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Impacts & Solutions

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:Social Media Sport Journalism
Case Study of Ethical values from UK and Germany

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## Introduction

As traditional media give way to digital media, particularly the Internet, consumers are beginning to live increasingly hybrid lives where the real world and the digital world interact. "In this world, online and offline identities may overlap and interdigitate, erasing prior boundaries in social, cultural, linguistic, political, and economic domains" (Jordan, 2009, p. 181). Similarly, hooliganism and sport violence has moved from the real world to the online world. Troops of sport digital armies have hijacked sports media outlets to spread their identity and superiority.

Sports journalism has been historically judged as generally more problematic, regarded as practicing questionable ethics by accepting perks from sources, writing from a biased perspective and engaging in conflict of interest, all considered anathema to journalistic norms. In today's social media world sports journalism is facing a series of ethical deficiencies that are challenging the normative standards of the profession. Media accountability instruments can play an invaluable role in addressing these shortcomings. With this in mind, this article identifies and examines the most relevant accountability instruments in the field of sports journalism, including those produced within media organizations and those created by journalists.

## Aim of the study and research questions

This study aims at examining journalists' opinion on user interactivity in British Guardian and German Die Zeit. To be specific, this research aims at answering the following research questions:

a) Social media has created a new code of ethics covering the issue of hooliganism.
b) Online journalists engaged in audience discussion are expected to maintain social order.
c) Editors in both newspapers are not abiding with professional standards when it comes covering hooligans in their newspapers in order to keep social order.

This research is based on qualitative interview/ survey examining a set of 10 sport editor-journalists in both news organisations. The researcher used a base line questionnaire, a log to track interactivity, and a second questionnaire to try and determine ethical challenges overtime.

## Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework used in this study will be based on works by the sociologist Erving Goffman and the network sociologist Manuel Castell, as well as theories connected to the social construction of identity. The dramaturgic metaphor introduced by Goffman (1959) is helpful to understand hooligans' presentation of self (Spaaij 2008). Goffman argued that all social interaction is like a theatrical performance in which actors perform one of the many roles available to them, depending on the situation in which they find themselves. Important concepts in Goffman's analysis are "onstage" and "backstage". In order to explain these concepts one can use them to describe the roles of a football-player who is "onstage" when he or she is on the field, trains, plays a game, gives press-

conferences and deals with issues related to his or her profession as a football-player. The same logic applies to the referees, trainers and other professions related to the football landscape. The new media landscape, however, has blurred the differences between "onstage" and "backstage" so that there are hardly any differences between them; this blurring is explained by the risk of being watched through new media channels such as mobile cameras. The possibility of being constantly watched, commented on, taken pictures of, and written about in a numerous websites all over the world situates the professional sportsmen and sports-women onstage twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. In this study, Goffman's metaphor of social interaction as a theatrical performance will be used in the analysis of the narrative picture of hooligans in old and new media and it will be argued that the "narrative of hooliganism in new media is shaped by the fact that the hooligans are "onstage".

As the interaction on an Internet site constitutes the main source material for this article a theoretical inspiration has been Cas-tell's discussions of "symbolic communication", a term that signifies that identities are constructed according to organisational principles in the interplay between the Internet and the self, rather than through local social belonging (Castell 1996, 1998; Nayar 2010; Sveningsson 2003). Castell claims that these virtual communities are centred on the identity to which an individual aspires, the contexts to which the individual feels he or she belongs, and the social actions he or she desires to perform. The quest for identity and meaning is the main driving force behind individual interaction on the Internet, but is also a consequence of it. I don't agree with this analysis when it comes to football websites as these websites distinguish themselves among Internet com-munities by often having clear ties to a physical and geographical location determined by the favourite team's home arena and city. In addition, I dispute the idea that identities based on race, gender, sexuality and age can be chosen on the Internet and that they have no relation to essential bodies as the actual male body seems to play an important role for the hooligan websites (Nayar 2010).

