

'We are not long-haired hippies ...' Civilising offensives, suffering, doping and professional cycling

John Connolly

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

Volume 4, Issue 1: *Civilising Offensives*, January 2015

Permalink: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.11217607.0004.108> [<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.11217607.0004.108>]

 [<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>]

Abstract: *This paper examines the subject of resistance to civilising offensives drawing on the case of 'doping' in professional cycling. I argue that the specific form of mutual identification that emerged between cyclists, the similarity of experience that fostered such mutual identification, and its deeply embedded nature and continuity within the habitus, stood in many ways as a counter to the civilising offensive directed at doping. Combined with a situation where the apparatus of control for the prevention of doping was fragmented, and slow in attaining sufficient legitimacy amongst professional cyclists, it meant the habitus of professional cyclists was capable of moderating the internalisation of greater social constraints.*

Keywords: *Professional cycling; habitus; mutual identification; suffering; doping.*

Introduction

The part quotation in the title of this paper – 'We are not long-haired hippies [...] we reject the accusation that we are drug addicts' (cited in Foot 2011: 250) comes from a statement issued by Italian professional cyclists in 1968. It followed on from a series of positive tests for the use of banned stimulants at that year's Giro d'Italia [1],[#N1], and the efforts of the Italian cycling authorities to impose sanctions in respect of this. The actions of the cycling authorities in Italy constituted part of a wider European response to the use of specific stimulants and related practices for performance enhancement in sport at that time. It included the criminalisation of cyclists following the passing of legislation in several European states in the mid-1960s (Waddington and Smith 2009; Fotheringham 2007). Many professional cyclists rejected the imposition of these new social constraints and sought to resist or ignore them.

This targeting, and related stigmatisation, of cyclists was part of what might be termed a more extensive civilising offensive (Powell 2013; Van Krieken 1989) in the sense that there was a conscious and deliberate strategy by some state and cycling regulators to prevent cyclists from using various performance enhancing drugs [2],[#N2]. However, it is, I contend, difficult to disentangle civilising offensives from wider civilising processes; indeed, as Van Krieken (1999) illustrates, civilising offensives, civilising processes and de-civilising processes can interpenetrate and occur simultaneously.

The shift in policy in the 1960s meant that social practices previously without any significant stigma within the sport of professional cycling were now stigmatised in a more amplified way, increasingly encapsulated within and by the phrase 'doping' [3],[#N3]. As such, a relatively new code of behaviour was being enforced, one which to a large degree was alien to many continental European professional cyclists. Although civilising offensives directed at performance enhancing substances in sport had been initiated prior to the 1960s

(Gleaves and Llewellyn 2014), it was at this point that the extent and scale of such offensives expanded (Waddington and Smith 2009). This offensive was now primarily state-led in several European countries and as such would be enforced by agents of the state in conjunction with extra-state entities – national cycling associations.

Cyclists rebelled strongly, perhaps unsurprising given the long tradition of using stimulants, which neither carried any stigma, nor was considered a transgression of the rules (Thompson 2008; Waddington and Smith 2009; Foot 2011). For instance, at the 1966 Tour de France, they effectively went on strike in protest against the imposition of new 'doping' controls. Indeed, throughout the same year many refused to cooperate with these new arrangements (Fotheringham 2007: 169). Indicative of the general feeling of many cyclists, the then champion French cyclist Jacques Anquetil stated: 'We find these tests degrading. Why do cyclists have to be suspected and controlled while any other free man can do what he likes and take what he likes?' (cited in Fotheringham 2007: 169–170). Nor was this mere rhetoric, many leading cyclists openly resisted the new constraints and the sanctions constituted within them.

Over the following decades, both the social constraints and further stigmatisation, including the criminalisation of cyclists, intensified. However, the penetration of the habitus (Elias 1996) of professional cyclists by this on-going civilising offensive was both uneven and slow, despite notable changes [4],[#N4]. The specific focus of this paper is to examine how certain aspects of the habitus develop and endure to such an extent that the individual habitus resists, moderates and prevents the internalisation of constraints associated with civilising offensives. The main source materials were historical monographs of professional cycling in several European countries, newspapers, on-line cycling media and an analysis of twenty autobiographies and seven biographies of professional cyclists covering the period from the early 1900s to 2013.

I argue that the strength and widening scope of mutual identification, and crucially its form, in conjunction with other social processes – in particular a fractured monopoly apparatus for doping prevention – functioned to push against the civilising offensives directed at 'doping' within the sport of professional cycling. Elias notes that one of the central criteria for a civilising process is 'the extent and depth of people's mutual identification with each other and, accordingly, the depth and extent of their ability to empathise and the capacity to feel for and sympathise with other people in their relationships with them' (Elias 1996: 109). The requirement for widening scopes of identification for civilising advances has been the subject of much attention (Burkitt 1996; Mennell 1990; de Swaan, 1995). However, forms of mutual identification are also of central significance in fomenting or sustaining oppositional movements or pushing against civilising pressures. In *The Germans* (1996), Elias illustrates how the scope of identification between members of the aristocratic tradition, based on their way of life, social aspirations and fears, and their sense of loss, cemented in an opposition to the republican state and the form of government it embodied [5],[#N5]. Similarly, Dunning *et al* (1988) traced how a specific form of bonding (strong local identifications) amongst sections of the British working classes in the twentieth century was a contributing process in violence at football matches. Strong we-feelings in the form of class solidarity were also central in resisting the civilising offensive described in Verrips' (1987) study of a Dutch village in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Here, I argue that the specific form of we-feeling, what it was based upon, and its continuity in the habitus, in conjunction with a fractured monopoly apparatus for the control of doping, can explain the slowness, some might even suggest failure, of civilising offensives in terms of doping within professional cycling. Thus, more broadly, the paper illustrates how strong bonds of mutual identification amongst those who are the target of civilising offensives can function to push against such civilising pressures. This is significant because processes of mutual identification tend to be associated or connected with civilising advances.

