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English 101.A01

8 Nov. 2013

Summary-Response Essay

In the article, “Drug Policy in Sport: Hidden Assumptions and Inherent Contradictions,” authors Aaron C. T. Smith and Bob Stewart bring forth evidence that the use of a “harm minimization” approach to deter athletes from using harmful drugs can be much more effective than the current “deterrence-only” model used today (123). Smith and Stewart state that the deterrence only model, as enacted by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), has four major, inaccurate, assumptions that undermine the authenticity of the model’s effectiveness: setting a good example, having a level playing field, protecting the health of athletes, and preserving the integrity of the sport are those four norms (124). The authors say that a harm minimization model is beneficial in the long run for three key reasons: it focuses on the importance of context when creating regulations, develops strategies to reduce demand, and places emphasis on early intervention (127). I agree with both authors that in order to maximize the further effectiveness of WADA regulations, an integration of the missing four key elements, along with the inclusion of a harm minimization model, must be present within WADA regulations.

Smith and Stewart write that using the concept of sport as an example-setter for children is held universally, but yet still has its flaws (124). First, the idea that sports should set good examples for children is backed by studies proving that sport participation is linked to improvements in positive child-development (e.g. anxiety) (Smith and Stewart 124). However, in the past thirty-years sports have made strong, evident ties to the tobacco and alcohol industry,

which in itself shows that sport, can be a reagent for “socially dysfunctional behavior,” (Smith and Stewart 124). This is most commonly proven by the association of beer (e.g. Coors) and the NFL, and chewing tobacco within the MLB. I recall countless times watching a Mariners game and seeing the pitcher with a mouth full of chew, merely reinforcing my correlation between tobacco and sports.

Next, the authors analyze the assumption that the WADA’s drug code is essential to maintain a level playing field (124). They argue that when only select athletes have access to state of the art training technology, all other athletes become disadvantaged. They go on to say that “unique genetic advantages” can be another factor that leading to an un-even playing field (124). Again, I agree with the authors. Athletes from Denver, Colorado have an advantage over athletes in Aberdeen, Washington simply because of elevation. Variances in elevation may create an unavoidable advantage/disadvantage but nevertheless, creates inequality in sport.

Furthermore, Smith and Stewart assess the assumption that the WADA regulations also protect the health of athletes (125). One factor is the medicalization of sports, wherein professional athletes have the option, sometimes highly encouraged, of using drugs to speed up recovery rate due to injury (Smith and Stewart 126). Medicines such as pain-killers and anti-inflammatory drugs are frequently used to get athletes back on the field sooner, but simultaneously pose risk for further damage to the athlete (126). It is things of this nature, while paired with highly physical sports, which go against one of the “core values,” of the WADA, *protecting the health of athletes*. I am bias on this assumption because I enjoy the masculinity and adrenaline rush derived from participating in high risk sports, but am also opposed to the concept of using narcotics to “postpone,” the effects of an athlete’s injury.

The fourth and final assumption that Smith and Stewart attempt to debunk is the WADA's view of preserving the integrity of sport (126). The WADA basically states that "the occurrence of doping practices should be punished because they undermine the social value of sport and its fundamental authenticity" (qtd. in Smith and Stewart XXX). The authors debate this statement on grounds that it ignores the impact of science, technology, and commercialization of sport today (127). Again, I am biased on this debate for the simple fact that each of those impacts will be continually advancing and forever changing.

Even though the WADA is continually strengthening their efforts to eradicate all use of drugs within sporting, Smith and Stewart have convinced me that there is much more which can be accomplished (123-29). In my opinion, the real question isn't whether the WADA has failed in its efforts, but rather whether or not they will be willing to adapt to the ever-changing world around us and in doing so eliminate the flaws present in today's anti-doping regulations.

Work Cited

Smith, Aaron and Bob Stewart. "Drug Policy in Sport: Hidden Assumptions and Inherent Contradictions." *Drug and Alcohol Review* 27.2 (March 2008): 123-29. Print.

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In the *New York Times* editorial “Fill ‘Er Up,” Watson Smith argues that the recent drop in gasoline prices will discourage American car manufacturers from producing more fuel-efficient vehicles, which, until several weeks ago, remained a top priority. Smith remarks that, as congress is loaning out twenty-five billion dollars to the “Big Three” (Ford, GM, and Chrysler), Ford has just released its newest F-150 pickup truck, which averages only sixteen miles-per-gallon. With Ford actually *promoting* the poor fuel-efficiency of the truck, the author seems pessimistic about the future of American auto manufacturing.

On one hand, the author has a valid point. His concern about American car manufacturers’ concentration on the price of gasoline over fuel efficiency is founded. The current developments at Ford support this perspective. On the other hand, I believe the author neglects the vitality of low-fuel efficiency vehicles in commercial and rural applications, bases his assumptions about manufacturers on limited information, and distrusts Americans’ desires for advancement towards energy independence.

For one, Smith’s article dismisses that, in certain situations, vehicles that consume large quantities of gasoline are necessary. For example, many farming communities depend on trucks, tractors, and other specialized vehicles to operate. This does not mean every farmer needs an enormous, low-gas mileage pickup truck, but oftentimes a large vehicle—such as the F-150—is essential to complete many farming tasks. Furthermore, almost many service jobs (i.e. plumbing,

painting, window cleaning, etc.) depend on vehicles with high payload and high power output to haul gear.

Furthermore, Smith cites the release of one vehicle to symbolize the overall behavior of Ford, GM, and Chrysler. I believe he is wrong in stating that the manufacturers do not “understand that the days of cheap energy are over.” For one, most manufacturers have started producing hybrids and other fuel-efficient vehicles. As an example, Ford’s “Escape” hybrid, an SUV, gets up to thirty-four miles-per-gallon (“Escape”). Perhaps American car companies are slow to change their ways because mass-producing inefficient vehicles has worked in the past. However, the market will affect old selling schemes, and companies that fail to adjust will only bring their own demise. Many companies have already started this transformation.

Finally, the author assumes that Americans are more concerned with fuel prices than fuel economy. While there is surely some truth in this, I believe the popularity of fuel-efficient vehicles demonstrates that fuel-economy is important to consumers. Perhaps an impatient college student will not drive across country at fifty-five miles per hour in the name of energy independence, or a six-foot tall farmer will not cram himself into a Toyota Prius to save gasoline. Still, with the advent new hybrids, Americans *are* recognizing that, as Smith writes, “the days of cheap energy are over.” A full-scale pursuit of cleaner and cheaper energy sources is already beginning.

Sure, some manufacturers may continue to put out gas-guzzling vehicles, but Smith ignores the overall trend towards fuel efficiency by both manufacturers and consumers. It is for this reason that I believe Smith’s fears of Americans reverting to producing and purchasing large numbers of SUVs and trucks simply due to falling gas prices is unfounded. As such, the nature

of American auto manufacturing is bound to change, albeit slowly, to a market concerned with the pursuit of conservation and energy independence.

Works Cited

Smith, Watson. "Fill 'Er Up." *NewYorkTimes.com*. New York Times on the Web. 6 Nov. 2008.

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"Escape Hybrid." *Ford.com*. Ford Motor Company. 6 Nov. 2008. Web. 9 July 2012.