Many researchers conclude their studies about hooliganism with the statement that hooliganism is connected to a certain form of masculinity, a masculine identity based on physical power, heterosexism and a hard body. According to R.W. Connell these are im-portant characteristics of a hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1996). In addition, the hooligan masculinity is socially constructed as in opposition to something which is not masculine (Armstrong 1998). However, the social construction of the hooligan masculinity is likely to be more complex and just as Connell has concluded for the social construction of masculinity in general, there is no singular pattern of masculinity to be found everywhere (Connell 1996). In line with Connell, Ramòn Spaaij, a football researcher who has followed different supporters and hooligans and conducted over 400 interviews with hooligans from different countries, concludes that masculinities are not homogenous, simple states of being – they are continually produced and reproduced. Foot-ball cultures exist, not on their own as locations for the construction and contestation of hooligans' aggressive masculinity, but, rather, in complex interrelationships with other cultural sites, including the family, schools, labour market, media representations and the legal system (Spaaij 2006, 2008; Mac an Ghaill 1996). Nor do hooligans develop a single form of masculinity. Outside football, they adopt other masculine roles as partners, parents, children, workmates and friends (Giulianotti 1999). The analysis in this study is, however, restricted to the media narrative, and hooligan masculinity in relation to family and friends will not be studied here. Instead, questions on whether the social constructions of hooligans' masculinities differ in old and new media will be posed.

## Background: Evolution of sports reporting

Documentation of sports has been traced 5000 ago Sports like sprinting and wrestling were found in cave paintings of Lascaux Caves in France and Sumeria dates back 3000 BC. The inscriptions and drawings on the tombs of Beni Hassan in Menia Governor-ate, Saqqara Tombs and Marorika Tomb, in Egypt, dating to around 2000 BC. These examples clearly show their will to convey the message related to sports. Pictorial representation was used to propagate the basic rules of the game, uniform of the players and means to announce the winner by awarding them different collars. By these pictorial representations we know that games like Hockey, Gymnastics, Archery, Fishing, Boxing, Weight Lifting, Swimming, Rowing and Marathon running were popular sports of those times.

From 776 BC Olympiads were organized by the Greeks and from there we find a series of athletes being depicted as champions through the paintings and statues. In the medieval world, before the advent of mass media, there were two major kinds of periodi-cal publications: the hand written news sheets and single item news publications. Carved in metal or stone, Acta Diurna (Daily Acts) were posted in the public places by the Roman Empire. In China, government produced news sheets called Tipao, hand writ-

ten on silk and were read by government officials.

In 15th and 16th century long news accounts called Relations, were published in England and France. Single event publications were also posted in broadsheet format. Pamphlets and booklets were also published and were often read loud.

Advent of modern mass media and sports reporting

With the invention of moveable type printing press by Guttenberg in 1456, the wide dimension of mass media was unleashed by printing of the Bible and other religious texts on a mass basis. Although the first printed periodical Mercurious Gellobelgious, printed in Latin appeared in 1594 in Cologne, now Germany, England emerged the epicenter of journalism in the times to come. The first newspaper was published in English named Oxford Gazette which later it became London gazette, and was published twice in the week. In 1702 first daily newspaper the Daily Courant was published from London.

There exists a symbiotic relationship between sports and media, by which both are benefited. Researchers like David Rowe call the relationship between media and sports as happiest of marriages. The symbiosis of media and sport seems to find its roots in the Victorian England era.

The year 1863 is marked in the history as a breakthrough in intensifying the relations between the two institutions. The introduction of rotary press in London provided an impetus to the growth of newspaper circulation. The same year in London, football association was formed which standardized the rules of the game eventually leading to its transformation into a game of mass attraction. A letter to the editor printed in the Times in 1863 demonstrates how local rules limited the expansion of football as a game, before its standardization by the Football Association:

"I am myself an Ethonian, and the game of football as played
by us differs essentially in most respects from that played
at Westminster, Rugby, Harrow and most other London clubs.
Now, this difference prevents matches being played between
either school or club; and furthermore, prevents a player from
gaining the credit of playing well anywhere but among his own
associates. (Tischler 1981: 24)"

The sports media complex started working and both media and sports gained in terms of popularity and circulation respectively. While the press developed into a mass medium, football simultaneously turned into a mass entertainment in Britain. By 1880 football started to drive the sale of newspapers. As such, newspapers as well as advertisers reacted accordingly.

