

SPORT & Entertainment REVIEW

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**Envisioning Sport Programs for the Other 75%:
Recapturing a Lost Generation**

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the Culture of Sport and Entertainment**

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Envisioning Sport Programs for the Other 75%: Recapturing a Lost Generation

Marlene Dixon, *Texas A&M University*

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Several catchy television commercials produced by the NCAA tout the thousands of college athletes who will not play professional sport. For the vast majority of college athletes, college participation will be the end of their competitive sport years, as meaningful adult sport participation in the US remains limited. The issue, however, starts much earlier. The vast majority of high school athletes will not play college sport, but will end their organized sport participation at age 18 or so. Further, the vast majority of youth sport participants will not play high school sport, or even middle school sport. In fact, statistics continue to show that by the age of 13, somewhere between 60–70% of American youth have dropped out of organized sport, with the biggest dropout rate belonging to girls. For me, and many others this drastic dropout rate is alarming. Why do so many American youth stop playing sport at such a young age?

The answers have been many. Some suggest that coaching is a problem; undertrained and overzealous coaches take the fun out of participation such that children burn out and no longer want to play. Some youth pursue other interests like music or art. Some begin working to support their families. Indeed, a myriad of reasons have been suggested and supported. One of the most compelling explanations that has built traction particularly in recent years goes beyond individual-level reasons and factors and explores the design of the US sport system itself. What about the way sport is delivered in the US creates a deluge of youth sport dropouts? How could we change the design of the youth sport delivery system sport such that we could recapture young people and provide meaningful sport participation opportunities throughout the adolescent years?

As a former youth, high school, and college sport participant, and now as a coach, parent, consultant, and scholar, I have examined this question from multiple angles, including 15 years of empirical research based largely in field and

consultant settings. While I have examined adult sport participation as well (e.g., Lim, Warner, Dixon, Berg, Kim, & Newhouse-Bailey, 2011), I find I am most compelled by the issue of youth drop-out. If we cannot first recapture youth sport participants, there may be no need to discuss the adult delivery system. Clearly, I am not the first or even the most well-versed to discuss the issue of the US sport delivery system; but, having lived and worked in this space for nearly 40 years, I would like to offer a few insights and suggestions of ways that we could adjust the sport delivery system in the US to better serve the majority of youth, and create pathways for lifelong sport participation. This call is in parallel to the Aspen Institute's Project Play call for developing more mainstream opportunities for sport participation. To be clear, these ideas are focused not at eliminating the elite development system, which I would argue serves about the top 25% of athlete in the US, but are focused on creating a system that better serves the other 75%.

Borrowing from Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, I will call this a "youth sport for all" model, understanding that there is no singular or universal sport for all program or structure, nor will "all" participate. The term is utilized to capture a model that broadly serves youth across the country who have an interest in meaningful sport participation, but not necessarily at an elite level. These suggestions are a mix of underlying philosophy, delivery system (time, place, and people), program structure, and governance. Some are research driven, and some are ideas drawn from working with and examining existing sport programs around the country and the world.

The first suggestion toward a youth sport for all model in the US involves the delivery system (see Dixon & Bruening, 2014; Dixon, Burden, & Newhouse-Bailey, 2012 for chapter overviews). Since the early 1900's the majority of youth sport in the US has been delivered in two separate, but parallel systems: school and non-school. In the school sector, sport is delivered usually beginning in middle school (6th, 7th or 8th grade) in school-based facilities, with school subsidies, and with school personnel as coaches and administrators. In the non-school system, sport is delivered, beginning as early as age 2 or 3, in a wide range of formats. These range from municipal offerings utilizing city/town facilities, with city-paid administrators and usually volunteer (mostly parent) coaches to private paid offerings using private facilities, administrators and coaches. The coaches and administrators may be part- or full-time, and facilities range from an individual field or court to full-service academies, such as IMG (See Coakley, 2010; Doherty, Misener, & Cuskelly, 2014; Jones, Edwards, Bocarro, Bunds, & Smith, 2016, and Misener & Doherty, 2009 for more in-depth discussions of the US youth sport delivery system).

The benefit of school-based delivery is that most schools are built with sports in mind and provide indoor and outdoor playing fields and courts (Green & Dixon, 2012). These are

usually paid for by public tax dollars, which implies that the facilities should be available to those who paid the taxes. The problem with school-based delivery systems in a youth sport for all model is that they are typically personnel-bound. That is, there are a limited number of coaches and administrators that schools can dedicate to sport, as education is their primary mission (Dixon & Bruening, 2014; Green & Dixon, 2012; Newland, Dixon, & Green, 2013). Thus, most schools offer limited participation opportunities (at most 2–3 teams per grade), and these spots only go to the most talented individuals. In very large suburban and urban schools (where there might be 3,000–4,000) students, only 24–36% of students participate (Burden & Dixon, 2012, 2013a, 2013b). While many schools have more capacity in off-seasons for facility use, they do not have more capacity for coaches, who are typically already overburdened with teaching and administrative duties.

The problem with a non-school delivery system is two-fold. City-based programs are strapped for facilities, while private offerings struggle to provide sport at an accessible cost (Dixon & Green, 2011; Green & Dixon, 2012). According to Project Play statistics, "Travel-team parents spend an average of \$2,266 annually on their child's sports participation, and at the elite levels, some families spend more than \$20,000 per year." This private pay for play model makes private sport inaccessible to many lower income youth, and increases participation disparities across the nation, particularly in lower socio-economic areas (Dixon & Green, 2011; Newhouse-Bailey, Dixon, & Warner, 2015; Newhouse-Bailey, Keiper, & Dixon, 2011). I'm not suggesting that we eliminate these programs; for those who can afford them they are a valuable and potentially enjoyable experience for youth and have the potential for helping advance athletes to the next level.

Thus, one way for providing youth sport for all is to provide hybrid sport programming. In line with the Aspen Institute's Recommendations for Project Play (2016), where proponents call for more "mainstream options for the moderately interested athlete," we need to create a better and more broadly implemented hybrid system. Jones et al. (2016) in their review and study of youth sport partnerships argue that inter-organizational partnerships of various forms increase the capacity of youth sport organizations to deliver sport, and to deliver sport that is more likely to meet constituent needs. Thus, school and non-school sport delivery systems need to share resources, build partnerships, and work together to provide sport that is more broadly accessible across the lifespan. What does this look like in practice? Building on my work and the work of others, here are some ideas and examples.

In Austin, TX, and Steelton, PA, flag football is provided for middle and high school girls through a private club that utilizes school fields (Dixon & Green, 2011; Green & Dixon, 2012). The coaches, referees, and logistical support is provided by and paid for under the non-school league. Athletes

pay a small fee that covers field rental, uniforms, coaching stipends, and referee costs. Athletes are recruited within the schools and represent their school in name and colors, and are subject to “no pass no play” academic eligibility rules, just like school-based athletes. Coaches and league organizers are non-school based. The schools provide space for practice and games for a significantly reduced rental fee. This system combines the advantages of low cost, school affiliation/identity, and availability of coaches; the program utilizes school fields (which are not in use during the spring), yet does not overburden school personnel. It provides a space for participation for girls who were filtered out of the school sport system.

In College Station, TX, the local parks and recreation centers partner with the elementary and middle schools to provide after-school/evening volleyball and basketball programs. This allows the city to significantly expand their programming to adolescent age groups because it gives access to additional court space, yet it does not tax the school’s personnel to provide the sport programming. The city pays a reduced rental fee for the courts, which also helps the schools maintain quality facilities.

A large high school in Houston, TX, is developing a full intramural program for its students. Sports offered include volleyball, kickball, basketball, ultimate, and flag football, which are coordinated with the school sport offerings with regard to season timing and facility use. The program is financed by local companies, who provide monetary support for a sponsor stipend, and equipment (e.g., basketballs, kickballs, ping-pong tables). It is run by a teacher-sponsor, but is student-directed in all other aspects. Recruiting, coaching, refereeing, and managing are all accomplished internally by the students. Scores are kept and records are tallied and recorded on the walls outside the gym. The program, open only to those who are not on a school-based team, provides literally hundreds of participation opportunities, at virtually no cost, to both boys and girls. The students report that it enhances school spirit, gives them a sense of ownership and leadership, and provides meaningful after-school sport participation right there at the school. Administrators say that it increases student buy-in, reduces delinquency, and maximizes use of school facilities (Burden & Dixon, 2013c).