The developments in professional cycling and the function of suffering

Professional road cycle racing had already emerged as an established sport by the late nineteenth century in several European countries, especially in France (Knuts and Delheye 2014; Ritchie 2011). Here, the sport's advance took its impetus not just from the growing popularity of the bicycle, and the growing social significance of sport more generally, but also due to the social position of the industrial and commercial classes and the desire of some comprising that social strata to benefit economically from these developments (Cardoza 2010; Foot 2011; Knuts and Delheye 2014; Thompson 2008).

From the early 1900s, the extent of the sport's commercial and professional structure in France and Belgium attracted increasing numbers from the lower classes as racers; cycling offered a means to earn a living and for those successful, perhaps, a more promising future (Knuts and Delheye 2014; Thompson 2008). The habitus of those comprising sections of the lower classes was in many ways predisposed to endurance road racing. Due to their non-cycling work conditions involving manual labour and long hours they already had a high tolerance for physical hardship. Consequently, the capacity to endure high levels of physical effort for long periods (and the pain and suffering this often involved) was already ingrained within the habitus of many of those who now sought income from the sport. Cycling competitions had already emerged as a test of endurance in terms of both time and space. Consequently, the ability to endure considerable physical pain and discomfort – produced in the course of overcoming physiological and psychological obstacles generated by the structure of racing events – quickly emerged as essential to winning. That such difficult physical conditions ensued for professional cyclists was also a reflection of a wider set of the power ratios, and scales of identification that this involved. Indeed, differences in the socio-organisational structure of the sport across various European nations reflected the nature of class relations in these states. While the majority of professional cyclists post 1900 came from lower-class origins (Thompson 2008; Knuts and Delheye 2014), their 'employers' [6][#N6], of which there were various categories, were primarily drawn from the bourgeois-industrial class. However, the social organisation of cycling reflected tensions emanating from a more complex figurational dynamic comprising the upper classes, the bourgeoisie, the lower classes and groups within each stratum.

By the late 1890s, across Europe, fear of a rising working class had increased bourgeois insecurities. In turn, class sensitivity and differentiation intensified, permeating sport including the nascent sport of cycle racing. It was particularly acute in Britain, where embourgeoisement and class insecurity connected with this had risen considerably (Dunning and Sheard 1979). In the case of cycle sport, members of the middle and upper classes in several European countries – Britain, Belgium and Germany – sought to distance themselves from the working classes by both aligning themselves with, and socially determining, the principles of amateurism while simultaneously stigmatising professional cycling which was increasingly dominated by those drawn from the lower classes (Ritchie 2011). In France the situation was somewhat different; here the acceptance of professionalism in cycle sport had taken root earlier as a consequence of the more established position of the bourgeoisie due to their earlier, more rapid, and more comprehensive defeat of the aristocracy. However, by the 1890s, here too, fear of working class ascent led some members of the bourgeoisie to seek to differentiate between those in cycle sport concerned with 'elegance and grace' and those motivated by the 'pursuit of speed' (Thompson 2008: 144).

Yet the sport in France expressed, to borrow Dunning and Sheard's conceptualisation, a more advanced phase in both the process of 'bourgeoisification' and 'proletarianization' (1979: 145). The sport was underpinned by a network of industrial and commercial entrepreneurs involved in the production and sale of bicycles and related ancillaries including newspaper owners and others involved in the creation and promotion of cycling

events. The financial inducements associated with cycle races drew increasing numbers of working class cyclists from France and Belgium. Moreover, in their efforts to benefit financially from the sport, and in a spiral of competitive interdependencies, members of the industrial and commercial classes developed new categories of cycle races, and of a more 'spectacular' nature such as the 1,200 kilometre Paris-Brest-Paris race (see Ritchie 2011). Indicative of a sportization process (Elias and Dunning 2008), these events, embodied through the cyclist in action, took on a mimetic function for spectators; mimetic tension could be experienced through witnessing the pushing of physiological boundaries, and the pain and suffering of cyclists. The creation of these increasingly physically arduous events privileged professionals over amateur gentlemen. Consequently, they drew the ire and invective of bourgeois groups particularly in Britain. For instance, in an Editorial in the British magazine *Cycling* in 1891, French races were criticised for: 'unreasonable physical exertion. It has ever been our opinion that such unnatural strains on the human frame should cease to be tolerated, and that a race should be limited to somewhere about 200 miles' (cited in Ritchie 2011: 248). That French cycling events were considered worthy of commentary reflects both the insecurities felt by bourgeois groups in Britain and how these events embodied their fears. Somewhat ironically, the characterisations employed were generated by a fear of lower class ascent rather than any concern for the conditions imposed upon lower-class, professional cyclists.

By the early 1900s the stigmatising of professionalism by members of the bourgeoisie in France (and also in Belgium) was replaced by a more overt targeting of the etiquette of cycle racers – their behaviour and appearance (Thompson 2008; Knuts and Delheye 2014). This also had the effect of tarnishing those members of the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie connected with the sport. Consequently, without rejecting the source of their social and economic ascent – cycle racing – they could not thoroughly distance themselves from the lower classes that cyclists were drawn from and the stigmatising effects of this association. Given that the rejection of the sport appeared neither economically nor socially desirable, the response was two-pronged. On the one hand, they sought to re-define professional cycling as social improvement, a means for disciplining the 'working class' body in the image of a machine – a metaphor that would resonate with the values and beliefs of the commercial classes and which suggested the control and moulding of the working classes (Thompson 2008). On the other, they subjected racing etiquette to greater social constraint as the rules of competition were re-engineered to 'civilise' racers in response to 'bourgeois' characterisations (Thompson 2008; Knuts 2014: 229). For example, the organisers of the Tour de France instigated regulations, and related sanctions, pertaining to the 'attire' of cyclists, their 'poor hygiene' their engagement in 'public urination' and their capacity for violent and abusive outbursts (Thompson 2008: 157–161).