Rob Steen, in his book Sports Journalism, claims that Victorian England saw positive and enormous changes in journalism and sports in particular and sports journalism in combination. To quote the Times in 1895,
"apparently without much fear of contradiction that all the
school boys of England read the cricket news, and that sport,
moreover, had become a positive passion, thanks to the publicity
given by the sporting press."

In the Victorian age, newspapers were the main source of information. With the abolition of stamp duty in 1855, many daily newspapers appeared in London, many of which carried sports news. The first newspaper with a special sports section was the Morning Herald in England (1817), many other English and American papers followed it: The Globe (England, 1818), The American Farmer (USA, 1819), and Bell s Life (England, 1824, published on Sundays). The Times, the conservative London paper, introduced its sports section in 1829. The sports sections of all these newspapers contained local news, as telegraph transmission was not yet available.

In the year 1882, first imprint of journalism emerged on sporting history. Australian cricket team was touring England and managed to beat the mighty English on their soil for the first time at the Oval. In response to this incidence of sports, the Sporting Times published a mock obituary and announced the death of English cricket by headlining it as "body is cremated and the ashes will be taken

to Australia". In the subsequent year when England was preparing to tour Australia, English newspapers sensationalized and wrote, "the tour is to regain the ashes". A damsel from Australia presented an urn to the touring captain Ivo Bligh which contains the ashes of a bail, a ball or a vail. Whatever it was, the urn would endure as the trophy for which the two nations would henceforth compete.

Pierce Egan is generally agreed to be the father of sports journalism, a writer who offended many Regency Sensibilities in London and beyond. Born in 1772 to an Irish road mender, Egan achieved a modicum of notoriety with a satire about the Prince Regent and his lover. It was in the burgeoning sporting arena, nevertheless, that he made his name. His first collection of pugilistic-themed musings, Boxiana, was published in 1812, he reported on bare-knuckle fighting and horse racing for the Weekly Dispatch from 1816 and, eight years later, suitably emboldened, launched a Sunday newspaper, Pierce Egan's Life in London, And Sporting Guide. Another leading pioneer in sports journalism was William Denison, first Honorary Secretary Surrey County Cricket Club. He first reported cricket matches for The Times in the 1840s, a decade that also saw him produce the magazine, Cricketer's Companion. United States, another major power of the world was also undergoing a drastic socio-political change in the 19th century. Before 1830s, sports were considered vulgar and disreputable among more literate people. Sports like horse racing and boxing received less coverage because it appealed to lower classes.

The 1830s-40s saw dramatic social change in the United States. Wave of industrialization in Northeast was underway. Cities swelled because of migration from countryside & immigrants. Interest in reading and sports was also increased by that time. By 1869, first pro-baseball league was also established. Newspapers started asserting health benefits of athletics and started to promote athletics as a way to train for life. Media began to extol virtues of sport for American society. U.S was transforming into an industrial power. Professional baseball entrenched as national spectator sport. Boxing moved from bar brawls to organized bouts. Golf and bicycling also rose in popularity. The cost of newspaper printing went down due to technology leading to increase in circulation of newspapers. Sports by the time started to attract readers hence advertisements followed. The symbiosis began to flourish. In 1883, Pulitzer created 1st sports department for New York World. In 1895, Hearst started 1st sports section at New York Journal. Use of telegraph enhanced the timing of serving the reports hot, sports journalism became a distinct genre.

In other parts of the world sports was swelling into a cult called "Masculine". France, Germany, Norway and the parts of the world which were colonized by the mighty imperial powers were also witnessing a shift towards modern culture; a culture in which information, entertainment and sport was rated high. By the end of the century, the religion was gaining fresh apostles. The French staged their first (strictly domestic) tennis championship in 1891; pre-empting the football league by forming the baseball league in 1876. The U.S. launched its own tennis (1881) and golf (1895) Opens, and in 1892 hosted the first heavyweight boxing title fight of the gloved era. This fledging internationalism culminated, initially, in the modern Olympic Games of 1896, in Athens, prehistoric home of the prototype.

