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國際學碩士學位論文

**A Study on the Role of Transnational
Advocacy Networks on Sports:
The Case of Boxing and Mixed Martial Arts**

초국경 네트워크의 스포츠에 대한
영향력 연구:
권투와 종합격투기의 사례를 중심으로

2013年 8月

서울대학교 國際大學院

國際學科 國際協力 專攻

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**A Study on the Role of Transnational
Advocacy Networks on Sports:
The Case of Boxing and Mixed Martial Arts**

Thesis by

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Graduate Program in International Cooperation
For the degree of Masters of International Studies

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**Graduate School of International Studies
Seoul National University**

Seoul, Korea

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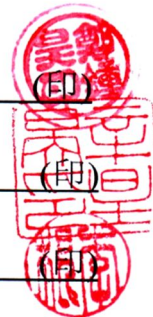
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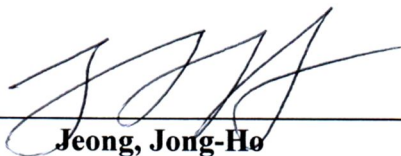
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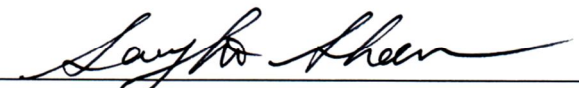
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Abstract

A Study on the Role of Transnational Advocacy Networks on Sport: The Case of Boxing and Mixed Martial Arts

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Considering the decline of boxing over the past few decades, the recent emergence of another combat sport, mixed martial arts (MMA) is worth noting. Those studying the changes made to violent sports have credited Nibert Elias' concept of *sportization*, the civilizing process of a sport, to explain the evolution of the two sports. This study will examine the role of a network of interest-driven actors, or a transnational advocacy network (TAN), and the extent of its influence on sportization as a part of the TAN's movement against boxing and MMA.

Though findings indicate that interest-driven actors' normative idea of ethics and morality did bring about regulation changes in both boxing and MMA, the concept of sportization alone fails to explain the differing trends between the two combat sports. This study argues that instead, varying degrees of the sport organizer's ability to capture the changing dynamics of business opportunities more comprehensively explain the

decline of boxing and the emergence of MMA.

This study shows that, taking full advantage of being a late mover, MMA performed better in balancing the TAN's normative pressure and the components needed for sport commercialization, which are conflicting in nature. This conflict arises in that the components needed for sport commercialization: *spectacularization*, *dramatization*, and *personalization*, are maximized using the violent aspects of the sport, the very aspects the TANs attack.

.....

Keywords: Boxing, Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), Transnational Advocacy Networks (TAN), Sport Commercialization

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List of Abbreviations

Name	Abbreviation
American Medical Association	AMA
British Medical Association	BMA
Canadian Medical Association	CMA
Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy	CTE
International Boxing Association	AIBA
International Boxing Federation	IBF
International Mixed Martial Arts Federation	IMMAF
Mixed Martial Arts	MMA
National Basketball Association	NBA
National Medical Association	NMA
Nongovernmental Organization	NGO
Orient and Pacific Boxing Federation	OPBF
Transnational Advocacy Network	TAN
Ultimate Fighting Championship	UFC
World Boxing Association	WBA
World Boxing Council	WBC
World Boxing Organization	WBO
World Medical Association	WMA

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

“To seek to isolate sport as an activity that stands alone in human affairs, untouched by “politic” or “moral considerations” and unconcerned for the fates or those deprived of human rights, is as unrealistic as it is (self-destructively) self-serving” (Des Wilson as cited in Sage, 2010).

Sage quotes Des Wilson in his book Globalizing Sport, emphasizing that sport-political connections are present at all levels of sport and politics, from local to national and further, international (2010, p. 186). Most studies have focused on the use of sport by state actors for nation and national identity building and as a means to display its soft power (Bairner, 2008; Cha, 2009; Mojca & Coakley, 2010; Mangan, Gwang, & Park, 2012). Studies of these natures can be classified as being ‘international’, or having to do with interactions between a government and another government. There are relatively fewer studies that look at sport and its issues under a transnational light (Coakley & Dunnig, 2000).¹ Transnational issues are issues that “transcend beyond borders” or those issues that extend or operate across national boundaries (Dictionary.com, n.d.).²

There exists many different types of sports but combat sports are unique in that the main goal of the sport is to inflict bodily harm on the opponent. Because of this inherent goal, the violence and brutality involved have historically been subject to large-scale controversy, and as a result, heavy scrutiny. Most cultures and countries have a similar

¹ See Coakley & Dunning (2000) for an overview of various issues involved in sports.

² The difference between the ‘international’ and ‘transnational’ is emphasized here. Refer to the definition of international: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/international?s=t> (retrieved June 20, 2013).

standard when it comes to such issues. Concern regarding combat sports due to its violence and brutality is thereby transnational.

1.2 Research Motivation

Even avid boxing fans will have difficulty arguing that boxing is as relevant to today's society as it was in the 19th and 20th century (Rovell, 2009; Bernstein, 2103).³ The popularity of boxing reached its peak in the 1920-70s. Although a more specific time period marking boxing's heyday is debatable, it is certain that the height of its popularity is in the past. Labeled "sweet science", there was a time when boxing reigned as a worldwide syndrome.⁴ Today, boxing has lost its former momentum and continues to suffer from a static lack of growth, a decline to which boxing organizers and experts have admitted to (Mankoff, 2011, Appendix A; Bernstein, 2013; Mcrae, 2013; Boxing's future, 2013).⁵

Boxing has been criticized by several different groups throughout history for being dangerous and violent. In particular, boxing advocates often blame those groups like medical establishments and religious groups that question the morality of the sport for causing its unpopularity. Boxing advocates have claimed that this evaluation is unfair

³ The moving away of boxing from society is evident in the decrease in percentage of boxing participants and the removal of boxing from mainstream media. Participation of boxing dropped 42.3% in 2009 compared to 2011 in the United States (Rovell, 2009). Boxing newscaster, Bernstein (2013) explains that boxing is no longer covered on mainstream media as it used to be in its heyday.

⁴ Boddy (2011) notes that many English idioms and figure speech still used today are derived from boxing. This demonstrates boxing's relevance to everyday life back in the days. Refer to: Boddy, K. (2011) 'Under Queensberry Rules, So to Speak': Some versions of a metaphor. *Sport in History*, 31(4): 398-422.

⁵ "Boxing Days" outlines how the 'boxing days' have been over for quite some time. The article argues that the decline the popularity of boxing is "mirrored in the frequency of boxing cartoons that have been published in *The New Yorker*" (See Appendix A).

citing other sports that have higher fatality rates but receive less criticism (Donnelly, 1989).⁶ However, the main reason behind such harsh criticism is that the ultimate goal and intent of boxing is defined in the infliction of harm on another human being, whereas other so-called dangerous or violent sports like motorcycling and American football have different end goals (i.e. to reach the finish line or to score a touchdown). It is hence not unwarranted that the morality of combat sports has been called into question for the past two centuries.

As such, the decline in the popularity of boxing and its moving away from mainstream media seemed as if the anti-boxing movement had been somewhat successful in implementing normative thought to the public in the field of combat sports. However, not long after, combat sport saw the emergence of another even more violent in form, mixed martial arts (MMA). Having almost the equivalent goal of inflicting harm on the opponent as boxing, MMA faces many similar moral concerns as boxing. Accordingly, similar groups, such as medical establishments and religious groups have spoken against the sport. The network of actors and other groups that are part of the anti-boxing or anti-MMA movement will be henceforth referred to as Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs).⁷

Despite the concerns raised by TANs, MMA remains one of the fastest growing sports in history (Schorn, 2009; Sharp, 2010; Burneal, 2013). In fact, MMA has also shown

⁶ Other 'dangerous' sports have higher fatality rates therefore boxing advocates claim that boxing is not as dangerous as people argue. Donnelly (1989) cites fatality rates of these sports from a publication by the American Medical Association (1983): Boxing (.13); US college football (.3); motorcycle racing (.7); scuba diving (1.1); mountaineering (5.1); hang gliding (5.6); sky diving (12.3); and jockeys and sulky drivers (12.8).

⁷ The concept of TANs will be discussed in detail in Section 2.

signs of significant global growth. The Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) organization is the largest pay-per-view event provider in the world, their broadcast reaching almost one billion homes worldwide in 30 different languages (Ultimate Fighting Championship, 2013a).⁸ In key demographic groups, particularly males aging 18-34, UFC's television events draw better ratings than the National Basketball Association (NBA) and Major League Baseball (MLB) games (Scelfo, 2006). Recent trends show that interest in MMA or specifically, the UFC, as a professional sport increased significantly compared to the more commonly known major sports leagues like the National Football League, National Hockey League, NBA, and MLB in terms of number of visitors to their respective home pages in the U.S (Saks, 2007, Appendix B).⁹ In discussing MMA's growth, Kim (2010) cites that,

In September 2001, UFC 33¹⁰, the first [Nevada State Athletic Commission]-sanctioned MMA event in Nevada, grossed \$816,660. In December 2006, UFC 66¹¹ grossed \$5.4 million. Furthermore, UFC 66 had a pay-per-view rate of approximately 1.05 million buys, grossing approximately \$42 million. In total, the UFC generated over \$200 million in revenue in 2006, breaking records previously held by boxing and professional wrestling, which generated \$177 million and \$131 million respectively. ...Gross revenues of pay-per-view events have had

⁸ The UFC is by far the forefront runner promotions organization of MMA and it is the "fastest growing sports organization in the world" Refer to: <http://www.ufc.com/discover/ufc> (retrieved April 27, 2013).

⁹ Although data collection is somewhat raw, general trends show that compared to 2006, there was a 106% increase in the number of visitors to UFC's homepage in 2007. The runner-up league was the NHL with a 35% increase. See Appendix B for the increase in visitors to homepage.

¹⁰ UFC 33 took place in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA. The event consisted of eight matches, three of which were title matches (Tito Ortiz vs Vladimir Matyushenko, Jens Pulver vs Dennis Hallman, and Dave Menne vs Gil Castillo). Refer to: <http://www.ufc.com/event/UFC-33-Victory-In-Vegas/results> (retrieved July, 13, 2013).

¹¹ UFC 66 took place in Paradise, Nevada, USA. The event consisted of nine matches, one of which was a title match between Chuck Liddell and Tito Ortiz. Refer to: <http://www.ufc.com/event/UFC-66-LIDDELL-VS-ORTIZ/results> (retrieved July 13, 2013).

annual increases of 47% in 2004, 232% in 2005, and 424% in 2006 (p. 5). Revenues generated from UFC matches and recent trends noted above certainly illustrate that MMA is on the rise.

However, comparing the rise and fall of MMA and boxing respectively does not imply a zero-sum phenomenon. That is, this paper is not suggesting that the decline of boxing caused the emergence of MMA or vice versa. In fact, it would be both inaccurate and inadequate to make a causal argument. Boxing is a sport that has been around for centuries whereas MMA is a sport that has only recently emerged with a lifespan of a few decades at most. Experts in the field comment that the existence or popularity of boxing and MMA are not in an “either-or” situation (Bernstein, 2013; Juul, 2012; Cofield, 2012).¹² This thesis instead puts into perspective how two sports that share very similar characteristics are showing different trends worldwide through the same generation.

1.3 Research Question

With the decline of boxing and emergence of MMA in mind, this thesis will address the following research question:

Both boxing and mixed martial arts (MMA) receive similar normative pressure from Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) but why do they show differences in popularity?

To answer this research question, this thesis will examine the role of TANs in the development of both boxing and MMA. If existing literature looked at those wanting to ban boxing simply as anti-boxing or anti-MMA movements, this thesis will examine them

¹² In fact, many sportswriters and sport casters call to boxing and MMA to work together.

as a TAN and therefore hopefully provide a novel contribution. Specifically, it will explore the extent of the TAN influence on the popularity of the sport.

2. Literature Review

Earlier works regarding the developments of boxing and MMA have largely come from the field of sociology. That is, studies have perceived the changes that have been made to boxing and MMA as part of a civilizing process. Alterations have been made to this civilizing process of sport to account for the creation and the recent emergence of MMA. This section will examine these studies.

2.1 Sport as a Civilizing Process: Defining Sportization, Tension Balance, and Quest for Excitement

Studies taking a sociological approach on the development of a wide variety of sports have based their studies on Elias and Dunning's concept of *sportization* (as cited in Sheard, 1997; Donnelly, 1989; van Bottenburg & Heilbron, 2006; García & Malcolm, 2010).

