

Animal Racing: Shifting Codes of Canadian Social Tolerance

Kevin Young

Introduction

As public and official concern with the ethics of animal treatment reaches new heights in many countries (DeGrazia 2002), as inquiries into institutionalized corruption in equine sports gather pace (Drape et al. 2012), as drivers of racing horse wagons begin to be punished over animal deaths (*CBC News* 2015b), and as the first criminal prosecution related to horse doping heads to the Supreme Court of Canada (*Calgary Herald* 2015 October 13, p. B1), the time seems right to reconsider the question of racing animals for public ‘entertainment’ and ‘sport’.

The term ‘animal racing’ likely conjures up images of horses competing at high speed over set distances, over obstacles, or propelling wagons and carriages of various dimensions (Scott 2005; Gerber and Young 2013; Young and Gerber 2014). However, horses are not the only animals to be ‘raced’. In fact, the range of racing animals is surprisingly diverse and often imbued with deep historical and cultural significance. It includes, but is not limited to: dogs (for example, Hsinchun 1994; Kemp 1999; Grundlingh 2003; Atkinson and Young 2005), camels (for example, Khalaf 1999), yaks (for example, Bhutan 1996), buffalo (for example,

K. Young (✉)

Department of Sociology, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada
e-mail: kyoung@ucalgary.ca

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271

Chaudhari and Chaudhari 2005), bulls (for example, Lamoureux 2003), elephants (for example, Delaney and Madigan 2009), and even mice (for example, Bancroft 1978), hamsters (for example, Gardiner 2001; Phillips 2004), and turtles (for example, Ryan 1974). Further, numerous types of birds (notably pigeons) have featured centrally in the racing traditions of many societies (for example, Walcott 1996). Threaded through all of these traditions are rituals, often very colourful and flamboyant, of spectacle, betting¹ and masculinity. Needless to say, one might also add rituals of risk and injury both to animal and human participants. More than anything else, it is changing social sensibilities to questions of risk, and who/what is and is not able to consent to such risk that increasingly projects animals used for public entertainment and sports into the lime-light. The Calgary Stampede represents one forum for examining the nature and prevalence of, as well as the response to, animal treatment in racing sports. This chapter undertakes such an examination using the figurational approach of Norbert Elias.

Nature

The Calgary Exhibition and Stampede is an annual 10-day-long event in Calgary, Alberta, that takes place every July. The Stampede itself features a world-famous parade, midway entertainment, agrarian style competitions, a major trade show, world class concerts, a daily rodeo and the Rangeland Derby Chuckwagon races. These elements of what can be called the ‘Stampede proper’ occur at Stampede Park, a 200-acre site on the south-eastern edge of Calgary’s downtown core (Beniot 2012, p. 23).

In addition to events on the Stampede grounds, the city itself is transformed from a modern metropolis and one of Western Canada’s foremost business hubs into a place of boisterous celebration and spectacle. Each day, pancake breakfasts take place all around the city with some breakfasts at major shopping malls attracting upwards of 100,000 people. Many citizens participate in parties and social events, often claiming a connection to Western (that is, cowboy, ranching, etc.) heritage. The Stampede even transforms corporate Calgary as dozens of shops and businesses have their storefronts decorated in Western themes,

¹ Whilst it is generally very difficult to find reliable statistics on those who bet and/or attend animal racing, at least in the UK horseracing overwhelmingly makes up the majority of betting (<http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/Gambling-data-analysis/statistics/Industry-statistics.aspx>).

companies host Stampede parties, and many workplaces allow and even encourage staff to wear Western attire for the duration of the festivities. It is common for businesses to slow and even close down, allowing employees time to attend events. The Stampede generates millions of dollars in direct and indirect spending for the local economy and is perhaps the single most important annual event for the local economy (Hirsch 2010).²

The Calgary Stampede is organized and managed by the Calgary Stampede Board, an entity comprising well-known and well-connected Calgarians. The Mayor of Calgary and two sitting counsellors also occupy positions on the Board. As a corporate event, the Stampede presents a commercial opportunity that many Calgary businesses simply cannot afford to pass up. Many companies engage in campaigns that relate their brand to the Stampede and associated Western themes (Hirsch 2010). In addition to corporate connections, the Stampede receives various forms of assistance from all three levels of government (municipal, provincial and federal) and many have argued that the line separating local politics from local businesses has become extremely blurred (Foran 2008, p. 150).