At the same time as greater social constraints were imposed on their behaviour, the rules and structure of races betray little effort to reduce the level of hardship on cyclists [7].[#N7]. Commercial motivations combined with social distrust of the working classes – and the scale of social identification connected with this – functioned as a bulwark against any desire to improve the racing conditions cyclists faced. Instead, the structure of road racing competitions in France, and the rules constituting them, retained a brutalising character. Despite efforts to do so – in Belgium for example they formed trade unions known as *syndicates des coureurs* (Knuts and Delheye 2014) – professional cyclists were unable in the early decades of the twentieth century to significantly resist or change the conditions imposed on them (Knuts and Delheye 2014; Thompson 2008) [8].[#N8]; the relationship had features of an established-outsider figuration (Elias 1996). Indeed, given the asymmetrical power balance, working-class cyclists felt compelled to overtly accept aspects of these bourgeois characterisations and their 'work' conditions. For instance, during a dispute between some cyclists and the organisers of the Tour the France in the 1920s, one of the 'rebel' cyclists involved stated that they, 'accepted "excessive fatigue, suffering, pain" as part' of their profession (cited in Thompson 2008: 91) [9] [#N9]. It also underpinned the social context in which members of the commercial classes sought to valorise

the relationship between suffering and road racing rather than improve the conditions of racers. Here, the conceptual term 'suffering,' in its discursive rather than embodied form, becomes increasingly amplified in relation to the sport in France. I emphasise these developments for they explain how, in several interconnected ways, both the concept of, and social necessity for, suffering was continually reinforced – through both social constraints and self-restraints – becoming deeply ingrained in the habitus of professional cyclists in France by the 1930s. Combined, these processes served to further propel what can be classified as a code of behaviour within the sport in which ever higher thresholds of suffering became required, demanded and rewarded in the early decades of twentieth-century France (see, for example, Fife 1999).

As one might expect, the taking of specific substances and related practices, which allowed racers to endure greater pain, emerged from the intersection of these related processes. In the absence of any significant social stigma, immoral connotations and an external apparatus for their prevention, cyclists could engage in such practices without fear of sanction and social shame. Thus, a professional cycling habitus developed in which suffering was required and rewarded and in which the taking of a range of substances to sustain suffering was generally free of stigma.

Despite improvements in bicycle technology from the 1930s, the incorporation of these advances within the sport and greater functional specialisation, the high value placed on the ability to endure suffering remained. Of course, greater self-control and foresight in both racing and pre-race preparation, as well as the application of related 'cycling' knowledge, took on greater functional relevance. Nonetheless, escalating competitive tensions, the structure of the sport, and the conditions it imposed on cyclists meant a habitus in which suffering was considered essential endured. Equally, within this habitus the function of suffering as an expression of both the We and I identity (Elias 2001) of cyclists also strengthened and widened. Within this self-image, cyclists were expected to suffer. Moreover, this we-image transcended national boundaries. As before, it was expressed in the performance of cycle racing and increasingly in the tendency for cyclists to valorise their own capacity for suffering and those of others within the sport. For instance, the Italian cyclist of the 1940s and 1950s, Fiorenzo Magni recalling his experience during a stage on the 1956 Giro d'Italia stated:

I fell on the descent from Volterra and I broke my collarbone. The doctor said to me, 'You can't ride'. But I put some rubber sponge on the handlebars and I rode the time trial. I used up four pairs of shoes by trying to brake. Then I rode over the Apennines. But on the uphill time trial at San Luca the pain was too much, so Faliero Masi cut up a tyre for me and tied it to the handlebars and I held it in my teeth. The next day, in the Modena-Rapallo stage, I fell again and I broke my upper arm. I fainted with pain. I was already on a stretcher. But I got up and the group waited for me. And I finished the Bondone stage in the snow (cited in Foot 2011: 194).

Even in Britain, where the sport retained a primarily amateur structure, the capacity to suffer was considered a badge of honour in the 1950s (Hewson 2006). Suffering came to be increasingly representative of the sport 'internationally' – and of the self-image of cyclists in particular. Invariably, the enhanced mobility of cyclists post the Second World War facilitated greater levels of interactions between cyclists from different regions and nations. In addition, the status of cycling competitions and scale of professionalism and commercialism in France, Italy and Belgium meant they became the locus for these relationships – drawing increasing numbers of aspiring professional cyclists from more nations. Thus, cyclists drawn from more diverse cultural backgrounds were able to compare their conditions and experiences. While this overall process reflected a widening of the scope of identification it also further impelled the strengthening of what was now a more international 'collective' professional cycling identity.

From the 1960s onwards, the power gradient between cyclists and their 'employers' decreased somewhat but also became more multi-polar due to greater functional differentiation and specialisation across the figuration of professional cycling. Notwithstanding, professional cyclists, as a group, remained in a comparatively weak position. Of course, there were variations here too with less established, mainly younger cyclists, in a more vulnerable position. Furthermore, the sport of professional cycling continued to be the preserve of those drawn from the lower social classes. Thompson's analysis of the occupational histories of Tour de France cyclists is instructive here. In the period from 1903 to 1939, involving 99 cyclists, 53 per cent were involved in manual labour with the remainder (47 per cent) drawn from small businesses – cafe owners and butchers – and the clerical/service sector. From 1947 to 1969, 67 per cent came from or were involved in manual labour with the remainder coming from small business and the clerical/service sector (Thompson 2008: 268) ^[10] [\[#N10\]](#).

