The Grey Zone Between Tactics and Fixing: An Explorative Study of Match-Fixing in Road Cycling

Abstract

Match-fixing in sport has become more visible than ever. However, despite some well-known incidents in road cycling, match-fixing has rarely been investigated in this unique sport discipline. Drawing on Ashforth and Anand's (2003) theoretical model of normalization of corruption in organizations and on the perceptions of 15 active Belgian road cyclists, this study examines road cyclists' perceptions of match-fixing in their sport. As the culture of agreements can be seen as part and parcel of road cycling itself, this study also examines whether match-fixing is embedded, perpetuated, and thus normalized in road cycling. Using semi-structured interviews, this qualitative study indicates that there is a general lack of awareness in road cyclists of the threats of match-fixing. Moreover, by demonstrating that (1) cooperation between competitors to obtain success happens routinely, (2) cyclists use self-serving explanations to justify these collaborations, and (3) newcomers are induced to engage in and accept collaborations with their competitors, we argue that match-fixing can be seen as normalized behavior in road cycling. To enhance the future credibility of road cycling towards both fans and sponsors, countermeasures against match-fixing (including awareness-raising initiatives) should therefore be intensified.

Keywords: Match-fixing, Road Cycling, Normalization, Sport Manipulation, Tactics

Introduction

Road cycling currently faces several significant challenges that cast shadows on its future (Van Reeth & Lagae, 2018). For example, road cycling has been heavily affected over the past decades by several (mechanical) doping scandals, which damaged road cycling's public image and economical foundations (Aubel et al., 2018, 2019; Bell et al., 2016; Pike, 2018; Smith, 2017b, 2017a; Stewart & Smith, 2010). As a consequence, road cycling is often perceived as a "doping-infected sport" (Wagner, 2010, p. 321). However, doping is far from the only sport corruption problem road cycling is currently experiencing (Christiansen & Hjørngard, 2013; Van Reeth & Lagae, 2018). In 2011, for instance, former cyclist Alexandre Vinokourov was accused of buying (i.e., fixing) his 2010 Liège-Bastogne-Liège victory – a prestigious one day cycling race – from Alexandr Kolobnev (Cyclingnews, 2011). Hardly one year later, Vinokourov was again discredited after his controversial victory in the 2012 London Olympic road cycling race (VeloNews, 2012). Given the above, road cycling certainly deserves further investigation into its connections with match-fixing (i.e., being the manipulation of sports competitions) (Van Der Hoeven et al., 2020).

Like doping, match-fixing is a form of corruption in sport (Kihl, 2018a). Corruption in sport refers to "any illegal, immoral or unethical activity that attempts to deliberately distort the result of a sporting contest for the personal material gain of one or more parties involved in that activity" (Gorse & Chadwick, 2010, p. 43). Following Gorsira et al. (2018), Tzeng and Lee (2020) proposed an integrated micro-meso (i.e., individual-group) approach to study match-fixing. After all, match-fixing has to be understood in the unique context of the social structures and cultures in which it is embedded (Numerato, 2016). Road cycling provides such a unique context to investigate match-fixing, as it has several peculiarities which create "grey zones" in which road cyclists have to perform (Fincoeur et al., 2020). More specifically, road cyclists operate in a hybrid and hierarchical regime, as road cycling is an individual sport that requires

teamwork (Netland et al., 2012). Additionally, since road cyclists are subject to the peloton's own internal codes, norms, and ethics, strategic behavior is not limited to one's own team (Hardie et al., 2012; Mignot, 2016a). For instance, road cyclists (or whole teams) often cooperate with their competitors in order to have success (Scelles et al., 2018). As such, the distinction between tactics and fixing becomes unclear.

Although the abovementioned studies illustrate the need to investigate match-fixing in the unique context of road cycling, little empirical work on this topic has yet been conducted (see Christiansen and Hjørngard (2013) for an exception). Christiansen and Hjørngard (2013) examined three Danish elite road cyclists' experiences and attitudes to agreements on podium placing and trade with victories. They discovered that agreements on victories and placing are often made among road cyclists to uphold and reinforce a certain social order in the peloton (Christiansen & Hjørngard, 2013). However, Christiansen and Hjørngard (2013) acknowledged that these agreements may also incorporate some form of corruption (i.e., match-fixing).

Although Christiansen and Hjørngard (2013) have thus provided significant insights into the subject, there is still a lack of knowledge about how road cyclists perceive the threats of match-fixing to their sport. Moreover, a theoretical organizational corruption framework is rarely used in the study of match-fixing albeit individual and group level factors play an important role in terms of explaining sport corruption (Kihl, 2018b). This study therefore applies Ashforth and Anand's (2003) theoretical model on the normalization of corruption in organizations to investigate whether and how match-fixing is embedded, perpetuated, and normalized in road cycling's structures, processes, and culture. Given this context, the present study largely advances our knowledge regarding the nature and underlying mechanisms of match-fixing, by addressing the following research questions:

RQ1: How do road cyclists perceive match-fixing in their sport?

RQ2: How is match-fixing embedded, perpetuated, and normalized in road cycling?

Literature review

Conceptualizing match-fixing in the context of road cycling

Several match-fixing conceptualizations and definitions have been established over the past years (for an overview, see e.g., Van Der Hoeven et al., 2020). However, the most widely used and commonly accepted definition is the one of the Council of Europe (2014) which describes match-fixing or the "manipulation of sports competitions" in their so-called Macolin Convention as:

> An intentional arrangement, act, or omission aimed at an improper alteration of the result or the course of a sports competition in order to remove all or part of the unpredictable nature of the aforementioned sports competition with a view to obtaining an undue advantage for oneself or for others. (art. 3.4)

When discussing match-fixing, a distinction is often made between betting-related and non-betting-related (or sporting-related) match-fixing (Spapens & Olfers, 2015). In betting-related match-fixing, people aim to make profits and/or launder money by placing a bet on the outcome of a fixed match or on a specific event during a match (i.e., "spot-fixing") (Hill, 2008; Serby, 2015). Non-betting-related match-fixing on the contrary, focuses primarily on sporting interests (e.g., to enable a specific club or athlete to win the championship or to determine who the next-round opponent would be). Moreover, a further distinction is based on whether or not the match-fixing case at hand involves bribery or coercion (Spapens & Olfers, 2015). When an individual takes the initiative to fix, without communication with others, it is called "lone-wolf match-fixing" (Holden & Rodenberg, 2017).

