanism (thus the scale consists of 32 items), and an overall score was computed for moral disengagement and used in this study of aggression and delinquent behavior. Participants are presented with a number of statements and are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with these statements; this format has been used in the remaining instruments described in this section. Example items are “it is all right to fight to protect your friends” measuring **moral justification**, and “slapping and shoving someone is just a way of joking” assessing **euphemistic labelling**. This instrument has been used in the first study that examined moral disengagement in relation to doping in sport (Lucidi, Grano, Leone, Lombardo, & Pesce 2004).

Addressing the need for a sport-specific measure of moral disengagement, Boardley and Kavussanu (2007) developed the Moral Disengagement in Sport Scale (MDSS), which, in line with Bandura et al (1996), also consists of 32 items. This was followed by the Moral Disengagement in Sport Scale - Short (MDSS-S), which comprises a subset of eight items from the MDSS, with only one item measuring each mechanism (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2008). Example items are “it is okay for players to lie to officials if it helps their team” for **moral justification**, and “bending the rules is a way of evening things up” for **euphemistic labelling**. Although these two scales measure moral disengagement in sport, none of their items refer to doping. Nevertheless, the MDSS-S has been used in one doping study (Hodge Hargreaves, Gerrard, & Lonsdale, 2013).

An instrument that measures doping moral disengagement was developed by Lucidi and colleagues (Lucidi et al., 2008) based on interviews conducted with 35 high school students, who competed in sport regularly; its psychometric properties were assessed in a large sample of high school students, many of whom (55%) were active sport participants. The “doping moral disengagement scale” consists of six items tapping the six moral disengagement mechanisms that are relevant to doping. Example items are “compared to the damaging effects of alcohol and tobacco, the use of illicit substances is not so bad”, for **advantageous comparison**; “it is not right to condemn those who use illicit substances to improve their body, since many do the same” for **diffusion of responsibility**; and “there is no reason to punish those who use illicit substances to improve their physical appearance; after all, they do not hurt anyone”, for **distortion of consequences**. No items assess attribution of blame or dehumanization, the two mechanisms that operate on the victim, as these mechanisms did not emerge in the interviews (Lucidi et al., 2008).

Perhaps due to the focus of their research, described in the next section, the scale developed by Lucidi et al (2008) included a variety of items. Specifically, two items

explicitly referred to one's body and physical appearance, while only one item referred explicitly to sport. The remaining three items did not specify the doping context (i.e., sport, body building) but referred to the use of illicit substances in general (e.g., "it is ok to use illicit substances if this can help one to overcome one's own limits"). Thus, this scale measures moral disengagement with respect to doping in body building *and* sport, and includes some items that can be applied to both contexts. Due to its broad focus, this scale would be less than ideal if one wishes to investigate doping in either sport or body building.

Finally, Lucidi and colleagues (2014) developed a six-item measure of team moral disengagement. The items were developed based on focus group interviews, where athletes were provided with sets of distinct circumstances in which doping use could be justified. Team sport athletes evaluated the extent to which the moral disengagement items were clear and pertinent to doping, while experts on social-cognitive theory and research guessed the theoretical moral disengagement mechanism, to which each item referred (at this stage seven items were available), thus supporting the validity of the scale. Example items are "In a team, doping use is just another good way to "keep the group together" for euphemistic labelling, and "In a team, a player cannot say "no" to doping use when the coach or the teammates ask him/her to do it" for displacement of responsibility. Lucidi et al (2014) have provided evidence for the psychometric properties of this scale.

To address the need for a doping scale that is specific to sport, Kavussanu et al. (2014a) adapted items from the MDSS-S (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2008), the short version of the scale that measures moral disengagement in sport, to make them relevant to doping in team sport. For example, the item "it is okay for players to lie to officials if it helps their team" that measures moral justification, became "it is okay for players to use doping substances to help their team". The item "a player should not be blamed for injuring an opponent if the coach reinforces such behaviour" became "A player is not responsible for using doping substances if asked to do this by his/her coach". This scale consists of six items, one for each of the six mechanisms of moral disengagement that are relevant to doping. Similar to Lucidi et al. (2008), no items measure dehumanization or attribution of blame.