The relationship between sports and media crystallized in beginning of the twentieth century. In England, football started eating up the editorial space covered by cricket. With the start of the labour movement and rise of the working class in terms of modicum of money and status, the pendulum swung. A more colorful and gossipy
American style of journalism took over from the old Victorian style. The improvement in the printing process and transportation enhanced the rewrites and updates of the test matches and golf tournaments.

Hugh Buggy, a Melbourne Herald reporter, made a mark by covering one of the biggest sporting controversies remembered as "bodyline ashes series" in 1932-33. In fact, the term bodyline was brainchild of the reporter covering the series in Australia, in which England bowlers were deliberately targeting Australian batsmen on their body, which was unethical and draws a line between fair and unfair play. Hugh Buggy was using the phrase „bowling on the line of the body" in his reports but to cut the cost of telegram while sending the report he used „bodyline bowling". The controversy was the first significant international row.

The People boasted four pages of sports and increased its circulation from 60, 00, 000 in 1942 to 4.6 million immediately after World War II. It exploited the sports' commercial possibilities optimally. The newspaper also financed the year-long investigation in English football about betting, one of the biggest scoops in sports of the era.

## Television and sports reporting

A major change in sports viewing experience was awaiting, as television set its steps into the picture. The world was going to experience sporting events live in their living room with a cup of coffee. The sports lovers need not to go into the stadiums to enjoy the game; instead, television would cater them at their sofa. "In 1936, certain parts of the Summer Olympics could be seen on television in about 30 public areas in Berlin. In June 1937 approximately 2000 Londoners could watch a tennis match transmitted from Wimbledon, and in 1938, the first international football fixture – between England and Scotland – was aired on British television".

After the Second World War and emergence of the third world countries, scenario of the world changed. The dominant paradigm of development was injected in the developing and the under developed countries. The concepts like globalization, liberalisation and new world information and communication order were projected by the western countries as the sole path of development. In doing so, the West presented sports as one of the key mantra for cultural change.

The phenomenon of sport was consistently presented as a"
prime instance of the gathering force of globalization, especially
by extending and reconfiguring national cultural practices
as global phenomena. As a result, „What may at first seem a
"national pre-occupation takes on global implications
"(Wenner, 1998:3)

With the entire media available, the electronic medium of television emerged as the popular device to get amused and informed as well among the public. Sports journalism also saw changes as people would prefer the medium where fast news of the events is available. Television provides sound as well as images, which gives the feeling of being there to the spectators. The technology provides the spectators to enjoy the event from different angles. Slow motion and replays also enhance the view of the action and make it spectacular.

This curiosity of knowing who won was catered by electronic media but due to lack of time they were not able to provide the background information about a match. Print media started providing this stuff to the readers, special columns, comments and analysis of the overall proceedings of the sporting event, along with an alluring style of writing that propelled sports journalism into new heights of professionalism.

Television seems simultaneously to support, popularize, and dominate sports. It has contributed to the globalization of sports. By the worldwide transmission of sports, traditionally popular only in certain countries or regions such as baseball in America, cycling in France, sumo wrestling in Japan, television fueled new sporting fashions elsewhere, and live reports from international events like the Olympics and Soccer's World Cup introduced audiences across the world to new sports.

In the beginning, television cameras were immobile and actions were shot with defined panorama. Boxing matches were ideal for television to cover because of its limited space of small ring. 1970's, 80's and 90's saw technology which innovated the camera to move around and focus on the action in every corner of the ground.

Slow motion with 1000 frames per second crystallized the minutest of details of the action. Introduction of the cable and satellite network opened the floodgates for specialized TV channels dedicated to sports. The increased number of TV channels due to cable and satellite television made it possible in 1979 to start the first network in the USA specializing in sports, named ESPN (Entertainment and Sports Programming Network). In Europe, where the monopoly of public service broadcasters was broken in most countries in the 1970s and 1980s, Eurosport and DSF, a German sports channel, went on air. The specialized sports channels have also changed the nature of sports reporting by introducing more entertaining elements.

Commentators make a lot of jokes and puns. Researchers have tried to study the relationships between sports and media and coined some terminologies and concepts like the "sports/media complex" (Jhally 1989), the "media/sport production complex" (Maguire 1993), the "media sport cultural complex" (Rowe 1999), and the "sport-media nexus".