In the context of road cycling, Fincoeur (2010) and Hardie et al. (2012) were among the first scholars to briefly touch upon the issue. Subsequently, Christiansen and Hjørngard (2013)

discussed to what extent agreements on podium placing and trading with victories should be regarded as match-fixing in road cycling. On the one hand, Christiansen & Hjørngard (2013) argued that the culture of agreements can be seen as an inherent structural and cultural element of road cycling. After all, road cyclists from different teams often have to cooperate to improve their likelihood of success (e.g., in a breakaway) (Scelles et al., 2018). On the other hand, by cooperating or making agreements with (cyclists from) other teams, the result or the course of the race may be altered in favor of some beneficiaries. As such, based on the definition of the Council of Europe (2014, art. 3.4), agreements or cooperation between competitors in order to improve the likelihood of success may be seen as a form of non-betting-related match-fixing (Spapens & Olfers, 2015). In addition, Christiansen and Hjørngard (2013) briefly touched upon the potential threat of betting for road cycling as well. After all, since road cycling races are offered on the betting market, the threat of betting-related match-fixing may lurk around the corner (Forrest, 2018; Lastra et al., 2018).

In summary, Christiansen and Hjørngard (2013, p. 81) stated that "the sport of road cycling is paradoxical in its essence." While agreements and cooperation may be seen as fundamental characteristics of road cycling, it may also induce its destruction (Christiansen & Hjørngard, 2013). This paradox and the vulnerability to match-fixing can partly be explained by the unique peculiarities of road cycling.

Peculiarities of road cycling

Road cycling has several peculiarities, which make the sport susceptible to match-fixing (Christiansen & Hjørngard, 2013). Firstly, road cycling is an individual sport practiced in teams (a so-called "hybrid sport") (Lagae & Van Reeth, 2016). Road cycling races are organized as team events, but apart from the occasional team time trials, most races are won by individual cyclists (Rebeggiani, 2016; Van Reeth, 2016). This unique setting creates opportunities for strategic behavior both within and between teams (Mignot, 2016a).

Within a team, a hierarchical distinction is usually made between "team captains," who are expected to garner the team's results, and "domestiques" or helpers, whose only role is to support the team captain(s) during the race (Rebeggiani, 2016, p. 35). Candelon and Dupuy (2015) showed that this hierarchical organization within teams increases performance inequality among cyclists. Moreover, Netland et al. (2012) stated that there is an inherent tension between individualism and collectivism in road cycling teams. After all, it is nearly impossible to achieve success in road cycling races without some team members (i.e., the domestiques) having to sacrifice their own chances of winning (Netland et al., 2012). Consequently, some road cyclists may decide not to follow the team tactics to achieve a better personal result (Netland et al., 2012). A similar tension is present between teams as well. The world governing body of cycling, the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), makes a (hierarchical) distinction between UCI WorldTeams (highest level), ProTeams, and Continental Teams (third level) (UCI, 2020). One step down from the Continental Teams, the fourth level teams (i.e., amateur teams) are classified as "elite without contract" teams. As road cyclists of different team levels (mainly of the three highest levels) often compete against each other in the same peloton, agreements between them are also regularly made (Rebeggiani, 2016).

Additionally, since road cycling teams almost completely depend on their main sponsors, contract durations are rather short in road cycling (Rebeggiani, 2016; Van Reeth, 2016). However, cyclists have to be endowed with a valid contract each season. Therefore, the job insecurity and the pressure to deliver results is quite high (Rebeggiani, 2016). This pressure to get a new contract may foster the attractiveness of match-fixing practices. Moreover, another peculiarity of road cycling is that individual prize money is usually shared with all team members, including the technical staff (Rebeggiani, 2016; Van Reeth, 2016). This mechanism is used to stimulate cooperation within a team (Netland et al., 2012). However, this team-based sharing of prize money could also lead to a tendency towards underperformance, since team

members are still rewarded when other members of their team take responsibility (Netland et al., 2012). On the other hand, this could also stimulate cyclists to make agreements with cyclists from other teams in order to earn more (prize) money.

Furthermore, road cycling is practiced on public roads with air resistance as the primary external factor (Hoenigman et al., 2011; Olds, 1998). Therefore, the technique of "drafting" (i.e., riding in the shelter of another cyclist or group of cyclists and staying out of the wind) is "the foundation for much of the tactical work" in road cycling (Brewer, 2002, p. 280). More specifically, cyclists who draft expend up to 40% less energy than others who are in the lead position going the same speed (Dilger & Geyer, 2009). Consequently, cyclists from different teams often form temporary cooperative alliances, rotating one by one into the lead position of a group, in order to improve their likelihood of success (Hoenigman et al., 2011). Moreover, road cycling races vary from one day competitions to competitions of up to three weeks (i.e., stage races) (Van Reeth & Lagae, 2018). In stage races, multiple prizes can be won. Hence, competitors in the same stage may have very different objectives which do not necessarily correspond with winning the stage (e.g., finishing before cyclists likely to be among the first with regard to the general classification, or being in the breakaway to enable his/her team to produce a minimal effort in the peloton) (Scelles et al., 2018).

Lastly, the cycling peloton has often been compared to a very close community, or even a "family," in which each cyclist must adhere to "tacit rules" and in which noncooperative behavior is undesirable (Rebeggiani, 2016, p. 51). Mignot (2016a) emphasized that there are even certain norms of "etiquette" or fairness (i.e., unwritten rules) that cyclists should adhere to in the peloton (e.g., not attacking when opponents are having sanitary stops) (p. 219). Moreover, since cyclists ride with each other all year long, everyone knows who are the "free riders" (i.e., drafters) and the conditional cooperators (Mignot, 2016a). As such, cyclists are advised to build a good reputation in the peloton. Otherwise, other cyclist will not be willing to

cooperate with them (e.g., in a breakaway) (Mignot, 2016a). However, this close-knit community has already shown to facilitate illicit activities (e.g., doping use) and avoid detection and prosecution (Bell et al., 2016). Several authors have even drawn parallels to the mafia concept of "omertà" or code of silence (Bassons, 2014; Hamilton & Coyle, 2012; Kimmage, 2007). They showed that when cyclists broke the code of silence about corruptive activities (in most cases doping), they were ostracized or even pushed out of the sport (Bassons, 2014; Hamilton & Coyle, 2012; Kimmage, 2007). In summary, Table 1 depicts an overview of the peculiarities that make road cycling susceptible to match-fixing.

Please insert Table 1 near here

Match-fixing as normalized behavior in road cycling

As already mentioned, the culture of agreements in road cycling may imply some form of match-fixing, which in turn is a form of corruption in sport (Kihl, 2018a). Many definitions of the concept of corruption have already been proposed by several researchers across multiple disciplines (Castro et al., 2020). In this article we refer to corruption as the "misuse of an organizational position or authority for personal or organizational (or sub-unit) gain, where misuse in turn refers to departures from accepted societal norms" (Anand et al., 2004, p. 40). When a corrupt practice becomes embedded in an organization's structures, processes, and culture in a taken for granted way, this practice is considered normalized (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). Ashforth and Anand's (2003) theoretical model on the normalization of corruption stipulates that three pillars contribute to the normalization of corruption in an organization: (1) institutionalization, (2) rationalization, and (3) socialization. As shown in Figure 1, the three pillars are interdependent and mutually reinforce each other (Ashforth & Anand, 2003).