In my research and consulting work across the US and abroad I have observed partnerships between schools and churches, schools and private providers, and schools and public providers. These kinds of partnerships not only make sense, but only work when both parties are flexible and creative about space, timing, and cost. We need to continue to revise the boundaries between school and non-school sport; we need to redefine what “real” sport participation means. In doing so, we open the door for meaningful participation to many more boys and girls who are currently not being served.

A second aspect of a youth sport for all mindset in the US is an appropriately competitive atmosphere (Newhouse-Bailey, Dixon, & Warner, 2015; Warner & Dixon, 2013). That is, some sport calls for and thrives on a highly competitive atmosphere. Selecting the best and having athletes constantly compete (within and without) to be the best can cultivate excellence. We need this type of competitive atmosphere for at least some sport offerings in the US. But, this kind of atmosphere is not attractive for everyone, nor is it conducive for building broad-based participation. In fact, by its very design, it is conducive for narrowing.

In response to this type of atmosphere, a number of scholars have suggested that sport opportunities should be non-competitive, and focused on fun (see Graham, Dixon & Hazen-Swan, 2016 for a partial review). Again, this attracts a particular market segment. But, my work, particularly with mainstream adolescent girls and boys, suggests that they prefer a semi-competitive atmosphere. In essence, this means they like that scores and records are kept; this makes the games meaningful. They like that they have to try-out for the teams and they have to attend practice in order to play in games; this makes membership meaningful and helps them improve and develop skill. They do not like competing against their friends for spots on the team; they do not like getting cut if they do not progress on a particular schedule. They want to challenge themselves to become better and improve their own skill and performance, yet not necessarily compete against others (Dixon & Pace, 2007). Many of the participants we worked with suggested that they had been in the ultra-competitive system and either opted out or were forced out of that system (Dixon & Pace, 2007; Warner, Dixon & Chalip, 2012). They did not, however, enjoy playing just for fun, or in pick-up games. Instead, they wanted a way to participate in organized competition, where they could test themselves and improve their skills, without losing friendships and feeling constantly stressed.

In my study and consultation, I have observed a number of programs across the US, UK, Kenya, and Australia that provide this kind of atmosphere. For example, flag football programs in Austin, New Orleans, and Pittsburgh, as well as the emerging basketball programs we are helping to develop in Nairobi allow girls to assemble their own teams and play against other schools in weekly league competitions. They hold try-outs and communicate expectations, but the skill threshold for making the team is low, so cuts are rare. This competitive structure creates meaningful participation opportunities, but also supports (rather than strains) friendships and promotes mastery rather than ego oriented outcomes (Dixon & Green, 2011; Dixon & Pace, 2007; Green & Dixon, 2012).

In the UK, flag and kitted programs in the Coventry area have been successful at attracting girls and boys who want to play sports other than netball, soccer, or rugby. These programs fall across a range of competitive emphases; the com-

petitive emphasis being driven by the athletes themselves who self-select the level and number of tournaments they desire to play in. In Australia (and most non-US sport systems), many schools require participation in sport. In these schools, teams are created for every ability level. So, for example a school may have a soccer program that has a first 1 team all the way through a tenth team. Those teams play a matched team from the other school. Thus, the competition level on the higher-level teams tends to be more intense, and reduces in intensity as the levels progress down. Further, far and away the most prominent sport system outside the US is a club-based system where teams are provided for nearly all levels of competition, relative to the available interested pool of participants. Thus in both of these systems, rather than cutting participants, they expand meaningful competition opportunities to accommodate the greatest number of participants possible.

The main point I am emphasizing here is that in the US, we have largely viewed competition and play or fun as polar opposites. Programs, and their assumed outcomes, must fall into one category or the other. A US Youth Sport for All program would recognize and offer a range of competitive emphases, and allow participants a voice or at least a choice in the level of competition they desire (see also Aspen Institute, 2016). This goal could be accomplished by creating new programs, or by offering more of a range within existing programs. Rather than losing those participants who do not desire the highest level of competition, we recapture them at a lesser competitive level where they can achieve the outcomes they desire from meaningful sport participation.

A third element of a US Youth Sport for All program is a lower investment level (compared to varsity and elite club programs). Again, this idea aligns with the philosophy of offering more mainstream alternatives, but is implemented more at the structural level. While data on actual time expenditures by adolescents on sport participation is difficult to obtain, Project Play national surveys suggest that it is a strong concern of parents (i.e., they are worried that children and youth spend too much time in sport).

The amount of time spent on sport for highly invested athletes can be quite high. Consider the example of a varsity high school basketball player at a local school. This athlete is required to spend one hour in school 5 days a week, and two hours after school for practice 3 days per week. In addition, most Saturdays require 2–3 hours for shooting and film. Games take place twice per week, and require 3–5 hours at the gym, not including travel time. Thus, for a local high school commitment, the time required is approximately 19–24 hours per week. Time commitments can range even higher for club/select teams who may practice 3 hours/4 nights a week, and full weekend tournaments (see Newhouse-Bailey, Dixon, & Warner, 2015 for additional examples). For adolescents, then, choosing high investment sport essentially eliminates other activity choices. Teens must choose between

sport and band, or sport and drama. For teens of lower socioeconomic status, they may be forced out of school athletics because they cannot both work and play sport (Burden & Dixon, 2012, 2013a; Olushola, Jones, Dixon & Green, 2013; Olushola, Green, & Dixon, 2014).

We need to create meaningful sport participation opportunities that call for a lower time investment. Programs that I have worked with, designed, and/or delivered have a found success in attracting large numbers of youth with investment levels of about 6 hours/week. In this model, athletes practice 2 times/week for 1–2 hours, then play games either 1–2 times per week, often with multiple games on one day. For example, a local middle school boys 7v7 football program practices and plays on school fields, and is coached by parent or college student volunteers. They practice 2 hours on Sunday, then play 2 games on Tuesday nights. In total, athletes dedicate about 6 hours/week to the team.

In the UK, girls play flag football on hybrid club teams. They practice 2 times/week for about 2 hours each. Then, instead of playing in a league structure, they play tournaments only, and typically play one weekend long tournament per month. Parents report that this drastically reduces their time commitment in driving their daughters to competitions. Girls report that they love the weekend tournament formats for three main reasons: 1) they are able to play multiple games in a short period of time, which quickly enhances their individual and team skill levels, 2) they spend time together, which builds their friendships, and 3) they have their non-tournament weekends open for other activities. Across stakeholders, they prefer this model to the weekly league model found in most US school-based sport.

The high school intramural program I mentioned before is based on an investment of about 2–4 hours per week. Students typically practice in the first two weeks of the season, then play games for the remainder. They usually play on Monday and Wednesday, or Tuesday and Thursday, and play 2–3 games in an afternoon. Students report high participation rates—they work or do other activities on their non-participation days, and some report that they come to watch the other teams on the days they are not playing, just because they enjoy being around sport and their friends. In sum, while some youth and their parents desire to and thrive on a model of high investment level in sport, this model is not the only one that creates meaningful participation. Any number of examples demonstrate the success of a lower investment model in drawing large numbers of mainstream participants who persist in sport because they can play sport and “still be teenagers.”

Other programs are working to maximize investments by adding life-skills or mentoring components, such that the time invested in sport reaps academic and social benefits as well (e.g., Newland et al., 2013; Olushola et al., 2012; 2013). For example, the girls basketball programs in our study based in West Virginia found that mixing sport with mento-

ring and academic tutoring maximized the life benefits from both, and reduced transportation and other logistical costs in terms of time. Girls were able to accomplish multiple goals within one-time commitment. In Nairobi, we are developing this same model with the added dimension of the provision of food. Thus, in one place and time block, girls are provided sport that enhances their academics, life skills, and meets their physical and emotional needs.

A final thought and perhaps first next step is that despite strong (perhaps even voracious) cries to the contrary, it is likely time that we introduce some standardization and governance in the youth sport sector, particularly in the non-school based offerings. As a start, I think this comes in two forms.