So while the social conditions experienced by cyclists improved – in part due to a shift in the power balance in their favour and the concessions achieved on the back of this – the greater use of innovations in bicycle technology, reduction in the length of races – and as a result of a wider civilising process in which the thresholds of repugnance towards pain and suffering advanced – there remained considerable symmetries in the social origins, work conditions and the economic and social insecurities experienced by cyclists right through the decades. For instance, five-time winner of the Tour de France, Bernard Hinault (1989) recalled in his autobiography that cyclists at the 1984 world championships were not allowed, under the rules, to drink hydrating fluids during the first 100 kilometres of the race. As such, the experiences of succeeding generations of cyclists, and from more disparate nations, had a familiar thread. Though differing for individual cyclists, many, it would appear, experienced insecurities underpinned by the fact that cycling had taken on central financial and meaning functions for them. Contractual (job) insecurity was persistent, salaries, while improved, remained relatively low for many, a factor often masked by the concentration of rewards at the top (Brewer 2002; Fotheringham 2007).

Cycling also provided an important source of meaning and status. Failure involved a loss of standing amongst one's peers, and the humiliation connected with this. For most, cycling was a core part of their lives from a young age. The potential loss of cycling from their lives remained a constant threat generating the same insecurities: What would they do? What life would they have? Their opportunities for meaning, their life chances, as they perceived them, were restricted to cycling (see, for example, Kimmage 1998; Pieper 2005; Hewson 2006; Denson 2008; Moore 2011; Roche 2013; Kelly 2013). Indeed, such insecurities can be observed up to the present (see Millar 2011; Roche 2011). The ability to endure suffering had a primary function in overcoming these fears and insecurities. Interrelated with this, the capacity to suffer conferred considerable intra-group prestige amongst cyclists, and the wider cycling figuration they comprised (see, for example, Fignon 2010; Hewson 2008; Kelly 2013). Not only did specific generations of cyclists in an intra-national sense continue to identify and define themselves with the need for suffering, the circle widened encompassing more cyclists from different nations.

Through to the 1970s and beyond, cyclists continued to be extolled for their ability to suffer. Indeed, the narrative of suffering re-emerges again and again – transcending competitions and national boundaries. Its functional significance to both competing within the sport and a professional cycling identity was inextricably linked. The following excerpt from the retired Australian professional cyclist of the 1980s and 1990s, Allan Pieper's 2005 autobiography *A Pieper's Tale*, is illustrative of this:

I miss bike racing. Nothing can ever replace the feeling I had in competition [...] I also miss the bond, the brotherhood. In cycling, like in war, men are bonded by their pain and by their suffering. We feel for each other because we know how each other feels (2005: 105).

The insecurities described, and the means to navigate and overcome them, also take place in a relatively closely knit community. France, Belgium and Italy [11],[#N11] remained the locus of the professional sport attracting increasing numbers of cyclists from different nations. This, combined with the structure of the sport meant cyclists were often distanced from their families for long periods of time. Their occupational (racing and training) and social lives were largely spent in the company of fellow cyclists. That their social origins often mirrored one another, as did their efforts to obtain, and maintain, a professional contract with all the sacrifices and insecurities that went with it, also served to reinforce the bonds between them (see, for example, Kimmage 1998; Pieper 2005; Henson 2006; Denson 2008; Parking 2008; Moore 2011; Roche 2012; Kelly 2013). Furthermore, as racers, they also shared the same competing desires and motivations – winning races, gaining or retaining a contract – and correspondingly the fear of not being able to achieve these. Of course, this also generated considerable competitive pressures between cyclists. However, such similarities of experience and the enactment of professional and personal relations (involving both cooperative and competitive bonds) in this relatively closed environment facilitates a situation in which the habitus of cyclists is more open to being heavily permeated by the values and pressures ‘within’ the sport. Equally, as Dunning and Waddington (2003) note, such a structure can also function to buffer the stigmatising pressures of wider society.

Social constraints and legitimacy

Although state authorities were the central drivers of the civilising offensive directed at doping within the sport through their enactment of national legislation and the deployment of their agents to enforce this (see Fotheringham 2007; Waddington and Smith 2009), both the process and social institutions developed to impose constraints were initially quite fragmented. National and international governing bodies for cycling had also taken on this function, and there was a considerable lack of uniformity in the imposition of controls and sanctions. Indeed, the motivations and ability to deploy organs for the control of doping were incoherent leading to an ineffective and fragmented apparatus of control (Brissonneau and Ohl 2010; Foot 2011; Fotheringham 2007: 171). And, where violations of rules were often overlooked by the authorities and sanctions overturned, as was sometimes the case (Brissonneau and Ohl 2010), the perceived boundaries between what was permitted, and not permitted, remained loose. In an unintended way, this further increased the anxieties experienced by cyclists and contributed to their reluctance to accept the legitimacy of such institutions. In order to attain legitimacy, the organs of control must not only be effective, but also be perceived as consistent. Where this fails to emerge, a level of hostility develops due to the fear that others may be able to act outside such constraints and attain advantages. Given the competitive pressures which cyclists exercised upon one another, alongside those emanating from the wider figuration of cycling, and the lack of a comprehensive and effective apparatus for the control of doping, mutual suspicions and fears could run wild. In the decades that followed, a spiral of fear escalated – what Elias (1996) termed a double bind situation – spurred on by advancing medical knowledge, a tightening of the figurations of sport and medicine and pharmacological developments (see Waddington and Smith 2009).

