

Cultures of Sport Hazing and Anti-Hazing Initiatives for the 21st Century

Stepping Across
the Millennium

Edited by
jay johnson
Jessica W. Chin



Research in the
Sociology of Sport

VOL
23

**CULTURES OF SPORT HAZING
AND ANTI-HAZING INITIATIVES
FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

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**CULTURES OF SPORT
HAZING AND ANTI-HAZING
INITIATIVES FOR THE 21ST
CENTURY: STEPPING
ACROSS THE MILLENNIUM**

EDITED BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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ABOUT THE EDITORS

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Dr Jessica W. Chin is a Professor in the Department of Kinesiology at San José State University. Her research involves interdisciplinary, critical cultural analyses, focusing on the ways social, cultural, political and historical contexts intersect with the construction of identity through sport and physical activity. In addition to her work on Asian American identity and representation, her current line of research includes investigations of the meanings and experiences of sport hazing and initiation rituals, particularly on girls' and women's teams. Through her work, she identifies and suggests practical steps towards creating changes in sport culture that lead to sustainable, positive experiences for athletes. In collaboration with Dr jay johnson and a team of international scholars, she has researched historical trends of hazing in women's sport, hazing experiences in the Canadian University Sport (USport) System, applicability of outdoor education models for team-building and initiation activities and the role of alcohol in sports team hazing; together, they apply the research findings to develop and implement anti-hazing workshops for university athletes and administrators.

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Brian Crow is in his 23rd year as a Professor in the Department of Sport Management at Slippery Rock University, where he currently serves as the Department Chairperson. He held previous faculty appointments at Hampton University and the University of Southern Mississippi. Crow earned a Doctor of Education degree in Higher Education Administration (1994) and a Master of Business Administration degree (1991) from West Virginia University and a Bachelor of Science degree in marketing from West Liberty University (1988). He has spoken to more than 8,000 student-athletes at 50+ high schools, colleges and universities about the issue of hazing in athletics since 2004. Dr Crow was on the Board of Directors for The Hazing Prevention Network from 2017 to 2022.

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I am **Bapiwe Gobodo** a dedicated PhD candidate in Sociology at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa. My research focuses on the intricate and often racialised relationship between masculinity and violence. Exploring how masculine ideals shape and influence patterns of violence in the local context, my work seeks to contribute valuable insights to the broader discourse on gender, violence and societal structures.

Geneva Gudmundson holds a Bachelor's degree in Recreation Management and Community Development from the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba and is currently a Research Assistant in the FKRM and a Research Coordinator in the College of Nursing, both at the University of Manitoba. Her research focus includes health psychology and sociology, health behaviours, physical health, mental health, qualitative methods, mixed methods and arts-based methods. Geneva played a variety of sports, both competitively and recreationally and has had past experience as a rookie (first-year athlete) in multiple sport leagues and settings.

Margery Holman has had a 42 year career at the University of Windsor with a diversity of experiences in sport including teaching, coaching, administration and research. Dr Holman has committed both her academic and community lives to equity, using sport as the primary platform to contribute to positive change. Her teaching career included courses such as Principles of Coaching, Ethics, and graduate and undergraduate Sport and Law. She created and taught a landmark course on Gender in Sport and Physical Activity. She coached university teams for 24 years while also serving as Director of the women's sport programme for 18 years. In 1988, she accepted an appointment to serve as the University of Windsor's first Employment Equity Coordinator, working to develop the first policy to address sexual harassment and abuse on Campus. This led to her research focus on sexual harassment in sport which then evolved into hazing research and the sexual abuses that emerge from these questionable traditions. Her extensive efforts for reform to build equitable and safe sport for all has resulted in multiple university and community awards recognition.

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Hank Nuwer began tracking hazing deaths in a database nearly 50 years ago and continues to this day at his website. He is the author and/or editor of five books and hundreds of articles on hazing and hazing prevention. He is a Professor Emeritus of Journalism from Franklin College and holds an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Buffalo State University for his scholarship on hazing. He resides in Fairbanks, Alaska, and part-time in Warsaw, Poland, where he has published scholarship on hazing in prisons conducted by guards and inmates.

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Austin Sutherland is a 2024 graduate from the University of Manitoba Faculty of Law.

Fabiana Turelli is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba, Canada. Her undergraduate and master's degrees focused on martial arts and masculinities in Brazil. Her PhD carried out in Europe was a study of the women's Spanish Olympic karate squad. Her postdoctoral study, in Australia, searched for ways to bring theory into practice in a struggle against social issues. Dr Turelli's research line is critical, combining concepts of critical theory, feminism, sociology of sport, Anglophone proposals for critical pedagogies and intersectionality. By being herself a martial arts and combat sports (MACS) practitioner for several years, she advocates for the potential of MACS to holistically empower people.