First, we need to be open to more regulations within the Youth Sport for All or mainstream offerings. That is, if programs are going to be successful in reaching the more moderately invested participant, and they are going to demonstrate characteristics of lower investment levels and appropriate commitment levels, then the leagues or structures in which they are offered need to be structured as such. For example, a youth basketball program I work with only allows teams to select any players they want (within the age range), but they can only have 8 boys on a team, and they can only practice one hour per week and play one game per week. This creates parity in the league and prevents a default to higher competitive and/or investment levels. The league or program offering must be clear about the rules and abide by them, otherwise, the default will be another elite offering. The structures may vary, but they need to create parity and an atmosphere that will support the characteristics argued for above.

Second, we need more structured implementation of programs that work. As explained above, the US youth sport delivery system (if one can call it that) exists as a piecemeal puzzle of a variety of offerings across towns, cities, and states that has little consistency or replication. One city may have a brilliant program that was created out of a desire to serve a particular need, or from the vision of a dedicated youth sport champion. However, that program remains localized, while the next city over suffers from a lack of similar programming. We need to continue to network and share ideas through avenues along the lines of (but not limited to) Project Play, to share and more broadly implement the design, structure, and implementation of excellent Sport for All type programs across the US.

Governance of these broader programs is perhaps the most difficult part of a Youth Sport for All vision. Some would suggest that governance should be housed within USA sport—a Federal level governance system. This suggestion has some merit, yet often strikes at odds with the USA Sport Systems alternate goal of developing elite Olympic level athletes. Some would suggest that schools should subsume operation and governance of non-school sport. For the reasons outlined above, I do not think this is feasible or desirable. School sys-

tems are already overtaxed with demands, and may also have conflicting demands against elite sport. Thus, private organizations seem a desirable option. However, rather than incentivizing elite development, they need to be tasked and incentivized with broad-based participation. One example of an organization that is attempting to do this is Upward sports. Through networks of churches across the US, they promote a particular brand of sport participation that comes with training, gear, rules, and governance. While I am not advocating for this organization in particular, it is an example of how a private organization could create a Youth Sport for All program, then market it across the US and it could become broadly implemented toward a larger participation base. It seems likely that multiple organizations will emerge in this space to provide a variety of sports, and that multiple organizations will provide each sport (e.g., soccer will be provided by multiple clubs or systems). I do not envision one singular youth sport governing body or provider. But, I do think that we can learn from each other and work to support and promote sport programs that work. We can devise ways to help those programs become more broadly implemented rather than waiting and hoping for a good program to come along to each community. For example, we could strengthen something akin to the National Alliance for Youth Sport. But, instead of just becoming a member of the Alliance, there could be a directory of “certified programs” that can be replicated in other cities or town. Members of the alliance would be encouraged not only to certify their programs, but to actively promote them to other cities and towns, spreading their success at promoting Youth Sport for All.

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Rising Above the Clutter: Brand Awareness of Sponsorships

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This past March, I purchased tickets to attend the PGA Tour's Valspar Championship in Palm Harbor, Florida. While on Ticketmaster, I wondered out loud, "What is Valspar and why are they sponsoring golf?" As a sport marketing researcher who has spent the last 11 years focused on understanding how companies can be most effective in promoting their brands via advertising and sponsorships, I was curious about the title sponsorship. A fundamental desired outcome of sponsorships is brand awareness and I had no awareness of Valspar. The sponsorship was activated throughout the tournament—on site, on television commercials, in hardware stores, and on the product labels themselves. Upon entering Innisbrook Resort's Copperhead Golf Course, I quickly realized Valspar was a paint company. Valspar paint buckets served as tee box markers. The caddies wore Valspar hats and brightly colored bibs reflecting the many shades of Valspar paint. The Valspar chameleon mascot was evident on signs. We sat in a beach themed spectator area, on brightly colored Adirondack chairs in the sand and watched players putt on hole three in an area known as the Chameleon Cove. The beach also featured a large 50-ton, 20-foot tall chameleon sand sculpture. The Valspar Food Truck Rally and Valspar Color Experience 18th Green Expo had fan activities. Valspar brand ambassadors handed out coupons and Valspar branded sunscreen that featured the wording "Save the color for the walls" with paint swatches, such as Copperhead red (a nod to the Copperhead course), on the bottle. After a day on the course, it seemed Valspar had creatively made paint fit at a golf event and increased my brand awareness. I was not the only one impacted; according to an ESP Sponsorship Report (2016), Valspar noticed a 10-point increase in awareness for their sponsorship of the 2016 event. This was enough to convince Valspar to renew its four-year contract a year early. In the ever-changing field of sponsorship, brand awareness remains an important metric for companies and

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affiliated media or event managers. Yet, the vast number of opportunities to advertise or sponsor in the sport, entertainment, and event industry presents the question of how can a brand differentiate, stand out, and rise above the clutter? Based on my research, interactions with industry, and observations, in this review, I discuss the current sponsorship climate, continued importance of brand awareness, and submit six tips for corporations aiming to maximize brand awareness through sponsorship activation.

The Sponsorship Climate and the Importance of Brand Awareness

Corporate sponsorships are not new to the sport or entertainment environment, but are consistently increasing in number and costs, eliciting the attention of both industry and academia. The ESP Sponsorship Report (2016) showed that \$60.1 billion was spent on global sponsorships, including sports, entertainment, causes, arts, festivals, fairs, and association/membership organizations. Of this, \$22.3 billion was in the United States alone. The top two projected sponsorship categories for 2017 were sports (70%) and entertainment (10%). A steady increase in sponsorship spending over the last five years suggests that sports and events remain a preferred and viable opportunity for corporations to market their brands to targeted audiences. It also means when we attend a concert, art festival, sporting event, or most any other local, regional, or national event, we are often bombarded with sponsorships in the forms of numerous brand logos — on signs both static and digital, within rows of tents of activations or promotional giveaways, or with the event itself “presented by” a company listed on the ticket. *With so many brands, do we even notice?*

For those involved in developing or executing sponsorship partnerships, it is widely recognized that a desired outcome of sponsorship is consumer brand awareness. Brand awareness can be defined as an impact on the cognitive domain, where a consumer is able to recall or recognize a brand from memory because of the exposure of the brand as a sponsor of the event. The Valspar example showcases how creative, engaging, and repetitive event activation can help foster brand awareness.

Over the years, my colleagues and I have studied the effectiveness of different advertising and sponsorship forms, focusing on measuring the ability of consumers to recognize sponsor brands. In 2006, a team of colleagues including Gregg Bennett, Yosuke Tsuji, and I worked on a pair of experimental design studies exploring the effectiveness of virtual advertising in televised sport when that was a cutting-edge technology. I moved into comparing the different promotional forms of televised commercials, signage, and athlete endorsements in another experimental inquiry with James Zhang in 2006. Then, with the rise of sport video

games, such as the Madden and FIFA series, I explored that genre with Zhang, Galen Trail, and Richard Lutz. Sport video games feature in-game advertisements within the games that are fulfilled as sponsorships, such as uniform logo sponsors, on-screen sponsors, game segment sponsors (e.g., coin toss or halftime sponsors), and venue signage sponsors seen in the background providing a realistic view of the game. In a series of studies, we found sponsorship recognition to be high. An unanticipated result of one experimental study found people even recognized video game sponsors when playing a control group game that did not have sponsors, showing that their previous experience with the version with sponsors led them to believe they saw brands in the study, even though there were none. This speaks to the power of involvement and repetition on brand awareness. We also examined gamers’ motives to play sport video games and how those influence the effectiveness of the sponsorships. Taking a cue from gaming, the ideas can be applied to the sport or entertainment industry.

In all of the studies, we focused on examining the way awareness impacts attitude toward the brand/event and consumption of the brand/event, or the effectiveness of creating brand awareness. Repeatedly, we noticed that cognition (brand awareness) is a critical component in the sponsorship mix because of its relationship with influencing an individual’s attitudes, likes, or preferences (affective domain) and intention to consume or consumption (conative domain). In the 2013 sport video game study, we found brand awareness led to brand attitude, which in turn led to brand purchase intentions. This affirms the importance of generating brand awareness and the time companies spend on analyzing awareness metrics, such as impressions and click rates.

