Corruption in Sport: Causes, Consequences, and Reform

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Corruption in Sport: Causes, Consequences, and Reform is edited by Lisa Kihl, who is also one of 20 contributing authors. This book has 13 chapters (221 pp.) that can be divided into five sections or themes: the concept of corruption, causes of sport corruption, consequences of sport corruption, reform and challenges in combating corruption, and current and future research in corruption.

Although the first two chapters are grouped under the first theme, the concept of corruption, Chapter 1 simply provides a short introduction of sport corruption and then spends most of its remaining pages in explicating the structure and content of the book. The definition and classification of corruption, however, can be found in Chapter 2, where the author suggests studying corruption from three perspectives: philosophical, legal and regulatory, and criminological. The author concludes the chapter with a model of sport-related corruption. In this model, there are two layers. The inner layer is made up of the “core of certainty,” where the law is used as a regulating mechanism for corruption, and the outer layer is made up of a “penumbra of uncertainty” that is regulated by the rules of sport.

The next four chapters are devoted to the second theme of this book: causes and sources of sport corruption. The authors of these chapters examine sport corruption in different levels, from individuals, groups, organizations, national, to the overall sport industry. In Chapter 3, sport corruption is examined at the micro level (i.e., among individuals and groups). The author starts with the underlying causes of corrupt practices, such as poorly paid officials and athletes accepting bribes to supplement their incomes. Then she concentrates on examining two types of corrupt behaviors, doping and match fixing, at the individual and group levels. Finally, sport corruption in the context of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I intercollegiate athletics is discussed. Overall, the author does a good job of explaining sport corruption with an interdisciplinary theoretical approach (i.e., using the disciplines of psychology, economics, and organizational studies, as well as such theories as motivation, personal norm, rational choice, and social network).

Chapter 4 examines sport corruption at the macro level, such as how national and international sport-governing bodies become corrupt. The author indicates that the two underlying causes of corruption accusations among international sport federations (ISFs) are the commercialization of sport and the instrumentalization of sport by politics, besides the cultural and structural factors. The general public is familiar with the well-known corruption-related indictments surrounding the
Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), but most people do not realize that fraud and bribery practices also exist in other ISFs such as the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), International Volleyball Federation (FIVB), International Weightlifting Federation (IWF), and International Handball Federation (IHF). One unique and interesting feature about this chapter is Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index of the ISFs.

It is not surprising that FIFA and FIVB have the lowest scores among the 35 Olympic ISFs (the lower the score, the more of its officials from corrupt countries operate in the ISF).

In the next chapter, the authors adopt Getz’s (2006) model of regime to examine the ability of the NCAA and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) to cope with doping. In this model, seven conceptual propositions are used to test the effectiveness of a regime: causal explanation, behavioral diversity, behavioral change, target-group size and power, clarity of objective, allocation of resources, and balance-implementation system. The authors conclude that the drug-testing policy regimes of both the NCAA and WADA are ineffective due to the various challenges they face (e.g., diverse stakeholders and behavior associated with use of performance-enhancing drugs, restricted resources provided by WADA, NCAA institutions not partnering to improve drug testing).

The authors of Chapter 6 provide a longitudinal analysis of occurrences of corruption (dating back to the 19th century) in different sports. They consider doping and breaches of codes of conduct as “noncriminal and unethical acts” and bribery (e.g., to secure a contract to host a major sporting event) as “highly illegal and criminal” (p. 80). No sponsor wants to be associated with corruption that ruins its brand name and investment (Mazanov & Connor, 2010). However, unlike corrupt individual athletes where sponsorship is quickly withdrawn, sponsors of a major sporting event are slow to react because of their commercial interests and the mass world audience. For this reason, the authors conclude that the “temptations” are always there and corruption is inevitable due to the vast sums of money involved, such as the building of infrastructure for, and sponsorship of, an international mega sporting event.

In the section of the book covering consequences of sport corruption, both the micro and macro consequences of sport corruption across the sport industry are explored. Chapters 7 and 8 examine the consequences of sport corruption at the micro level, and Chapter 9 looks into the macro aspect.

Based on the concept of integrity, the authors of Chapter 7 examine the impact of corruption on individual athletes, teams, and organizations. Although the component of integrity is complex, the authors come up with four related aspects of sporting integrity: integrity of sport itself, personal integrity in sport, the organizational integrity of sport, and procedural integrity in sport events. Using three case studies of athletes (Honsie Cronje and Lance Armstrong) and organizations (the International Olympic Committee [IOC] and FIFA), the authors illustrate the impact of corruption on the athletes, their teams, and organizations.

After a brief introduction of the nature of corruption, the authors of Chapter 8 use Gorse’s (2014) sporting-transgression model to explain organizational stakeholders’ decision-making processes in responding to sport corruption. Specifically, stakeholders can select to withdraw (either immediately or at end of the contract) or to continue the relationship. If they choose to stay, there are a few options: remain