Sportization refers to the civilizing process of sports in which those sports displaying high levels of violence have transformed to become less violent by creating and changing rules of the sport by eliminating, reducing, and or controlling the violent aspects of sports (van Bottenburg & Heilbron, 2006). Elias places the sportization process within the wider civilizing process that occurred from the late middle ages onwards (Sheard, 1997). In other words, the process of sportization parallels the process of state formation, which leads the state to a more civilized society. In describing such processes, authors generally refer to "social pressure," "public disapproval," or "anti-sport" movements as a source of the civilization process but do not expand much on which specific actors are involved (Sheard, 1997; Donnelly, 1989; van Bottenburg & Heilbron, 2006; García & Malcolm,

2010).

Further, Dunning claims that sport organizations aim to achieve a *tension balance* during the process of sportization (1999). Tension balance refers to the balance between a high level of tension and a reasonable degree of protection during contests. A so-called “good sport” would have the optimum level of tension balance (Dunning, 1999).

Fighting contests are mimetic events which lack the “more extreme danger posed in (dangerous) ‘real life’ situations” (García & Malcolm 2010, pg. 42). An important characteristic of these mimetic events lies in that sport organizers are able to control and manipulate the tension balance of these events thereby fulfilling people’s underlying *quest for excitement* (van Bottenburg & Heilbron, 2006).

2.2 Rise and Fall of Combat Sports

The 20th century saw a gradual decline in boxing. Scholars were greeted with a new combat sport, MMA. In addition to the process of sportization, García and Malcolm (2010) argue that MMA has emerged as a global sport as a result of hybridization between Eastern and Western combat styles, as well as due to the participants’ desires to generate increased levels of excitement in an *informalizing* process. The concept of informalization is drawn from Wouters (1986, as cited in García & Malcolm, 2010).

Wouters’s concept of informalization derives from his analysis of the so-called *permissive society* of the 1960s. Wouters (1986) notes that the relaxation of social regulation (e.g. with regard to sex and nudity) and the development of less formal social relations evident in the 1960s (e.g. the more flexible interpretation of manners and the questioning of status hierarchies), was interpreted by some as a moral decline of society; as decivilizing in the everyday sense of that term (García & Malcolm, 2010, p. 41).

Informalization is closely related to and is therefore often discussed in relation to an increased quest for excitement; García and Malcolm (2010) imply that there has been an increase in quest for excitement by the fans and that MMA was able to fulfill this quest with the level of violence present in MMA. Yet, the concepts of informalization and quest for excitement provide inadequate explanations to why the future of MMA is reacting differently to sportization (van Bottenburg & Heilbron, 2010). As was done with boxing, MMA has added rules and regulations sanctioning the degree of violence over time. Yet, unlike boxing, MMA continues to grow despite the decreased level of violence compared to MMA's earlier stages.

van Bottenburg and Heilbron (2006) offer a more acceptable explanation and claim that the reason for such rise in MMA can be traced to the “changing balance of power between organizers, practitioners, spectators, and viewers” (p. 262). In discussing this changing balance, van Bottenburg and Heilbron (2006) expand on Elias' original concept of sportization and refer to the concepts of *de-sportization* and *re-sportization*. In other words, the changing balance of the interest-driven actors allowed MMA to change, just enough to satisfy, albeit to the minimum level, those acting against MMA while maintaining a pleasurable tension balance for its fans. Like other scholars that use sportization to explain the changes that have been made to the sport, van Bottenburg and Heilbron (2006) also acknowledge the presence of TANs and social pressure that was forced against MMA. van Bottenburg and Heilbron (2006) predict four partially overlapping paths of MMA's future if “campaigns waged against [MMA] events in various countries” continue (p. 276). They include: (1) abolition and demise (2)

underground (3) re-sportization and (4) spectacularization.

As the name suggests, *abolition and demise* refers to the banning of MMA as a sport via legislation or folding of certain MMA organizations and leagues due to financial reasons. The possibility of this scenario, especially regarding the banning of MMA, would be the success of the social pressure and public disapproval of the sport. Although a few states or certain smaller regions, have already banned MMA, current trends show that this scenario is not as likely on the larger scale. The sport continues to grow worldwide and several regions have recanted their decision or moved to re-legalize the sport.

The second scenario, MMA going underground, is closely related to the first scenario. Abolition and demise may force the sport to go underground. Though underground competitions can also exist in places where MMA is already legal for various other intentions.

van Bottenburg and Heilbron (2006) coin the term *re-sportization* in the third scenario because of MMA's characteristically tangent tendency to the normal sportization expectation. When MMA first debuted, it intentionally pursued a barbaric and violent image, moving away from sportization. This initial moving away from sportization is referred to as de-sportization. Re-sportization refers to increased regulation both on and off the ring or cage after its initial de-sportization process. This includes health check-ups prior to matches, rules regarding umpiring, and athlete-promoter-and manager relationships. Because of the strong opposition faced in its initial stages, MMA has chosen a different path of working closely with states for stricter regulation, a pathway

other sports do not normally take (Smith, 2010).

The fourth scenario, *spectacularization*, refers to the "shift of attention away from fighting skills to the show and spectacle surrounding the events" (van Bottenburg & Heilbron, 2006, p. 277). Details regarding this aspect will be explained in further detail in the analytical framework section. This fourth scenario is more likely as MMA or the UFC has already opted to use spectacularization as a means to commercialize and to attract fans to the sport. MMA industry today hints closer toward the latter two pathways.

3. Analytical Framework

3.1 Transnational Advocacy Networks by Keck and Sikkink

To examine the international developments made to both boxing and MMA, this thesis will utilize Keck and Sikkink's (1998) TAN framework, which was first conceptualized in their book, Activist without Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics. This thesis will argue that, with small adjustments, such a framework is also applicable to the world of sports. The use of this framework will shed some light into explaining what led to the decline in boxing and the successful emergence of another combat sport, MMA. Specifically, the concept of TANs will supplement the "social pressure" that was referred to in explaining sportization.

A TAN "includes those actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and service" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 2). TANs are especially active in issue areas which have high value content and informational uncertainty (Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

TANs are special in that the non-traditional international actors, or simply put, non-state actors, are able to actively exchange relevant information and participate in persuading, pressuring, and gaining leverage over powerful organizations and governments. Major actors in advocacy networks may include but are not limited to the following: international and domestic nongovernmental research and advocacy organizations; local social movements; foundations; the media; churches; trade unions; consumer organizations; intellectuals; parts of regional; international intergovernmental organizations; and parts of the executive and/or parliamentary branches of governments

(Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 9). TANs are able to change the nature of debate and policy outcomes. TANs bring about change by ‘framing’ issues and by bringing in new ideas and norms by serving as sources of information and testimony. TANs allow their target audience to obtain the information in a manner that they would not otherwise have had (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

With this definition in mind, TANs have been involved in framing and changing the discourse on a variety of issues, ranging from anti-slavery to fair trade movements (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Their movements have been expanding to other fields. TAN movements have been detected in the development of certain sports as well. The movement against boxing has largely been headed by medical associations and religious groups. TAN actors have targeted governments in which sport ministries are affiliated with, the legislation regarding sports in their respective countries, and finally the general public to ban combat sports by revealing information about the dangers involved such as occurrences of deaths and brain injuries. They have stressed the brutality and immorality involved in boxing. That being said, TANs against boxing and MMA have been guided by moral and ethical thoughts. Ethics and moral can be a tricky concept to define but one definition of ethics is as follows:

Ethics refers to well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. Ethics, for example, refers to those standards that impose the reasonable obligations to refrain from rape, stealing, murder, assault, slander, and fraud. Ethical standards also include those that enjoin virtues of honesty, compassion, and loyalty. And, ethical standards include standards relating to rights, such as the right to life, the right to freedom from injury, and the right to privacy. Such standards are adequate standards of

ethics because they are supported by consistent and well-founded reasons (Velasquez, Andre, Shanks & Meyer, 2010).

Or simply put, what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, or what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ depends on the society’s standards.

In explaining how TANs work, Keck and Sikkink (1998) state that they “must use the power of their information, ideas, and strategies to alter the information and value contexts within which state make policies” (p. 16). This process involves persuasion, socialization, and pressuring. The authors also argue that opportunities for network activities have increased significantly, benefiting from advances in technology which have simplified and allowed for faster and easier information exchange between actors within TANs (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 14).

Keck and Sikkink (1998) also point out that TANs have traditionally been particularly active in pursuing issues that involve bodily harm. Since the main goal of combat sports like boxing and MMA is to inflict bodily harm on the opponent, when applied to combat sports, those pursuing a ban on boxing and MMA would be considered a TAN.

3.1.1 Political Strategies Used by TANs

Keck and Sikkink (1998) categorize the different strategies TANs use into four types; (1) information politics, (2) symbolic politics, (3) leverage politics, and (4) accountability politics.

(1) Information Politics

Information politics is a strategy in which TANs formally and informally exchange information among actors. According to Keck and Sikkink (1998), TANs, “provide

information that would not otherwise be available, from sources that might not otherwise be heard, and they must make this information comprehensible and useful to activists and publics who may be geographically and/or socially distant” (p. 18).

Activists involved interpret and use both statistical facts and testimonies to frame issues in a way that will effectively persuade and mobilize the public. In using statistical facts and testimonies, the press and media play crucial roles as they are the single most effective way of reaching a large audience (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Information politics is the building block of every transnational advocacy movement; without the necessary information, initiating a movement would be impossible. For example, in the case of combat sports, revealing medical studies that show extensive brain damage in former boxers and MMA fighters would be a part of information politics.

(2) Symbolic Politics

As the name suggests, the use of powerful symbolic events is often referred to as the strategy of symbolic politics (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 22). Symbolic events are used as catalysts to attract attention from an otherwise uninterested public or related organizations. Symbolic politics is especially effective in increasing awareness of the movement to the general public and legislation that would otherwise not have paid attention (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

An unusual event allows TANs to frame the cause they are fighting for in an impactful way. Keck and Sikkink (1998) cite the use of symbolic politics in the movement for the rights of indigenous people as an example. Rigoberta Menchú’s Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 and declaration of the ‘Year of Indigenous People’ in 1993 by the United Nations

led to the increase in awareness about the situations of indigenous people (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Another example of symbolic politics would be the reporting of the death of a Korean boxer, Duk Koo Kim in 1982 by the mass media which eventually led to changes in the rules of boxing.¹³

(3) *Leverage Politics*

The main goal of TANS is to bring about change in the *target actor(s)*¹⁴ (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). However, TANS are often not strong enough to bring about tangible change in these target actors. Leverage politics is the strategy of involving more powerful actors, relative to the target actors, to pressure the target actors. In other words, “by leveraging more powerful institutions, weak groups gain influence far beyond their ability to influence state practices directly.” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 23)

In discussing leverage politics, Keck and Sikkink (1998) identify that there are two types: (1) material leverage and (2) moral leverage. Material leverage is closely linked to money, goods, and votes. Moral leverage is closely related to the “mobilization of shame”. Such leverage is used by TANS under the key assumption that target actors value the opinion of others (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 23). For example, in the past, human rights activists have delivered information to the U.S. government and its policy makers convincing them to halt military and economic aid to those countries with questionable human rights practices (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 23).

(4) *Accountability Politics*

TANS use accountability politics when their target actors do not commit to their

¹³ The death of Duk Koo Kim will be further discussed in Section 4.3

¹⁴ Target actor refers to the group or organization that the TANS are pressuring to change.

previous promises or commitments. TANs follow up on target actors' accountability by monitoring the progress of target actors' actions and commitments. Activists were able to use accountability politics on the Soviet Union regarding its violation of human rights provisions despite its prior commitment to the 1975 Helsinki Accords (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p 24).

Table 1 – Types of Political Strategies Used by TANs

Types of political strategies	Description
Information Politics	The ability to quickly and credibly generate politically usable information and move it to where it will have the most impact
Symbolic Politics	The ability to call upon symbols, actions, or stories that make sense of a situation for an audience that is frequently away
Leverage Politics	The ability to call upon powerful actors to affect a situation where weaker members of a network are unlikely to have influence
Accountability Politics	The effort to hold powerful actors to their previously stated policies or principles

Source: Keck and Sikkink (1999).

