

# SPORT, LEISURE, AND THE BODY

Society for the Study of Social Problems

## NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

**Alicia Smith-Tran, PhD**

Texas Christian University

Greetings, Division Members:

Between widespread violence against the Black community, heightened political tension, and the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic, the past few months have left me angry, anxious, and exhausted, to say the least. The ways in which we can and cannot engage in sport and leisure has gotten widespread media attention, ranging from the temporary shut down of professional sports, uncertainty surrounding the upcoming collegiate athletics seasons, and of utmost importance, the inability of Black individuals in our country to engage in activities such as birdwatching or going for a jog without being surveilled or killed. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, and we are sure to see more developments and examples in the coming weeks and months.

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In spite of it all, I am doing my best to remain optimistic. The Los Angeles Lakers recently hired a sociology professor as their Inaugural Director of Racial Equity -- a move I hope will inspire other athletic organizations to dedicate more money and time to addressing racism and exploitation in sports. I am trying to be hopeful that renewed rage and emphasis on Black Lives Matter can bring about systemic changes in policing, and can spark additional public discourse on white privilege and institutional racism throughout the U.S.

There is much more to say about all that is going on, but I am sure many of you, like me, have been inundated with news articles, social media posts, and non-stop conversations surrounding current affairs. My hope is we can use our energy and expertise as researchers, educators, and activists to contribute to a more equitable, safer, and healthier society. I am confident that your presence in this organization means you are dedicated to eradicating racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia and a host of other social problems. I also hope that you are all taking some time for self-care - as the old saying goes, you can't pour from an empty cup.

I am thrilled to highlight the work of our graduate student paper contest winner and runner-up in this issue, as well as other work of our members. Please make note of SSSP's upcoming half-day virtual conference, and if you have not already, please be sure to follow our division on Facebook and Twitter.

As always, I have immense gratitude for our newsletter editor, Tiffany Hang, and social media manager, Kaitlin Pericak, for all their hard work.

Finally, please encourage your colleagues to join and renew their SSSP memberships. It is more important than ever.

Stay safe, and be well.

In solidarity,

**Alicia Smith-Tran**

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# Save the date!

## SSSP VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING

SSSP will hold a half-day virtual annual meeting on Friday, August 7 from 12:00pm-5:00pm (EDT). [Click here for more information!](#)

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

1) SSSP Business Meeting	12:00pm-1:00pm
2) Presidential Address	1:15pm-2:15pm
3) Awards Recognition	2:30pm-3:15pm
4) Plenary Pandemic Focused Session	3:30pm-5:00pm

## VIRGINIA BERNDT ON BODY POSITIVITY AND AWARENESS TOWARDS INVISIBLE ILLNESSES

**Virginia Berndt, PhD Candidate**  
University of Delaware

One of our members, Virginia Berndt, was recently highlighted in "Yass Magazine" for her research centered on reproductive health, contraception, disasters, and the body. Virginia openly documents her experience with chronic illness and academia through social media, hoping to bring awareness and advocacy for chronically ill scholars and those with invisible illnesses, broadly. To read more on Virginia Berndt's research, [click here!](#)



# 2020 GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER CONTEST: FIRST PLACE

**Trenton Haltom, MA**  
University of Nebraska



## **PAPER TITLE:**

“Feeling like a Freak: Men Baton Twirlers, Compulsory Masculinity, and the Fag Discourse.”

My research program concerns men in "crisis" and who challenge social norms within and across several domains: gender, sexuality, culture, health and the body; work and occupations; and sports. My work is especially attuned to how these crises perpetuate difference and thus social inequality.

“Feeling like a freak” is how one of my participants described being one of the few boys in the sport of baton twirling. His sentiment comes from his experience being harassed for being a baton twirler and subject to “fag discourse.” Fag discourse is a way men regulate each other’s gender and sexuality, and is especially prominent for boys and men in activities associated with women and girls.

For this paper, I was interested in how subjects of fag discourse respond to the teasing and bullying they receive. Through qualitative interviews with 30 American male baton twirlers, I found a response to fag discourse was to emphasize valuable characteristics of masculinity (rather than sexuality) as if it were compulsory to their performance of gender. The male twirlers understood baton twirling is a “blemish” on both their heterosexual and

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masculine credibility. Participants' narratives also illustrated the hardships of experiencing fag discourse. In response, they reappraised their relationship to masculinity by attempting to regain masculine credit through mastery and success in the sport. I argue this is evidence of the compulsoriness of masculinity.

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My entry point into this line of research comes from my own time as a competitive baton twirler, performer, and now judge with the National Baton Twirling Association. I collected data for this project for my Master's thesis in the Department of Sociology at the University of Houston where I graduated in 2015. Data from this research has also been published in *Sociology of Sport Journal* and as a chapter in *Body Battlegrounds: Transgressions, Tensions, and Transformations* (Bobel and Kwan, 2019).

In my dissertation, I explore how magazines as cultural products present men and sociocultural shifts in masculinity. I examine representations of men, their bodies, masculinity, and sexuality in *GQ*, *Men's Health*, and *Sports Illustrated* over time (1980-2018) using a mixed method content analyses of covers (N = 2750). My coauthored work has been published in *Gender & Society*, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *Deviant Behavior*, *Journal of Men's Studies*, and other outlets. I look forward to entering the job market this fall and graduating in summer 2021. You can follow me on twitter @tmhaltom or visit my website ([www.tmhaltom.com](http://www.tmhaltom.com)).



