

Video Transcript: Hazing in Sport

Dr. John Heil: Public interest, advocacy, and social justice are a cornerstone 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 because sport is a very powerful institution, which at once mirrors society and sets a standard for behavior.

When we try to understand hazing, it's really important to differentiate what's team building, what's not, and what's helpful, and what's not. That line is not necessarily very easy to draw.

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: 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 is 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. 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. John Heil: Over half of sports teams and organization engage in formal systematic hazing. Often, the coaches are aware. Often, it

happens in a public space. Often, alumni are present. In a twist in the modern social media era, more than 50% of the pictures end up in a public web space.

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, I think, to groups like fraternities ... Hazing even happens, for example, in the armed forces, 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. Edward Etzel: 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. If they chose to leave, the consequences of that psychologically, socially, perhaps financially, would be quite [inaudible 00:03:37].

Eddie Reese: There have been bad instances at Texas in hazing. There have been people that have died. These state laws, 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, then they're a victim, and 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 double bind is the 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, the people who were harmed, and they will not be the ones speaking up. 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. 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 rite of passage and an initiation, that 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, and what's seen as the way we've done things for a long time, the sort of good-old-boy networks and good-old-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. Basically, if I have to talk to somebody more than twice about something like that, they're off the team.

Dr. Leonard Zaichkowsky: Organizations, if they put a value on having psychologists who would continue to educate management, well, ownership, management, and players, and their supporters about the negative aspects of hazing behavior, I think that has to continue.

Dr. Robert McKelvain: To the extent that our school permits, we can actually function as a mediator, as a discussion starter, as a interested and involved third party to help them work through whatever it is that needs to be resolved.

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 the plane and saved the lives of many others. You have to think they probably learned something as student athletes in the process to identify as a challenge, what's a challenge, work as a team. This is what we're trying for. This is what we want. 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?