By using the four strategies, networks can be effective in five different stages by: “(1) framing debates and getting issues on the agenda; (2) encouraging discursive commitments from states and other policy actors; (3) causing procedural change at the

international and domestic level; (4) affecting policy; and (5) influencing behavior changes in target actors” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 201).

3.2 TANS in the International System

The concept that TANS have an influence in shaping ideas and norms is only realized through the lens of constructivism in international relations. That is, while other schools of thought like realism and liberalism credit only states as the main actors, constructivism acknowledges non-state actors to also have the ability to influence ideas and bring about change or emphasize certain normative thoughts. Under constructivism, TANS are legitimate actors that bring about tangible changes.

Wendt (1999) views the international system as a result of social interaction and practice, or more comprehensively, a result of social construction. Specifically, "the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature" (Wendt, 1999, p. 1). This underlying thought of constructivism shows that the actions of states are influenced by shared ideas and values.

Essentially, government actions are shaped by ideas and widespread values in society and as mentioned above, sport ministries that oversee sports are closely regulated by these governments all over the world (Wendt, 1999). With this assumption, TANS have a comprehensive mechanism of how to bring about change to the international system. The strategies mentioned above are aimed at stimulating the public and framing and increasing the awareness of certain issues via information and symbolic politics. Further,

TANs may use leverage and accountability politics is used to question and hold responsible those who act against their cause. In sum, TANs have room to operate due to the government (or sport ministries) position to accept TAN pressure.

3.3 Application of TAN Strategies to Profit-Driven Actors

Keck and Sikkink's (1998) concept of TANs stem from a constructivist's view and in relation to how governments behave as a reaction to TAN pressure which is motivated by shared ideas and values. Sell and Prakash (2004) modify and expand on Keck and Sikkink's (1998) work by challenging the idea that non-profit driven organizations and interest groups are different from profit-driven or businesses and that they are driven by different causes and pursue different goals. Instead, Sell and Prakash (2004) argue that both non-profit driven networks and profit-driven networks use very similar strategies. Sell and Prakash (2004) breakdown their argument into three parts: (1) motivation (2) strategy, and (3) outcome to question Keck and Sikkink's (1998) idea of networks.

Keck and Sikkink (1998) argue that profit-driven actors are motivated and driven by instrumental goals and purposes, scientific groups and epistemic community by 'shared causal ideas', and TANs by "shared values and principled beliefs" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998, p. 2). However, Sell and Prakash (2004) disagree with Keck and Sikkink's (1998) notion and explain that "both business and NGO networks have principled as well as instrumental beliefs and cannot be distinguished on the basis of motivations" (Sell & Prakash, 2004, p. 151). Simply put, "seemingly instrumental actors are motivated by normative considerations" (Sell & Prakash, 2004, p. 148). Sell and Prakash (2004) also

point out that many NGOs are guided by instrumental concerns as well.¹⁵

Table 2 – Similarities and Differences between Keck & Sikkink (1998) and Sell & Prakash (2004)’s Framework

	Motivation	Strategy		Outcome
		<i>Influencing factor</i>	<i>Types</i>	
Keck & Sikkink (1998)	* Non-profit actors (TANs): normative ideas (shared casual ideas and values) * Profit-driven actors: instrumental gain	Motivation	Information, symbolic, leverage, accountability politics	Outcomes influenced by political strategies
Sell & Prakash (2004)	No significant difference between non-profit and profit driven actors. Both are motivated by normative ideas and instrumental or excludable gains	External	Same as Keck & Sikkink, 1998	Outcomes influenced by how effectively networks shape and frame the agenda

Derived from: Keck & Sikkink (1998) and Sell & Prakash (2004)

In terms of strategy, Sell and Prakash (2004) state that both non-profit and for-profit networks use similar strategies of information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics

¹⁵ Sell and Prakash (2004) examine two cases: (1) 1994 Agreement on Trade-Related Intellectual Property (TRIPS) in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and (2) the NGO campaign against enforcing TRIPS to ensure access to HIV/AIDS medicines as examples to “challenge constructivist scholarship that emphasizes the distinction between various types of transnational networks based on instrumental versus normative orientations” (p. 143).

and accountability politics. More importantly, Sell and Prakash (2004) claim that strategies are influenced by external factors and situations.

Sell and Prakash (2004) explain that, “for Keck and Sikkink, motivations influence strategies, and therefore outcomes, under certain conditions” (p. 151). However, Sell and Prakash (2004) found that the “success or failure to achieve the network’s desired outcome critically depends on how effectively the networks [are] able to shape the agenda” (p. 151).

The emphasis here is a *common framework*. What Sell and Prakash (2004) is arguing is that both profit and non-profit driven networks have both instrumental goals and shared principled beliefs. Therefore, Sell and Prakash (2004) call for the “actions and strategies” used by both type of networks to be viewed through a “common analytical framework” (p. 149).

To be revealed in a later section of this study, the emergence of MMA did not occur out of the blue (Berg & Chalip, 2010). The UFC, the leading organization of MMA, is also the industry leader in the sport of MMA. The UFC is often credited for putting MMA “on the map”. In accordance with Sell and Prakash (2004), the thesis will show that the UFC, a profit-driven actor, applied political strategies to stimulate the growth of the sport, despite the normative ideas emphasized by anti-boxing and MMA movements.

Elias argues that the civilizing process is accompanied by “an increase in the social pressure on people to exercise stricter, more even and continuous self-control over their feelings and [behavior]” (as cited in Dunning, 1990, p. 66). TANs use precisely this normative idea of applying social pressure to induce the civilizing process of boxing. This

thesis will look at which actors used what strategies to exert pressure for change in boxing. As described above, TANs are driven “largely by the centrality of principled beliefs or values in motivation” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 1). Criticisms outlined above can be seen as TAN’s framing efforts.

3.4 Components of Sport Commercialization

Political strategies used by TANs clash with the components that the media and sport organizers use as part of their efforts to commercialize the sport. Especially to consumable services like sport, media can be used very effectively to connect with the audience and potential fans. (Horne, 2006).

Whannel (1992) and Houlihan (2003) identify three components that are required to successfully commercialize the sport. The three components are (1) spectacularization, (2) dramatization, and (3) personalization. *Spectacularization* involves variety, color, and impact to enhance the entertainment element and to provide a wealth of material (Houlihan, 2003, p. 195). *Dramatization* involves the creation of story lines with an emphasis on suspense, conflict, and confrontation (Houlihan, 2003, p. 196). An example would include pre-event discussion and analysis. *Personalization* involves highlighting of individual sportspeople and connecting with the audience (Houlihan, 2003, p. 196). Because of the nature of these components, they overlap with each other from time to time.

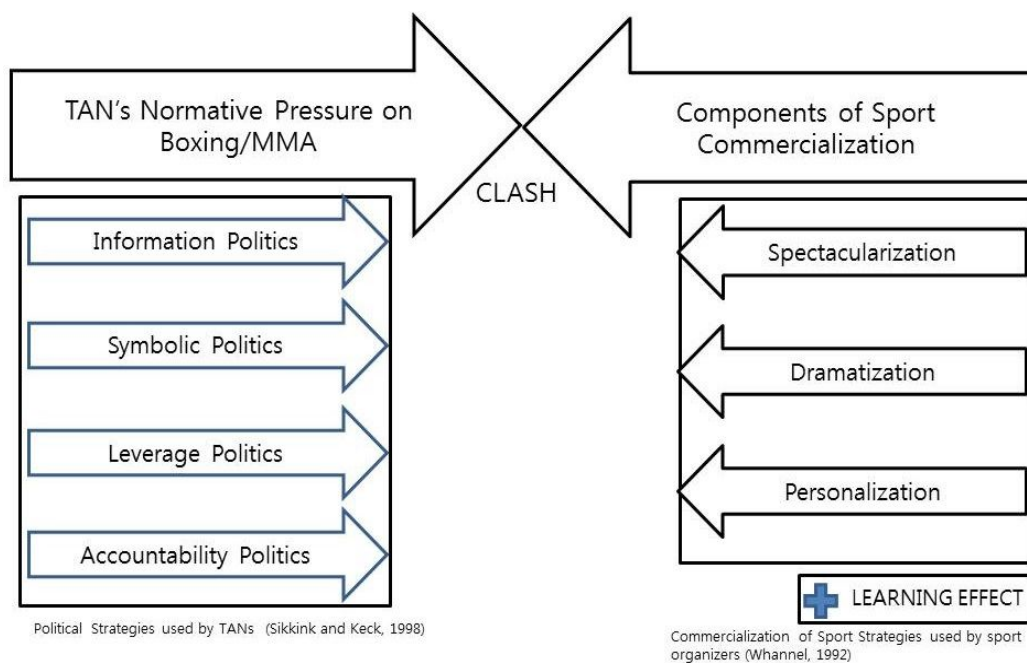
What makes this commercializing a sizable clashing force against TANs is the fact that all three components feed off the violence that is involved—the very aspect that TANs criticize. Namely, the violence involved allows sport organizers and the media to

maximize the use of the three components (spectacularization, dramatization, and personalization) needed for sport commercialization.

3.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that will be used as the backbone of this thesis will combine Keck and Sikkink (1998)'s concept of TANs and Whannel (1992)'s sport commercialization strategies, both of which tackle the violent aspects of the sport. The following figure illustrates the conceptual framework that will be used.

Figure 1 – Conceptual Framework: TAN Pressure and Commercialization Strategies



Derived from: Keck & Sikkink (1998) and Whannel (1992)

As seen above, this analytical framework draws upon a somewhat diverse areas of studies: social sciences (transnational advocacy networks), sociology (sportization), and

marketing (sport commercialization).

Though seemingly unrelated, these concepts will be combined under this framework and used in an attempt to offer a fresh perspective to explain the current phenomenon and situation of combat sports, specifically boxing and MMA, as we know it today.

3.6 Hypothesis

The following hypotheses will be used for the purposes of this research to explain the developments made to each of boxing and MMA.

H1: *Anti-boxing TANs' normative idea of morality caused the decline of boxing.*

H2: *Pro-boxing's inability and pro-MMA's ability to capture business opportunities caused the differences between the modern trends of the two sports.*

If hypothesis 1 identifies external factors as the cause of the decline, hypothesis 2 refers to internal factors.

3.7 Methodology

This thesis will use the conceptual framework of clashing forces between Keck and Sikkink's (1998) concept of TANs and Whannel's (1992) components of commercialization of sport based on violence to test the hypotheses. By taking a comparative approach, the study will aim to examine how the political strategies used by TANs were used in shaping the development of boxing and MMA. Trends in boxing and MMA in the western world will be used to the primary focus of this study.

The investigation will incorporate previous literature from the field of sport sociology and law, relevant websites, newspaper articles, interviews of related personnel, and publications from various organizations and associations regarding this topic. Because of

the nature of the generation in which MMA made its debut, this study will rely on the web as its primary resource.

4. The Decline of Boxing

4.1 Brief History of Boxing

The preceding form of boxing is ‘prize fighting’ (bare-knuckle fighting). The height of prize fighting’s legitimate popularity lasted until the 1810s. With much criticism, the sport was forced to go underground or to rural areas and later resurfaced as boxing in the late 1800s. “A new set of rules was devised by John Graham Chambers¹⁶ in 1867 (just one year before the running of special trains to prize fights was made illegal) sponsored by the Marquis of Queensberry¹⁷, and has changed little” until the 1980s. (Donnelly, 1989, p. 339). Since the 1980s, various incremental changes such as the increase in protection gear and reduction of rounds were implemented.¹⁸

Currently, boxing has multiple governing bodies.¹⁹ Of them, five are recognizable; they include the World Boxing Association (WBA), World Boxing Council (WBC), International Boxing Federation (IBF), World Boxing Organization (WBO), and International Boxing Association (AIBA²⁰).²¹ Each governing body has its own

¹⁶ John Chambers (1843~1883) founded the Amateur Athletic Club (ACC) which staged athletic competitions including boxing. His “talents lay in regulation and organization”. Refer to: Boddy, K. (2011) ‘Under Queensberry Rules, So to Speak’: Some versions of a metaphor. *Sport in History* 31(4): 398-422.

¹⁷ These rules are often referred to as “The Queensberry Rules”, the rule changes included the mandatory use of gloves, the 3 minute round and the 10-second knockout, and took the sports indoors and placed the ring on a raised platform.

¹⁸ More recent changes will be examined in Section 4.3.

¹⁹ There are other smaller governing bodies but the five listed above sanction the most games.