With brand awareness being an important part of the communication process in general, study participants were not always precise in recognizing sponsors and were often confused about which brands were sponsors. In some settings, we found that participants recalled sponsoring brands at high rates, showcasing the benefits of repetition and authenticity of the sponsorships. However, in other platforms, such as when Kendra Bayne and I studied social media in 2013, receiving Facebook posts did not garner high recognition rates about events, likely because it resides in a platform that has multiple messages and limited opportunity to differentiate from the crowd.

Sponsorship clutter can be defined as the “excessive number of other messages that interfere with the message of the sponsors and lead to the perception of over-commercialization” (Masterman, 2012, p. 57). Because corporate sponsorships are a revenue stream for events, sometimes the philosophy is “the more the merrier.” Yet, the increasing number of event sponsors creates more clutter for attendees/spectators. Not surprisingly, many researchers discovered clutter can impact the effectiveness of the sponsorships, especially in terms of brand awareness, and this should be a concern.

Most recently in 2017, Jensen and Cornwell even contend that clutter is a significant predictor in corporate partners ending their sponsorship contracts. Given the prominence and challenge of clutter, let's address how corporate sponsors can rise above it.

As Dees and Cianfrone noted in a 2014 special issue commentary on sponsorship effectiveness, determining effectiveness and devising strategies for sport and event advertising and sponsorships is a constant area of discovery. In utilizing the unique framework of past research on sport video games for a fresh look at sponsorship, I identify six tips for corporations aiming to maximize brand awareness through sponsorship activation: (1) be authentic, (2) create competition, (3) capitalize on nostalgia, (4) get personal, (5) go digital, and (6) explore new domains.

Six Tips for Increasing Brand Awareness

- 1. Be Authentic.** Within sport video games, simply having corporate brands within the games enhances the gamer experience in adding realism because signage on the walls of the FIFA game or a GMC Never Say Never Moment in Madden replicates a televised sporting event. While brands within the games are beneficial to the experience, recently Hwang and et.al. investigated if the types of brands would influence awareness levels within a sport video game, specifically the effects of brand congruency on awareness. Brand congruency is the concept of similar or aligned products (in this case, sport related for a sport video game) may illicit higher awareness than non-congruent brands (non-sport related). However, they found brand congruency with the game did not affect gamers' ability to recall or recognize the brands. If we consider entertainment or sports, congruency or brand 'fit' may make it easier to create brand awareness, but it is likely most event sponsors are not congruent with the event. The Mizuno Glove Experience is a well-executed sponsorship between the glove company and the Atlanta Braves, where fans can borrow a glove to catch balls during the game and return it afterwards. The congruence between the two is clear. Yet, even if a sponsoring company does not fit an event like a glove, they can still enhance the experience creating a link in the mind of the spectator. The activation of the beach atmosphere and Adirondack chairs at the Valspar sponsored golf event enhanced the guest experience of the event and made it seem like the sponsor fit, even though paint has no tie-in to the game of golf. A corporate sponsor can find ways to be authentic, adding to the experience.
- 2. Create Competition.** In a 2013 study on sport video gamer motives, Zhang and I found that among the reasons gamers played sport video games was to apply

their sport knowledge and fulfill their need to compete. The motives then influenced their ability to recognize brands for in-game brand awareness. Outside the sport video game environment, sponsors can create an opportunity for competition among event attendees to foster brand awareness. People are inclined to remember the sponsor activation with competition because they engage with it. Advergames is a method to create this engagement opportunity. Home Depot and its partnership with ESPN Game Day in the fall of 2017 serves as an example of this activation. The ESPN Game Day "Home Depot Know Your Stuff Trivia Challenge" was an online contest set up on iPads at the Home Depot booth at every ESPN Game Day. They produced a trivia game that featured videos of the game day crew—like Desmond Howard—asking a college football question, then responding, "you know your stuff" if answered correctly. Fans individually answered 10 college football questions as fast as they could for the chance to be the best-timed answers. During the season, the fastest time and number correct won a behind-the-scenes experience, while the website version provided a trip to The Home Depot College Football Awards Show. Although this is an elaborate example of competition and adver-gaming, and it may not be feasible for all companies, the competition concepts still apply. Event sponsors offer onsite activities like corn hole challenges, free throw or putting contests, or other games of skill to fulfill the need for competition. When contests are tied to a sponsor it can aid in creating brand awareness.

- 3. Capitalize on Nostalgia.** In an effort to be remembered and create a cognitive and affective connection even after an event is over, corporate sponsors can consider the sentiment that events bring to individuals. Promotional giveaways are common—often cheap trinkets with the brand logo—and discarded after events. A sponsor can consider creating promotional items that resemble memorabilia to provide patrons with something they may keep. Cianfrone, Zhang, Trail, & Lutz (2008) sport video game research showed that repetition/exposure to the brand generates awareness. Thus, keepsake brand giveaways will prove to be more effective in creating awareness. A giveaway that serves as a commemorative piece to the event may be more likely to stand the test of time, help people remember the event, and the fond times associated with it. For example, a guitar pick with the artist and event sponsor, a commemorative branded ticket holder lanyard (for a physical ticket event), or even branded apparel like sunglasses from an outdoor festival or a towel from a hot outdoor country venue are promotional items that sponsors can give away to capitalize on nostalgia and create repetition and exposure to the brand for future use.

4. **Get Personal.** When playing a sport video game, the user is able to create their own team name, adjust player rosters, and personalize the experience including selecting brands of equipment, in the case of a golf or tennis game. To personalize the event experience, sponsors can provide opportunities for the patron to receive a personalized promotional item. In an effort to stand out among the other giveaways, sponsors should consider personalization. The classic photo booth with framed photos that include the brand and event title works in providing a personalized keepsake of the event. A unique example of personalization was executed by Carvana, the auto sales company. At events, they parked an old DeLorean, as featured in *Back to the Future* movies, next to their tent allowing patrons to sit inside the winged vehicle. A Carvana staff member took a digital photo of the individual in the driver's seat and it was processed 5 minutes later into a takeaway photo magnet that prominently displayed the Carvana logo and name around the person inside the iconic 80s car. The patron leaves the event with a photo magnet keepsake branded with the Carvana logo, generating awareness over time and repeated exposure. Similarly, in the selfie age, sponsors need only create a unique art piece or background with the event name and company logo to create a photo opportunity for patron personalization..
5. **Go Digital.** Consumers desire digital content and can serve as an inadvertent brand ambassadors through social media. Companies can increase brand recognition through digital content such as photos, GIFs or video clips that consumers share digitally; such activations can also drive social media trends through hashtags, and generate awareness to a new audience. A recent Keiser Permanente (KP) Corporate Wellness Race in Atlanta executed a digital sponsorship activation when participants reached the KP booth. While waiting in line, they entered an email address and phone number on an iPad, then were recorded on video doing any action for 5 seconds in front of a KP backdrop. They immediately received a text of the animated GIF that could then be shared on social media that linked from the sponsor's website. In addition to being sent to the participant, the GIFs were displayed on large screens throughout the event space. Sponsors who can capitalize on the digital space, gain engagement beyond the event, and capture a new online space with potential consumers.
6. **Explore New Domains.** Finally, in examining sport video games, we saw that the games were platforms where brands could rise above the clutter and provide corporate partners access to different, but focused markets. Likewise, corporations can be on the lookout for opportunities to partner with niche events that have avid followers, as supported by Greenhalgh and Greenwell's 2013 research on understanding goals of niche

sponsors. One such area garnering attention is sponsorships with eSports, either through jersey sponsorships, team sponsors, or brand placement within the games. The advantage of this new marketplace is the audience size, focused attention on the screen, and repetition. In November 2017, Forbes reported more than 600 new sponsors were acquired in the eSports space between January 2016 and November 2017. In that new space, brand congruence is seen as the early point of focus as sponsors include energy drinks, snack foods, and technology companies leading the way. Additionally, other new domains to explore are virtual spaces, such as augmented or virtual reality to maximize brand exposure.