In sum, moral disengagement in doping research has been measured with a variety of instruments, three of which are specific to doping. One of them pertains to both sport and physical appearance (Lucidi et al., 2008), while the other two refers to doping in team sports (Kavussanu et al., 2014a; Lucidi et al., 2014). There is still a need for an instrument that measures doping moral disengagement in individual sports or that could pertain to both individual and team sports.

Finally, Kavussanu et al (in review) developed the Moral Disengagement in Doping Scale, which also consists of items that are specific to sport. The items were developed by academics with expertise in scale development and research experience on moral disengagement and doping. The scale was administered to three samples of athletes competing in a variety of team sports, and evidence for its content, convergent, concurrent, and discriminant validity, as well as its reliability, was provided (Kavussanu et al., in review). Example items are « Doping is alright because it helps your team » for moral justification and « Doping is a way to maximize your potential » for euphemistic labelling.

Moral Disengagement and Doping in Sport

A growing body of work has investigated the role of moral disengagement on doping using a variety of theoretical perspectives. Specifically, a few studies (e.g., Lucidi et al., 2004, 2008) have examined moral disengagement alongside constructs from Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behaviour; one study (Hodge et al., 2013) has investigated this in conjunction with constructs from self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002); and another (Kavussanu et al., 2014a) has examined moral disengagement along constructs from social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1991). In some cases, researchers have included constructs from other theoretical perspectives, in an effort to better understand doping. These studies are reviewed in this section, with a focus on the primary theory guiding each investigation.

Theory of planned behavior. The seminal study of moral disengagement and doping intention was conducted by Lucidi et al. (2004) using a cross-sectional design and a sample of 952 Italian high school students, approximately a third of whom competed regularly (i.e., at least once a month) in sport. Doping intention, a key variable in Ajzen's (1991) theory, was measured by asking participants to indicate how strong was their intention to use illegal substances to improve their sport performance or physical appearance in the next three months, and what was the probability they would do this. Moral disengagement was a positive – albeit weak - predictor of doping intention. One weakness of this study was the use of Bandura et al.'s (1996) moral disengagement measure, which is not doping specific; this

might explain the weak relationship noted between moral disengagement and doping intention.

This weakness was rectified in subsequent work by Lucidi et al (2008), in 762 Italian high school students, of whom approximately half (i.e., 55%) were taking part in some type of sport activity. Moral disengagement was measured with the doping moral disengagement scale (Lucidi et al., 2008), while doping intention was assessed with the two items used in the previous study (Lucidi et al., 2004). Participants also completed questionnaires assessing other key constructs of the theory of planned behaviour, such as subjective norms (i.e., the extent to which significant others would have approved their use of illegal substances to improve sport performance or physical appearance), and attitudes toward doping. Finally, doping self-regulatory efficacy (i.e., individuals' beliefs about their capability to resist use of doping substances) was measured. These assessments represented the Time 1 measures. Three months later, participants were asked to indicate from a list of illegal substances, which ones they had used in the last three months (doping use) with the aim of enhancing their athletic performance or improving their physical appearance without a doctor's prescription.

Moral disengagement moderately and positively predicted both intention to dope at Time 1 and reported doping at Time 2. Interestingly, participants with higher scores on moral disengagement also reported more positive attitudes toward doping, perceived that important others would approve of their doping, and were less likely to believe they could resist doping if the opportunity arose. The latter finding is interesting, and suggests that people, who do not feel capable of resisting temptation, tend to justify doping, because they are not psychologically strong enough to say no. Moral disengagement might allow these individuals to minimize negative emotion by justifying their behaviour. Thus, the low capability to resist temptation may lead one to morally disengage.

In a study designed to replicate the findings of Lucidi et al. (2008), Zelli et al. (2010) administered the same instruments to 864 high school students at two time points, 4-5 months apart. Moral disengagement was a weak positive predictor of doping intention (but not doping use), was positively linked to subjective norms and positive doping attitudes, and was inversely and strongly associated with doping self-regulatory efficacy. An interesting aspect of this study was the examination of interpersonal appraisals. Specifically, participants were presented with hypothetical scenarios in which they had to imagine themselves in a situation where someone (a peer, coach, instructor), advised or strongly encouraged them to use a doping substance. Then they indicated the likelihood they thought the counterpart in the scenario acted: (a) in the protagonist's interest and welfare (positive appraisal); (b) for his own personal interest (instrumental appraisal); or (c) to harm the protagonist (negative appraisal). They also indicated the likelihood they would do what the counterpart asked them to do if they were in that hypothetical situation (behavioural appraisal).