Alexandre Fernandez Vaz has a Master's degree in Education from the Federal University of Santa Catarina, and a PhD in Human and Social Sciences from Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universität Hannover, Germany. At UFSC since 1998, he has been a Full Professor and works in the Postgraduate programs in Education and Interdisciplinary in Human Sciences, in addition to coordinating

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Jennifer J. Waldron, PhD, is a Professor in the School of Applied Human Development at Bowling Green State University (BGSU). Her extensive body of work encompasses over 80 peer-reviewed publications, book chapters and presentations at prestigious national and international forums. Dr Waldron's research focuses on critical issues within the realm of sports culture, including hazing as well as gender and sexuality in athletic environments. She strives to shed light on these complex issues, advocating for change within sporting communities so all athletes can flourish. Dr Waldron is the recipient of multiple awards such as the Woman of Distinction award at BGSU, the AAHPERD Mabel Lee Award for Young Professionals and the Regents Award for Faculty Excellence at the University of Northern Iowa.

Christopher Zacharda currently serves as the Senior Associate Dean of Students at Northwestern University. He also is currently a research scholar with the Piazza Center at Penn State University. His career in student affairs spans more than 25 years across various areas: fraternity and sorority life, student conduct, student engagement and leadership, off-campus living, residential life, care and support and wellness. He has also taught at both the undergraduate and graduate level, most frequently in research methods. As an avid swimmer, he began swimming competitively at age five and continues swimming at the US Masters Swimming level. He also enjoys open water swims in Lake Michigan and across the Narragansett Bay and Provincetown Harbor.

FOREWORD

Changes in public attitudes and widespread reforms that accompany paradigm shifts in society astonish members of the public when they occur, but not the scholars, activists and editorialists who saw the necessity of these changes. The latter are seldom surprised that these paradigm shifts finally do occur, although later in hindsight they may express wonder about the breadth, depth and swiftness of successful, earth-shaking movements. Today it may seem inevitable that Mothers Against Drunk Driving, drove to fruition harsher drunk driving penalties and led to the popularity of designated drivers, lower B.A.C. thresholds, zero tolerance for teen drunkenness and a plethora of awareness campaigns such as ‘Buzzed driving is drunk driving’.

A more recent earth-shaking change is the #MeToo Movement’s takedown of privileged persons who formerly got away with sexual assault, harassment and out-and-out rape. Society has experienced the insistence on seatbelt use, an increasing clamour for privacy protections and the emergence of toughened building codes, prosecution of rogue police, truth-in-lending credit card protections, disclosures on food labels, on and on.

The anti-hazing push seen internationally in countries such as Canada, the United States, the Philippines and India are, in my opinion, somewhere in a liminal state between ‘boys will be boys’ coddling of perpetrators and institutional eye shutting towards hazing practices at one extreme, and, on the other extreme, a steamrolling populist movement to #stophazing and to impose relevant criminal penalties when hazing activities include forced drinking, sexual assault, male-on-male rape through penetration and negligent ‘requirements’ such as the ingestion of disgusting and toxic substances, cult-like mind games, sleep deprivation and physical violence.

In sports hazing at one extreme, we see coaches euphemistically term the practice ‘team building’, and we still see professional sports teams parade so-called rookies through public displays of humiliation in the guise of tradition, which by any other definition would be seen variously as workplace harassment, battery, assault and unsportsman-like conduct. Following the Sweet 16 victory of UCLA over Baylor University in 2024, Trojans head women’s basketball coach Lindsay Gottlieb noted gleefully that star JuJu Watkins had to undergo a mild, non-criminal hazing because of her freshman status. Sports Illustrated described the stunt as ‘hilarious’. While Gottlieb is known for her levity and a clean programme, the incident demonstrates that ‘hazing’ is regarded by some coaches and players as ‘a good-natured tradition’, despite numerous examples where that ‘tradition’ somehow goes haywire.

By way of example, time and again, some coaches defend hazing under the belief it is a ‘team-building’ practice. In 2019, then-Lathrop High School football coach Roy Hessner ignored warnings that several of his players could not swim when he nonetheless ordered them to the deep end of the pool while taking off and putting back on a heavy sweater. As a result of the drill, three unconscious boys were rescued and taken to a Fairbanks, Alaska hospital. Hessner resigned under a clamour of protest by the parents of players.