Please insert Figure 1 near here

The first pillar, *institutionalization*, refers to "the process by which corrupt practices are enacted as a matter of routine, often without conscious thought about their propriety" (Ashforth & Anand, 2003, p. 3). The institutionalization process consists of three major phases (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). In a first phase, the initial corrupt act or decision is made. This decision is often linked to an unethical organizational climate, in which immoral actions are creeping in (Brief et al., 2001). Christiansen and Hjørngard (2013) showed that road cyclists cooperate or make agreements with their competitors for a variety of reasons (e.g., to improve the likelihood of success in the race, or to improve the chance of winning in future races). In a second phase, corrupt acts become embedded in organizational structures and processes (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). More specifically, once a corrupt decision or act produces a successful outcome (e.g., a victory), road cyclists tend to commit it to their memory, and thus reuse it in the future (Anand et al., 1998). Simultaneously a deviant (sub)culture (i.e., the cycling peloton) may emerge which normalizes the corruption and insulates road cyclists from the wider culture with its countervailing norms, values, and beliefs (Greve et al., 2010). In a third phase, the corrupt practices become routinized and habitual (Misangyi et al., 2008). One is swept along by the momentum of the system, which blunts individuals' awareness that a moral issue is at stake (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2002). After all, if a road cyclist does not recognize that a situation contains a moral issue, the moral decision-making process cannot be further activated (Gioia, 1992; Rest, 1986; Van Der Hoeven et al., 2020). As such, the corrupt acts become normative and taken for granted, while being enacted mindlessly (Ashforth & Anand, 2003; Collins et al., 2009).

In the second pillar, *rationalization*, individuals engage in a process where self-serving ideologies are developed and used to justify the corrupt acts (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). The rationalizing ideologies help distance road cyclists (and the peloton) from the aberrant moral stance implied by their actions by explaining why specific acts of corruption are justifiable or

excusable exceptions to the general normative rules (Budiman et al., 2013). The rationalizations explain why otherwise law abiding and morally upright individuals engage in corruption and "tend not to view themselves as corrupt" (Anand et al., 2004, p. 40). Christiansen and Hjørngard (2013), for instance, demonstrated how some road cyclists stated that agreements about victory are not corrupt, since "you can't buy something you aren't." More specifically, the road cyclists emphasized that there must first be a chance of winning, before you can start negotiating (Christiansen & Hjørngard, 2013). When the rationalizations become a shared resource in the organization's culture, they may pave the way towards collective corruption (see Frost & Tischer, 2014). For instance, Zyglidopoulos et al. (2009) illustrated how excessive rationalizations may cause escalation of corruption in organizations. Ashforth and Anand (2003) identified eight types of rationalizing ideologies used in various combinations to justify corrupt practices (see Budiman et al. (2013, p. 140) for an overview).

The third pillar is *socialization*, which involves the process by which newcomers are taught to accept and then perform corrupt practices (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). This is often done in conjunction with the rationalizing ideologies (Anand et al., 2004). Ashforth and Anand (2003) identified three paths of socialization: i.e., cooptation, incrementalism, and compromise. In cooptation, newcomers are induced by rewards to change their attitudes toward corrupt acts (e.g., by receiving money) (Anand et al., 2004). In incrementalism, newcomers are gradually introduced to corrupt acts (Brief et al., 2001). More specifically, newcomers are initially exposed to small and slightly deviant acts (e.g., cooperating with competitors). When they come to accept the act as normal, they are introduced to other more corrupt acts (e.g., buying or selling a victory). In this way, the newcomer is eventually engaging in acts that he or she would initially have rejected (Anand et al., 2004). In compromise, "individuals essentially 'back into' corruption through attempts (often in good faith) to resolve pressing dilemmas, role conflicts, and other intractable problems" (Anand et al., 2004, p. 45; Ashforth & Anand, 2003, p. 30).

Christiansen and Hjørngard (2013) argued that when cyclists do not take a deal or break an agreement, the tacit threat of social sanctions and punishments can have extensive consequences for their future in the peloton. As these three paths of socialization show, ongoing corruption is sustained through the induction and absorption of newcomers (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). However, Beugré (2010) showed that not every newcomer will embrace corrupt practices and may resist socialization into it.

Methods

This study focuses on road cycling only, excluding other cycling disciplines such as track cycling, mountain bike, BMX, para-cycling, cyclo-cross, trials and indoor cycling. Road cycling offers the most interesting context in terms of our research questions (Rebeggiani, 2016). More specifically, road cycling has the most peculiar and complex organizational structure, and is considered the most strategic cycling discipline (Mignot, 2016a; Rebeggiani, 2016). Moreover, road cycling has already been affected the most by sport corruption scandals, compared to other cycling disciplines, and is characterized by many "grey zones" (Fincoeur et al., 2020). Nevertheless, various peculiarities of road cycling are transferable to the other cycling disciplines. In terms of geographical scope, Belgium is an interesting case to study as this country belongs to the European core countries of cycling (next to France, Italy, and Spain), where a lot of races are organized (including two of the "Five Monuments of cycling") (Mignot, 2016b, p. 17). Furthermore, Belgian cyclists and teams have always been well represented in the history and development of road cycling (Mignot, 2016b).

Participants

A snow ball sampling approach was used to recruit active adult road cyclists who might have useful information to shed light on our two research questions (Emerson, 2015). Moreover, we had no preference for road cyclists of certain levels, as Christiansen and Hjørngard (2013)

suggested that agreements on podium placing and victory trading are not restricted to the highest hierarchical level. In addition to male road cyclists, we also recruited female road cyclists, as women's road cycling has grown in recent years and is considered key in the further development of road cycling (UCI, 2019). We continued interviewing road cyclists until data saturation was reached (Guest et al., 2006).

Data collection

Prior to the interviews with the road cyclists, two pre-qualitative pilot interviews were conducted with a former cycling manager and a sport journalist. The interview with the former cycling manager lasted 135 minutes, while the interview with the sport journalist lasted 38 minutes. The main aim of these pilot interviews was to familiarize ourselves with the road cycling context and to finetune the scope of our study.

Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews, based on an interview guide with open-ended questions. Before recording the interviews, all respondents were asked to read an information letter which described the purpose and content of the study, as well as the procedure and the total confidentiality related to the data collection and analysis. When the respondents had read and agreed to the information letter, they were asked to sign an informed consent.

In total, 15 adult road cyclists who were active on different levels (from elite without contract to WorldTour level) were interviewed. More specifically, 11 respondents were male and four female. An overview of the respondents' characteristics is shown in Table 2.

Please insert Table 2 near here

All interviews were tape recorded and executed in Dutch by the first author and a research assistant. The duration of the interviews varied between 20 and 45 minutes. Questions

were asked about how road cyclists perceive (the threats of) match-fixing in their sport, how and when it could occur, and their attitudes towards it. Moreover, respondents answered questions about how and why certain tactics or agreements are made with (cyclists from) other teams, how they justify these acts, and if and how these tactical acts have become embedded, routinized, and normalized in road cycling. Additionally, we examined how newcomers are induced to certain tactical or corrupt acts, and if and how these acts are perpetuated in the peloton.

Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, after which we used NVivo 12 software to analyze the data (Welsh, 2002). A directed content analysis was utilized (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), as existing theory (Ashforth & Anand, 2003) was used to develop the initial codes. However, given the inductive nature of our first research question, the coding scheme was further supplemented with new codes during the data analysis. The interviews were coded separately by the first author and a research assistant. Subsequently, the coding outcomes were compared, debated, and agreed upon to guarantee a correct interpretation of the data. Relevant quotations were only translated into English in the writing phase.

Findings

The findings are presented in two separate sections, respectively focusing on road cyclists' perceptions of match-fixing in their sport (RQ1), and on how match-fixing is embedded, perpetuated, and thus normalized in road cycling (RQ2).

Road cyclists' perceptions of match-fixing in their sport

Our findings show that road cyclists acknowledge that cooperation between competitors or teams happens and that agreements are sometimes made. However, road cyclists did not perceive cooperation with competitors as match-fixing, since agreements between competitors

or teams are usually not made in advance, but depend on the situation during the race (e.g., between individual cyclists in the decisive breakaway). The statement of road cyclist no. 6 reflects this argument: "The word match-fixing means for me that we can decide before the race what will happen during the race, but that is not the case in road cycling." Moreover, road cyclists often emphasized that cooperation with competitors is part of road cycling tactics. Road cyclist no. 8 phrased this as follows: "Cooperation is certainly inherent to the sport. Road cycling is not only a physically challenging sport, but also a tactically and mentally challenging sport. […] It is a six hour race and plans are made between cyclists or teams."

Additionally, nearly all road cyclists indicated that buying and selling victories it is not uncommon in their sport, mainly at lower levels of competition (i.e., elite without contract). Although mixed feelings were present when it comes to the acceptability of buying and selling victories, many road cyclists did not even perceive this behavior as match-fixing. Road cyclist no. 9 formulated this in a striking manner: "Buying and selling races happens, and there is no taboo about this. But match-fixing, no, I don't think this lives in the world of road cycling."

In the same vein, many road cyclists were convinced that "match-fixing does not occur in road cycling." Consequently, nearly all road cyclists did not perceive match-fixing as a threat to their sport. When it comes to the threats of bookmakers or online betting, most road cyclists were convinced that betting-related match-fixing does not form a threat to road cycling. However, more than half of the interviewees indicated that bookmakers often influence the results of races, mainly during so-called kermesses (i.e., local races organized during fairs) in West Flanders (i.e., a Belgian province). Road cyclist no. 4 explained this as follows:

> Some cyclists dare to play with the bookmakers. They let someone else bet money, and they know what their odds are. Then they know how much money they can win, and how much money they can use during the race to buy the victory.

Despite incidents from the past, nearly all road cyclists perceived bookmakers as an inherent cultural part of the "tradition and folklore of the sport." Furthermore, most road cyclists believed that online betting has (had) no influence on the course of races, and thus does not form a threat to road cycling. For example, road cyclist no. 5 argued as follows: "You are much less likely to win something, than when you bet on football. You have one chance in 180 road cyclists in the peloton."

Match-fixing as normalized behavior in road cycling

Institutionalization

The road cyclists indicated that the initial decision to cooperate with competitors is made for a variety of reasons. Most road cyclists indicated that cooperation between competitors happens for tactical reasons in order to improve the likelihood of success. On the one hand, road cyclists themselves can make the decision to cooperate with their competitors. For instance, road cyclist no. 2 emphasized this feeling as follows: "If you want to win a race, it makes sense that you cooperate with your competitor(s) in the breakaway." On the other hand, the team management can also make agreements with other teams, as illustrated by road cyclist no. 15: "If two teams have the same interests, for instance, to end the race in a bunch sprint, then it happens that the team managers of both teams agree to let their teams work together during the race." However, the initial decision to cooperate is often not made solely for tactical reasons. Several road cyclists indicated that they are more likely to make agreements with competitors they know or training partners of other teams, than with competitors they do not know. Additionally, many road cyclists indicated that the decision to cooperate with competitors or to make agreements, is sometimes made from a rational-choice perspective. In words of road cyclist no. 4: "Everybody is looking for money. From the moment you can earn 100 euros extra, you are not going to let this pass you by. For me personally, it is not important whether I finish first or second." Nevertheless, the majority of road cyclists clarified that it

depends on the level and the importance of the race. Road cyclist no. 3 stated that: "The lower you go, the fewer boundaries there are."

Additionally, road cyclist no. 12 indicated that: "Ethics are quickly pushed aside, when road cyclists have the opportunity to influence the course or the result of the race in their advantage, both in terms of money or their chance of winning." In the same vein, road cyclist no. 14 explained that there are many unwritten rules in the peloton, also regarding cooperation with competitors:

> There are many unwritten rules. […] When you are with two in a breakaway (in a stage race) and you can take the leader's jersey and the other cyclist is not a general classification rider, then you often say "you may win the race and I take the jersey." Then, you ride together against those who are chasing you in order to take enough time. In this way, you can take the leader's jersey and the other cyclist may win the race."

As such, certain unwritten rules about cooperation with competitors have become embedded in road cycling's structures and processes. Moreover, road cyclists no. 6, 9, and 11 emphasized that the road cycling peloton is a small and secretive world. If deviant behaviors happen in the peloton, everyone will know it the next day, because "everyone speaks about everyone" (road cyclist no. 6).

In line with this element, many road cyclists indicated that cooperative behavior with competitors is taken for granted and normal in road cycling. Moreover, the following statement of road cyclist no. 8 illustrates how road cyclists cooperate mindlessly with their competitors: "In theory, cooperative behavior with competitors could be problematic, if you think about it. However, I don't think anyone really thinks about it." Road cyclists no. 9, 12, and 15 even emphasized that this is actually not "a topic of conversation in road cycling." However, when it comes to routinized and normalized fixing, all 15 road cyclists immediately mentioned the

post-Tour de France criteriums. All road cyclists indicated that the results of the post-Tour de France criteriums are agreed upon in advance. Moreover, nearly all road cyclists declared that the course and the end result of the race are determined by the criterium's organization. "After all, it is important that the major cyclists, who participated in the Tour de France, are on the podium" (road cyclist no. 13). Road cyclist no. 6 further clarified: "Post-Tour de France criteriums serve to entertain the people. […] The people would rather see the big names of the Tour de France win the criterium, than second or third rank cyclists, with all due respect."