Across the two time points, moral disengagement was positively associated with the positive and behavioural appraisal and negatively – albeit weakly – linked to the instrumental and negative interpersonal appraisals. The behavioural appraisal variable could be considered a proxy for doping as participants who indicated higher likelihood to dope should be at higher risk for doping. This link was strong and provides further evidence to suggest that moral disengagement plays an important role in facilitating doping (see also Boardley & Grix, 2014; Boardley & Kavussanu, 2011).

Finally, Lucidi, Zeli, and Mallia (2013) analysed data collected from 1975 Italian high school students with characteristics very similar to those of Lucidi et al. (2008) and Zelli et al. (2010) and using the same instruments. Again, doping moral disengagement was positively associated with both doping intention and doping use, and its relationships with the other constructs were similar to those reported by Lucidi et al. (2008).

The studies by Lucidi and colleagues have several strengths: They employed impressively large samples; they were the first to apply moral disengagement to doping; they developed the first measure of doping moral disengagement; and most of them used a longitudinal design, which provides stronger evidence – than cross sectional studies – about the direction of causality between variables. One weakness of this line of work is that many of the participants were not competing regularly in sport. Given that some items explicitly referred to sport performance, greater precision would have been achieved if all participants were athletes. Similarly, a very small percentage (1 to 3.1%) of the participants reported having used doping substances. Nevertheless, these studies made a significant contribution to the literature by identifying links between moral disengagement and doping intention as well as other variables within the theory of planned behaviour. It would be interesting to examine these variables in individuals, who are at higher risk of doping, such as elite athletes, to determine whether the identified relationships are replicated.

Self-determination theory. One study has investigated the effects of moral disengagement on doping susceptibility along constructs of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002). This theory describes different types of motivation. Of particular relevance to moral disengagement and doping is controlled motivation, which occurs when individuals take part in sport for extrinsic reasons, for example to avoid feelings of shame or guilt, due to pressure from others, or for the extrinsic rewards associated with sport participation (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2010). Athletes with controlled motivation strive for ego enhancement, fame, and extrinsic rewards (Deci & Ryan, 2002, cited in Hodge et al., 2013). As their focus is on winning, which would allow them to achieve these goals, these athletes are more likely to morally disengage and use PEDs (Hodge et al., 2013). Indeed, controlled motivation has been positively associated with both moral disengagement (Hodge & Lonsdale, 2011) and use of PEDs (Barkoukis, Lazuras,

Tsorbatzoudis, & Rodafinos, 2011) in past research. One precursor of controlled motivation is the controlling interpersonal style, which is evident when the coach acts in a coercive, pressuring, or authoritarian way (see Bartholomew et al., 2010).

Hodge and colleagues (2013) investigated moral disengagement as a mediator between controlling coach climate, controlled motivation and doping attitudes and susceptibility. In a sample of 224 competitive athletes, including 81 elite athletes, they found that controlling coach climate (i.e., interpersonal style) positively predicted controlled motivation. Importantly, controlled motivation positively – albeit weakly - predicted moral disengagement, which, in turn, was a strong positive predictor of attitudes toward PEDs; the latter variable strongly and positively predicted drug taking susceptibility (i.e., the amount of consideration athletes would give to using a banned PED), which has been associated with doping use in past research (Gucciardi, Jalleh, & Donovan, 2010). The link between controlled motivation and moral disengagement indicates that athletes who play sport for extrinsic reasons are at risk for morally disengaging; however, the effect was weak, suggesting that self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002) may not be as useful as other theories (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 1991) in enhancing our understanding of doping behaviour in sport. One limitation of this study is that the moral disengagement scale used (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2008) was not specific to doping.