Conclusion

Brand activation can utilize many of the recommended strategies in an effort to reach the sponsorship goal of brand awareness. One final example that displayed all six tips was Octagon's 2017 activation of Mastercard's sponsorship at the Champions League Final in Milan. In the #MadnessorPriceless hashtag activation, they set out to showcase the madness that is flaunted by football fans by setting up a barbershop where fans showed off their team pride with a complimentary freestyle haircut. It was authentic in using the Priceless tag that is true to Mastercard and in capturing the "madness" of football fans. This provided personalization for the fan brave enough to get a haircut. It also provided a nostalgic memory, as the fan had a true takeaway to talk about for a while (or at least until their hair grew back). Mastercard went digital with a virtual haircut, so fans could see themselves and share the passion. They integrated digital with social media and a competition of #MadnessorPriceless, letting fans decide online where the haircut fell on the spectrum. Octagon reported that it created discussion by 3.5 billion consumers and optimized brand exposure, eventually leading to awareness.

The sponsorship landscape is ever-changing and companies are investing in sponsorships of festivals, entertainment, concerts, and sporting events in hopes of creating a return on their investments. Companies seeking to maximize the effectiveness of sponsorships in reaching desired outcomes, such as brand awareness, may consider the challenges of the current climate of clutter. This review sought to identify six tips for cutting through clutter in sponsorship strategy, as it is an exciting time to create sponsorship partnerships for concerts, festivals, and sporting events.

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Creating an Anti-Hazing Value System: Changing the Culture of Sport and Entertainment

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Creating an Anti-hazing Value System: Changing the Culture of Sport and Entertainment.

Participating in sport provides the opportunity for many positive outcomes and benefits, including taking part in increased physical activity, socializing, learning to work in a team environment and developing various athletic skills. However, there are also many negative aspects of sport participation to be leery of, including injury, harassment, and the topic of this article—hazing.

Crow and MacIntosh (2009) conceptualized hazing in sport as:

Any potentially humiliating, degrading, abusive, or dangerous activity expected of a junior-ranking athlete by a more senior teammate, which does not contribute to either athlete's positive development, but is required to be accepted as part of a team, regardless of the junior-ranking athlete's willingness to participate. This includes, but is not limited to, any activity, no matter how traditional or seemingly benign, that sets apart or alienates any teammate based on class, number of years on the team, or athletic ability (p. 449).

Hazing is distinct from positive team building strategies. To be clear, hazing is not a positive team building strategy; it is a harmful ritual that needs to be eradicated across the sport and entertainment system.

At worst, hazing has resulted in the death of at least one person on college campuses across the U.S. every year from 1969 to 2017 (Nuwer, 2017). Many of these tragedies have occurred in a fraternity pledge-based setting, including the Penn State University case with Beta Theta Pi and the death of Timothy Piazza. Other incidences, such as the death of Florida A & M University student and marching band member Robert Champion, and the serious injuries sustained by Bria Shante Hunter, another member of the university's marching band, highlight the heinous acts of violence expe-

rienced by young people looking to integrate into a team or organized group environment. Not immune to the repercussions associated with hazing are the many young athletes attempting to integrate into a sport team and culture.

Within the US, a national survey on college team-based sports estimated that approximately 80% of athletes are subjected to questionable or unacceptable activities as part of their initiation onto their team (National Survey of Sports Teams, 2017). What makes matters worse is that 60% of these athletes would not report hazing to authorities. In a similar vein, Carroll, Connaughton, Spengler, and Zhang (2009) noted that over 80% of student athletes were hazed. Allan and Madden (2008) noted that 55% of students across the US experienced some form of hazing, although 91% who experienced hazing behaviours did not consider it to be hazing at all. What we can ascertain from these figures alone is that (1) hazing is common in sport, (2) there is confusion about what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable team building, and (3) hazing itself largely is unreported.

One does not have to look far to find examples of hazing on college campuses across North America. There are numerous examples among fraternity, sorority, and various student clubs and teams that continuously demonstrate the prevalence of initiation activities, many of which endanger the health and safety of the individual. For instance, the 2015 men's and women's swimming and diving programs at the University of Western Kentucky were suspended for five years, because of various hazing allegations involving underage drinking, sexual assault, and other violations of school code of conduct. In the same year, the women's softball program at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia had the remainder of its season cancelled amid hazing allegations and resulting lawsuits. However, the problem is not simply isolated to college campuses. In many club based sports, athletes are commonly subjected to hazing rituals involving alcohol, physical abuse and other harmful and degrading acts. Without going into unnecessary details of acts of hazing (excessive alcohol consumption, sexual exploitation, physical harm), there are plentiful anecdotes amidst club, high school, and junior teams that illuminate the depth of the problem in the sport and entertainment industry.

Organizations like Hockey Canada have taken strides to increase the awareness of the problem of various ongoing abuses by developing programs such as Speak Out (Hockey Canada, 2015). This program was designed to help educate people about the importance of preventing bullying, harassment, and various forms of abuse. Hockey Canada decided that it was time to change the culture of the sport of hockey and that it must play a leading role in creating a safer place to play the sport for all involved. Although the speak-out program was not specifically designed to eradicate hazing, the initiative created a platform to speak about the need for changes in player, coach, official, and parental behavior, and pointed out that to change the culture requires the efforts of

all people involved. The NCAA has also been active in attempting to create change to the sporting environment by for example, creating new policy, designing educational programs and awareness campaigns around the need to eliminate hazing from occurring across college campuses, and being a voice for safe sport. Yet, despite a seemingly enhanced public awareness of the negative implications from bullying, harassment, and hazing, these problems continue to persist in the sport and entertainment industry.

In this paper, I will outline some of the reasons why hazing persists, the need for leadership and the stakeholders of sport and entertainment to design and implement positive team building strategies, and some ideas on how to co-create a more positive sport and entertainment culture.

Why does hazing persist in North American culture?

There are likely many reasons why hazing continues to remain a part of the landscape of joining teams and groups. One possible explanation is the credence attached to the importance of maintaining tradition and history or rather, this is the way that things have always been done here, so we must continue.

One notable area of research that helps explain the power behind the importance of history, rituals, and celebration is the phenomenon known as organizational culture (Martin, 1992; Schein, 1999). Schein conceived that an organization's culture is comprised of core values, beliefs, and basic assumptions that help guide and coordinate member behavior. The literature on the topic has demonstrated that organizational culture is inextricably tied to the leadership and that, although the concept can grow holistically, it is difficult to change. Many scholars believe the concept of organizational culture is one of the more important management areas to grasp because of the power to influence human behavior. Indeed, aspects such as tradition, history, and ritual help people to understand some of the key values and beliefs that explain and predict expected behavior in an organization (Schein, 1999).

For any new person coming into an organization (team or group), they are looking to bond with their new colleagues or teammates, prove their commitment, generate cohesion, and understand the important values and beliefs to help them in their role or work (MacIntosh & Doherty, 2005). Organizational culture can act as a control mechanism that teaches and reinforces attitudes and behavior when it is managed by the organization's leadership. The existence and persistence of hazing then can be seen as function of cohesion and unity, while demonstrating who on the team is dominant and, what is expected of the new member entering the team or group. Consequently, the leadership of the organization has a critical role to play in eradicating hazing rituals.

When the act of hazing is examined more closely, it is apparent that the perpetrators were also once likely to be the victims themselves. In one of our latest research efforts, we found that veteran members, once hazed themselves, repeat the offences sometimes in a worse manner than what they themselves received and thus, (perhaps) unknowingly reproduce the hierarchical structure that breeds further ritual. Consequently, the notion of status and power are in the hands of the veteran players who have likely endured similar initiation rituals that continue to perpetuate the problem.

For this reason, it is critical that sport and entertainment organizations take the problem of hazing seriously and begin developing new initiation strategies that can become positive rituals in future years. For this to happen, and for effective change to be realized, there is a need for leadership amongst the various levels of sport and entertainment (e.g., collegiate, amateur, professional teams) to address the issue, plan and implement new strategies with their stakeholders. While this is a difficult proposition, in my research with Allison Doherty, we found that doing so will begin the process of needed value and attitude change towards acceptable initiation practices, while also building a more positive organizational culture that influences the behaviors of people involved. Brian Crow and I have lamented that the current state of hazing in athletics requires coaches, administrators, parents, and student-athletes to scrutinize traditions on their teams and develop positive team building initiations. Consequently, there is a need for people to come together, discuss and think about new strategies that will have an influence across the sport system (from high school to college sport, amateur to professional sport).

A Need for Positive Leadership and Team Building

To be clear, hazing is not team building. Team building is a purposeful effort where leaders (whether coaches, veteran members of a group or team) examine their own processes of working together, which includes looking into how new members become socialized and integrate into the new environment.