Reciprocal fears and suspicions, and the insecurities induced by these, left largely unrestrained by the lack of a strong and effective external apparatus, contributed to a process that took on increasingly compelling characteristics. Moreover, it led many cyclists to adopt their own ‘protective’ responses – to partake in doping (see, for example, Maertens 1993[1988]; Fotheringham 2007; Millar 2011; Riis 2012; Hamilton and Coyle 2012).

Although the socio-technical expansion of constraints aimed at preventing doping increased – tests to identify the use of steroids by cyclists were developed in the mid-1970s (McKay 2013) – they remained fragmented

and weak. Crucially, they also failed to attain sufficient legitimacy amongst a large number of cyclists. For instance, even by the late 1980s, after some twenty years of a civilising offensive, the legitimacy of the agencies directing this were still not sufficiently accepted by many cyclists. For example, the Belgian cyclist of the 1970s and 1980s Freddy Maertens, in his 1989 autobiography *Fall from Grace*, recalling his experience of a sanction in 1977 wrote:

Yet even this victory was taken from me. It appears that the substance *Stimul* could now be identified at dope controls. Once again the BWB [the governing body for Belgian cycling] demonstrated the same hypocrisy as in the 1974 season and left the riders alone for several weeks before unexpectedly lashing out with a long list of positive cases [...] A meeting for the Belgian riders was held at the Holiday Inn in Ghent to look into what measures we could take to get back at the BWB. Later we flew to Milan for discussions with our Italian counterparts (1989: 87).

This latter comment too was an indication of the scope of identification and related cooperation which had emerged between cyclists from different nations and regions. As illustrated, the seeds of this solidarity had been in gestation for some time. The habitus of cyclists from diverse regions had a common element. For many, this included a low level of identification with the apparatus for doping prevention and, interrelated with this, its perceived illegitimacy. Indeed, some ten years later, at the 1998 Tour de France, following the widespread intervention of agents of the state, cyclists mobilised again in opposition to these interventions, and the civilising offensive they embodied, staging sit-downs and go-slows (*Cycling News*, July, 1998). Significantly, although cyclists acted collectively they were not wholly in agreement. This reflected their different habitus, with variances in the perceived legitimacy of the institutions for doping prevention and also in the extent to which the social constraints connected with this had been internalised. For some cyclists, thresholds of repugnance towards doping had advanced more than others – a position I have argued elsewhere (Connolly 2012). There are echoes here with Van Ginkel (1996) who makes the contention in reference to his own study that the civilising offensive was more effective amongst those who were already receptive to the behavioural standards to be imposed (see also Kruithof (2015) this issue).

Part of the reason for the fractured and limited success of this civilising offensive, as outlined, was the actual structure of the apparatus for the control and prevention of illegal performance enhancement (doping). Despite its expansion, and a strengthening of the agencies connected with it through greater functional specialisation, its effectiveness was limited to a certain degree due to inter- and intra-competitive tensions between those comprising these agencies (Waddington and Smith 2009; Wagner 2010). As such, both state and extra-state agencies were unable, and unwilling in some cases, to exert more effective external constraints and to gain more sufficient legitimacy for their use (see, for example, *Cycle Sport*, 1996, August: 39–42).

These developments occurred at a time in which Wouters (2007) contends civilising advances occurred in several European nations (see Dolan 2009 for the case of Ireland). Professional cyclists were not 'outside' such a process involving the requirement for, and ability to exercise, a more constant and differentiated level of self-restraint. Yet these self-restraints were not, or more precisely were only very slowly, provoked and activated in the cause against 'doping' [12]. That this was the case is explained in part by the weakness of external constraints and the level of perceived legitimacy; a necessary requirement for anchoring higher levels of shame feelings towards doping within the habitus. Without this, or where it is weak for various reasons, conscience formation involving a higher threshold of repugnance towards doping only slowly emerges.

Continuities, habitus, and intra and intergenerational bonds

Analogous with the fractured apparatus for the control of doping was a social habitus attuned to pushing against this specific civilising offensive. I have already outlined how the social conditions cyclists emerged from, the social and physical environment in which the performance of their work occurred, the interconnected anxieties and pressures generated, and the functions of suffering that emerged in relation to this crystallised within the habitus of professional cyclists manifesting itself in a specific form of we-identification. Initially, for many cyclists, this habitus pushed so strongly against the civilising pressures directed at doping, it found expression in open hostility to the expansion of external constraints, an outright refusal to accept the legitimacy of the apparatus of control associated with this, and a conscience relatively free of guilt in relation to doping.

Gradually, the subsequent civilising offensives and pressures did have an effect – the threshold of repugnance towards doping advanced (Connolly 2012). However, the form and strength of the we-identification of cyclists and its deep imprint within the habitus, even where the habitus of cyclists became penetrated by civilising offensives, functioned to moderate these civilising pressures. One indication of this has been the tendency to express solidarity with, and understanding for, those cyclists associated with doping rather than condemn or ostracise them. For instance, in the introduction to his autobiography, Allan Pieper writes:

I tried to ride clean, most of the time. I know that sometimes riders beat me who had taken drugs, but I never felt they had stolen anything from me. All they had done was make a choice that I had been free to make, but didn't. Why should someone who has not been in the same situation get hysterical about that? Nobody can bring Marco [Marco Pantani, the Italian cyclist who died in 2004] back. But guilty as he may have been, he was one of us, a brother who fought and died for what he loved, what we all love, cycling. He was nothing more, and certainly nothing less. Why was he persecuted? (2005:11).