High-profile hazing examples in professional sports also include many egregious examples. Here are three.

- (1) First-year Manchester United soccer player David Beckham was made to masturbate to a photo of a veteran male player.
- (2) Miami Dolphins veteran Richie Incognito was accused of hazing and bullying teammate Jonathan Martin, although Incognito put the blame back on Martin who he said had mental problems.
- (3) A long list of hockey hazing allegations that include unwanted sexual abuse, nudity and the claim of former Sarnia Sting player Daniel Carillo who asserted that he was paddled daily with a hockey stick and urinated on in the shower.

At the other extreme, sports reporters often file stories as newsworthy when coaches in various sports announce that hazing of first-year players is verboten. Even more newsworthy is when serious hazing allegations are made and coaches like New Mexico State’s basketball coach Greg Heiar and Illinois’ Northwestern University football coach Pat Fitzgerald get sacked by their institutions.

I believe that the present volume is important not only as an indispensable work of scholarship contributing to the literature in the study of sports sociology, but it also may be of crucial importance for college presidents, athletic directors and coaches needing a roadmap to accelerate efforts to eradicate hazing at their own institutions.

The volume addresses contemporary sport hazing practices through an analysis of what these often destructive rituals mean for those athletes who endure them and for those who perpetuate them, but also delineates, exposes and interprets the conduct of coaches and administrators whose action and negligence allow these barbaric, draconian customs to continue. To that end, the volume offers constructive ways and means to build team spirit and camaraderie without resorting to destructive and offensive rituals.

Of equal importance, the scholars and researchers represented here also unveil practical and theoretical examinations of hazing practices in light of the latest research on ethnicity, gender and race. Editors Jay Johnson and Jessica W. Chin collectively over their long careers have contributed books, studies and presentations on hazing that, while academically flawless and sound, are written in prose accessible to athletics professionals, the media, parents and other interested parties. In particular, I have admired their well-known sociological examination of alcohol in varsity and club sport hazing published in 2020. The lethal combination of hazing and requiring the drinking of copious amounts of alcohol in an

initiation has killed, among others, Western Illinois University lacrosse player Nick Haben, University of Minnesota at Duluth rugby player Ken Christansen and, allegedly more recently, Lyon College baseball player James Gilfedder.

My own involvement includes a database of hazing deaths that I began in 1975 after University of Nevada Wolfpack football player John Davies was savagely beaten, physically worn down and made to drink a deadly mixture of grain alcohol, wine, beer and whiskey that ended in his death. Prior to Davies' death, the hazing by fellow athletes of the Sundowner Club was witnessed openly by many members of the UNR community, including myself.

It is not lost on me that this volume is coming out in 2024, a single year shy of the 50-year anniversary of the violent and totally avoidable death of Nevada's John Davies. I anticipate learning much about what is different and what has stayed the same since I wrote about the behavioural implications of Davies' death in a groundbreaking article at the time for *Human Behavior* magazine. In closing, I believe this volume has important implications overall for the culture of sport in society.

Hank Nuwer
Franklin College, USA

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First and foremost, we thank our families for their unconditional support and understanding of our lives and work. We love you and know how fortunate we are. Many thanks to each of the authors for sharing their time, expertise and perspective; your outstanding contributions make this book all the more impactful and meaningful as we work together to promote positive changes in sports cultures and practices. We are grateful to the publishing and editorial team for all of their efforts behind the scenes and in guiding us through this process. With heartfelt gratitude, we acknowledge the monumental effort and inspiration that Dr Margery Holman provided us in both the preparation and completion of this book. Marge's pioneering work in critical feminist studies and sport hazing, and her mentorship and friendship are second to none, all of which helped to make this book possible. We are so thankful, Marge, to have you on our team. It has been a fantastic journey!

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INTRODUCTION: CULTURES OF SPORT HAZING AND ANTI-HAZING INITIATIVES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: STEPPING ACROSS THE MILLENNIUM

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In 2004, Dr jay johnson and Dr Margery Holman co-edited a book titled *Making the Team: Inside the World of Sport Initiations and Hazing*. At the time, this collection of chapters, the first book to describe hazing in the context of sport, showcased some of the emerging and leading hazing researchers in North America discussing multiple areas of contemporary hazing practices, both in and out of sport. The list of authors included Dr Hank Nuwer, widely regarded as a trailblazer in hazing research, who graciously authored the Preface for our current book *Cultures of Sport Hazing and Anti-Hazing Initiatives for the 21st Century: Stepping Across the Millennium*. He has repeatedly highlighted many of the questionable practices that athletes, team leaders and administrators have allowed, contributing to their perpetuation to the detriment of athletes, teams, coaches, administrators, institutions and the culture of sport. From the seminal research at the time, we learned that in sport, hazing rituals and practices have been commonly justified by teams and proponents as upholding traditions, proving one's commitment, and as a way of strengthening the bonds between members. Further, this scholarship revealed that many hazing practices are configured to introduce new members to both the power-based, hierarchical structure of the team and to reinforce the model of masculine hegemony reproduced by these ceremonies. In spite of unsubstantiated beliefs and myths about the virtues of hazing, research findings overwhelmingly indicate that with hazing,