## New media and sports reporting

In mid-nineties came Internet which took over the field while competing with other forms of media like TV, radio, newspapers and sports magazines. Internet provides instant inflow of information from kilometers away on a single click at the fastest pace. People find it easy to follow a test match or a golf match while working in the office or travelling. Internet on mobile phones these days connects you with the world and events happening around. Sports fans can update themselves at every second even if they are pre-occupied. The dot com boom has significantly changed the media market. Websites like www.cricinfo.com for cricket and www.live-scores.com for soccer have emerged as the popular destinations on the internet, for sports lovers to update themselves while keeping themselves busy in the work they are out for.

Steen also wrote in his book, Sports Journalism, about introduction of web version of sports publications:

"Cricinfo, indeed, was set up by English expats living in the
US who were eager to satisfy their thirst for up-to-date scores,
though Guardian Unlimited were first to produce the web
version, accompanied by articles that could not be accommodated
in print: one of the wonders of this is the freedom it afforded
to break the tyrannical hold so long imposed by page sizes
and the column format. Soon it was deemed commercial
suicide not to follow suit, even though nobody had quite as
yet, worked out precisely how to make such sites pay."

Internet has, in fact, emerged as an encyclopedia which provides all the photographs, statistical data and other background information of a sport. Of late, clubs and organizations both government and private, own their websites whereon information about latest developments of the team, players' performances and statistics are updated on a regular basis. For the sports which are neglected by media, internet, of course is a boon. Fans can find information about the tournaments and other latest developments on the net by the use of search engines. Every tournament which is organized has its website, information regarding venues and tickets can be availed from it. Due to hits on the website by the fans, advertisers are also attracted. A fair chance of getting handsome amount of money from the advertisers is there. As such, the internet provides and revolutionizes the sporting experience of the passionate fans of sports. Short message services are also available for the fans to be updated about latest scores of the match.

### Hooliganism and Media

International research on hooligans and hooliganism has focused on explanations of these phenomena Dunning (2002). The focus has been on football hooliganism in Britain. The researchers have come from several mother disciplines and have used various theoretical frameworks for their research, such as anthropology (Harris 1991; Armstrong 1998), postmodernism (Giulianotti 1999), Marxism (Taylor 1971; Clarke 1978; Hargreaves 1986), cultural sociology (Marsh 1978), psychological theory (Kerr 1994) and history (King 1997; Robson 2000). The discipline with the widest spread, inside and outside Britain is "figuration sociology" or "process sociology". This discipline is a synthesis of psychology, history and sociology, based on the civilisation theory founded by Norbert Elias. Eric Dunning, a follower of Elias, has integrated the latter's civilisation ideas into the context of football and hooliganism. Empirically, these ideas are based in three perspectives on hooliganism: explaining the "meaning" of hooliganism by analysis of empiric material from or by the hooligans themselves, localising hooliganism in the social structure with emphasis on questions of social class and gender, and examining the dynamics at work in interactions between hooligans and other groups in society (Dunning 2002). Despite being the most widespread theory, the figuration sociologists' model of explanation has been heavily criticised for lacking in critical reflexivity, being overly descriptive and not being grounded in sufficient empirical evidence (see for example Giulianotti 2004).

Despite the tough and often harsh debate of the past twenty years among English football researchers, most agree that hooliganism is a highly complex issue that is difficult to demarcate in theory and practice. In addition, and as I have already mentioned above, it is also problematic to define what constitutes hooliganism since the definitions that have had the most impact are those created in the worlds of media and politics, and include almost any disturbance motivated by sports. In practice, this means that the violence of individual thugs on or off the field, verbal assaults, physical violence, threats of violence, and vandalisation of public or private property are all included in the term hooliganism. In the words of Dunning (2001: 1): "Probably the most important thing to stress is that the label 'football hooliganism' is not so much a scientific sociological or social psychological concept as a construct of politicians and the media."