# 2020 GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER CONTEST: RUNNER-UP

**Shaonta' E. Allen, MA**  
University of Cincinnati



## **PAPER TITLE:**

"#ImWithKaep: Celebrity Influence, Frame Diffusion, and Youth Activism"

During the 2016 season, Colin Kaepernick's demonstrations on the football field drew attention to the Black Lives Matter Movement and the ongoing issue of police brutality in America. Soon after, student athletes across the country began to use their local sport platforms to protest in a similar fashion. While scholarly literature commonly acknowledges social media and popular culture's ability to entertain, distract and even pacify youth, thus deterring political activism, studies have yet to address whether or not celebrities can alternatively inspire youth engagement in social activism. To examine this further, the present study investigates how Kaepernick's social activism influenced young athlete-activists. A content analysis of 590 articles covering athlete-activism between August 2016 and May 2018 reveals that stories covering youth activists shared four media frames with stories covering Kaepernick's protests: (1) The Agitation Frame, (2) The Responsibility Frame, (3) The Protest Frame, and (4) The Backlash Frame.

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Given these findings, I argue that frame diffusion - the process in which movement beliefs, objects, and practices spread from one social location to another - is evidenced here as high-school and college athlete-activists adopted Kaepernick's political ideologies and demonstration tactics. This study ultimately extends our understanding of celebrity influence by illustrating how professional athlete-activism can inspire and mobilize youth activists.

My broad research agenda addresses how Black people perceive and respond to racial inequality. I specifically focus on three institutions when examining these processes: religion, higher education, and Pop-Culture/Sport. For this reason, Kaepernick's protest in 2016 initially caught my interest. But what was more fascinating to me was seeing how student-athletes across the country began to mirror his protest. So I decided to look into this phenomenon further. As this project was developing, I was selected into the Centre on Social Movement Studies 2018 Summer School in Florence, Italy. That year's theme was "Youth Political Participation in Times of Increasing Inequality." Workshopping this paper with scholars from across the world who were also studying youth activism definitely enhanced my thoughts on this project.

# New PUBLICATIONS

## FROM DIVISION MEMBERS

We are happy to share new publications from our division members! The range of topics covered –within the areas of sport, leisure, and the body, as well as beyond – demonstrates the reach of our members’ voices and contributions to scholarly conversations. If you would like your new publication(s) to be included in the next issue, please email Newsletter Editor Tiffany Hang at [tiffany.hang@tcu.edu](mailto:tiffany.hang@tcu.edu)

- **Barnes, Sarah.** 2020. “'The Best Recovery you Could Possibly Get': Sleep, Rest, and the National Basketball Association.” *Sociology of Sport Journal*. Forthcoming.
- **Cabin, William.** 2020. “In the Realm of Haunting Ghosts: Denying the existence of Substance Abuse in Medicare Home Health.” *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work* 2: 226-36.
- **Cabin, William.** 2020. “Social Workers Assert Medicare Home Care Ignores Social Determinants of Health.” *Home Health Care Management & Practice*. Forthcoming.
- **Cabin, William.** 2020. “'Less is Better' Philosophy Decreases Home Health Aide Utilization to Increase Reimbursement in Medicare Home Health.” *Home Health Care Management & Practice* 32(2): 105-109.
- Burke, Kelsy, and **Trenton M. Haltom.** 2020. “Created by God and Wired to Porn: Redemptive Masculinity and Gender Beliefs in Narratives of Religious Men’s Pornography Addiction Recovery.” *Gender & Society* 34(2): 233-58.
- Worthen, Meredith G.F., and **Trenton M. Haltom.** 2020. “Fifty Shades of Leather and Misogyny: An Investigation of Anti-Woman Perspectives among Leatherman.” *Deviant Behavior*. Forthcoming.
- **Haltom, Trenton M.** 2020. “A New Spin on Gender: How Parents of Male Baton Twirlers (Un)Do Gender Essentialism.” *Sociology of Sport Journal*. Forthcoming.



# New PUBLICATIONS

FROM DIVISION  
MEMBERS

- Alamo-Pastrana, Carlos, and **William Hoynes**. 2020. "Racialization of News: Constructing and Challenging Professional Journalism as 'White Media.'" *Humanity and Society* 44(1): 67-91.
- **Shelby, Renee**. 2020. "Value-Responsible Design and Sexual Violence Interventions." *Routledge Handbook of Public Criminologies* 286-98.
- **Smith-Tran, Alicia**. 2020. "Exploring the Benefits and Drawbacks of Age Disclosure among Women Faculty of Color." *Teaching Sociology* 48(1): 3-12.
- **Smith-Tran, Alicia**. 2020. "A Life Course Perspective on the Start of Black Middle-Class Women's Recreational Running Careers." *Sociological Spectrum*. *Forthcoming*.
- **Smith-Tran, Alicia**. 2020. "'Finally Something for Us': Black Girls Run! and Racialized Space-Making in Recreational Running." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*. *Forthcoming*.

*SSSP wants to  
hear from you!*

**CONNECT  
WITH US:**

Let us know what you are working on! Please  
send information on recent articles, reports,  
presentations, etc. to Tiffany Hang at  
[tiffany.hang@tcu.edu](mailto:tiffany.hang@tcu.edu)