Team building is about creating positive experiences. For leadership then, it is a necessary step to examine the process by which new members and existing members bond over positive team building experiences where they go about learning and enhancing the important values and beliefs that comprise the desired culture. The leadership of a group or team, has a fundamental role to play in creating and implementing fun and non-harmful practices to help build the culture.

Team building is a process. The process of team building should begin well before the school year when invitees and walk-ons start taking part in try-outs and practices. For the

leadership (coaches, captains, administrators), the off-the-field, off-season preparation should include the design of strategies for the new member socialization and integration process. Again, these strategies should be built around the premise of fulfilling the organization's key values and beliefs in a positive team building fashion.

The NCAA has created some guidelines for administrators, coaches, student-athletes and team captains which offer good ideas on both hazing prevention and positive team building. For example, engaging in team hikes, conducting food drives, wearing team jackets or uniforms on game day, participating in a community service project are just a few of the ways to build a sense of togetherness and team. For all sport and entertainment organizations, it is important to ensure that there are written policies in place that treat hazing as being unacceptable while simultaneously stipulating that new members will acquire positive experiences as they integrate into the group/team environment. Furthermore, there must be some discussion regarding the consequences of the violation of anti-hazing policies set forth by the governing body of the organization and how the organization will specifically deal with the violation. It is prudent that the organization also takes the time to set up a way for incoming members to report any violations or incidents that they feel are not acceptable, without having the person fear any repercussions of being penalized for their honesty. Creating a safe space where violations can be reported both online and in person is a necessary step to protect the incoming members of the organization.

The process of team building does not end during the recruitment phase or pre-season formation and introduction. Leadership of the organization must continuously monitor the ongoing matters of the team, and from time to time throughout the year engage in team building activities (e.g., rope/obstacle courses, team dinner, celebrating birthdays etc.).

The importance of leadership. Being a leader comes with many connotations that are often associated with power, influence, and charisma. Adding another task to the role of a leader (such as creating team building strategies) may challenge that person's capacity to be an effective leader, yet it is a needed responsibility to shoulder if hazing prevention is to be taken seriously. The importance of leadership to a team or group comes before the start of each new season. Research has shown that team outcomes are best achieved when there is a work environment that promotes feelings of togetherness, when team members understand and accept their roles, and when expectations are clearly articulated and exhibited in people's behavior (Paradis & Martin, 2012). Throughout the team building process, leadership has a critical role to play in promoting and reinforcing important values.

Research and practice denotes that leadership of the organization has a strong influence on shaping the culture through what they espouse, reiterate, reinforce, and celebrate. If haz-

ing is ever to be extinguished from sport and entertainment, it is the leadership of the organizations that must institute the changes, shape and reinforce the expected behaviors. This may require leadership to take a hard stance against the issue of hazing, despite the possibility that these same people underwent initiations that were questionable themselves. In fact, many might believe that the old rituals were not harmful (despite the fact that they qualify under a definition of hazing), and that these practices promoted team building. However, while history and tradition are unquestionably important to instilling important values and beliefs, there is a need for a new system of positive team building rituals to emerge if hazing is in fact to be eradicated.

In our latest study we found that leadership across the various sectors of sport and entertainment must acknowledge that protecting the rights, privileges and associations attached to maintaining human welfare is of the utmost concern. For leaders then, setting the example of positive teambuilding, creating a safe space and environment for newcomers into the organization to feel welcome and respected, and continually pushing away from the idea of dominance are but some of the ways to create a more positive sport and entertainment experience.

The following section will discuss the notion of organizational culture and provide some suggestions on how managers, administrators and leaders can purposefully embed various team building strategies into their yearly calendars to help remove hazing from the team building lexicon. Supported by clearly articulated rules and policies regarding the unacceptable versus acceptable ways of going about team building, sport leaders across the system (e.g., NCAA, U-Sport, high school sport, club level, and junior level sport) can begin crafting and implementing creative, fun and engaging team building strategies into their plans, as they do with practices, training and nutrition information, in an effort to create a more positive culture.

Co-Creating a Positive Culture

Removing the acceptance of hazing behaviors such as the abuse of alcohol, sexual exploits, bodily harm, public displays of embarrassment, and generally degrading activity requires participation and accountability from coaches, athletic administrators, players, teammates and friends, as well as people outside of the traditional confines of the organization. People that participate in sport and take part in a team should have positive experiences associated with learning their role. Consequently, the impetus for change begins with the internal stakeholders of the organization taking a stand to create a more safe and healthy environment for all individuals. However, creating effective change also requires those people outside the organization to police dangerous situations, be advocates for creating new policies and rules to

protect people, and to be a voice of reason in terms of acceptable practices for integration. When pressure emanates from internal and external stakeholders to create change, then the organization and its leadership must do more to enable the change to occur so that they can remain legitimate and competitive.

It is becoming more common for administrators to understand their responsibility in producing a positive environment for the participants, leaders, coaches, fans and media alike. Administrators should also have a responsibility in educating and enforcing important policies to protect the rights of its stakeholders. Consequently, the notion of co-creating a sport and entertainment culture should be considered when it comes to efforts to remove hazing.

The leadership of the organization should consider the various ways that they can embed positive team building strategies to help create a more cogent value system. The following methods could be considered by athletic administrators specifically. First, sport administrators might consider conducting leadership workshops for the team captains to provide ways that captains can act as mentors both on and off the field of play for incoming members. Furthermore, having reference material (policies, rules, ideas for positive team building) readily available for potential recruits, incoming and existing members that describe positive team building while providing insight into what is appropriate behavior can act as important reference points towards understanding acceptable behavior. Compiling information and designing a program during the off-season that considers pre-season and in-season team building events and activities can help promote a sense of unity and importance for player and team development. However, it is not enough to simply list all the things that are right and wrong as they relate to team building, nor is it sufficient to discuss them amongst the group at the first encounter of every season; there must be more consistent follow-up with the message of positive team building for effective change to take place. Guidelines and policies are helpful; however, they can also be easily tuned out when they are viewed as overly formalistic and poorly explained in terms of the meaningfulness for each person.

Second, many collegiate institutions engage in the creation of an educational program for athletes regarding hazing through for example, NCAA speakers, campus experts, PowerPoint presentations, and other means intended to provide clearly articulated rules outlining unacceptable behavior (Wilfert, 2007). These initiatives are important in generating needed awareness and discussion regarding the harms of hazing and the positive benefits of appropriate team building strategies. It is recommended that these same types of workshops and information be made available to the entourage of the athlete as well. The recent Major League Baseball anti-hazing and anti-bullying policy now prohibits teams from engaging in activities that exploit and/or offend individuals. Policies such as these are certainly helpful, and should be-

come examples for amateur and club level sports across the country.

Sport clubs should also include these types of initiatives in the design of their socialization programming for newcomers. It may seem somewhat like overkill in producing constant messaging about anti-hazing ideals through the use of posters, flyers, pictures, and other visible cues; however, serious problems need many types of communication to help find solutions.

Building a positive team building culture takes time, effort, and the coordination of many stakeholders. I argue that sport stakeholders can and should help sport administrators in co-creating initiatives to help eradicate the problem of hazing. Research has demonstrated that changing deeply held values and beliefs is possible when there is both a need and want on behalf of the stakeholders to do so. However, the research has also demonstrated that any profound types of change do not happen overnight and that it takes a concerted effort and persistence to change a value.

As noted earlier, there are many different segments of college and university life that are unfortunately impacted by issues related to hazing. Sports teams, programs, and organizations can and should be at the forefront of creating change and instilling positive team building strategies into new entrant socialization programs. Taking a longer term view of creating system change requires an appreciation for organizational culture and culture building to instill new values and beliefs. As noted, culture building involves more than simply writing down what is important and reminding people at the start of a new season. Culture building requires more than the espousal of words or some type of policy statement hidden in the organizational documents and archives. Although words are critical, rules and regulations are often overlooked and ignored altogether. Strong, authentic and consistent leadership from multiple stakeholders is a part of the recipe towards a more positive sport culture. Consequently, both tangible and intangible methods are needed to help people understand the detrimental influence of hazing.