It is clear from this quote that Dunning sees the media as having a crucial role in constructing the image of hooliganism. Dunning emphasises the importance of what he labels the tabloidization of the popular press and claims that the media's treatment of these issues strongly contributes to the spreading and development of hooliganism. He points to two tendencies in media reporting that illustrate this well. First, the media has been giving the impression that the problems are more major and serious than what is actually and objectively the case. Second, the large amount of media attention on hooliganism has fortified their collective identity and increased the number of hooligan clashes (Dunning 2002: 4). It is important for this study to stress that Dunning's conclusions are connected to old media, but even so, it will be claimed here that new media has a crucial role as well. The actual reporting, and what I have chosen to call the narrative picture may, however, differ between old and new media.

The role of media in connection to hooliganism has also been emphasised by researchers other than Dunning. The first Swedish report on hooliganism was published in 1986 by the educationist Martin Johansson, in which he provides an overview of psychological, socio–psychological and sociological explanations of hooliganism. Worth noting is how he points to the difficulties in measuring the frequency of violence that pertains to sports, since much of this violence can only be triggered by its being noticed in the media (Johansson 1986). Just like Dunning and other researchers, Johansson's analysis stresses medial influence on the hooligan discourse.

## Methodology

### Scientific Method

As mentioned earlier, this research is based on qualitative interview/ survey examining a set of 10 sport editor–journalists in British Guardian and German Die Zeit news organizations. The researcher used a base line questionnaire, a log to track interactivity, and a second questionnaire to try and determine ethical challenges overtime.

The practice of using qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study, called a mixed–method evaluation design, has proved beneficial. According to Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989), the mixed–method approach allows the researcher to verify findings, refine research questions, and constantly consider new areas of research. The combination of methods used in this study, sometimes referred to as triangulation, helped to establish a participant's identity change as a fan and a commentator, based on online interaction with sports–related information (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Creswell, 2010).

### Research Sample

Both the Guardian and Die Zeit are seen as elite news organizations when it comes to news organization structure as well as readership. Their online version is visited by more than 250,000 unique visitors in 2015.

The study was conducted in February 2015 where the league in both nations are seen to be at high. To begin, the researcher contacted journalists in both news organizations involved in creating sports–related content online. A recruitment process yielded 10 male participants in each organization. Because participants came from a convenience sample, the results from this study cannot be generalized to the entire population.

The research was conducted on three stages: a baseline questionnaire, examining interactivity logs, and interviews and a second questionnaire round.

The first stage of the research was to submit a questionnaire to each participant to better understand his identity as a fan and as a commentator. McCracken, a leading U.S. scholar on interviewing methods, says that questionnaires work well with in–depth interviews because they "[establish] channels for the direction and scope of discourse" (1988, p. 24). The questionnaire, created with Survey Monkey (http://www.SurveyMonkey.com), consisted of two sets of seven point–scale questions, questions about the participants' interaction time with online information and demographic questions. The first set of seven questions is for a reporting on fanship scale, while the second set for a commentatorship scale. Wann and Branscombe (1993) developed the reporting fanship scale, called the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS). It is meant to measure "the degree to which spectators identify with sports teams" (Wann & Branscombe, 1993, p. 1). The scale is comprised of seven questions asking how a participant views his fanship, and how others view it (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). For the purpose of this study, the SSIS was used as the first set of seven questions without being almost unchanged.

While research into content creation is relatively new, no scale was found to measure the degree of a participant's identity as a commentator. To solve this problem, the researcher adapted the SSIS to create the second set of seven questions in Appendix 1 and captured self–reported scores on a respondent's level of commentators.

All participants filled out the questionnaire on the same day during two time slots. It was important to choose a day for participants to fll out the questionnaire when they would not be strongly influenced by a recent sports–related event, such as a big game or news development. As each participant completed his questionnaire, Survey Monkey organized his responses as an individual and within

the entire group. The data was analyzed by looking at percentages and frequencies. Surprising findings and emerging themes were also noted. This method allowed the researcher to better understand the fan and commentator identities of the participants at the start of the study, so she could measure identity change at the end of the study.

The second stage of research was to have each participant keep a log of their interactivity for 10 weeks, notably on their experiences in adding their own comments to ongoing online discussions. Coughlan and Sklar (2003) stated, "Another useful preparatory activity is to encourage participants to keep a journal...to reflect on their everyday behaviors, and to formulate a point of view about a design issue by focusing on it as they went about their everyday lives" (p. 133). The logbooks were distributed to participants in August 2017, prior to the start of the Premiere league and the Bundesliga season.