Social cognitive theory. Moral disengagement mechanisms are described in the social cognitive theory of moral thought and action (Bandura, 1991) as the practices that enable individuals to transgress without experiencing negative affect. Kavussanu and colleagues (2014a), tested this tenet of the theory in young elite football players ($N = 345$). Participants completed the measure of doping moral disengagement discussed earlier (Kavussanu et al., 2014), and were presented with a scenario describing a hypothetical situation, in which they had the opportunity to use a banned performance enhancing substance. Then, they were asked

to imagine themselves in the hypothetical situation and indicate the likelihood they would use the substance (doping intention), as well as their anticipated feelings of guilt, if they were to use the substance. Moral disengagement negatively predicted anticipated guilt, which in turn negatively predicted doping intention.

These findings support Bandura's (1991) theory that moral disengagement facilitates transgressive behaviour by minimizing the negative affect associated with such behaviour, and are consistent with previous research, which has also shown links between moral disengagement and anticipated guilt (Bandura et al., 1996; Stanger et al., 2013). Guilt is an important adaptive emotion that elicits reparative action. Feeling remorse about one's behaviour means that the person is unlikely to repeat the behaviour. Indeed, Kirby, Moran, and Guerin (2011) in their interviews of elite athletes, who admitted doping, found that guilt was one of the most important deterrents of doping. Moral disengagement has the power to reduce this adaptive emotion thereby facilitating doping. Interestingly, moral disengagement also predicted doping intention independently of anticipated guilt (i.e., had a direct effect on doping intention), a finding that is consistent with previous research on both delinquent and antisocial behaviour (Bandura et al., 1996; Stanger et al., 2013). Thus, moral disengagement is an important variable to consider on its own right.

Kavussanu et al. (2014a) also investigated the conditions that could lead to moral disengagement, that is, its antecedents. Given that doping is a moral issue, performance climate (i.e., coaching behaviour that highly values normative success), moral atmosphere (i.e., coach and teammates condoning doping) and moral identity (i.e., placing importance on being a moral person) were examined; three variables that have been associated with antisocial behaviour in previous sport morality research (see Kavussanu, 2012). Figure 1 presents the relationships identified between all variables in this study. It can be seen that performance climate and moral atmosphere positively predicted moral disengagement,

whereas moral identity was a negative predictor of this construct. These findings highlight the significance of the team environment in which the athlete operates in facilitating moral disengagement and subsequent doping behaviour. However, placing importance on being a moral person could deter moral disengagement, thereby reducing its effects on doping. Although this study revealed some interesting findings, and is the first to test Bandura's (1991) theory on doping, it is cross-sectional, which precludes firm conclusions about the direction of causality.

Moral Disengagement and Doping in Body Builders

The studies reviewed so far used quantitative approaches to examine moral disengagement. Recently, Boardley and his colleagues (Boardley & Grix, 2014; Boardley et al., 2014) embarked in a venture of qualitative research of moral disengagement and doping. In two studies, they interviewed body builders, a population, whose main aim is to build muscle mass, and the use of doping substances can facilitate this aim. Research shows that there is greater prevalence of doping in athletes from sports that require high levels of physical strength such as bodybuilding (e.g., Thiblin & Petersson, 2005); thus, understanding this population is important.

In the first study that examined moral disengagement in bodybuilders, Boardley and Grix (2014) conducted semi-structured interviews with one female and eight male bodybuilders aged between 20 and 30 years. All participants were either using PED at the time of the interview or had used PED previously, but it is unknown whether they competed in sport. The interview protocol included open ended and targeted questions centred on the eight mechanisms of moral disengagement. For example, a question used to explore moral justification was "do you think there are any ways in which you using PED can benefit

others?” Content analysis was performed by applying operational definitions of each mechanism on the data.