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the risk for harm and the actual damage inflicted far outweighs any perceived benefits.

More than 20 years of hazing-related literature provides us with an enhanced understanding of the embedded culture it represents; yet, hazing remains an issue of concern across a wide range of sports, across the globe. The continuation of potentially harmful, traditional initiations is contingent on a matrix of factors including the use of alcohol, secrecy, tradition, misogyny, ritual and power. When these factors are excused by sport administrators and the general public, maltreatment of athletes by their peers through hazing remains a threat to the positive experiences that sport can offer. The two decade arc of time between the two books provided us with a base of research and writing to build upon, creating a space for commentary and contemporary analyses. Scholars and practitioners have populated this space with resources, knowledge and educational tools, establishing a platform to speak to the broader cultural changes that have impacted hazing practices during that span of time. Of the most notable are the growth of girls'/women's participation in sport, the legal parameters of hazing and development of hazing-specific laws around the globe, growth in sport hazing research emanating from dozens of countries around the world, technology, social media and expanded personal/public/media awareness with understandings of hazing practices.

The end of this two decade span of time is book-ended by our most recent nationally funded study that looked across sports and gender to examine hazing knowledge and practices in Canadian varsity athletics. The results indicated, among other findings, that hazing continued in high percentages, and that athletes transitioning from high school to university teams expect to be hazed (Johnson et al., 2018). As researchers, this surprised us, as we shared in more depth in Chapter 1, "Into the New Millenia: Reflections From Our Half Century Journey With Hazing." Collectively over the decades, we have witnessed steps and progress towards changing the culture of hazing in sport and had genuinely expected less reporting and less of a prevalence, noted in most men's and women's sports. We do present and trumpet the positive steps forward that are evident when looking back from a historical perspective and into our contemporary landscape, yet those findings were problematic on multiple levels. This is evidenced in that the knowledge of the cultural practices and expectation of hazing in sport existed for all of the athletes, a shadow present in the middle and high school aged sporting experiences of the next generation.

Even though public and private hazing ceremonies have persisted, there have been significant and observable changes to the sport landscape. Of note, this funded research was conducted just prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the complete cessation of sport during the pandemic, the neo-hazing topography of teams post-pandemic has yet to be charted or researched in light of increasing accounts of team hazing ceremonies. Political and social events tied to the pandemic have impacted the portrayal of hazing, marking the beginning of a new global wave of racial and ethnic violence and hate. With a subsequent surge in athlete activism and social justice movements (#MeToo and #StopAsianHate, to name a couple), calls for accountability in

cases of abuse, abusive practices and bullying, especially as they are connected to gender- and race-based violence, are also on the rise. In this context, athletes' voices, in particular for those athletes who have historically been marginalised, have been amplified. Accordingly, the public as well as sport officials and administrators are taking note.

In light of these recent shifts in the political and sport landscapes, we felt it important to analyse and present current experiences and practices of sport hazing from multiple and diverse perspectives, while tackling long-standing issues of abuse and identity-based violence in sport. This approach is significant in not only developing better understandings of motives as well as effective prevention measures but to also offer healthy alternatives to the more traditional and harmful ways of marking the transition of new members onto a team. In this volume, we identify current hazing trends, provide critical analyses of recent hazing incidents and present multiple, diverse voices on the subject matter. It also offers further insights by suggesting practical steps to improve policy and promote positive sport experiences and cultures for athletes.

By the time of publication, it will have been 20 years since the publication of the initial volume on hazing, augmenting the usefulness and timeliness of the current volume. This 2024 edition offers current critical analyses of sport hazing practices, including diverse perspectives and experiences of hazing and initiation in the contemporary sport landscape. Considering the findings of extensive research, a section of the volume is dedicated to practical suggestions that support collaborative efforts for enacting positive change to team sport cultures and welcome rituals. Authors' contributions have considered intersections of identity (related to, for example, gender, race and ethnicity) and offer critical examinations of team hazing from multiple perspectives, analytical frameworks and theoretical lenses based on their research findings and knowledge related to sport and hazing.