The participants received logs to start filling out the week of August 30, 2017. Once per week for 10 weeks, they were to fill out one log to describe and comment on their experiences. Participants submit ted their logbooks by October 31. Once the logbooks were submitted, participant responses were coded for recurring themes, steady changes, and surprising elements.

Finally, each participant was asked to complete another questionnaire, which used only questions 2–20 of the first questionnaire. After reviewing the responses from this questionnaire, the researcher compared each participant's response with the other participants' to the same initial questionnaire and also compared the each newspaper group's aggregate responses to the initial questionnaire.

## Findings

Sports journalism has been historically judged as generally more problematic, regarded as practicing questionable ethics by accepting perks from sources, writing from a biased perspective and engaging in conflict of interest, all considered anathema to journalistic norms.

Media ethicists have argued that sports journalists should practice their craft with the same standards as other journalists. Sports journalists have also acknowledged the need for increased professionalism; researchers have noted "evidence that newspaper sports journalism is changing and becoming serious." The adoption of ethical codes and journalistic ideals regarding freebies, boosterism and other issues are considered indicators that sports journalism is meeting professional standards.

This research, a survey of sports editors at daily newspapers in the British Guardian and German Die Zeist, finds that sports departments still vary in their use of ethical codes and professional standards, however. Sports editors, may operate by a set of norms not acceptable in other parts of the newsroom.

## Codes of Ethics

Codes of ethics are recognized as being valuable to journalism because they introduce issues, provide guidance and clarify standards of behavior. Codes do not guarantee ethical behavior; researchers argue that how much management embraces a code and how often ethics are discussed are more important than the existence of a code.

The Associated Press Sports Editors (APSE), formed during the 1970s, adopted a code in 1975 and revised it in 1991; it eschews conflicts of interest, discounts, free tickets and gifts. Critics argue that sports editors, however, may give only lip service to such codes, rendering them meaningless. Garrison and Salwen wrote: Verbal endorsements for such matters give the impression that sports journalism is moving toward professional status. There are only rewards to be gained and no negative consequences from verbally endorsing professionalism and lofty ethical standards.

Slightly more than half of the editors (56 percent) said their staffs follow an ethical code. Ninety percent also believed that the sports department code should be the same as that used by the newsroom. Fifty-one percent of both newspapers dailies follow a code; 78 percent of dailies with more than 100,000 circulation use a code ($X^2=10.204$; df=3; p<0.05).

## Ethics

Editors were asked to indicate how often ethics are discussed in their sports departments. Six percent said "every day," and 26 percent said "less than once a month." Thirty percent said discussions took place once or twice a week; 37 percent said such discussions took place once or twice a month.

Significant differences existed based on experience ($X^2=45.192$; df=24; p<0.01). Editors with fewer than five years' or more than 30 years' experience most often reported discussing ethics "every day" (13 and 22 percent, respectively) than did editors with between 6 and 30 years' experience, who reported doing so at a rate of about 2 percent. Editors with more than 30 years' experience reported most often (43 percent) that ethical issues were rarely or never discussed.

## Freebies

Sports editors were asked whether they agreed with the statement, "Receiving free tickets, travel or tokens does not affect the objectivity of a sports reporter." More than half (53 percent) disagreed with this statement, and 43 percent agreed. Four percent provided a "don't know/not sure" response. (See Table 2.) Significant differences among editors existed based on circulation category ($X^{sup}2^{} = 33.343$; df=15; p<0.01). Fifty percent of editors at small-circulation dailies (<50,000) disagreed compared with 82 percent at very large papers (>250,000). Adherence to a code did not impact editors' responses regarding freebies ($X^{sup}2^{} = 11.713$; df=5; p<0.05).

## Boosterism

Editors were asked to indicate agreement with the idea that sports coverage "should boost home teams." Fifty-nine percent disagreed and 39 percent agreed. Two percent provided a "don't know/not sure" response.