²⁰ AIBA used to be called “Association Internationale de Boxe Amateur”, but recently changed their official name to “International Boxing Association”. AIBA used to solely govern international amateur boxing events (i.e. Olympic boxing) but has recently made moves to govern professional boxing as well and has moved on to drop ‘amateur’ from its official name. They still use the acronym AIBA to avoid confusion. Refer to: <http://www.aiba.org/default.aspx?pId=375#> (retrieved May 2, 2013).

²¹ The sheer number of world or international governing bodies fighting for control in the boxing

championship belts and sanctions its own matches and tournaments, but rule changes have been more or less the same among all governing bodies.²²

4.2 Criticisms on Boxing

Authors who study the development of boxing refer to those opposing boxing as “critiques of boxing”, “moral reformist groups” (Donnelly, 1989, p. 332) and “anti-boxing lobby” (Murphy & Sheard, 2006, p. 550). They identify the mass media, medical establishments, various religious and ethical societies as specific actors (Donnelly, 1989; Dunning, 1990; Dunning, 1999; Sheard 1997; Murphy & Sheard 2006). They agree that these actors played a significant role in pressuring boxing organizations to make changes either pushing for the sport to become safer or as a means to ban boxing.

Arguments against boxing from the anti-boxing lobby take three basic forms: (1) medical, (2) paternal and, (3) brutalization and degradation (Donnelly, 1989, p. 334-5). Medical arguments are the most prevalent. Medical arguments use the number of casualties, brain damage, and other injuries that result from participating in boxing. Paternal arguments have to do with the victimization and exploitation of boxers by greedy promoters and also with the ties of boxing to organized crime and gambling. The brutalization and degradation argument suggest that the violent aspects of boxing degrades and brutalizes both the athletes and the audiences watching the sport. Although this is not a complete list, these cover most of the arguments that have been made against

industry is often ridiculed as being an “alphabet soup”. Simply put, no other sport industry has a more complicated system. Refer to: <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/365684-alphabet-soup-getting-lost-in-the-boxing-organizations> (retrieved May 19, 2013).

²² Most, if not all governing bodies apply similar rules and regulations. Refer to: <http://boxing.isport.com/boxing-guides/boxing-rules-regulations> (retrieved May 19, 2013).

boxing. TAN actors have used different combinations of these arguments to make their arguments stronger and pressure for change.

4.3 The Role of Anti-Boxing TAN and Their Influence

The process of sportization, as a part of a civilizing process, has largely been a response to TAN actors demanding for a ban on boxing. These TAN actors have used different political strategies to implement normative ideas.

Medical associations have been the forerunner in the anti-boxing movement. Religious groups are a close runner-up. These two groups have mainly used information politics and symbolic politics as a part of their anti-boxing campaign.

Information politics

As explained earlier, information politics involve, “the ability to quickly and credibly generate politically usable information and move it to where it will have the most impact” (Keck & Sikkink, 1999, p. 92). Many boxers who received repeated blows to the head have often displayed “slowed movement, tremors, confusion, and speech problems typical of the condition” (Cantu, 2011, paragraph 2). Such symptoms were first described by an American pathologist, Harrison Martland in 1928 as “punch drunk syndrome” or “dementia pugilistica” (Corsellis, 1989). The official medical term for punch-drunk syndrome is Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE).²³ Various studies have been published showing that many boxers show signs of CTE (Thurman, Branche, & Snizek, 1998; Clausen, McCorry, & Anderson, 2005; McCorry, Zazryn, & Cameron, 2007; McKee

²³ The term punch drunk syndrome was often used because it was easy for the general public to understand and use. Refer to: <http://robertcantumd.com/educational/what-is-cte/> (retrieved June 18, 2013).

et al., 2009; Lakhan & Kirchgessner, 2012). Acute and immediate injuries to the brain, eyes and other body parts have also been documented. (Porter, Hodgkinson, Hirst, Wharton & Cunliffe, 1988; Wedrich et al., 1993; Greer & William, 1999; Bianco et al., 2005; Corrales & Curreri, 2009). There have also been many recorded deaths in boxing which are often used as sources of information politics (Svinth, 2007).²⁴

The British Medical Association (BMA) describes itself as the “leading authority on the hazards of boxing” (Fisher, 1993, p. 1). BMA’s first official movement against boxing started in 1982 when they passed a resolution during their *Annual Representative Meeting*, stating that, “in view of the proven ocular and brain damage resulting from professional boxing, the [British Medical] Association should campaign for its abolition” (BMA, 1992 as cited in Fisher 1993, p.1) . They later passed two additional resolutions, extending their call for ban on boxing to amateurs and among children as well.²⁵ The BMA notes that even if a boxer survives a bout without displaying signs of physical injuries, the cumulative effect of a career in boxing can lead to greater susceptibility to chronic neurological injury (Fisher, 1993).

Using their studies as evidence, the BMA used various mediums to reach the general public to help them become aware of the dangers involved in boxing. Members of the BMA have spoken at the “Cambridge Union, technical colleges, the annual meeting of

²⁴ Svinth (2007) currently maintains an ongoing project called “Death under the spotlight: The Manuel Velazquez boxing fatality collection”. Manuel Velazquez was a boxing activist who collected data on boxing injuries and deaths. Velazquez collected “Western” boxing deaths since 1741. The project continues and activists against boxing refer to this data to make their arguments. Also, “Long line of injured boxers” published in the Telegraph discusses deaths resulting from boxing in detail. Refer to: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/othersports/boxing/2994873/Long-line-of-injured-boxers.html> (retrieved June 3, 2013).

²⁵ This resolution was passed in 1992 with more medical evidence.

the Amateur Boxing Association doctors, and many local BMA divisions” and have publicized the results of medical studies that show that boxing causes harm (Fisher, 1993, p. 1).

In 1983, just one year after the MBA issue its statement against boxing, the World Medical Association (WMA) also issued a statement of similar nature:

Boxing is a dangerous sport. Unlike most other sports, its basic intent is to produce bodily harm in the opponent. Boxing can result in death and produces an alarming incidence of chronic brain injury. For this reason, the World Medical Association recommends that boxing be banned (World Medical Association, 2005).

WMA’s 1983 statement was later reaffirmed two more times, once in 1996 and again in 2005.

Because the WMA oversees National Medical Associations (NMA) all over the world, several other NMAs have called for the ban of boxing.²⁶ In the same year, the Journal of the American Medical Association published an article titled “Boxing should be Banned in Civilized Countries”, in which the author describes boxing as an "obscenity" (Lundberg, 1983).²⁷

In 1984, the American Medical Association (AMA) followed up the publishing of the

²⁶ The WMA has more than one hundred national medical associations and more than 10 million physicians. Refer to: <http://www.wma.net/en/60about/10members/20memberlist/index.html> (retrieved June, 28, 2013).

²⁷ As the title suggests, Lundberg (1983) argues that boxing should not be sanctioned in civilized countries. He follows-up his argument in a series of articles, the most recent one being published in 2005. He uses a boxing metaphor by adding “round 2 (~4)” to his articles. Refer to: Lundberg, G. D. (1983). Boxing should be banned in civilized countries. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 249, 249–250; Lundberg, G. D. (1984), Boxing should be banned in civilized countries—Round 2. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 251, 2696–2698; Lundberg, G. D. (1986). Boxing should be banned in civilized countries—Round 3. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 255, 2483–2485; and Lundberg, G. D. (2005). Boxing should be banned in civilized countries—Round 4. *MedGenMed.*;7(3).

article by adopting a resolution calling for a ban in boxing citing instances of frequent brain injuries and fractures caused by boxing (Trumbull, 1984). More recent AMA policy regarding the hazards of boxing are as follows:

The AMA (1) encourages the elimination of both amateur and professional boxing, a sport in which the primary objective is to inflict injury; (2) supports communicating its opposition to appropriate regulating bodies; (3) supports medical societies' efforts to work with their state legislatures to enact laws to eliminate boxing in their jurisdictions; and (4) supports efforts to educate the American public, especially children and young adults, about the dangerous effects of boxing on the health of participants (AMA policy reference H-470.980, as cited in Richards, 2007).

The Australian Medical Association also refers boxing as “a public demonstration of interpersonal violence which is unique among sporting activities” (Australian Medical Association, 2007). Their statement against boxing was publicly shared first in 1997 and was reaffirmed in 2007. After the BMA, AMA and other NMAs started calling for a ban, countless articles all over the world published and highlighted the injuries involved in the field of boxing (Appendix C).²⁸

Religious groups also use information politics as a strategy to ban boxing. Religious groups were more active both academically and socially in their anti-boxing movements in the earlier days.²⁹ Many theological studies were published regarding the morality issue involved in boxing (Steinhouse, Greene, Granik, 1950; Hillman, 1951). They refer to the bible to evaluate morality of boxing. For example, the bible states that the state of

²⁸ See Appendix C for a list of articles reporting various NMA's statements to ban boxing. Note that this is a partial list, and that articles were compiled for the purposes of this thesis to show articles were published from different parts of the world not just in certain countries.

²⁹ Members of the clergy would publish articles in magazine. For example, Father McCormick R. A., S.J.'s article titled “Is Professional Boxing Immoral?” was published in 1962 in *Sports Illustrated*. The article makes a lengthy argument on how boxing is immoral. Refer to: <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1147969/> (retrieved May 17, 2013).

drunkenness is forbidden and they point to “punch drunk syndrome” that is results from boxing.

Symbolic Politics

Symbolic politics involves “the ability to call upon symbols, actions, or stories that make sense of a situation for and audience that is frequently away” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 22). The Pope issuing a statement urging for the ban on boxing in 1933 is an example of symbolic politics (Ban on Boxing, 1923). A symbolic character like the Pope stressing his opposing stance against boxing can be considered as a strategic use of symbolic politics.

The case of Duk Koo Kim is a prime example of symbolic politics used by TAN actors against boxing. Duk Koo Kim was a South Korean boxer who eventually died after a championship match against Ray Mancini in 1982. Kim, the Orient and Pacific Boxing Federation (OPBF)³⁰ lightweight champion at the time, had flown to the United States to challenge WBA world lightweight champion Ray Mancini. Kim was the obvious underdog of this match up and the media jumped on this match up. The death of Kim provided a glimpse of what the media wanted in terms of coverage. Kim’s death had everything; not only did he have a dramatic personal story that the media could exploit but his misfortune also happened to candidly display and “prove” all of the concerns that TANs had previously raised.

³⁰ OPBF is the federation that sanctions title fights in the Asian and Pacific regions. It was originally established in 1954 by the Japanese, Korean, and Filipino boxing commissions. OPBF now consists of the following regional members: Australia, Fiji, Guam, Hawaii, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand, PAMA, Philippines, Republic of China, Samoa, Taiwan, Thailand and Tonga. It is also interesting to note that OPBF helped form the WBC in 1963. Refer to: <http://www.opbf.jp/> (retrieved July, 12, 2013).

The Kim-Mancini match allowed the media to spectacularize, dramatize and personalize the sport and the athlete. The match took place just outside Caesars' Palace, Las Vegas on November 13, 1982 (Kriegel, 2012). Kim went into brain surgery immediately after falling but died four days later. Kim's death is cited as one of the most important incidents in the boxing industry and that it initiated important changes of rules in boxing (France-Presse, 2012). Although there were many deaths from boxing, this incident was symbolic in that Kim publicly fell into a coma while the match was being aired to a mass audience. The personal back-story³¹ involved played an important role in the mass media and ultimately attracted much more attention than the other deaths. Kim's case is still cited today, decades after his death, whenever the boxing controversy comes up (Kriegel, 2012; France-Presse, 2012; Hwang, 2012). It is difficult to detect as infamous a media coverage and interest as Kim's.