When we conceptualised the idea for this book, two story lines were fairly obvious and formed the foundation for its design and presentation. The first was the story arc of the decades when we collectively have been immersed in research and action centred on hazing. The second was the relative proliferation of researchers from around the globe immersed in researching hazing in sport. The predominance of academic research in this field is undertaken in North America, and while it is not a new phenomenon recently occurring in other places, we now have a richer understanding of the pervasiveness of these practices in other parts of the globe thanks to the network of international researchers. The authors of the chapters contained in this book represent an international ensemble of people engaged in hazing research and prevention from diverse perspectives in many countries around the world. They are academics; they are students, athletes, coaches, administrators and fans of sport. Some have been engaged in this field of research for upwards of 50 years and some are more recent graduates. We tried to capture a perspective that could look across that span of time and the changes we have witnessed with regards to hazing in sport as well as some of those problematic aspects and residuals that still remain in the culture of sport after all these years later.

We divided the content of the book into three sections to reflect the scope of that undergirding. The first section features contributions that highlight a partial view of hazing research from around the world. The second section presents chapters that elevate the voices of stakeholders, many engaged in analysis through the lens of gender. The final grouping of chapters section represents a diverse collection of the dissemination of the hazing-related academic knowledge amassed through that period of time. These are professional offerings from the pioneering experts in hazing, a bountiful collection of anti-hazing tools and programming detail areas of transformative interventions across sporting experiences, that provides a rich menu of interventions and resources for you to access. The chapters in this book build upon the foundational research started all those years ago and expand our understanding of the pervasiveness of hazing practices around the globe, showcasing hazing research in countries from five different continents. The volume speaks to the differences and the similarities of those hazing experiences, unpacked through the lenses of gender, privilege, race and power. Some of the terrain covered in this text overlaps with previous studies in interesting ways and offers completely new portraits of the intricacies and nuances of hazing in sport, many of the chapters weaving gender and masculinity into their analyses and writing. Additionally, there is a focus on the legal repercussions and dimensions of hazing from multiple global perspectives. It highlights work that draws on recent examples from sport that when presented in the national news have prompted enough public support to address structural change at the institutional and grassroots level of the governing bodies.

Lastly, we made the decision to include one of the three sections of the entire manuscript dedicated to the dedicated work of those whose researchers who continue to extend and build upon their longitudinal hazing knowledge, experience and work with athletes, coaches, institutions and governing bodies, accrued over years. These efforts have been successful in creating toolkits, resources, education platforms and facilitated practices that are designed to promote and spur change within culture of hazing and abuse in sport for the betterment of all. Now, we look forward to handing off that baton to the next generation of academics, authors and practitioners who continue to build upon that base of knowledge in the tireless pursuit of creating spaces and experiences in sport that are free from abuse, harassment and discrimination and are truly welcoming and allow individuals to flourish. This is likely predicated upon that joy that we found in our youth, etched into our life histories and formed into an enduring and complex love of sport and moving our bodies that we want others to also experience in positive and affirming ways.

We trust you will mine as much or more than we did as authors and editors from this collection of thought provoking and action inspiring texts that comprises this book. While a daunting task, we look forward to championing the efforts of those authors and architects of that future book that describes hazing in the context of athletics as we walk together, towards a better more inviting and open field of play in sport.

KEY READINGS

Johnson, J., & Holman, M. (2004). *Making the team: Inside the world of sport initiations and hazing*. Canadian Scholars Press.

This seminal book includes a collection of burgeoning scholarship from engaged scholars, practitioners, coaches, athletes and journalists that described the intersections between sport and hazing through a multitude of socio cultural lenses and perspectives, including gender, sex, race, masculinity, and power with an eye towards cultural change.

Nuwer, H. (1999). *Wrongs of passage: Fraternities, sororities, hazing, and binge drinking*. Indiana University Press.

This was one of the first, in-depth examinations of the culture of hazing in groups. The particular focus of this book were the longstanding hazing traditions of fraternities and sororities in the American College system. In addition to describing the widespread practice of hazing across the country, the text looks at the culture that enabled and for some time, supported hazing.

REFERENCE

Johnson, J., Guerrero, M., Holman, M., Chin, J., & Signer-Kroeker, M. (2018). An examination of hazing in Canadian intercollegiate sports. *Journal of Clinical Sport Psychology, 12*(2), 144–159. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jcsp.2016-0040>

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PART 1

**TRENDS ACROSS TIME AND THE
GLOBE**

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