Significant differences among editors existed based on circulation ($X^{sup}2^{} = 42.245$; df=15; p<0.01). About 46 percent of sports editors at small dailies supported boosterism; fewer at larger papers did. For instance, only 17 percent of editors at papers with 100,000 to 250,000 circulation believed coverage should support home teams.

Significant differences also existed among editors based on age ($X^{sup}2^{} = 41.648$; df=25; p<0.05) and journalism experience ($X^{sup}2^{} = 44.053$; df=30; p<0.05). Editors who were 30 years old or younger (51 percent) and who were older than 60 (43 percent) less often disagreed with boosterism. The age group that most often disagreed (78 percent) with the statement was 41–50 years old. The percentage of editors who disagreed with the statement climbed with experience; 42 percent with fewer than five years' disagreed with boosterism compared with 75 percent with 21 to 30 years' experience.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Although an increasing number of sports editors have adopted ethical codes, beliefs and practices that defy ethical norms persist. The results of this study reveal that sports editors in both newspapers may not be much closer to professional standards than they were years ago. The problems seem to be more pronounced for smaller-circulation papers. Further, this study did not reveal younger journalists as a "new breed" of professionalism. These findings highlight the need for increased emphasis on ethics in both sports journalism education and in sports departments.

It is difficult to imagine a code of ethics that would allow accepting f reebies or demonstrating bias in coverage; the APSE code and the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) code both address these issues. Thus, the results of this survey, where 43 percent of editors do not believe objectivity is compromised by perks and 39 percent believe sports pages should cheer home teams, indicate a disconnect between what many editors say they want and what they actually believe. This seems to support Garrison and Salwen's assertion that editors see the value in "verbally endorsing professionalism" but don't translate the endorsement to practice.

Another indicator of the low status of ethics is the frequency by which sports editors report discussing issues. More than 60 percent reported that ethics discussions took place only occasionally or rarely. Given the importance of such discussions to promoting ethical behavior and the likelihood that editors are faced with ethical quandaries daily, whether they recognize them as such or not, lack of dialogue could promote poor decision-making.

The results also challenge the notion that younger journalists bring a higher professional standard to newsrooms. Younger editors did not respond differently except in two areas: the frequency of ethics discussions and the degree to which they supported boosterism.

On one hand, the fact that younger journalists were more likely to report frequent ethical discussions is encouraging. This could indicate a higher sensitivity to ethical issues. This could also be a function of their relative inexperience; they are less sure of themselves and, thus, more likely to seek feedback from colleagues as they socialize into the newsroom culture.

Younger editors, however, were also more likely to support boosterism, a practice that has tarnished the image of sports departments. Perhaps younger editors still view sports too much as "fans" and not enough as journalists, or they more easily bend to pressure from readers who expect cheerleading.

Editors at smaller papers, who were generally younger and less experienced, were less likely to see ethical problems with freebies, were more likely to support boosterism and were more likely to work without a code than were editors at larger papers.

These results are not surprising. Sports editors work with just a few freelancers or without any staff support; they are forced to rely on contributions written by coaches, parents or fans. Further, they may be more likely not to question the ethics of freebies if their newspaper resources are stretched thin. What is encouraging, however, is that about 50 percent of editors at small-circulation dailies report that they follow a code. Further, they do not report discussing ethics less often than do others.

## Recommendations

The results of this survey highlight the need for education and advocacy for journalistic standards in sports departments. Research that explores other ethical issues for sports journalists, such as attribution and relationships with sources, would also be helpful.

It seems that education and advocacy are needed most by two groups: editors at small-circulation dailies and sports journalism students. Although it is likely that sports editors at larger papers receive ongoing training–both in-house and from organizations such as APSE–editors at small papers can go years without it. This is where state press associations and universities can help. Training for editors at small-circulation papers will not erase the dilemmas they face without needed resources; that problem is one that can be solved only by enlightened publishers. Nevertheless, training for editors at small papers can help.

Further, if sports journalism is to benefit from a "new breed with professional aspirations," rigorous training must take place at the college level. Courses should emphasize ethics and address the problems that have tarnished the reputation of sports journalism. Young editors and reporters must forge paths that embrace ethical norms to help sports journalism tackle the professional problems that have plagued it for decades.

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