Conclusion

The first step in solving a problem is realizing that there is one. The research is quite clear that hazing persists in sport, entertainment, and other sectors (e.g., military) across North America. It is also clear that hazing is not team building. It is time that administrators take a leading preventative role to stop hazing and start focusing on positive team building strategies to produce a more desirable culture.

In contrast to hazing, there are many good examples that sport leadership can draw from to implement positive team building strategies some of which have been highlighted in this article (e.g., have members partake in community ser-

vice initiatives, arranging team uniforms, engaging it team hiking).

Making a commitment to eradicating hazing requires the leadership of the organization to have both tangible artifacts (e.g., policies to read in a handbook) and intangible acts (e.g., recognizing desired behavior). It is essential that leadership model behaviors that reinforce the principles they wish to instill in all new members entering the organization. Ultimately, leadership must be critical of the old ways in which new members are socialized into the group or team, and this may mean going against rituals and traditions. Creating a reward system can help in the process of teaching the core values and principles that you wish to uphold in every new member. For example, institutional rewards for the best new team building activities as a part of the University celebration and banquet can be a part of the yearly celebrations. Celebrations at banquets honoring safe and effective culture building activities can become a part of the expected organizational environment. Consistent reinforcement of positive team building initiatives is needed by organization's leadership. In addition, leadership needs to create policies that clearly articulate what is and is not positive team building.

There is little doubt that changing the current culture of sport and entertainment organizations is a worthy challenge to pursue, one that will take much time and effort from the leadership of the various sectors to realize; but one that is worth the battle to protect the interest of those who wish to pursue membership into a team/group or organization.

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Benefits of Writing for Passion, not for Promotion

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It is difficult to imagine an excellent teacher who is not passionate about her research, and it is even more difficult to imagine an excellent teacher who is not passionately dedicated to obtaining as much knowledge as she can about her field(s) of expertise, and who also wants to share her knowledge with others for the sake of the joint pursuit of knowledge. (Corlett, 2005, pp. 29-30)

There are very few individuals in academia whom go their entire career without forming collaborations. These partnerships can develop for a variety of reasons. For some, it can happen out of necessity due to unwieldy research that requires more than one individual. For others, the alliance can form through mutual interest in a given topic. Others might aim to work with as many people as possible simply to maximize their output. Lastly, collaborations can emerge through non-academic reasons such as friendship or other bonding experiences.

Many researchers in the academic field of sport management find common ground and bask in their passion towards the industry. Whether in the form of so-called “trash talk” with a fellow colleague regarding her favorite university athletics program, or bonding in a fantasy sports league with several other faculty, sport fandom is oftentimes a natural means through which researchers in our field can engage in social activity based on the academic ties that bind them together. Beyond sport, researchers also form connections through their work-related efforts—shared frameworks, theories, or methodologies often lead to making connections and networking with likeminded individuals in our academic community. Yet, despite these bonding activities through sport fandom or involvement in academia, many scholars often still struggle to convert these connections into fruitful collaborations.

These common, more traditional ways of connecting within our community are not what led us to come together and undertake our first collaborative research effort. Although we were both sports fans, and former doctoral students at the same university, what peaked our interest in working together was our shared passion for music and particular affinity of musical artists such as Tool, Kendrick Lamar, Neutral Milk Hotel, and Sufjan Stevens. The love we had for indie rock, hip-hop, and folk music undoubtedly brought us closer over the years, much the same way sports fandom generally connects faculty in sport management. However, unlike sports fandom, whereby faculty have a natural bridge to collaboration, we were fairly perplexed as to how we could incorporate our passion for music into a research project that would offer new insights for the field of sport management. Trying to intersect music and sport was not the only challenge; we also happened to be opposites in regards to our research agendas and methodological capability. One of us wrote about teenage wizard sport adaptations (Cohen, Melton & Wely Peachey, 2014) and non-profit initiatives in Nicaragua utilizing interview and focus group methods (Smith, Cohen & Pickett, 2016), while the other focused on sonic branding in sport (Ballouli & Bennett, 2014), and utilized quantitative and experimental research designs (Hwang, Ballouli, So, & Heere, In Press) .

Though it would have been easy to just shrug our shoulders and move on, we were both driven to figure out a way to leverage our passion of music to collaborate on a project that made sense for the both of us. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how academics within the field of sport management can find a common ground working with researchers outside their normal group of collaborative partners by conducting “passion projects.” We argue such projects provide gratifying experiences that sometimes go unrealized in typical research projects, whereby project collaborators, sample populations, and research designs can become all too familiar and routine to the individual. Furthermore, we suggest passion projects offer stronger outset motivations for conducting research than projects that may be otherwise developed out of ease or necessity.

Inception of a Passion Project

While our passions and motivations were aligned, the question still remained: How would we go about incorporating music into a sport study? There were some obvious areas that came to mind, such as walk-up music for baseball players, entrance music for fighters, musical performances for global events like the Olympics or World Cup. These were initial ideas that we could not seem to conceptualize into a study that was feasible and made sense for both of our interests. A couple years went by and we kept brainstorming different ideas that one of us shot down for one reason or another.

Finally, Adam randomly met the founder and CEO of an organization called the Hip Hop Loves (HHL) Foundation at a sport-for-development conference at the Muhammad Ali Center in Louisville, KY. After listening to his presentation about the organization’s mission to intersect hip-hop and sport as a means of encouraging healthier lifestyles among urban, at-risk youth in Harlem, NY we had a phone conversation and determined this was an exciting opportunity and we would make this our passion project.

Our next step was to select a research design that appealed to both of our individual strengths and expertise, yet allowed for us to learn from each other about methodologies with which we were less familiar. This led to us down a path of a mixed-methods research design, a scarcity for both of our academic careers. To this end, Adam, who usually grounds his research in qualitative methods, was able to appreciate how various quantitative methods (e.g., mean group comparisons through survey design) allowed for robust assessments of the program’s impact. On the other hand, Khalid, who typically conducts quantitative research using survey instruments, learned how on-site observations and interviews provided a deeper understanding of the participants, including their experiences with the organization and program volunteers.

Passion in the Field: Researchers, Participants, and Volunteers

While this study leaned towards a social inclusion perspective, it also incorporated various marketing aspects, including branding and outreach, which allowed each researcher to incorporate his strengths into developing data collection instruments. More importantly, this study required on-site observations and interviews, a methodology that would allow the researchers to travel to New York City and collaborate in person for several days. Despite that most of this research effort was designed under the expertise of one of our skill sets; there was a component of the work neither of us had yet experienced. Admittedly, we both had limited involvement collaborating with African-American individuals in a research setting or conducting observations at an organization that focused on inner-city youth participants. The lack of experience provided an opportunity for us to discuss the process and our approach; and we gained a valuable experience together by reflecting on what we learned as scholars.

How Passion Created a Closer Working Relationship

This research was built around a passion we both shared. Although both of us had published with several different collaborators on topics much more aligned with our research agenda, we worked seamlessly together and fed off each other throughout the entire process. This was not a “tradition-

al” research project that got put on the back burner for the typical reasons (e.g., other projects, teaching requirements, service needs). In fact, the project was moved to the top of our to-do lists and became a mission in which we both really wanted to work. In addition, there was trust between the two of us (and among study participants) during data collection and data analysis. Though there might have been some initial trepidation from the young Harlem residents to sit in a formal setting with two representatives of the so-called “ivory tower,” it was fulfilling to observe just how quickly these participants opened up after noticing our knowledge and positive energy towards the community and hip-hop culture.

While there is certainly a high level of trust among authors for any research project, this particular effort provided more opportunities for us to really delve into participant interviews, on-site observations, and data analysis due to the confidence we had in one another to embrace various roles. Research projects usually involve a true “leading” researcher who has comparatively greater experience in a topic area relative to other research collaborators. For such instances, these collaborators usually play smaller, complimentary roles in the research process. At the outset of our passion project, and throughout the research process, we both served as “co-lead” authors because of the trust we had in each other’s abilities. Not only did we both have a deep comprehension of the theoretical nature of the study, but we also understood the impact of hip-hop on these participants well enough to engage in quality data collection and analysis.