The media used a two-pronged approach in supporting the anti-boxing movement. While exploiting the spectacularization, dramatization, and personalization components for increased ratings, they also touched upon the three types of criticisms highlighted by anti-boxing TANs, the medical aspects, the paternal aspects, and the brutalization and degradation aspects. This played favorably for the anti-boxing movement. Whether they intended it or not, mass media became an important actor of anti-boxing TAN. Anti-

³¹ Kim was born to a "dirt-poor" family. His father was a fisherman and a farmer, struggling to feed his family. He inherited this poorness; a typical picture of a Korean family at the time. He also had fiancé who was three-months pregnant at the time of his match against Mancini. He found hope through boxing. In other words, he needed this win for his family and for Korea for that matter. Refer to: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/17/sports/families-continue-to-heal-30-years-after-title-bout-between-ray-mancini-and-duk-koo-kim.html?pagewanted=all> (retrieved May 20, 2013).

boxing's TAN movement shows a close resemblance to today's pro-MMA's commercialization tactics.³²

Leverage Politics

Anti-boxing TAN has also used the tactic of leverage-politics, calling upon more powerful actors to affect change. An example would be the AMA calling upon several international boxing governing bodies to address the risks involved in the participation of boxing,

Until such time as boxing is banned in this country, the following preventive strategies should be pursued to reduce brain and eye injuries in boxers: (a) Ideally, head blows should be prohibited. Otherwise, our AMA should encourage universal use of protective garb such as headgear, and thumb-less, impact-absorbing gloves; (b) the World Boxing Council, World Boxing Association, and other regulatory bodies should develop and enforce objective brain injury risk assessment tools to exclude individual boxers from sparring or fighting (Williams, 2007).

Such a statement shows that medical associations are aware that an outright ban on boxing is unrealistic and that they therefore have opted to take the next best alternative. That is, minimize the violent and brutal aspects that lead to injuries by calling upon actors that are actually in the position to make visible changes.

Accountability Politics

Accountability politics as explained in Section 2 refers to “the effort to hold powerful actors to their previously stated policies or principles” (Keck & Sikkink, 1999). An example would be the BMA expressing their disappointment in UK Sport for awarding greatly increased funding for boxing in the upcoming Olympics. BMA states that “it’s a

³² Details on sport commercialization and sport violence will be discussed in Section 5.3

setback to our campaign against boxing, and it's worrying. We worry about how many go into [boxing] without knowing the risks" (Hawkes, 2012). They publicly called upon UK Sport, a body which has respectable power among individual sport associations in the UK.

The Formation of a TAN

A review of the political strategies used by anti-boxing TANs demonstrated that the actors involved were focused more on information and symbolic politics and were relatively weaker in using leverage and accountability politics. The anti-boxing movement also hints at the natural formation process of a TAN. The increase in the number of NMCs joining the BMA and WMA in issuing statements and opinions against boxing as well as religious groups citing medical studies in forming their own arguments marked the beginning of a united stance.

This network of bodies enabled for the organization of the following coherent argument: The goal of boxing is to inflict intentional harm on the opponent which results in detrimental injuries to those participating. These injuries are not only visible to those who are watching but are also backed up by medical studies. TANs were then able to construct the following frame: Because the sport causes bodily harm, participating and spectating such a sport makes people barbaric and unethical. Therefore, boxing should not be accepted in today's civilized society.

The Changes that Followed

Indeed, the application of political strategies by medical associations and religious group led a few countries to ban professional boxing in their country. Some of these

include Norway, Cuba, North Korea, and Sweden.³³ Norway banned boxing in 1981 (Associated Press, 1981). Sweden banned professional boxing in 1970, a decade before Norway did, when a study concluded that it had a brutalizing effect on the audience and led to life-threatening injuries to boxers (Associated Press, 2006).³⁴ However, it should be noted that Sweden lifted its ban on boxing in 2007. Therefore, it can be concluded the anti-boxing TAN has been more successful in bringing out rule changes that make boxing safer than in reaching its ultimate goal in banning the sport.

Murphy and Sheard (2006) discuss major changes that led to the current form of boxing as we know it today (Appendix E).³⁵ They list many changes that have been made, but four noticeable changes are: (1) the introduction of weight divisions, (2) the introduction of physical protection (gloves and head guards), (3) the reduction of rounds, and (4) the implementation of the standing eight-count.

The introduction of weight divisions allowed for the reduction of the apparent dangers involved in two fighters of different sizes fighting. This helped boxing display images of ‘fair play’, an important aspect of modern day sport. Murphy and Sheard (2006) quote Nick Pitt, a journalist, who comments about the implementation of gloves,

...the introduction of gloves helped to save competitive boxing from the threat of extinction at the very time that the law, the public, and many influential patrons were turning against it.

³³ Compared to the number of medical associations who announced their opposition towards boxing, much less number of states went on to actually ban boxing. Refer to: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6237978.stm> (retrieved May 3, 2013).

³⁴ A medical study detailing the negative effects of boxing played a dominant role in the Norwegian government’s decision to ban boxing. Refer to: <http://sports.espn.go.com/sports/boxing/news/story?id=2679831> (retrieved April 29, 2013).

³⁵ See Appendix E for a summarized list of intended and unintended outcomes of developments to boxing.

Prizefighting with bare-knuckles was so obviously bloody and barbaric that it was increasingly difficult to defend (p. 549).

Head guards were also introduced to protect the boxer from getting hit on the face and to protect the brain, providing a cushioning effect. The reduction of fifteen three-minute rounds to twelve three-minute rounds was presented as a safety measure to decrease the time boxers were subject to being hit (Carp, 2010). The standing eight-count was introduced to allow for the referees and umpires to decide if boxers were fit to continue fighting and prevent the further accumulation of irreparable damage. The reduction of rounds and the implementation of the standing eight-count are especially worth noting because these changes were enforced shortly after the death of Duk Koo Kim in 1982.

Although there were no factors that affected the changes in the level of quest for excitement of the fans and viewers, there were various external pressures from TANs that changed perceived minimum ethical boundaries. As a result, changes in the rules of boxing as a sport, infringed upon the quest for excitement, which destroyed a fragile tension balance, ultimately causing the decline of the sport.

5. The Emergence of Mixed Martial Arts

5.1 Brief History of MMA

MMA's original roots are often traced back to an Olympic competition of Pankration which was first introduced in 648 B.C. (Semaan, 2008).³⁶ A modern re-birth can be traced back to the birth of *vale tudo*³⁷, a Brazilian sport in the 1930s (Ultimate Fighting Championship, 2013a). More recently, "MMA is defined as a highly evolved combat sport where competitors combine multiple forms of fighting like jiu-jitsu, judo, karate, boxing, kickboxing, wrestling, and others to their strategic and tactical advantage in a supervised match" (Kim, 2010).

Pro-boxing's inability and pro-MMA's ability to capture business opportunities caused the differences between the modern trend of the two sports. 1992, John Milius and the Gracie family³⁸ created an elimination tournament under the name "War of the Worlds" (WOW). The competition called for fighters from various disciplines (Santos, Tainsky, Schmidt, & Shim, 2013). A year later, in 1993, WOW promoters joined forces with a pay-per-view provider, Semaphore Entertainment Group (SEG), creating the trademark of "The Ultimate Fighting Championship" (UFC) (Santos, Tainsky, Schmidt, & Shim, 2013). The UFC marketed the sport as having virtually "no rules". In fact, in MMA's early

³⁶ In Greek, the word 'Pankration' literally means "all powers" or "all strengths". It was originally developed by combining boxing and wrestling techniques into a singular contest of strength and courage.

³⁷ Vale tudo means "Anything goes" in Portuguese. Refer to: <http://www.bloodyelbow.com/2012/6/25/3097737/mma-origins-UFC-History-UFC-147-Wanderlei-Silva-Anderson-Silva-Chute-Boxe> (retrieved May 25, 2013).

³⁸ John Milius and the Gracie family were the founders of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and vale tudo. Refer to: <http://www.boxinginsider.com/mma/early-pioneers-of-ufc-royce-gracie-ken-shamrock-art-davie/> (retrieved May 25, 2013) and <http://www.boxinginsider.com/mma/the-octagon-a-man-named-milius-and-his-imprint-on-the-ufc/> (retrieved May 25, 2013).

stages, there were no weight classes and only eye-gouging, biting, and groin-strikes were prohibited (Kim, 2010; Santos, Tainsky, Schmidt, & Shim, 2013). Although they were able to attract many fans who were thirsty for fights with “no rules” and “anything goes”, such an approach attracted many criticisms, criticisms similar to that of boxing (Kim, 2010).

The UFC was later purchased by Zuffa L.L.C. owned by Frank and Lorenzo Fertitta and promoter Dana White in 2001 (Kim, 2010; Santos, Tainsky, Schmidt, & Shim, 2013). Kim (2010) states that, “the most significant change after the Zuffa purchase...was the long-term shift in regulatory ideologies. Unlike its predecessors, the UFC runs toward regulation, not away from it” (p. 3).

Along with added regulations and successful marketing strategies, the UFC played an important role in increasing the popularity of MMA. With the emergence of the UFC and MMA, other MMA organizations emerged as well.³⁹ Other MMA leagues and promotions organizations that used to exist now cease to exist; some have been bought out by the UFC and co-exist as brother/sister leagues⁴⁰, and some remain independent but small (Associated Press, 2007; Rondina, 2013). But it is without a doubt that the UFC is the industry leader of MMA. The UFC has also put in a significant amount of effort to make the sport international (Ultimate Fighting Championship, 2013a).⁴¹ With the UFC

³⁹ To see an unofficial list of top 20 MMA organizations refer to:
<http://www.mmamania.com/2012/3/18/2882556/ranking-the-mma-organizations-of-all-time>
(retrieved May 3, 2013).

⁴⁰ UFC agreed to buyout their (then) biggest MMA rival, Pride Fighting Championships (Japan) in 2007. UFC then bought out StrikeForce, the second largest MMA organization in the U.S. in 2011.

⁴¹ The UFC has offices in Beijing, London, and Toronto and broadcast matches in 149 countries.

at its heart and center, an MMA ecosystem has been created. Without such a sturdy base, MMA would not have been able to grow at such a fast pace.

5.2 Criticisms on MMA and the Role of TANs

One scholar refers to the emergence of MMA as “the global revival of free-for-all prize fighting in the form of the UFC” (Sugden, 1996, p. 176). With such an emergence, scholars have studied the development of MMA and agree that the theory of sportization is a useful model to understand the development of fighting sports (van Bottenburg & Heilbron, 2006; van Bottenburg & Heilbron, 2010; Garcia & Malcolm, 2010). They agree that the evolution of no-holds-barred or ‘cage fight’ events to what has now become MMA is part of the sportization process. However this theory is unable to explain the rise and spread of MMA, especially because TAN pressure for the ban on MMA has remained more or less the same compared to that of boxing, a normative pressure that was relatively successful in causing the decline of boxing

Most medical associations and doctors calling for a ban on boxing have called for a ban in MMA as well. In fact, it can be argued that because of the more obvious violent aspects highlighted in MMA, it receives paralleling criticisms as well. They have simply included, “and MMA” to most of their statements (Appendix D).⁴² For example, in 2007 The BMA’s Board of Science issued a report with updated evidence on the health risks involved in boxing and also added that the relatively younger sport- MMA is just as dangerous (White, 2007). In discussing their movement to ban MMA, the Canadian

⁴² See Appendix D for a list of articles reporting various MMA’s statements to ban MMA. Note that this is a partial list, and that articles were compiled for the purposes of this thesis to show articles were published from different parts of the world not just in certain countries.

Medical Association (CMA) also groups the MMA with boxing. Dr. Atul Kapur, a member of CMA's committee on ethics comments that, "the difference between skiing, hockey and mixed martial arts and boxing, which we have a policy on, is the intent of skiing and hockey is usually not to cause bodily injury to your opponent" (Canadian Press, 2010).

Further, although boxing and MMA have slightly different statistical data in terms of injuries, much of the arguments that claim that boxing or MMA leads to an increase in brain injuries and orthopedic injuries remain the same or at least very similar.⁴³ Many studies look at injuries sustained from MMA matches show that injuries range from brain injuries (concussions) to orthopedic injuries (sprains and fractures) are very similar to boxing injuries. (Buse 2006; Bledsoe, Hsu, Grabowsky, Brill, & Li, 2006; Ngai, Levy, & Hsu, 2008; Scoggin et al., 2010).⁴⁴

Therefore, the same moral and ethical yardstick is applicable to both boxing and MMA. While the BMA led the movement against boxing, with MMA, it is the CMA leading the anti-MMA movement. The CMA called for an outright ban of MMA in 2010. 250 delegates of the CMA voted to seek a government ban on MMA during one of their annual meetings in 2010 (Associated Press, 2010). The president of CMA, Dr. Anna Reid

⁴³ There are claims that, since MMA has only recently emerged there is a lack of scientific studies especially compared to boxing, needed to support a movement against MMA. Refer to: <http://www.mmajunkie.com/news/2013/04/ask-the-fight-doc-should-the-canadian-medical-association-support-an-mma-ban> (retrieved July 3, 2013). However, it should be noted that with increased number of matches and tournaments studies regarding this topic is also increasing.