This analysis revealed that some mechanisms were clearly evident. For example, euphemistic labelling was evident when participants referred to PEDs as “juice” or “gear”, thus they used sanitised language rather than calling them with their actual name. Diffusion of responsibility was also evident when participants felt that most bodybuilders dope, therefore it was ok for them to dope. The presence of bodybuilders in the training environment, who dope, was interpreted as creating pressure to use PED thereby enabling individuals to displace responsibility. It was stated that PED users did not encourage PED explicitly, but did so “...by appearance, so maybe by someone looking at them and going “yeah” (Boardley & Grix, 2014, p. 428). However, Bandura (2002) clearly refers to *social pressure* and the presence of an authority figure to whom responsibility for one’s actions is displaced, and who is viewed as dictating harmful behaviour: Under displaced responsibility, people “view their actions as stemming from the dictates of authorities” (Bandura, 2002, p. 106). In this study, more experienced bodybuilders (who could be seen as authority figures) did not explicitly encourage doping and were not perceived as putting explicit pressure on young bodybuilders to dope.

Boardley and Grix (2014) suggested that advantageous comparison was evident when participants compared doping to other unhealthy practices, such as drinking alcohol or smoking. They also refer to evidence of moral justification when one participant indicated that if he tried the PED himself, he could give people feedback on it. Thus, the participant saw a social benefit of his PED use; he did not indicate though that this helped him justify his doping behaviour.

Boardley and Grix (2014) also interpreted some quotes as reflecting the distortion of consequences mechanism because participants downplayed the consequences of PEDs on

their health and did not consider the psychological harm their potentially ill health in the future could cause to others who care about them. Although PEDs could have health consequences for the user, participants felt, that based on the research they did, if PED was done properly, it looked like it was ok and safe. Perhaps these bodybuilders did downplay the health consequences of doping, but it is also possible that they used substances in a manner that was not harmful to them (e.g., small quantities, not too frequently, etc). Psychological harm can be caused to others if a loved one's health deteriorates (Boardley & Grix, 2014), but this assumes that their own health will indeed deteriorate in the future, and athletes have friends and family who truly care about them; this is not always the case.

Boardley et al. (2014) extended this work to an impressive sample of 64 male bodybuilders, who had admitted using doping substances. They used the same approach as Boardley and Grix (2014) and reported similar findings. For example, professional bodybuilders mentioned that, PED allowed them to financially support their family, thus they justified their behaviour in pursuit of a valued social or moral purpose (moral justification); they pointed out that compared to alcohol and smoking, PED use is not that bad (advantageous comparison); they used the terms "juice" and "gear" to refer to PEDs (euphemistic labelling); and they felt that everybody uses PEDs, so it is ok to use them (diffusion of responsibility).

There was somewhat more clear evidence of displacement of responsibility in this second study. For instance, the culture of bodybuilding whereby more experienced bodybuilders typically encourage young new bodybuilders to "maximize their potential" was interpreted as displacement of responsibility (Boardley et al., 2014). This mechanism was less clear in the quote "You see people doing what you want to do, and if you know that they are doing certain things [using PED], that's the route to get there... definitely", which was also interpreted as indicating displacement of responsibility (Boardley et al., 2014).

Specifically, it is not clear from this quote to which authority figure bodybuilders displaced responsibility.

These two studies by Boardley and colleagues have provided interesting information regarding the way male (and one female) bodybuilders think about PEDs. An important strength of this work is the recruitment of participants, who were either current or past users of doping substances. However, some simply used PEDs in order to build muscle mass, and did not formally compete, thus they did not try to deceive others. It can be argued that these body builders' behaviour is similar to street drug users: It has the potential to cause harm *to them*, but not necessarily to others, a view that was shared by some participants (Boardley et al., 2014). Moral disengagement in individuals who use banned substances to build muscle mass (e.g., Boardley et al., 2014) or improve physical appearance (e.g., Lucidi et al., 2004, 2008) is somewhat different from the practices originally described by Bandura (1990, 1991, 1999, 2002), who has explicitly and repeatedly referred to the consequences of one's behaviour *for others*. Even though PEDs are often illegal, their use does not involve direct consequences for other people. Nevertheless, the two studies by Boardley and colleagues have provided interesting insights into the way body builders think, and the moral disengagement mechanisms they use, and have undoubtedly enhanced our understanding of doping practices and justifications in this population.