How Passion Guided the Learning Process

From a learning standpoint, we both took away several things about ourselves and the research process. We learned how passion for a study really paves the way for quality work in spite of the anticipated distractions that are too common in academia. It was made apparent there are individuals, programs, and organizations that exist on the fringes of our field that go unnoticed because they do not fall into more popular, money driven areas of sport (i.e., professional sports, college sports, mega events). Further, lack of funding can often deter academics from more non-traditional avenues of research. We personally were unsuccessful at acquiring a grant for our research, but due to our excitement, we found a few dollars and sacrificed other academic travel plans to pursue this collaboration. To this end, we learned undertaking a passion project on the so-called fringes can have a much greater and longer-lasting impact on not only us as scholars, but also study participants and our field as a whole. Our research has led to lasting relationships with HHL participants, volunteers, and managers. It also led to several additional grant applications co-authored by HHL managers and ourselves, which otherwise would not have been pursued if not for our shared passion for music.

Key Takeaways

Not only did we publish a study, for which we were both proud, in a quality academic journal, we found a way to write about music (hip-hop, no less) in a sport management journal. Though our idea seemed like a long shot years ago, we never gave up on our vision of bringing our shared passion for music into both of our research agendas. Further, because this was a passion project for us, we finally got to work together on a study inspired by our interests. The main impetus was not the desire for citations or some other form of promotion metrics, but simply because we encountered a phenomenon that intrigued both of us and we wanted to assess and optimize the efforts of the partnering organization. We certainly do not claim to speak for the entire academic community in the field of sport management, but it is far too uncommon to hear researchers in our discipline talk about studies that simply do not interest them. Sadly, it shows at our academic conferences or symposiums. It is often easy to determine which scholars are truly passionate about their research as opposed to those who are merely going through the motions. Perhaps their doctoral advisors pushed them towards a research stream that does not intrigue them anymore. Maybe they had great access to data, and took advantage of the so-called “low hanging fruit.” Or, they simply thought the research topic would be desirable for a particular academic journal. After all, there is nothing wrong with boosting one’s output and aspiring to “play the game” en route to getting a promotion.

That said, we treated our collaboration as a passion project, and because we enjoyed the process, partnership, and results, we believe our efforts had more impact on our skills as researchers, and longevity as academics, than perhaps any of our previous research projects. Admittedly, we both have and continue to work on research by which the priority is to pad our vitae or impress tenure review boards, and we are certainly proud of our overall output agendas. Nevertheless, this study allowed us to pursue one of the basic reasons we each pursued academia, a love of learning and discover. To this end, we believe this collaboration not only resulted in a positive growth experience regarding our careers as researchers, but additionally enhanced our teaching in the classroom. Learning research and interpersonal skills were both worthy additions to assist in our efforts to positively impact our teaching methods and students. Additionally, we both have received a little additional “street cred” from our students when they hear about our field research in Harlem and being published for writing about hip hop.

We believe “outside the box” thinking can only help advance our field and provide innovate ways of thinking about research. We are at a crossroads with non-traditional sports and technology becoming more and more mainstream in the sporting industry (e.g., eSports, drone racing, and virtual reality). This is not to suggest the entire field should stop

pursuing studies involving sport-for-development or ticket pricing—these research efforts and others like should certainly continue, and we both are still advancing our more traditional research agendas. We would be the first to admit that our passion project did not focus on developing theory, and thus, it most likely will not be the highest cited article in our careers. Nevertheless, though the work-life balance and overall lifestyle of academia certainly draws many into higher education, nearly all of the researchers we have crossed paths with in sport management chose to pursue a PhD due to a passion for the industry and desire to make a “discovery.” We hope other academics might also become inspired to incorporate their own passions into their research projects. Be it a love for food, passion for dance, or soft spot for animals, whatever it is, there is more than likely a way it intersects in sport in some capacity and merits an investigation worthy of publication.

Recommendations for Sport Management Researchers

Although our prominent conferences are working more and more to inspire research collaborations through social outings, workshops (i.e. the Diversity and Inclusion Workshop at NASSM), and banquet dinners, perhaps there is still more that can be done. While we can easily learn about a faculty member’s research agenda at any of these functions, what about hearing about one’s beloved Premier League team, favorite novel, or last Netflix series she streamed? In a similar fashion, PhD students should make sure they find ways to strengthen their cohort beyond discussing their statistics assignment or their dissertation drama. Some of the greatest bonds students can make take place not during seminars but during happy hour or movie night. Finally, journal reviewers should be open-minded about non-traditional research and scholars that push the boundaries of our field.

Specific Recommendations

- Practice what we preach in the classrooms. We often try to get our students to learn about each other (and from each other) through games, activities, social interaction. These unique bonds over commonalities are what persevere over time, not the group work we assign them.
- Push more non-traditional or innovative settings or methodologies in PhD seminars or special issues in journals.
- Have an open mind. If you have a passion or hobby and want to incorporate it into your research agenda in some capacity, you can do it!

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The mission of *Sport & Entertainment Review (SER)* is to become the outlet for the best new ideas for people creating, leading, and transforming sport and entertainment organizations and businesses. *SER* seeks to be one of the world's leading journals on publishing cutting-edge, authoritative thinking on the key issues facing executives in the world of sport and entertainment.

Articles published in *SER* cover a wide range of topics that are relevant to the different industries in sport and entertainment (such as professional sport, live performances, music, theater, dance and art, etc.) around the world. To further enhance these industries, authors are invited to write about theoretical concepts in leadership, organizational change, negotiation, strategy, operations, marketing, finance, sales, human resource, and event and project management. Preference will be given to authors able to draw upon previous research they conducted in a particular area and are able to show how their previous studies furthered the understanding of this particular area.

While we encourage diversity in all subjects, all *SER* articles will have certain elements in common: (1) they are written for senior managers who benefit by the content and the article clearly articulates how the knowledge can be applied to the workplace; (2) the ideas presented in the articles can be translated into action and have been tested in a sport and entertainment industry context. Proposals that demonstrate fresh thinking that advances previous knowledge whose practical application has been thought through in clear, jargon-free language are those most likely to meet the readers' needs.

Proposals should answer the following questions:

1. What is the central message of the article you propose to write? What is important, useful, new, or counterintuitive about your idea? Why do managers need to know about your idea?
2. How can your idea be applied in business today?
3. For which kinds of companies would your idea work especially well? For which kinds of companies would the idea NOT work well? Why?
4. What research have you conducted to support the argument in your article?
5. Upon what previous work (either of your own or that of others) does this idea build?
6. What is the source of your authority? What academic, professional, or personal experience will you draw on?
7. What is the applicability of your idea beyond your own discipline of sport or entertainment, and how can it benefit the other fields in sport and entertainment? (e.g., if your study originates in sport, how can it benefit managers working in music, theater, arts, or live performance, and vice versa.)

The proposal should address the questions above (it does not need to be written in question-and-answer format) in a narrative outline (500-750 words). The outline should describe the structure of the article and detail each important point in a separate paragraph (excluding reference list).

Provide not just a sense of your primary ideas, but of how the logic of the ideas will flow. Points should be illustrated with real-world examples or one extended, detailed example.

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Proposals will undergo blind peer-review to assess to what extent the proposal fits the submission guidelines of *SER*. This review process will take up to four weeks and could lead to three different decisions:

1. The proposal is accepted and the author(s) will be invited to submit a full article manuscript (3,000-5,000 words).
2. The reviewers provide positive feedback about the proposal, but invite the author(s) to revise the focus of the article and resubmit the proposal before moving on to a full review.
3. The reviewers decline the proposal.

The proposal must include the following elements in the order listed:

1. Title of proposed article.
2. Author's name, institution, contact information.
3. Narrative (500-750 words). Narratives should be submitted in 12-point Times New Roman font, using American Psychological Association (APA) Guidelines.
4. Reference list.

If a proposal is accepted, authors will submit a full-length article (3,000-5,000) for the review process, using the APA guidelines. While it is the intention of the editorial board to accept each article at this point of the review process, acceptance is not guaranteed. Reviewers retain the right to reject the manuscript, particularly if the authors are unwilling or unable to incorporate reviewers' suggestions for revisions.

Proposals should be submitted to SER editor Bob Heere at bheere@hrsm.sc.edu, or associate editor Brianna Newland at bnewland@udel.edu

All inquiries about the submission and review process should be directed to Bob Heere via email at bheere@hrsm.sc.edu