This extract from Pieper who retired as a professional cyclist in 1992, the same year Marco Pantani began his professional career, is indicative of the process described above. Here intergenerational and international we-identity underpins the reference to Pantani, and in the differentiation drawn between 'others' and 'us' professional cyclists. This 'us' is trans-generational. Furthermore, there is no attempt to stigmatise those who doped, while his stress on never having felt cheated suggests not only a relatively low threshold of repugnance towards 'doping' but also a strong sense of solidarity with other cyclists.

This identification and solidarity is evident from cyclists from different generations and nationalities. It involves a distinct disinclination to censure cyclists at either an inter- or intra- generational level. Rather, a justification based on social conditions and suffering is invoked. Such accounts are prevalent even as the taboo on doping became more amplified in the past decade. For instance, in an issue of one of Britain's top selling cycling magazines in 2004, *Cycling Weekly*, labelled 'The drugs issue', the then recently retired American professional cyclist Jonathan Vaughters penned an article to explain the pressures on those entering professional cycling. After describing the sacrifices of a cyclist's teenage years, he continues by depicting their first year as a professional:

As you start to race, you notice how much faster these races are than anything you encounter as an amateur. You struggle, you get dropped, you fail to finish. Despite all your hard training and

talent, for some reason you just can't keep up. You not only can't win, you are barely able to keep up with the peloton [...] At the end of the season, you have done nothing in the pro ranks, and you know it. Next year will be the last on your contract, it will be your last as a professional cyclist. You will be 25 years old, you will have sacrificed every other possibility in your life, and you will have nothing, absolutely nothing to show for it. You will have no job, no skills, no friends, no family, and you will have the one thing you have loved dearly pulled away from you. Your dream will be lost, and so will you (*Cycling Weekly*, 30 October, 2004: 31).

While Vaughters does not condone doping – he subsequently became a leading anti-doping advocate – he feels compelled to explain the pressures on cyclists. Even amongst those cyclists who went about attempting to civilise 'each other' (Van Krieken 1989) there remained a tendency to sympathise with rather than demonise those implicated in doping. For instance, former champion cyclist of the 1980s and 1990s, American Greg Lemond, stated: 'I see Floyd Landis and Tyler Hamilton as tragic stories [both were implicated and confessed to doping in the 2000s]. Marco Pantani as well. I know some people look on them as the problem. They're not the problem' (cited in the *Irish Times*, 27 June, 2009: A9). However, there are variances in the scale and level of solidarity reflecting the different habitus formation processes of individual cyclists and the extent to which civilising offensives had become internalised. As a higher threshold of repugnance towards doping becomes internalised in the habitus guilt and anger can also emerge, as these enhanced shame feelings towards doping collide with the emotional bond felt towards fellow cyclists based on an understanding of the social conditions and suffering they endure. For instance, the retired French cyclist of the 1990s Erwann Menthéour in an interview following the sudden death of fellow cyclist and countryman Philippe Gaumont in 2013 stated:

I felt and still feel immense bitterness [...] because I thought about what an expensive price so many people have paid for cycling over the last 20 years. I thought of how, when the Festina affair [13][#N13] happened, overnight a group of young men who were just doing what they had to do to earn a living suddenly lost all respectability, all dignity. These were guys riding 35,000 kilometres a year, people were in awe of them, and then all of a sudden they were treated like shits. And somewhere, even if they knew that they were only doing what everyone else did, those guys also had to look themselves in the mirror and feel shame, guilt, because that was what everyone was telling them that they should feel (Friebe 2013).

Behind these narratives are very strong feelings of solidarity and identification. Clearly, there were differences in the wider structure and extent of interdependencies that shaped the habitus of individual cyclists across the generations. However, for most, there remained a set of interdependencies that retained a level of similarity. This in turn helped cement a we-identity that transcended generational and national boundaries and a continuity in the habitus of professional cyclists. It is this aspect of the habitus which remains central in moderating the internalisation of greater shame feelings towards doping. In an interview as recently as April, 2014, Lance Armstrong who was officially stripped of his seven Tour de France victories for doping stated: 'Of course I'm going to say I won – but ask the guys (fellow Tour de France competitors) that went and suffered with you and ask them, "Did he win?" I think I know what they'd say' (in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April, 2014). The veracity of the statement [14][#N14] is less significant than the invoking of suffering and what this indicates. Suffering and the interdependencies that underpin its functional importance – both the I and we functions of suffering – remain central in understanding the habitus of professional cyclists and how it shapes their response to the civilising offensive against doping.

Conclusion

In drawing from the case of professional cycling, I wish to reiterate my main theoretical argument which is that although the concept of mutual identification is most strongly associated with a civilising process, mutual identity, perhaps more significantly what it's based upon, can act as buffer against civilising offensives. Indeed, both Powell and Verrips have noted the significance of the we-image of the 'civilisers', and indirectly that of the targets of such an offensive given the figuration they form with one another, in understanding civilising offensives. However, less emphasis appears to be directed at the we-image of the latter, its strength, and how it is generated and sustained. I argue that we need to be more exact in describing the precise forms of mutual identifications connected with various social developments. There is a tendency to assume an automatic association between increasing mutual identification and civilising advances. As I have sought to illustrate here, specific kinds of mutual identity, and the solidarity connected with this, can also serve to militate against civilising offensives.