⁴⁴ Scoggin et al. (2010)'s study is one of the first studies to objectively examine injuries sustained from MMA matches based on on-site evaluations. Studies show the type and frequency of injuries that result from participating in MMA. Refer to: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20567743> (retrieved July 3, 2013).

commented that,

Cage fighting [also referred to as MMA], like boxing, is distinct from many other sports, in that the basic intent of the fighter is to cause harm in order to incapacitate his or her opponent. And an activity in which the overriding goal is to pummel one's opponent into submission does not promote good health (Canadian Press, 2008).

Not only did the president speak out, but the CMA also approached the Commons justice committee which has jurisdiction over the legislation regarding combat sports, specifically, the Criminal Code section dealing with prize fights (Canadian Press, 2008).

The use of symbolic politics is also similar in MMA. Anti-MMA movements have used the deaths of MMA athletes to reach the public in an effort to implement normative ideas about violent sports like MMA. There have been three recorded deaths in sanctioned MMA fights.⁴⁵ However, these deaths were not given as much attention compared to the death of Duk Koo Kim.

Similar tactics are observed in MMA for leverage and accountability politics. In MMA's earlier stages, John McCain⁴⁶ was very active in pursuing a ban on MMA, calling it "human cock-fighting". McCain went about writing letters to other state senators asking other states to join the ban on MMA (Oakes, 2013). This resulted in not only bad press but also in the banning of MMA in over 30 states in the sports' infancy

⁴⁵ There have been three recorded deaths in sanctioned MMA matches. Sam Vasquez died on November 30, 2007 in Texas and Michael Kirkham died in South Carolina on June 28, 2010. Vasquez and Kirkham both died of cerebral hemorrhage. Further, Tyrone Mimms died on August 11, 2012 in South Carolina due to an unknown cause following a MMA match. Refer to: <http://www.mixedmartialarts.com/news/436658/Fatalities-in-MMA-1993---present/> (retrieved June 15, 2013).

⁴⁶ John McCain is a U.S. Senator (Arizona) and a former presidential candidate. The nature of McCain's past and current position allows him to exert considerable influence on legislation and the public.

(Oakes, 2013).⁴⁷ The National Center for Domestic Violence also went about using accountability politics when the center wrote a letter addressing the New York State Assembly to stop them from passing the legislation regarding the sanctioning of MMA in New York. They followed up this action by publicly stating that, "the UFC contributes to a culture of violence against women and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people" (Wagenheim, 2013). Thus, in looking at the different groups involved and the extent of criticisms against MMA, it can be argued that MMA actually received harsher criticisms compared to that of boxing.

Resultant changes in the sport's rules are similar to that of boxing. Organizers banned certain techniques that were "too violent" and offensive, including head butts, elbow strikes to the neck, kicking an opponent who is down, hair-pulling and pitting. They also introduced weight classification, made gloves compulsory, and also agreed to disqualify rather than fine those who broke the rules (Howes, 1998, as cited in van Bottenburg & Heilbron, 2006).

5.3 Profit-Driven Actors of MMA

Despite this backdrop, MMA was able to become one of the fastest growing sports in the world. The reasons for this growth stems from differing actions/moves on the part of profit-driven actors of the two sports.

Because boxing and MMA are two distinct sports, there are obvious and inherent differences, but a particularly significant difference in terms of commercialization efforts. These differences stem from UFC's, a profit-driven actor of MMA, demonstration of

⁴⁷ However, it should be noted that the ban was lifted within a couple of year of its initial banning as a result of MMA organizers' political efforts. Refer to: Section 5.3 of this study.

“learning effect” in two ways. Kim (2010) states that “[Dana] White⁴⁸ has used boxing as the blueprint of what not to do in terms of MMA progression” (p. 6).⁴⁹ Kim (2010) is arguing that, considering that both are similar in that they are both combat sports, MMA was able to take advantage of being a *late-mover* (Bainbridge, 2013).⁵⁰ First, profit-driven actors of MMA were successful in preemptively preparing against the political strategies used by anti-boxing (and MMA) TANs. Second, when first vitalizing the sport, they showed systematic and tactical differences which directly impacted the components needed for sport commercialization.

MMA’s use of political strategies to overcome TAN pressure is worth nothing. That is, pro-MMA’s use of political strategies can also be detected. MMA organizers have used and are currently using information, symbolic, leverage, and accountability politics to respond to anti-MMA TAN criticisms.

In discussing the legalization and evolution of MMA, Kim (2010) argues that information politics can be used by MMA organizers as a part of the sports’ promotion efforts.

From an athletic perspective, opponents of MMA tend to focus on the ability to strike fighters on the ground. ...Ground fighting⁵¹ is arguably far less dangerous than professional boxing. A

⁴⁸ Dana White is the president of the UFC. Refer to: <http://www.ufc.com/discover/ufc> (retrieved May 20, 2013).

⁴⁹ Kim (2010) also mentions that “MMA can use boxing as a blueprint form a legal perspective” as well (p. 6).

⁵⁰ Late-mover advantage is a term often used in business and marketing. This concept refers to the advantage that late-movers are able to seize because “followers can learn from pioneers' mistakes, see whether there is a market worth entering and judge consumers' tastes”. This is not to argue that boxing failed “learn”. Boxing simply did not another sport to “learn from” when it first faced strong opposition.

⁵¹ Ground fighting is a technique often used in MMA. An aspect that most differentiates boxing and MMA.

professional boxer who is knocked to the ground multiple times remains grounded for six to eight seconds, staggers to his feet, follows the simple commands of "hold your hands up and take a step toward me," and is then allowed to repeat this sequence of events. Also, the battered boxer, unlike the MMA participant, is not allowed to hold his adversary to limit the punishment. Thus, an MMA/boxing medical comparison actually reveals MMA as being the safer sport. Yet only one of these sports remains muddled by state legislators (Kim, 2010, p. 10).⁵² MMA organizers have certainly used this to their advantage in convincing states that had formerly banned the sport.⁵³ By using information politics, that is, by referring to scientific facts and deemphasizing the extent of injuries resulting from matches, they were successfully able to argue that MMA is in fact medically safer than boxing.

In a good application of symbolic politics, the UFC banned an athlete who refused to adhere to MMA rules from the league. Renato "Babalú" Sobra refused to release a chokehold promptly and maintained the choke even after his opponent, David Heath, tapped out (Stupp, 2007). This incident was certainly an incident that anti-MMA TAN actors could have used as a part of their argument against MMA and brought out how the sport can lead to uncontrolled violence. However, the UFC made an example of Sobra and dropped him from the league stating that such actions are not encouraged and works

⁵² Kim (2010) one step further and argues that comparing MMA with traditional sports will strengthen MMA's argument for widespread MMA sanctioning (i.e. by showing a sport-by-sport-comparison of the number of deaths and injuries to football or baseball). However such tactic proved ineffective for the case of boxing (refer to footnote 6). So therefore, Kim's argument that MMA has purposefully used boxing to show that it is "safe" (at least relatively safer than boxing) is the more viable and effective argument.

⁵³ Berg and Chalip (2010) examine three states (Texas-2005; Tennessee-2008; Maine-2009) in the U.S. that chronologically sanctioned MMA. They look at the differences, commonalities, and evolution of the policy discourse. For a detailed process of the legalizing process of MMA refer to: Berg, B., & Chalip, L. (2010). Legalizing the emerging: A policy discourse analysis on the legalization of mixed martial arts. *Annual Meetings of the North American Society for Sport Management*, Tampa, Florida.

against the best interest of the of sport. White⁵⁴ further revealed that “if Sobral had retained a hold on an ankle or knee in similar fashion, risking permanent harm to his opponent, [he] would have personally made sure that Sobral would never fight again, not only in the UFC, but within any MMA organization” (Kim, 2010, p. 3). By publicly condemning the action they were able to make a positive statement with a situation that would otherwise have been used against MMA in their favor.

Further, the UFC utilized leverage politics when they approached the legislation to lift the ban and sued the state of New York for not lifting the ban in 2013 (Sandomir, 2011). They also used accountability politics, where they highlighted McCain’s new stance about the sport in 2007. If McCain described MMA as a “human cock fight” in 1996, in 2007 he stated that, “they have cleaned up the sport to the point, at least in my view, where it is not human cockfighting any more. I think they’ve made significant progress” (National Public Radio, 2007;).⁵⁵

Second, as mentioned above, boxing and MMA show tactical and systematic differences in pursuing business interests. These tactical and systematic differences directly influence each sport’s ability to manipulate the components needed for sport commercialization which intricately related to the violence involved in the sport of MMA

⁵⁴ Dana White is the president of the UFC (as explained in footnote 48).

⁵⁵ Santos, Tainsky, Schmidt, & Shim (2013) focus on U.S. news media’s framing of public officials’ discourse concerning MMA in their literature. They conclude that there are two dominant frames: “leveraging of sociopolitical capital to protect societal values” and “leveraging of sociopolitical capital to advocate for legislation”. They argue that the news media has repetitively framed and reframed MMA as a result of repetitively moral threats and reassurances. It was briefly mentioned earlier that framing of an issue is important for TANs to successfully reach their goal. The two dominant frames back up the clashing forces between pro-MMA and anti-MMA actors.

(Fisher & Downey, 2006).⁵⁶

Figure 2 – Systematic and Tactical Differences between Boxing and MMA

Differences	Boxing	MMA(UFC)		Components of Sport Commercialization Influenced
Systematic	[Multiple Voices] Multiple governing organization (multiple champions per weight class)→ unable to identify a “real” champion	[One Voice] UFC as the leading organization (buy-out rival promotions and differentiate weight-classes internally)→ unified image	⇒ ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ ⇒	Spectacularization & Dramatization
Tactical	-	Reality TV show (previously on Spike TV, now on Fox Sports)	⇒ ⇒	Dramatization
	-	Fan Expo		Spectacularization & Personalization
	Lack of use of social media	Use of social media (Facebook and Twitter)		Personalization

Systematically, as briefly mentioned, boxing has more than five international

⁵⁶ In discussing the expedited flows of information and globalization of finance, Fisher and Downey (2006) dedicate an entire chapter to the UFC in their book discussing the ethnographic reflections on the new economy. It mentions how the MMA and the UFC was able to grow and emerge due to the globalization and technological developments, which is tightly related to the commercialization of the sport.

governing bodies that fight over who is more legitimate. The boxing industry is metaphorically referred to as being an “alphabet soup⁵⁷”. Each of the organizations has its own championship belt. Therefore, at one given time, there are multiple world champions per weight class. The complexity embedded in the system makes it difficult for fans to approach boxing and so the media also loses interest. For the case of MMA, UFC acts as a leader within the sport of MMA, carrying out mergers with rival promotions, allowing them to create a story with one champion and also convey a unified image to the fans and the media. The unified image of MMA allows them to maximize spectacularization⁵⁸ and dramatization (Swain, 2011).

The systematic difference is also reflected in their tactical differences. UFC successfully dramatizes the sport through its reality television show, *The Ultimate Fighter*⁵⁹, provides a back story and creates suspense up until actual UFC MMA matches.

The violence present in a MMA match coupled with a storyline allows the UFC to, to an extent, even beautify an otherwise violent sport. Namely, the spectacularization and dramatization allows them to tone down and decrease the perceived violent aspects of MMA.

Further, the UFC also regularly holds fan expos which allow them to further

⁵⁷ A figure of speech ridiculing the excessive number of boxing governing bodies (refer to footnote 20).

⁵⁸ Swain (2011) conducts an in-depth analysis of spectacularization of MMA. However, note that a more detailed and slightly different definition of spectacularization is used.