Rationalization

Multiple rationalizations are used by road cyclists to justify cooperation with competitors, making agreements, or buying and selling victories. Many road cyclists referred to other sports (mainly soccer) that were worse off when it comes to match-fixing, according to them. This form of rationalization is called selective comparison (a subtype of social weighting). Through selective comparison, individuals compare their own deviant acts with behaviors of others which are considered worse, to show that they are actually not that bad (Anand et al., 2004). As road cyclist no. 2, 4, 9, and 15 stated: "I think the problem is much bigger in soccer." Road cyclist no. 6 described this as follows:

> What has happened in soccer in recent years is completely different from what happens in road cycling. I think, road cycling is actually one of the few sports where you cannot determine in advance who will win. […] Road cycling is not like soccer or tennis, where match-fixing probably happens a lot.

Moreover, when the road cyclists acknowledged that the results and the course of the post-Tour de France criteriums are almost always determined in advance, they frequently tried to shift the attention away from the stigmatized fact that these criteriums are actually "fixed." The majority of road cyclists pointed to their safety (a non-stigmatized feature) as the main

reason why criteriums are fixed. After all, the road cyclists argued that they are completely exhausted after three weeks Tour de France. This kind of argumentation could be labeled as "refocus of attention" (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). Some road cyclists supplemented this argument by the rationalization of "metaphor of the ledger" (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). More specifically, some road cyclists stated that they "earned their credits" during the tour de France, and therefore deserve to win the post-Tour de France criteriums, which are organized to entertain the people.

Additionally, some road cyclists stated that they cooperated or made agreements with competitors, because they had no other choice due to circumstances beyond their control. On the one hand, nearly all road cyclists – such as road cyclist no. 2 – stated: "It is inherent to the sport […], and everyone does it." On the other hand, road cyclist no. 4, for instance, used the denial of responsibility to justify why he once sold a race:

> It was the first time that I experienced something like this. […] I was in the decisive breakaway with two other cyclists. One of the cyclists asked me how much money I would like to have, so he could win the race. However, I had already noticed that the other cyclist in the breakaway had already made an agreement with him. So, from that moment I knew that when I would refuse his proposal, they would ride with two against me. So, I had to accept his proposal. I know it's unfair and I would rather have taken my own chance, but at that moment I had no other choice.

> Road cyclist no. 7 acknowledged this rationalization, by the following statement:

> You have no choice but to participate. When you are with three in the decisive breakaway and you refuse the proposal and decide to go your own chance, then they will ride against you, also in future races. You can only win on your own strengths when you are three times stronger than the rest.

Some road cyclists even justified the cooperation with competitors on the grounds that this behavior is not actually illegal. As stated by road cyclist no. 14: "It is not that you do things that are not allowed, because everyone knows it happens." Road cyclist no. 12 even wondered: "I don't think there are any written rules in road cycling about whether or not this behavior is allowed." Besides the rationalization of "legality," some road cyclists also used the rationalization of "denial of injury" (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). For instance, road cyclist no. 4 stated: "The sport is actually not really harmed by making agreements." Road cyclist no. 4 and 11 clarified that: "In most of the cases, when someone accepts an offer to cooperate until the finish and become second, he actually realized he couldn't win that day. […] By accepting the offer, he at least earns something that day." In addition, road cyclist no. 3 and 9 explained that, occasionally, competitors cooperate against certain cyclists, because these particular cyclists are not liked in the peloton and "deserve it" to be chased down (i.e., denial of victim). Road cyclist no. 3 further clarified this by the following explanation:

> Some road cyclists are less liked in the peloton. When these road cyclists attack, then the others will be more likely to cooperate and chase them down. I don't see any problems in this. […] I would rather see that cyclist lose than win. The cyclist in question deserved his fate due to past infairness on his side.

In the same vein, some road cyclists emphasized that certain agreements are made out of friendship. Road cyclist no. 2, for instance, stated: "Among friends, agreements are often made to attack together or not to chase each other." As such, these road cyclists used the rationalization of "appeal to higher loyalties" (i.e., friendship) to justify their cooperative behavior with competitors.

Socialization

Since road cyclists frequently mentioned that cooperation with other cyclists is an inherent characteristic of road cycling, they argued that newcomers quickly discover that the possibility of obtaining a good result is greatly reduced if they show noncooperative behavior towards their competitors. Moreover, road cyclist no. 3 stated: "The longer you are in the peloton, the better you get to know the other cyclists, and the better you get to know the strong and cooperative cyclists. This has certainly an influence on your race tactics." Accordingly, many road cyclists stated that the attitudes towards cooperative behavior gradually evolve during one's career. In the beginning, newcomers are "hungry to win" (road cyclist no. 5). However, as they get to know the hierarchies within the team and the peloton, road cyclists realize that competitors with the same goals can be allies. Hence, road cyclists' cooperative experience increases. In the same vein, many road cyclists stated that older cyclists, mainly on lower levels of competition (i.e., elite without contract) are more likely to buy and sell races. As such, the process of incrementalism is applied to gradually introduce newcomers to the culture of agreements in road cycling (Brief et al., 2001).

Additionally, some road cyclists indicated that they sometimes agree to sell a race, because they wanted to avoid (future) problems or conflicts with certain competitors. As previously mentioned, road cyclist no. 4 and 7 stated "they had no other choice," because the two other cyclists in the breakaway had already made an agreement. In the same vein, road cyclist no. 3 stated that: "It is important to build a good reputation in the peloton." After all, sometimes it is just about: "You win today, and I win tomorrow" (road cyclist no. 10). Hence, road cyclists often make a compromise in order not to endanger their future in the peloton. Furthermore, rewards often help to make this initial decision. However, many road cyclists – such as road cyclist no. 5 – stated that: "Younger cyclists give more importance to victory and their career." Consequently, pure cooptation (i.e., only rewards), is considered not always enough to induce newcomers to road cycling's culture of agreements.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine road cyclists' perceptions of match-fixing in their sport as well as the ways in which match-fixing is embedded, perpetuated, and normalized in road cycling. Our findings suggest a general lack of awareness in road cyclists regarding match-fixing and its associated dangers. Moreover, the culture of agreements, ranging from just cooperating with competitors (i.e., drafting) to even buying and selling victories, is not considered match-fixing by the road cyclists we interviewed. These findings are consistent with Christiansen and Hjørngard's (2013) paradox, which argues that although agreements may induce match-fixing, they are considered a fundamental and inherent characteristic of road cycling.

Additionally, the grey zone between road cycling tactics and fixing clearly comes into view when exploring the normalization process. By investigating why road cyclists decide to cooperate with their competitors, this study shows how this decision is made for tactical reasons, out of rivalry or friendship, or from a rational-choice perspective. As such, this range of motives/rationales makes the distinction between tactics and fixing unclear. Moreover, the fact that unwritten rules about cooperative behavior with competitors exist in the cycling peloton, indicates how deeply embedded this behavior is in road cycling's culture and processes (Mignot, 2016a; Misangyi et al., 2008; Rebeggiani, 2016). Many road cyclists even emphasized how violating these unwritten rules can endanger their future chances of winning or even their future in the peloton, which can point to a "code of silence" (Bassons, 2014; Hamilton & Coyle, 2012; Kimmage, 2007). Furthermore, road cyclists considered cooperation with their competitors as normal and habitual, and even confessed routinized fixing during post-Tour de France criteriums. Consequently, such unallowed cooperation between competitors – which is a form of match-fixing or sport manipulation when considering its dominant definition – can

be considered institutionalized in road cycling's culture and processes (Ashforth & Anand, 2003).