Furthermore, a civilising offensive is not 'separate' from wider civilising processes and reversals, and specific manifestations of these such as individualisation and informalisation. As such, we need to consider how these processes interweave [15]. Neither should the structure and perceived legitimacy of the civilising apparatus be elided (Dolan and Connolly 2014). The offensive described was underpinned by a weak and fractured external apparatus of control that only very slowly attained sufficient legitimacy amongst greater numbers of cyclists. However, gradually, the acceptance of these functions advanced amongst an increasing number of cyclists due to greater social constraints. Greater and more consistent social observance also facilitates a rise in the perceived legitimacy of controlling functions. Cyclists came to trust more in them, and in their application, across time and space. One effect of this is a change in the nature and expression of solidarity with a tendency to differentiate between the types of doping; those associated with more recent transgressions are subject to less sympathy than those of the past. Another aspect, therefore, is a schism in intergenerational solidarity.

Notes

1. The Giro d'Italia [Tour of Italy] is an annual three week long professional cycle race that traverses Italy. [↗ \[#N1-ptri\]](#)
2. Competitive cycling was one of several sports targeted within this more comprehensive strategy for the prevention of doping in sport more generally at that time. [↗ \[#N2-ptri\]](#)
3. At a conceptual level, Dunning and Waddington suggest a deviation here between, on the one hand, 'doping', which encompasses those situations in which drugs are administered without the knowledge or consent of those receiving drugs, and on the other 'the knowing taking of performance enhancing drugs' (2003: 365). One of the difficulties with this separation, specifically in the case of professional cycling, is the use of blood transfusions as means to boost performance, which does not involve the use of drugs. In this paper, I deploy the term doping to refer to the illegal use knowingly or otherwise of drugs and other practices by cyclists to boost performance. [↗ \[#N3-ptri\]](#)
4. Elsewhere I have argued that a civilising process in relation to doping has occurred though it has been obscured by the media amplification of doping within the sport. [↗ \[#N4-ptri\]](#)
5. He also noted that in the case of some groups, such as the student corporations, the form of mutual identification was rather narrow and shallow. [↗ \[#N5-ptri\]](#)
6. In the early years many professional cyclists were independents who earned income through prizes provided by the organisers of races. Others were financially and materially sponsored by the owners of

- commercial enterprises such as bicycle manufacturers who provided equipment and wages. ♣.[#N6-ptr1]
7. Between 1905 and 1910 the number of mountain stages increased while assistance during mechanical breakdown was prevented and heavily penalised. ♣.[#N7-ptr1]
 8. Cyclists have attempted organised protests in the 1920s, 1930s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1990s and 2000s to resist or change the working conditions imposed on them by race organisers. ♣.[#N8-ptr1]
 9. Thompson's very detailed work locates suffering solely within the Tour de France. ♣.[#N9-ptr1]
 10. My own analysis of the various autobiographies and biographies examined for this study would concur with this conclusion. ♣.[#N10-ptr1]
 11. Later Spain became a central location for cyclists. ♣.[#N11-ptr1]
 12. In fact it is possible to hypothesise the opposite effect occurred and suggest that advances in the capacity and nature of both self-restraints and foresight facilitated the application of more complex and long term doping practices. Brewer (2002), following Weber, makes a similar claim. ♣.[#N12-ptr1]
 13. The Festina affair refers to an incident, and the fallout from it, at the 1998 Tour de France when the car of the Festina cycling team's soigneur, Willy Voet, was stopped by French police and searched; the car was containing a large quantity of illegal performance enhancing substances (*Cycling Weekly*, 30 October 2004: 45). ♣.[#N13-ptr1]
 14. Interestingly, the American professional cyclist Tejay van Garderen stated several months prior to Armstrong's interview that he still considered Armstrong the winner of the seven Tours. ♣.[#N14-ptr1]
 15. An important question which I have not addressed in this study was the role of national character or national habitus in this. ♣.[#N15-ptr1]

References

- Brewer, B. (2002) 'Commercialization in Professional Cycling 1950–2001: Institutional Transformations and the Rationalization of "Doping"', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 19(3): 276–301.
- Brissonneau, C. and Ohl, F. (2010) 'The Genesis and Effect of French Anti-doping Policies in Cycling', *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 2(2): 173–187.
- Burkitt, I. (1996) 'Civilization and Ambivalence', *British Journal of Sociology*, 47(1): 135–150.
- Cardoza, A. (2010) "'Making Italians"? Cycling and National Identity in Italy: 1900–1950', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 15(3): 354–377.
- Connolly, J. (2012) 'Habitus, Doping and Professional Cycling', Conference paper at *Norbert Elias and Figurational Sociology: Prospects for the Future*, 2–4 April, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Denson, V. (2008) *The Full Cycle*. Norwich: Mousehold Press.
- De Swaan, A. (1995) 'Widening Circles of Identification: Emotional concerns in Sociogenetic perspective', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 12(2): 25–39
- Dolan, P. (2009) 'Figurational Dynamics and Parliamentary Discourses of Living Standards in Ireland', *British Journal of Sociology*, 60(4): 721–739.
- Dolan, P. and Connolly, J. (2014) '[Emotions, Violence and Social belonging: An Eliasian Analysis of Sports Spectatorship](http://soc.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/06/05/0038038512474729.abstract) [<http://soc.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/06/05/0038038512474729.abstract>]', *Sociology*, 48(2): 279–294.