⁵⁹ *The Ultimate Fighter* (TUF) is a UFC reality TV show that debuted on Spike TV in 2005. The UFC and SpikeTV aired fourteen seasons (over 150 episodes) until they ended their six-year partnership in 2011. *The Ultimate Fighter* now airs on Fox Sports (a mainstream channel). TUF is also exported to other countries. Refer to: <http://www.mmafighting.com/2011/08/18/spike-tv-says-goodbye-to-the-ufc> and <http://www.411mania.com/MMA/news/287487/UFC-Confirms-The-Ultimate-Fighter-Nations:-Canada-vs.-Australia.htm> (both retrieved June 1, 2013).

spectacularize the sport and create personal connections with its fans (Ultimate Fighting Championship, 2013b).⁶⁰ Those within the boxing industry also admit that MMA, particularly the UFC, does an exceptional job in fully addressing the need, especially for spectacularization (Hemphill, 2011).⁶¹

Further, the UFC actively uses the social media, which allows them to communicate with fans and potential fans directly (Schoenfeld, 2012). UFC's use of social media is exceptional in the sport industry (Schoenfeld, 2012, Appedix F).⁶² In many occasions, White has openly credited the social media as one of the most important driving factors of the UFC and MMA's growth (Ferenstein, 2010; Laird, 2012; Mariotti, 2013). For example, at a UFC event that took place July 2012 in Calgary, Canada, a fan complained about his \$300 ticket which provided him with an obstructed view of the event along with a picture via Twitter directly to White (Radmanovich, 2012). After seeing the Tweet, White immediately took the necessary action to satisfy the fan and upgraded his seat. The public was able to follow this interaction when the fan expressed his satisfaction, again, on Twitter.⁶³ On the other hand, the boxing industry's use of social media is almost undetectable, which does not allow them influence the personalization component needed

⁶⁰ UFC explains that, "UFC Fan Expo is the world's premier Ultimate Fighting Championship fan event. Thousands of fans will celebrate their passion for America's fastest growing sport through participation in exhibitions, fighter autograph and training sessions, fan-inspired special events and competitions. Meet elite fighters and interact with industry icons".

⁶¹ Mike Tyson, a previous heavyweight boxing champion, comments about how boxing organizations need to learn from the UFC and MMA in an interview. Refer to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2VK8UvW480> (retrieved May 21, 2013).

⁶² Appendix F shows a comparison of the number of Facebook and Twitter followers of mainstream and major sport leagues.

⁶³ Twitter encounters between Dana White and the fan can be seen here: <http://storify.com/brownday/ufc-president-danawhite-demonstrates-amazing-custo/elements/500d89eb132536095dd49aa6> (retrieved July, 13, 2013).

for sport commercialization.

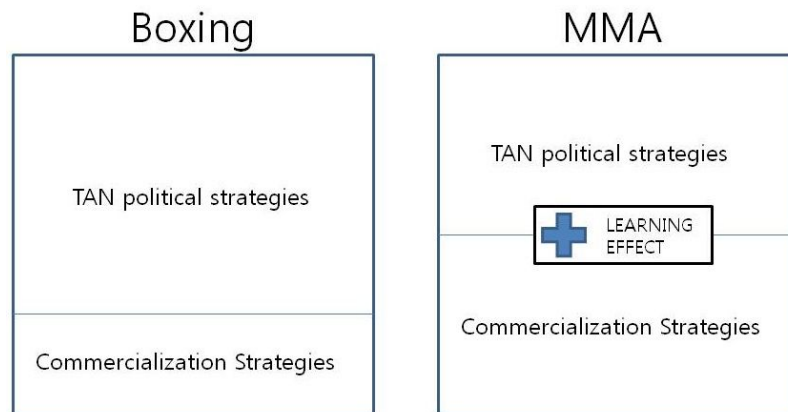
MMA received almost the same external pressure of TANs, pressure that imposed the same minimal ethical boundaries as it did to boxing. However, whereas boxing lost its tension balance, MMA satisfied its fans' quest for excitement by substituting spectacularization and dramatization for the lacking violence. Therefore, not only was MMA able to maintain its tension balance, it was also able to increase its popularity.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Findings

The downfall of boxing had appeared to be a result of oppressive pressure exerted by TANs. However, as examined above, the emergence of MMA, another combat sport, against the same pressure showed that TANs (external factors) were not the determinant factor in the decline of combat sports. Rather, internal factors (sport organizers) were the determinant factor in the differing trends of boxing and MMA. Specifically, MMA organizers (mainly the UFC) were more effective in using the political strategies against the anti-MMA TANs than boxing organizers were against their respective opponents.

Figure 3 – TAN's Normative Pressure and Commercialization Efforts



MMA actors were well aware of the moral concerns that were being brought up and were able to preemptively use these concerns against the opposing forces, implementing change as a result. Additionally, by maintaining an optimum balance with the TAN pressure as well as the commercialization efforts originating from their learning

capabilities as a late mover, MMA actors were able to overcome strong opposition against the sport and become the fastest growing sport of all time.

Sections 3 and 4 show that changes made to boxing and MMA can be explained using the theory of civilizing process. The decline in boxing and the emergence and growth of MMA were influenced more by internal factors, that is, the sport organizers' ability to commercialize and reach the viewers.

Table 3 – Summary of Findings

		Boxing	MMA
Political strategies used by TANs	1) Information Politics	O	O
	2) Symbolic Politics	O	O
	3) Leverage Politics	O	O
	4) Accountability Politics	O	O
Learning Effect	-	X	O
Commercialization Strategies used by profit-driven actors	1) Spectacularization	Limited	Successful
	2) Dramatization	Limited	Successful
	3) Personalization	Limited	Successful

TAN pressure inflicted the same prospective loss in both boxing and MMA. The resultant reduction in violence tilted an already fragile tension balance, a dynamic that caused the decline in boxing. It appeared as if TAN pressure was the determinant factor

that caused the decline in boxing. However, MMA, which experienced the same reduction in violence, was seen to outlive this off-balance and even continue to grow. Then, the case of MMA raises a discrepancy against the validity of this determinant factor, and suggests for the existence of another reason. Therefore, hypothesis 1, “Anti-boxing TANs’ normative idea of morality caused the decline of boxing” is rejected.

Changing business interest of the media and sport organizers have been analyzed above. Therefore, hypothesis 2, “Pro-boxing’s inability and pro-MMA’s ability to capture business opportunities caused the differences between the modern trends of the two sports” is accepted. The airing of UFC and other MMA matches on mainstream channels and skyrocketing pay-per-view earnings on cable are examples (Bearak, 2011; Ultimate Fighting Championship, 2013a).

The recent decision by the AIBA to remove headgear is also a sign that the boxing organizers have realized the importance of commercialization and the media. For quite some time the media voiced concerns about how headgears prevented the audience from looking at the boxers’ faces. That is, wearing helmets influenced the components needed for sport commercialization and therefore offset the necessary tension balance. They cite the study conducted by the BMA which concluded that headgears have severe side effects despite the cushioning effect as a reason for this move. But critics argue that this move was triggered as an attempt for boxing to return to its previous “golden days” (Mengisen, 2008; Wang, 2013).⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Despite the attempt to return to boxing’s golden days, many experts are pessimistic about boxing’s return to its golden days and have fallen behind in taking full advantage of the technological advancements in the globalizing era.

This thesis is twofold. First, Elias' concept of sportization of violent sports can be supported using the social-science concept of TANs. Results show that TANs were able to bring about regulation changes to make both boxing and MMA safer, rather than banning the two sports.

Second, the creation and emergence of MMA showed that the decline of boxing was not triggered by normative ideas implemented by TANs but the ability of sport organizers to capture the media and the public's interest and demands by manipulating components needed for sport commercialization.

6.2 Limitations and Further Research

MMA is still a young sport that is evolving and constantly changing. The rise and emergence of the sport is relatively easy to detect but the numbers and data to back up such a trend is difficult to find. This thesis has used articles and observations of others to delineate the current phenomenon. However, a more objective data would be more conclusive.

International governing body that oversees the sport of MMA, the International Mixed Martial Arts Federation (IMMAF) was only founded in February 2012 and its purpose is to provide "a stable, professional and democratic community for all national federations and offer support to countries committed to forming new federations where none currently exist" (IMMAF, 2013).⁶⁵ Further observation will be needed to see if the

⁶⁵ Attempt in creating a MMA governing is not new. That is, "this is not the first time that bodies have been formed with the purported aim of being a global institution to oversee mixed martial arts in some capacity - the latest serious effort was WAMMA, which 'sanctioned' the Affliction MMA events - but none has ever previously had the support of the UFC and so they have quickly faded into irrelevance." Refer to: <http://www.fightersonlymag.com/content/news/15980-ufc-to->

findings of this study will still hold in the future. Since IMMAF's vision is "for Mixed Martial Arts to be recognized as a sport through the full membership of IMMAF in *SportAccord*⁶⁶ and ultimately become an Olympic sport," it will be interesting to see what tactics are used to achieve their ultimate goal (IMMAF, 2013). Although MMA has gained a large fan base in a short period of time, the passing of MMA as an Olympic sport will allow for boxing and MMA to be analyzed and compared in a more leveled field.

Further, an earlier section of this thesis mentioned the "alphabet soup" phenomenon of the boxing industry.⁶⁷ Further analyzing the internal causes, besides external factors from anti-boxing TANs, of the decline in boxing such as pro-boxing's inability and pro-MMA's ability to capture business opportunities caused the differences between the modern trend of the two sports. The splitting of international boxing governing bodies will yield a more coherent conclusion regarding the relative impact of internal and external factors on the dynamics of a sport. That is, looking at the political reasons (based on national boxing associations) would provide another explanation for the decline of boxing.

support-newly-founded-international-mma-federation (retrieved May 12, 2013).

⁶⁶ *SportAccord* is an international sport organization. Specifically, it is "the umbrella organization for both Olympic and non-Olympic international sports federations as well as organizers of international sporting events". Refer to: <http://www.sportaccord.com/en/who-we-are/mission-and-values/#sthash.nLJRt06K.dpuf> (retrieved June 3, 2013).

⁶⁷ The oldest organization recognized by the International Boxing Hall of Fame is the WBA. The WBA was originally founded in the U.S. under the name of the National Boxing Association in 1921 but changed its name to WBA in 1962. When Bob Lee, the president of the United States Boxing Association ran for WBA's president and failed, he decided to create a new organization and created the United States Boxing Association-International. This organization is now known as the WBO. Refer to: <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/365684-alphabet-soup-getting-lost-in-the-boxing-organizations> (retrieved June 1, 2013).