A range of cognitive rationalization mechanisms were used by the interviewed road cyclists to justify this dominant culture of agreements in road cycling. In accordance with Christiansen and Hjørngard (2013), many road cyclists described that "you can't buy something you aren't," since they argued that you first need to have the skills to place yourself in a position in which such agreements are possible. Moreover, all eight rationalizing ideologies, as described by Ashforth and Anand (2003) and listed by Budiman et al. (2013), were used by the road cyclists. Road cyclists frequently referred to other sports, mainly soccer, to state that match-fixing is something which happens in other sports, but not in road cycling (i.e., selective comparison) (Anand et al., 2004). Next to this, they frequently tried to shift the attention away from stigmatized features (e.g., that post-Tour de France criteriums are usually "fixed") by focusing on non-stigmatized characteristics (e.g., preserving the safety of the cyclists). Additionally, road cyclists frequently denied their responsibility, and stated that they had "no other choice" or that "everyone does it" (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). The other rationalizing ideologies were used less frequently or often in combination with the abovementioned rationalizations. As such, these rationalizations show how road cyclists tend not to view their cooperative behavior as match-fixing, but as something justifiable or even desirable (Ashforth & Anand, 2003).

Furthermore, our findings indicate how new road cyclists are gradually introduced to the culture of agreements (i.e., incrementalism) (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). More specifically, road cyclists' cooperative behavior gradually evolves the longer they are in the peloton, and the better they get to know their competitors. As such, our results confirm the statement of Ohl et al. (2015, p. 868) that "cooperation and interdependences are embedded in an ecosystem which socializes the cyclist and leads him to redefine his norms and values." In addition, many road

cyclists acknowledged that they accepted and participated in this behavior, because they wanted to avoid dilemmas or problems with their competitors (i.e., compromise) (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). These socialization processes are in line with the peloton's conceptualization of a very close community (Rebeggiani, 2016), where cyclists should adhere to unwritten rules (Mignot, 2016a). Additionally, our findings show that the socialization of newcomers by rewards (i.e., cooptation) mainly happens in combination with other socialization processes, as rewards only are often not enough to convince young cyclists. Given the presence and interdependence of the three pillars of normalization of corruption (Ashforth & Anand, 2003) in road cycling's structures, processes, and culture, we argue that match-fixing can be seen as normalized behavior in road cycling.

This study contributes empirically and theoretically to the literature on match-fixing by using an organizational corruption theoretical framework (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). After all, sports corruption research, and match-fixing research in particular, has been largely under-theorized (Kihl et al., 2017). Moreover, theoretical perspectives on match-fixing are often merely rooted in rational choice theory, which emphasizes the individual cost/benefit decision making process towards match-fixing (Boeri & Severgnini, 2011; Cashmore & Cleland, 2014; Hill, 2015). Following Gorsira et al. (2018) and Tzeng and Lee's (2020) calls to investigate match-fixing from a micro-meso perspective, we applied Ashforth and Anand's (2003) theoretical model of normalization of corruption in organizations.

Our findings revealed how match-fixing can be embedded in the culture of a sports discipline, and how it calls for actions on the three pillars of normalization. In addition, we showed how one does not suddenly engage in match-fixing, but is gradually socialized into it. Furthermore, by exploring match-fixing in the unique context of road cycling, we demonstrated how the concept of match-fixing depends on the specificity of the sport (Zaksaite, 2013). More specifically, in some sports (e.g., soccer or tennis) certain acts (e.g., cooperation with

competitors) can be considered as match-fixing, while in other sports (e.g., road cycling) it may be labeled as tactics. As such, a grey zone exists between tactics and fixing.

Conclusion

This study shows that there is a general lack of awareness in road cyclists of the threats of match-fixing. Moreover, by showing that (1) match-fixing is institutionalized in road cycling, (2) road cyclists use rationalizations to justify their cooperative behavior with competitors, and (3) newcomers are induced to the culture of agreements, we argue that match-fixing can be seen as normalized behavior in road cycling.

Although this study adds an important contribution to the (sports) corruption and match-fixing literature, several limitations are present. First, this study only examined active adult road cyclists' perceptions of match-fixing. Youth and former road cyclists, as well as other stakeholders, could shed a broader light on the process (and evolution) of the culture of agreements. Second, the geographical scope of this study was limited to Belgium, although road cycling is an international sport in terms of cyclists, teams, and races (Rebeggiani, 2016). Country and cultural differences could exist in how road cyclists perceive the culture of agreements. Additionally, there is the possibility of a social desirability bias, as some interviewees may not have been willing to admit to forms of corruption. After all, some interviewees may have wanted to protect their sport, as road cycling has already had a lot of negative exposure in relation to the doping problem (Christiansen & Hjørngard, 2013; Fincoeur et al., 2020).

Based on our empirical findings, we advocate for more countermeasures against match-fixing in road cycling. Awareness-raising initiatives might reduce the use (and development) of rationalizing ideologies and socialization processes (Anand et al., 2004). Moreover, an ethical code could be used to improve road cycling's ethical climate (Constandt et al., 2019; De

Waegeneer et al., 2017). However, given the fact that the culture of agreements is strongly embedded in road cycling, a trustworthy whistleblowing protection program is also required (Verschuuren, 2020). Hence, future research should focus on the development of regulation, prevention and education concerning match-fixing in road cycling. Furthermore, emphasis could be placed on examining whether and how the format of road cycling should be adapted to eradicate match-fixing in this sport.

References

Anand, V., Ashforth, B. E., & Joshi, M. (2004). Business as usual: The acceptance and perpetuation of corruption in organizations. *Academy of Management Executive*, *18*(2), 39–53. doi:10.5465/AME.2004.13837437

Anand, V., Manz, C. C., & Glick, W. H. (1998). An organizational memory approach to information management. *Academy of Management Review*, *23*(4), 796–809.

Ashforth, B. E., & Anand, V. (2003). The normalization of corruption in organizations. In B. M. Staw & R. M. Kramer (Eds.), *Research in Organizational Behavior* (Vol. 25, pp. 1–52). Amsterdam: Elsevier Ltd.

Ashforth, B. E., & Kreiner, G. E. (2002). Normalizing emotion in organizations: Making the extraordinary seem ordinary. *Human Resource Management Review*, *12*(2), 215–235. doi:10.1016/S1053-4822(02)00047-5

Aubel, O., Lefèvre, B., Le Goff, J. M., & Taverna, N. (2018). Doping risk and career turning points in male elite road cycling (2005–2016). *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, *21*(10), 994–998. doi:10.1016/j.jsams.2018.03.003

Aubel, O., Lefèvre, B., Le Goff, J. M., & Taverna, N. (2019). The team effect on doping in professional male road cycling (2005-2016). *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and*

Science in Sports, *29*(4), 615–622. doi:10.1111/sms.13384

Bassons, C. (2014). *A clean break: My story*. London: Bloomsbury Sport.