- Dunning, E., Murphy, P. and Williams, J. (1988) *The Roots of Football Hooliganism. An Historical and Sociological Study*. London: Routledge.
- Dunning, E. and Sheared, K. (1979) *Barbarians, Gentlemen & Players*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Dunning, E. and Waddington, I. (2003) 'Sport as a Drug and Drugs in Sport', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 38(3): 351–368.
- Elias, N. (1996) *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth Twentieth Centuries*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Elias, N. (2001) *The Society of Individuals*. London: Continuum.
- Elias, N. and Dunning, E. (2008) *Quest for Excitement. Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process*, Dublin: UCD Press.
- Fife, G. (1999) *Devil's Island and the Tour de France by Albert Londres*. London: Cycle Sport.
- Fignon, L. (2010) *We Were Young and Carefree. The Autobiography of Laurent Fignon*. London: Yellow Jersey Press. [English Edition].
- Foot, J. (2011) *Pedalare! Pedalare! A History of Italian Cycling*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Fotheringham, W. (2007) *Put me back on my Bike: In Search of Tom Simpson*. London: Yellow Jersey Press.
- Friebe, D. (2013) 'Philippe Gaumont: The life and times of an enfant terrible' Cyclingnews.com; [Access <http://www.cyclingnews.com/features/philippe-gaumont-the-life-and-times-of-an-enfant-terrible> [<http://www.cyclingnews.com/features/philippe-gaumont-the-life-and-times-of-an-enfant-terrible>].]
- Gleaves, J. and Llewellyn, M. (2014) 'Sport, Drugs and Amateurism: Tracing the Real Cultural Origins of Anti-Doping Rules in International Sport', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 31(8): 839–853.
- Hamilton, T. and Coyle, D. (2012) *The Secret Race. Inside the Hidden World of the Tour de France: Doping, Cover-ups, and Winning at all Costs*. London: Bantam Press.
- Hewson, T. (2006) *In Pursuit of Stardom. Les Nomades du Velo Anglais*. Norwich: Mousehold Press.
- Hinault, B. (1989) *Memories of the Peloton*. Brattleboro: Vitesse Press.
- Kelly, S. (2013) *Hunger. Sean Kelly: The Autobiography*. Redbourn, St Albans: Peloton Publishing.
- Kimmage, P. (1998)[1990] *Rough Ride. Behind the Wheel with a Pro Cyclist*. London: Yellow Jersey Press.
- Knuts, S. (2014) *Converging and Competing Courses of Identity Construction: Shaping and Imagining Society through Cycling and Bicycle Racing in Belgium before World War Two*. Doctoral Thesis, KU Leuven.
- Knuts, S. and Delheye, P. (2015) 'Sport, Work and the Professional Bicycle Racer in Belgium, 1907–1940', *History Workshop Journal* (Forthcoming). doi: 10.1093/hwj/dbuo22
- Maertens, F. (1993)[1988] *Fall from Grace*. Hull: Ronde Publications.
- McKay, F. (2013) Anti-Doping: Testing Evolution in Sport. Cyclingnews.com: [Access at <http://www.cyclingnews.com/features/anti-doping-testing-evolution-in-sport> [<http://www.cyclingnews.com/features/anti-doping-testing-evolution-in-sport>].]

- Mennell, S. (1990) 'Decivilising Processes: Theoretical Significance and some lines of Research', *International Sociology*, 5(2): 205–223.
- Millar, D. (2011) *Racing Through the Dark. The Fall and Rise of David Millar*. London: Orion.
- Moore, R. (2008) *In Search of Robert Millar*. London: Harper Sport.
- Parkin, J. (2008) *A Dog in a Hat. An American Bike Racer's Story of Mud, Drugs, Blood, Betrayal, and Beauty in Belgium*. Boulder, Colorado: Velo Press
- Pieper, A. (2005) *A Pieper's Tale*. Norwich: Mousehold Press.
- Powell, R. (2013) 'The Theoretical Concept of the "Civilising Offensive" (Beschavingsoffensief): Notes on its Origins and Uses', *Human Figurations*, 2(2).
- Riis, B. (2012)[2010] *Riis. Stages of light and Dark*. Surrey: VSP.
- Ritchie, A. (2011) *Quest for Speed. A History of Early Bicycle Racing 1868–1903*. Santa Clara: Ritchie.
- Roche, N. (2011) *Inside the Peloton: My Life as a Professional Cyclist*. London: Transworld.
- Roche, S. (2013) *Born to Ride*. London: Yellow Jersey Press.
- Thompson, C. (2008) *The Tour De France*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sydney Morning Herald (2014) 'Lance Armstrong: I'm still Tour de France winner'
<http://www.smh.com.au/sport/cycling/lance-armstrong-im-still-tour-de-france-winner-20140425-zqz7c.html> [<http://www.smh.com.au/sport/cycling/lance-armstrong-im-still-tour-de-france-winner-20140425-zqz7c.html>]
- Van Krieken, R. (1989) 'Violence, Self-discipline and Modernity: Beyond the "Civilising Process"', *The Sociological Review*, 37(2): 193–221.
- Van Krieken, R. (1990) 'The Barbarism of Civilisation: Cultural Genocide and the "Stolen Generations"', *British Journal of Sociology*, 50(2): 297–315.
- Van Ginkel, R. (1996) 'A Dutch Sodom and Gomorrah: Degenerates, Moralists and Authority in Yerseke, 1870–1914', *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 24(3): 223–239.
- Verrips, K. (1987) 'Noblemen, Farmers and Labourers: A Civilising Offensive in a Dutch Village', *Netherlands Journal of Sociology*, 23(1): 3–17.
- Waddington, I. and Smith, A. (2009) *An Introduction to Drugs in Sport. Addicted to Winning*. Oxon: Routledge
- Wagner, U. (2010) 'The International Cycling Union under Siege – Anti-doping and the Biological Passport as a Mission Impossible?', *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 10(3): 321–342.
- Wouters, C. (2007) *Informalization: Manners and Emotions since 1890*. London: Sage.

Biography

John Connolly is a Lecturer at Dublin City University. His research interests include the sociology of sport, organisational change, and advertising.

Hosted by [Michigan Publishing](#), a division of the [University of Michigan Library](#).

For more information please contact mpub-help@umich.edu.

Online ISSN: 2166-6644