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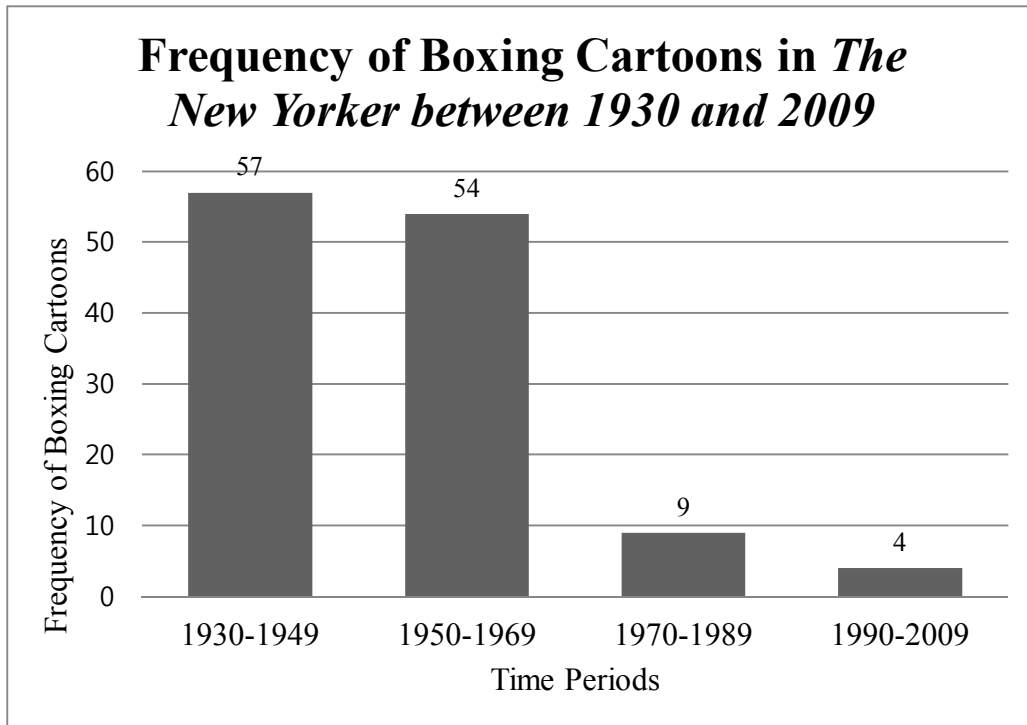
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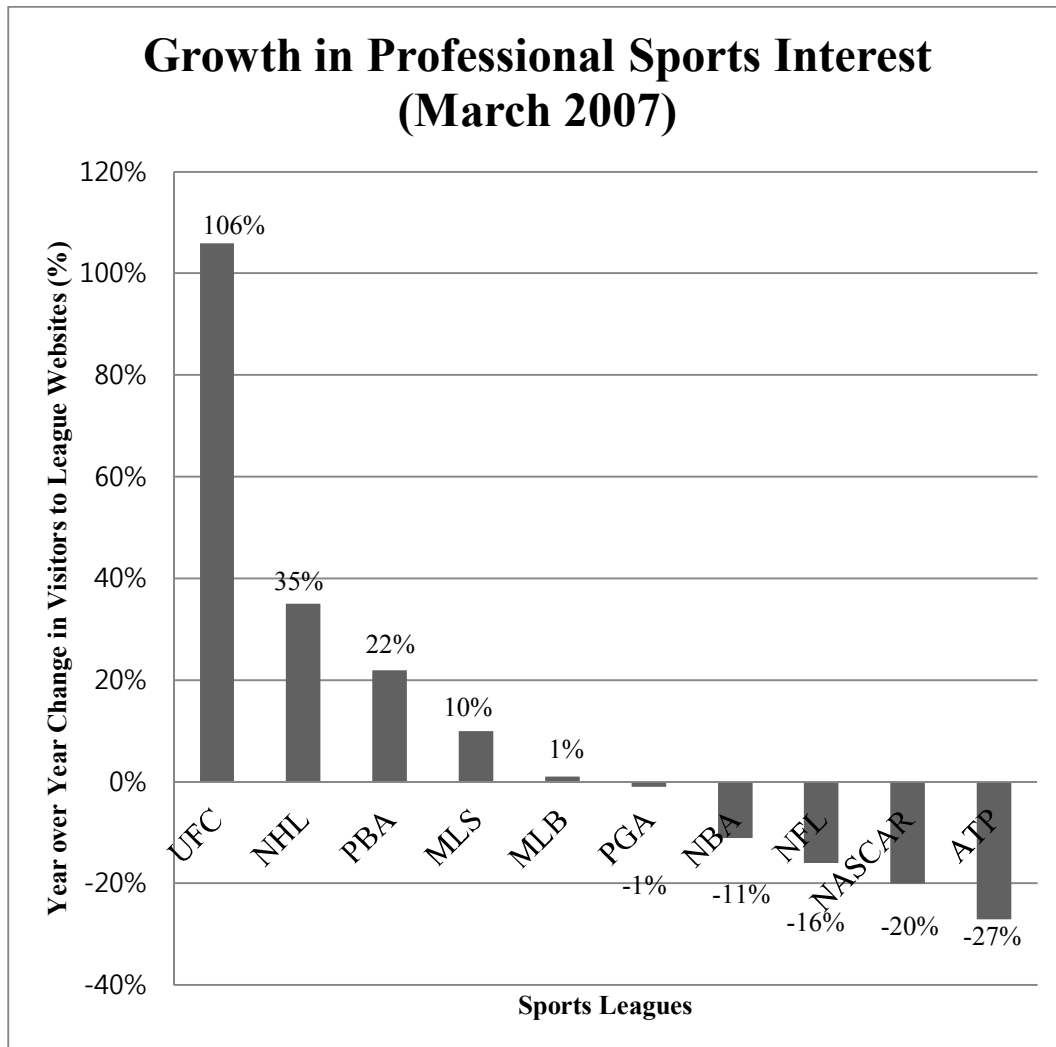
Appendix

[Appendix A] Frequency of Boxing Cartoon in *The New Yorker* between 1930 and 2009



Data from: Mankoff, R. (2011, November 9). Boxing days. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved May 21, 2013, from <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/cartoonists/2011/11/boxing-days.html>

[Appendix B] Growth in Professional Sports Interest: Percentage Change in Visitors to League Websites (March 2007)



Data from: Saks, G. (2007, April 20). UFC: 6th Most Popular Sport in U.S.? *Compete*. Retrieved May 28, 2013, from <https://blog.compete.com/2007/04/20/ufc-ultimate-fighting-championship-popularity-growth/>

[Appendix C] List of Articles Reporting Medical Associations' Statements to Ban Boxing

Physicians' journal calls for a ban on boxing (New York Times, January 14, 1984)
<http://www.nytimes.com/1983/01/14/sports/physicians-journal-calls-for-a-ban-on-boxing.html> (retrieved June 30, 2013).

AMA urges a ban on all boxing (Gainesville Sun, December 6, 1984)
<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1320&dat=19841206&id=vLMRAAAIIBAJ&sjid=qekDAAAAIIBAJ&pg=4955,2017360> (retrieved June 30, 2013).

BMA renews call for boxing ban (BBC, May 3, 1998)
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/87267.stm (retrieved June 30, 2013).

Enough? A brutal title bout left Gerald McClellan fighting for his life and the sport of boxing under attack once more (Sports Illustrated, March 6, 1995)
<http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1006286/> (retrieved June 30, 2013).

Boxing Should Be Banned – NZMA (Scoop Independent News, September 23, 2005)
<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/GE0509/S00101.htm> (retrieved June 30, 2013).

Calls to abolish boxing increase (IOL, September, 24, 2005)
<http://www.iol.co.za/sport/calls-to-abolish-boxing-increase-1.549385#.UZiWybX0FoA> (retrieved June 30, 2013).

Boxing Should Be Banned From Next Games, Australian Medical Association (Medical News Today, April 10, 2006) <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/releases/41288.php> (retrieved June 30, 2013).

Should science on brain injury inspire a ban on boxing? (Reuters, March 21, 2013)
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/21/us-boxing-brain-idUSBRE92K03720130321> (retrieved June 30, 2013).

[Appendix D] List of Articles Reporting Medical Associations' Statements to Ban MMA

Call to ban 'no-holds' fighting (BBC, September 4, 2007)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/6978438.stm> (retrieved June 30, 2013).

Ban brutal cage fighting, urge doctors (Telegraph, September 5, 2007)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1562187/Ban-brutal-cage-fighting-urge-doctors.html> (retrieved June 30, 2013).

Doctors calling for ban on mixed martial art (Vancouver Sun, August 16, 2010)

<http://www.vancouversun.com/news/bc-election/Doctors+calling+mixed+martial+arts/3395994/story.html> (retrieved June 30, 2013).

Canadian Doctors Seek to Ban Mixed Martial Arts (Wired, August 26, 2010)

<http://www.wired.com/playbook/2010/08/canada-ban-mma/> (retrieved June 30, 2013).

Should This Combat Sport Be Illegal? (Huffington Post, April 22, 2013)

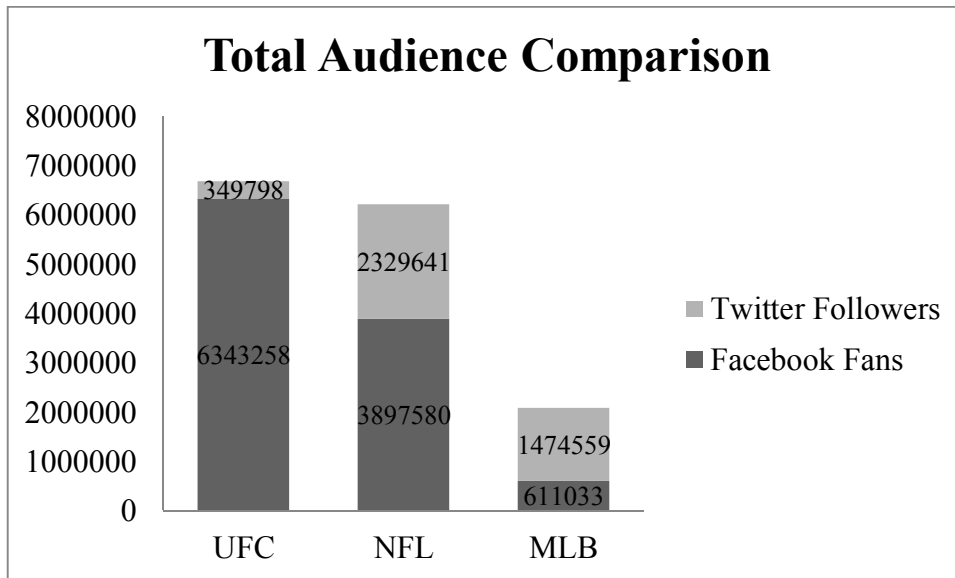
http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/dr-raywat-deonandan/mixed-martial-arts-criminal-code_b_3125885.html (retrieved June 30, 2013).

[Appendix E] Intended and Unintended Outcomes of Developments to Boxing

<i>Developments in Boxing</i>	<i>Intended outcome</i>	<i>Unintended outcomes or “side effects”</i>
Weight divisions	Fair play	Crash diets
Leather gloves	Less blood and gore	Only protects the hitters from cuts and bleeding, but leather gloves allowed hitters to hit harder, making the “hit-ees” more prone to brain damage
Reduction of rounds (15 three minutes rounds to 12)	Less fight time, less hitting, prevent serious injuries and deaths that were often being detected in rounds 13~15	Motivated by media to fit one hour slots rather to protect the boxers
Chowdhry scoring system	Fair judging through computerized scoring system	Motivates boxers to hit the opponents head rather body as they are more visible to judges using the computerized scoring system
Head guards	Cushion effect of blows to the head	Impairs vision making it difficult to avoid punches

Source: Murphy, P., & Sheard, K. (2006). Boxing Blind: Unplanned Processes In The Development Of Modern Boxing. *Sport in Society*, 9(4), 542-558.

[Appendix F] Total Audience Comparison of Facebook Fans and Twitter Followers for UFC, NFL and MLB (August, 2011)



Data from: Schoenfeld, A. (2012, June 29). Case Study: UFC Packs a Punch with Social Media. *Simply Measured*. Retrieved July 10, 2013, from <http://simplymeasured.com/blog/2012/06/28/case-study-ufc-packs-a-punch-with-social-media/>

Abstract in Korean

(국문초록)

초국경 네트워크의 스포츠에 대한 영향력 연구:

권투와 종합격투기의 사례를 중심으로

이 경 민

서울대학교 국제대학원

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지난 몇 십 년간 지속되어 온 권투의 하락세에 비추어 볼 때, 또 다른 격투기 스포츠인 종합격투기(MMA)의 최근 상승세는 흥미로운 현상이다. 폭력성을 띤 스포츠의 변화 과정에 대한 기존의 연구들은, 권투와 종합격투기의 변화를 설명하기 위해 Nobert Elias 가 주창한 개념인 ‘스포츠화’ (sportization) - 폭력적이고 무질서했던 신체적 활동이 규칙과 제도를 갖춘 스포츠로 문명화되는 과정- 에 크게 의지해 왔다. 본 논문에서는 초국경 네트워크를 목적을 추구하는 행위자들의 네트워크로 규정하고, 초국경 네트워크가 반(反)권투, 반(反)종합격투기 운동을 펼치는 과정에서 각 스포츠의 스포츠화에 미친 영향에 대해 살펴본다.

초국경 네트워크를 구성하는 행위자들이 추구하는 윤리적, 도덕적 규범이 권투와 종합격투기의 규정 변화에 영향을 끼친 것은 사실이지만, 스포츠화라

는 개념만으로는 권투와 종합격투기의 상반된 동향을 설명하기에는 부족하다. 본 논문은 스포츠 주최자들의 다양한 능력의 정도 - 변화하는 업계의 동향에 따라 스포츠 상용화에 필요한 요소들을 적절하게 파악해내는 능력의 정도 - 가 권투의 하락세와 종합격투기의 상승세를 더 포괄적으로 설명할 수 있다고 주장한다.

본 논문은 종합격투기가 후발 주자로서의 이점을 극대화하면서 본질적으로 상충하는 두 가지 동력 - 초국경 네트워크로부터의 규범적인 압력과 스포츠의 상업화에 필수적인 요소들 - 사이에서 보다 더 균형 잡힌 운영을 펼칠 수 있었음을 보여준다. 두 가지 동력 간의 긴장관계는 다음과 같은 사실, 즉, 반(反)종합격투기 초국경 네트워크들은 종합격투기의 폭력성을 비난하지만, 스포츠 상업화에 필요한 세 가지 요소들 - 장관화(spectacularization), 각색화(dramatization), 그리고 개인화(personalization) - 은 종합격투기에 내재된 폭력성을 통해 극대화된다는 사실에 기인한다.

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주요어: 권투, 종합격투기(MMA), 초국경 네트워크, 스포츠 상용화

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