Bell, P., Ten Have, C., & Lauchs, M. (2016). A case study analysis of a sophisticated sports doping network: Lance Armstrong and the USPS Team. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, *46*, 57–68. doi:10.1016/j.ijlcj.2016.03.001

Beugré, C. D. (2010). Resistance to socialization into organizational corruption: A model of deontic justice. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *25*(3), 533–541. doi:10.1007/s10869-010-9176-3

Boeri, T., & Severgnini, B. (2011). Match rigging and the career concerns of referees. *Labour Economics*, *18*(3), 349–359. doi:10.1016/j.labeco.2010.10.006

Brewer, B. D. (2002). Commercialization in professional cycling 1950-2001: Institutional transformation and the rationalization of "Doping." *Sociology of Sport Journal*, *19*(3), 276–301. doi:10.1123/ssj.19.3.276

Brief, A. P., Buttram, R. T., & Dukerich, J. M. (2001). Collective corruption in the corporate world: Toward a process model. In M E Turner (Ed.), *Groups at work: Theory and research* (pp. 471–499). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Budiman, A., Roan, A., & Callan, V. J. (2013). Rationalizing ideologies, social identities and corruption among civil servants in Indonesia during the Suharto era. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *116*(1), 139–149. doi:10.1007/s10551-012-1451-y

Candelon, B., & Dupuy, A. (2015). Hierarchical organization and performance inequality: Evidence from professional cycling. *International Economic Review*, *56*(4), 1207–1236. doi:10.1111/iere.12135

Cashmore, E., & Cleland, J. (2014). *Football's dark side: Corruption, homophobia, violence*

and racism in the beautiful game. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Castro, A., Phillips, N., & Ansari, S. (2020). Corporate corruption: A review and an agenda for future research. *Academy of Management Annals*, *14*(2), 935–968. doi:10.5465/annals.2018.0156

Christiansen, A. V., & Hjørngard, M. W. (2013). You can't buy something you aren't. On fixing results in cycling. *Fair Play. Revista de Filosofía, Ética y Derecho Del Deporte*, *1*(2), 64–84.

Collins, J. D., Uhlenbruck, K., & Rodriguez, P. (2009). Why firms engage in corruption: A top management perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *87*(1), 89–108.

Constandt, B., De Waegeneer, E., & Willem, A. (2019). Ethical code effectiveness in football clubs: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *156*(3), 621–634. doi:10.1007/s10551-017-3552-0

Council of Europe. (2014). *Council of Europe convention on the manipulation of sports competitions*. Retrieved from https://www.coe.int/en/web/sport/match-fixing

Cyclingnews. (2011). Vinokourov denies he bought 2010 Liège-Bastogne-Liège win. Retrieved September 30, 2020, from https://www.cyclingnews.com/news/vinokourov-denies-he-bought-2010-liege-bastogne-liege-win/

De Waegeneer, E., Devisch, I., & Willem, A. (2017). Ethical codes in sports organizations: An empirical study on determinants of effectiveness. *Ethics and Behavior*, *27*(4), 261–282. doi:10.1080/10508422.2016.1172011

Dilger, A., & Geyer, H. (2009). The dynamic of bicycle finals: A theoretical and empirical analysis of slipstreaming. *Economic Analysis and Policy*, *39*(3), 429–442. doi:10.1016/S0313-5926(09)50037-9

Emerson, R. W. (2015). Convenience sampling, random sampling, and snowball sampling: How does sampling affect the validity of research? *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, *109*(2), 164–168. doi:10.1177/0145482x1510900215

Fincoeur, B. (2010). La question du dopage à l'aune des étapes de la carrière cycliste [The doping issue by the yardstick of the various stages of the cycling career]. *Cahiers de La Sécurité*, *11*, 72–81.

Fincoeur, B., Henning, A., & Ohl, F. (2020). Fifty shades of grey? On the concept of grey zones in elite cycling. *Performance Enhancement and Health*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1016/j.peh.2020.100179

Forrest, D. (2018). Match-Fixing. In M. Breuer & D. Forrest (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook on the economics of manipulation in sport* (pp. 91–114). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Frost, J., & Tischer, S. (2014). Unmasking collective corruption: The dynamics of corrupt routines. *European Management Review*, *11*(3–4), 191–207. doi:10.1111/emre.12034

Gioia, D. A. (1992). Pinto fires and personal ethics: A script analysis of missed opportunities. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *11*(5/6), 379–389.

Gorse, S., & Chadwick, S. (2010, July/August). Conceptualising corruption in sport: Implications for sponsorship programmes. *The European Business Review*, 40–45.

Gorsira, M., Denkers, A., & Huisman, W. (2018). Both sides of the coin: Motives for corruption among public officials and business employees. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *151*(1), 179–194. doi:10.1007/s10551-016-3219-2

Greve, H. R., Palmer, D., & Pozner, J.-E. (2010). Organizations gone wild: The causes, processes, and consequences of organizational misconduct. *The Academy of Management*

Annals, *4*(1), 53–107. doi:10.1080/19416521003654186

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, *18*(1), 59–82. doi:10.1177/1525822X05279903

Hamilton, T., & Coyle, D. (2012). *The secret race: inside the hidden world of the Tour de France*. New York: Bantam Books.

Hardie, M., Shilbury, D., Bozzi, C., & Ware, I. (2012). *I Wish I Was Twenty One Now. Beyond Doping in the Australian Peloton*. Geelong, Australia: An Auskadi Samizdat.

Hill, D. (2008). *The fix: Soccer and Organized Crime*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Hill, D. (2015). Jumping into fixing. *Trends in Organized Crime*, *18*(3), 212–228. doi:10.1007/s12117-014-9237-5

Hoenigman, R., Bradley, E., & Lim, A. (2011). Cooperation in bike racing - When to work together and when to go it alone. *Complexity*, *17*(2), 39–44.

Holden, J. T., & Rodenberg, R. M. (2017). Lone-wolf match-fixing: global policy considerations. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, *9*(1), 137–151. doi:10.1080/19406940.2016.1202304

Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, *15*(9), 1277–1288. doi:10.1177/1049732305276687

Kihl, L. A. (2018a). *Corruption in sport: Causes, consequences, and reform*. London: Routledge.

Kihl, L. A. (2018b). Micro view: Individual and group explanations of sport corruption. In L. A. Kihl (Ed.), *Corruption in sport: Causes, consequences, and reform* (pp. 30–44).

London: Routledge.

Kihl, L. A., Skinner, J., & Engelberg, T. (2017). Corruption in sport: understanding the complexity of corruption. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, *17*(1), 1–5. doi:10.1080/16184742.2016.1257553

Kimmage, P. (2007). *Rough ride*. London: Yellow Jersey Press.

