

HAZING IN SPORTS: Video Commentary (8:30)

Transcript

Dr. John Heil:

Public interest, advocacy, and social justice are cornerstones of the American Psychological Association, yet the voice of psychology is conspicuously absent in the public discourse on important societal issues including racial and ethnic questions, performance enhancing and other drug use, hazing, sexual assault, and other forms of interpersonal violence, and gender equity. This is a lost opportunity. This board is a very powerful institution, which at once mirrors society and sets a standard for behavior.

Dr. Shane Murphy:

I think hazing is an appropriately negative word for bonding rituals, initiation rites, that have a negative impact on the individual who goes through it.

Dr. Rick McGuire:

So many of these kinds of behaviors, hazing, have been looked at as, "Well, that's just the way it's done." It isn't right in any other setting, but for some reason it has become acceptable in the given setting.

Dr. Robert McKelvain:

Hazing is not part of any sport. It's not part of any training program. It's not part of anything that you would do with an athlete or a team to make them a better team or make them a better athlete.

Dr. Lani Lawrence:

Ultimately when you do hazing, it divides teams instead of bringing them together, because there is that power differential that doesn't happen with team bonding.

Dr. Li Jing Zhu:

Solidarity can help the team reach their goal, and they can avoid a lot of problems such as hazing and also sexual harassment. The team dynamic will become much more better.

Dr. Leonard Zaichkowsky:

I've still been trying to figure out what role it really has. There are many other team-building activities that are more positive in nature than humiliating somebody.

Dr. Robert McKelvain:

The thing that drives hazing behavior is the desire on the part of people who've been through hazing to level the scales. They did it to me, I get to do it to them.

Dr. Shane Murphy:

Part of the sports ethos in particular, and this extends to groups like fraternities. Hazing even happens, for example, in the armed forces and police, even in companies, corporations. It's a feeling that you have to sort of prove something. It's that somewhat macho ethos that if you're good enough you can be part of this elite group, this group that's special, that has this bond.

Dr. Lani Lawrence:

Hazing is not good for anyone involved, but there is, I believe, a heightened risk for members of the LGBT community or people who don't conform to social norms.

Dr. Edward Etzel:

You know I think the powers that be would say, "Well, these people have a choice whether they do it or not." Probably they don't, because their motivation to fit in and become part of the team, is very strong. And if they chose to leave, the consequences of that psychologically, socially, perhaps financially, would be quite different.

Eddie Reese:

There've been some bad instances at Texas in hazing. There've been people that have died, and the state laws say you cannot haze anybody, you cannot allow yourself to be hazed, you cannot know about it. Those are not rules by the school. Those are state laws.

Dr. John Heil:

When someone is trying to be a whistleblower and they're also have been hazed and they're a victim, that complicates the dynamic because they're both a whistleblower and a victim. What happens is not only are they jeopardizing team status and risking punishment, but they're also putting themselves up in the current environment for public shaming, just by disclosing that the event happened. This creates a double bind, essentially, where a double bind is a sinister kind of catch-22, where it appears you have a choice. But really, you just have a choice between two punishing alternatives, which in the end, means no choice at all.

Dr. Robert McKelvain:

There is a silent group in teams where hazing goes on, for people who are harmed, and they will not be the ones speaking up. And then you'll assume that they're not there, because they didn't speak up. As a sports psychologist, I can tell you they are there, and it does them harm.

Dr. John Heil:

When it comes to action, we may need to work with a group or a team, do something individually, or sometimes just work in a general way in the public interest. Because sometimes there's not a solution there. But there is some benefit in speaking up in a public forum, trying to call attention to issues.

Dr. Shane Murphy:

It's very difficult to say let's just stop something, because you never know quite what it is that you're stopping. It's like putting your finger in the dike and then a new leak springs out. So the emphasis I would suggest is let's be really positive and make sure that we have something in place. Where if you want to have a team-building exercise, you want to have something that feels like a right-of-passage, an initiation, but it is a really positive thing. That it's well designed, that you as the coach are comfortable with it, and that you know about it.

Dr. Edward Etzel:

I think working through administrators and management, school systems, perhaps coaches if you have access to do so. But that's not an easy thing because culture is often entrenched in history.

And the values of what's seen as the way we have done things for a long time, and sort of good ol' boy networks and good ol' girl networks now, that maybe are not aware of the consequences of doing those things, even to know that something is illegal.

Mark Schubert:

If I see them crossing the line into hazing, then individually I'll talk to them. But we have a meeting at the beginning of the year, within the first month, where we talk about sexual abuse. We talk about hazing, but we make it very clear, and we have them sign a list of rules. And basically, if I have to talk to somebody more than twice about something like that, they're off the team.

Donald Anthony:

When you build a team, you want to create a bond of trust. In my thinking there's a fear factor in hazing.

Dr. Leonard Zaichkowsky:

Organizations put a value on having psychologists who continue to educate ownership, management, and players and their supporters about the negative aspects of hazing behavior. I think that has to continue.

Peter Westbrook:

And when we take the high ground, then it gets a little easier to tell the children, your job in life is to be the best that you can be. Your job in life is to help someone whenever you can.

Dr. John Heil:

Most people don't know who Beamer, Burnett, Bingham, and Glick are, and many people have probably forgotten what United Flight 93 is. They're the ones who spoke up, drove the revolt that ultimately resulted in crashing a plane and saved the lives of many others. You have to think they probably learned something as student-athletes in the process, to identify a challenge. What's a challenge, work as a team. And this is what we're trying for. This is what we want. And I think when we look back at anything we do as coaches, and anything we do in a team-building vein, are we creating this type of a person?

Contributors

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