Conclusion

In conclusion, moral disengagement has been positively associated with doping variables (i.e., doping intention, use, susceptibility, and attitudes), in several studies, using a variety of measures, samples, and designs. The evidence is clear that athletes who contemplate using doping substances are also prone to morally disengage. Importantly, moral disengagement may be a key mediator of the influence of both social environmental and

personal variables, stemming from different theoretical perspectives, on doping behaviour. That is, other factors may influence doping through their effects on moral disengagement. This underlines the need to include moral disengagement in interventions that are aimed to reduce doping in sport.

It is also important to note that although a variety of research designs have been used to date, experimental research is lacking. This means that the evidence for a *causal* relationship between moral disengagement and doping is not unequivocal. Longitudinal (e.g., Lucidi et al., 2008), cross-sectional (e.g., Hodge et al., 2013; Kavussanu et al., 2014a), and qualitative (Boardley & Grix, 2014; Boardley et al., 2014) studies have provided a good foundation for experiments and interventions to begin. For example, interventions that challenge moral disengagement practices in athletes, who are tempted to dope could be promising in the fight against doping. The evidence outlined in this chapter is clear that intervening on moral disengagement has potential to reduce doping in sport.

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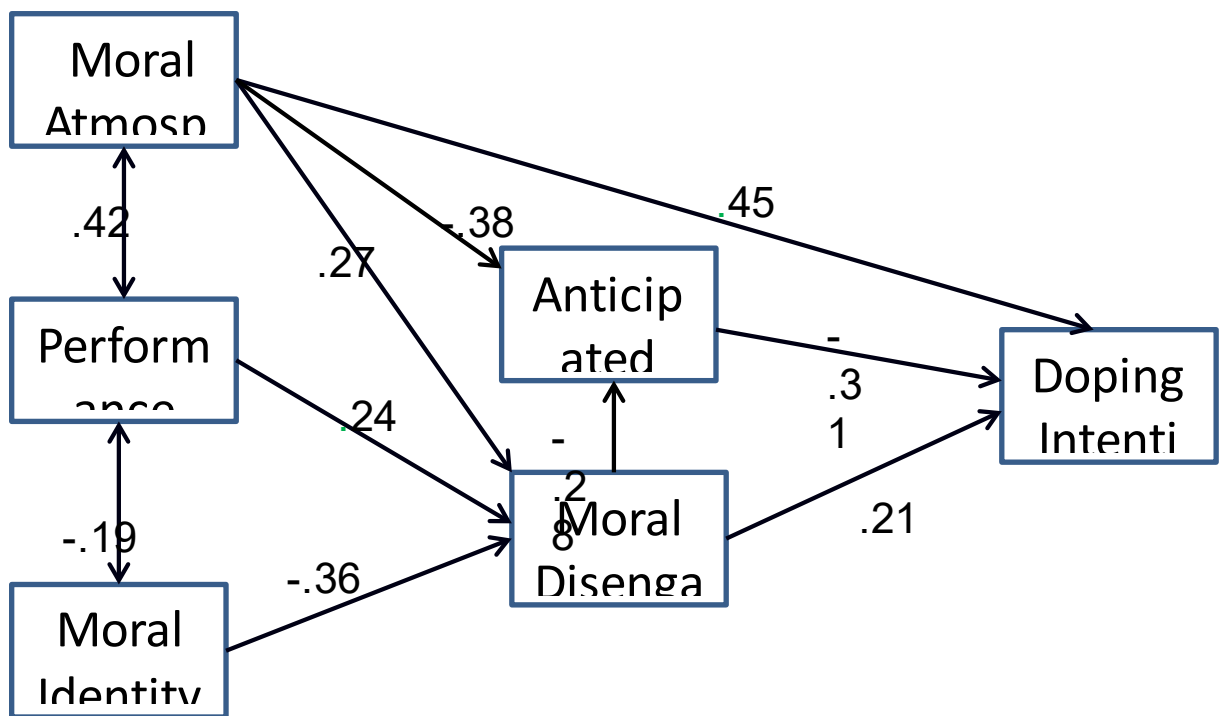


Figure 1. Moral disengagement in a key mediator of the effects of moral atmosphere, performance climate and moral identity on doping intention (Kavussanu et al., 2014).

Note. Higher scores on moral atmosphere reflect a team environment that condones doping.