Lagae, W., & Van Reeth, D. (2016). *Een economische blauwdruk voor het internationale wegwielrennen* [An economic blueprint for international road cycling]. Retrieved from https://feb.kuleuven.be/les/documenten/les16-156-lagae-vanreeth-wegwielrennen.pdf

Lastra, R., Bell, P., & Bond, C. (2018). Sports betting and the integrity of Australian sport: Athletes' and non-athletes' perceptions of betting-motivated corruption in sport. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, *52*, 185–198. doi:10.1016/j.ijlcj.2017.11.005

Mignot, J.-F. (2016a). Strategic behavior in road cycling competitions. In D. Van Reeth & D. J. Larson (Eds.), *The economics of professional road cycling* (pp. 207–231). London: Springer.

Mignot, J.-F. (2016b). The history of professional road cycling. In D. Van Reeth & D. J. Larson (Eds.), *The economics of professional road cycling* (pp. 7–31). London: Springer.

Misangyi, V. F., Weaver, G. R., & Elms, H. (2008). Ending corruption: The interplay among institutional logics, resources, and institutional entrepreneurs. *Academy of Management Review*, *33*(3), 750–770. doi:10.5465/AMR.2008.32465769

Netland, K. O., Schei, V., & Sverdrup, T. E. (2012). The winner takes all: A qualitative study of cooperation on cycling teams. *Scandinavian Sport Studies Forum*, *3*, 189–209.

Numerato, D. (2016). Corruption and public secrecy: An ethnography of football match-fixing.

Current Sociology, *64*(5), 699–717. doi:10.1177/0011392115599815

Ohl, F., Fincoeur, B., Lentillon-Kaestner, V., Defrance, J., & Brissonneau, C. (2015). The socialization of young cyclists and the culture of doping. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *50*(7), 865–882. doi:10.1177/1012690213495534

Olds, T. (1998). The mathematics of breaking away and chasing in cycling. *European Journal of Applied Physiology and Occupational Physiology*, *77*(6), 492–497. doi:10.1007/s004210050365

Pike, J. (2018). Doping, "mechanical doping," and local essentialism in the individuation of sports. In W. J. Morgan (Ed.), *Ethics in sport: Third edition* (pp. 321–335). Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics.

Rebeggiani, L. (2016). The organizational structure of professional road cycling. In D. Van Reeth & D. J. Larson (Eds.), *The economics of professional road cycling* (pp. 33–54). London: Springer.

Rest, J. R. (1986). *Moral development: Advances in research and theory*. New York: Praeger.

Scelles, N., Mignot, J.-F., Cabaud, B., & François, A. (2018). Temporary organizational forms and coopetition in cycling: What makes a breakaway successful in the Tour de France? *Team Performance Management: An International Journal*, *24*(3–4), 122–134. doi:10.1108/TPM-03-2017-0012

Serby, T. (2015). The Council of Europe convention on manipulation of sports competitions: The best bet for the global fight against match-fixing? *The International Sports Law Journal*, *15*(1-2), 83–100. doi:10.1007/s40318-015-0069-5

Smith, C. (2017a). Can mechanical doping be justified in professional cyclists' modern work environment? *PuntOorg International Journal*, *2*(1), 63–67.

doi:10.19245/25.05.wpn.2.1.6

Smith, C. (2017b). Tour du dopage: Confessions of doping professional cyclists in a modern work environment. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *52*(1), 97–111. doi:10.1177/1012690215572855

Spapens, T., & Olfers, M. (2015). Match-fixing: The current discussion in Europe and the case of the Netherlands. *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice*, *23*(4), 333–358. doi:10.1163/15718174-23032077

Stewart, B., & Smith, A. C. T. (2010). The role of ideology in shaping drug use regulation in Australian sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *45*(2), 187–198. doi:10.1177/1012690210361408

Tzeng, C.-C., & Lee, P.-C. (2020). Understanding match-fixing from the perspective of social capital: A case study of Taiwan's professional baseball system. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. doi:10.1177/1012690220917060

UCI. (2019). *UCI women in cycling: Best practice guide*. Retrieved from https://www.uci.org/docs/default-source/publications/2019-uci-women-toolkit-eng-web.pdf

UCI. (2020). *Road Teams 2020*. Retrieved from https://www.uci.org/road/teams

Van Der Hoeven, S., De Waegeneer, E., Constandt, B., & Willem, A. (2020). Match-fixing: Moral challenges for those involved. *Ethics & Behavior*, *30*(6), 425–443. doi:10.1080/10508422.2019.1667238

Van Reeth, D. (2016). The finances of professional cycling teams. In D. Van Reeth & D. J. Larson (Eds.), *The economics of professional road cycling* (pp. 55–82). London: Springer.

Van Reeth, D., & Lagae, W. (2018). A blueprint for the future of professional cycling. *Sport,*

Business and Management: An International Journal, *8*(2), 195–210. doi:10.1108/SBM-02-2017-0010

VeloNews. (2012). Colombian insists there was no deal with Vinokourov. Retrieved December 15, 2020, from https://www.velonews.com/news/road/colombian-insists-there-was-no-deal-with-vinokourov/

Verschuuren, P. (2020). Whistleblowing determinants and the effectiveness of reporting channels in the international sports sector. *Sport Management Review*, *23*(1), 142–154. doi:10.1016/j.smr.2019.07.002

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. doi:10.1080/16184741003770206

Welsh, E. (2002). Dealing with data: Using NVivo in the qualitative data analysis process. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *3*(2), Art. 26. doi:10.17169/fqs-3.2.865

Zaksaite, S. (2013). Match-fixing: The shifting interplay between tactics, disciplinary offence and crime. *International Sports Law Journal*, *13*(3–4), 287–293. doi:10.1007/s40318-013-0031-3

Zyglidopoulos, S. C., Fleming, P. J., & Rothenberg, S. (2009). Rationalization, overcompensation and the escalation of corruption in organizations. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *84*(1), 65–73. doi:10.1007/s10551-008-9685-4

Table 1: Peculiarities that make road cycling susceptible to match-fixing

Peculiarities
Hybrid sport
Hierarchical intra- and inter-team structures
Short term contracts
Prize money is distributed among team members
Technique of "drafting"
Races of heterogeneous nature
Peloton is a close community with tacit rules ~ omertà

Table 2: Overview of interviews with road cyclists

No.	Age	Gender	Level
1	24	Male	Continental
2	24	Male	Continental
3	24	Male	Elite without contract
4	27	Male	Elite without contract
5	27	Male	Continental
6	39	Male	Elite without contract
7	33	Female	Continental
8	27	Male	Continental
9	26	Female	Continental
10	29	Male	Elite without contract
11	26	Male	WorldTour
12	33	Female	Continental
13	35	Male	WorldTour
14	25	Male	WorldTour
15	33	Female	Continental

Figure 1: The three pillars of normalization (Ashforth & Anand, 2003, p. 3)