The Stampede has become closely entwined with the city of Calgary's image, identity, governance and economy. As Foran argues in *Icon, Brand, Myth: The Calgary Stampede*, some central aspects of the Stampede and its image—including whether the Stampede accurately reflects historical practices—are amplified by myth and legend (2008, pp. 148–149). Together, all of these aforementioned elements form a unique phenomenon encompassing much more than an innocuous municipal festival. The Calgary Stampede brashly brands itself as 'The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth'. However, all is not as well as it seems, and for some time storm clouds have been gathering over the Stampede.

Indeed, the Stampede has become a hub of controversy locally, nationally and internationally. While a variety of elements related to the Stampede have drawn critical consideration, and in some cases, condemnation, nowhere has criticism been more pronounced than in relation to the treatment of animals for public entertainment—in particular, the impact to horses in the Rangeland Derby Chuckwagon racing. Criticism takes many forms, and

² Annually, the Calgary Stampede brings in an estimated \$250 million for the city of Calgary (Hirsch 2010). This is a 2010 figure based off the total economic impact derived by the community including hotels, restaurants, tourism companies, in addition to the revenue generated on the Stampede grounds. The Calgary Stampede's 2014 consolidated financial statements (<http://corporate.calgarystampede.com/ar2014/ar2014.pdf>) reveal that the Stampede Board (between the Stampede itself, facility rentals, Cowboys Casino and other activities) made \$137 million in gross revenue.

often focuses on the injuries to and fatalities of horses that occur before, during and after competition. For many years, in the lead-up to July, local newspaper editorials have been replete with impassioned letters of both support for and condemnation of the Stampede, and particularly, the chuckwagon racing. As the following examples show, just a cursory glance through local and national newspapers reveals the newsworthiness of serious accidents at the Stampede ‘chucks’: ‘Two horses die during race on first night of Stampede’ (*Globe and Mail* 2006 July 10, p. A8); ‘Horse put down at derby’ (*Calgary Sun* 2011 July 9, p. 6); ‘Second horse put down at Calgary Stampede; Broken leg discovered after chuckwagon race’ (Stone and Ho 2011, p. A2); and ‘4 Calgary Stampede horses die in 2015 chuckwagon races’ (*CBC News* 2015a).

In addition to the public discourse often aired in the media, several animal rights and animal welfare organizations such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the Vancouver Humane Society (VHS), and the Calgary Humane Society (CHS) have run provocative public awareness campaigns opposing the inclusion of animals in Stampede events. As described by Gerber and Young (2013), emotive headlines and graphic images broadcast in the news media related to injured or dying animals sometimes being dragged off the track by tractors during high-profile Stampede events have become commonplace in recent years.

The increasingly contested nature of the Calgary Stampede and its use of horses lend itself particularly well to analysis using figurational or ‘process’ sociology. Assessing the Stampede and controversies surrounding it with conceptual tools such as ‘thresholds of repugnance’, ‘civilization/de-civilization’ and ‘sportization’, represents an illuminating line of inquiry. But it is first necessary to consider the prevalence of the problem increasingly at the centre of public concern.

Prevalence

Much, although certainly not all, of the controversy related to animal use and animal care in the context of the Stampede relates to the daily rodeo and chuckwagon races. The Rangeland Derby (chuckwagon racing) in particular is subject to the most media scrutiny and public opposition because of its high-profile nature, its often very violent crashes, and the harm incurred by its equine ‘athletes’.

Chuckwagon racing concludes each day’s competition. It is also the event perhaps most entwined with both corporate Calgary and what is

viewed as the Stampede's 'Western values' (van Herk 2008). In the annual build-up to the Stampede, local companies including many high-profile oil and gas firms, law firms, car dealerships, and the like bid on 'tarp rights' for the competing drivers in a televised 'tarp sale' (van Herk 2008; Fisher 2016³). Tarpaulins cover each team's wagon and are colourfully adorned with the logos and advertisements of Calgary's most prestigious businesses, some of which pay upwards of \$200,000 in order to sponsor top flight drivers (van Herk 2008, p. 247). In addition to these corporate links, in Stampede marketing material and advertisements, 'the chucks' are purported to be closely associated with 'western values' and notions of the 'traditional cowboy'. As van Herk (2008, p. 247) describes, corporate sponsorship of the chucks goes beyond marketing; it weaves together a 'tapestry of competition and cooperation'. Sponsoring chuckwagon racing simultaneously allows regional companies to situate their brand in a very public space and also foster the impression of connectivity to, and respect for, local history and culture.

However, despite what many locals are brought up to believe and often aggressively defend, the Rangeland Derby has little actual connection to authentic Cowboy culture or the region's history (van Herk 2008). Rather, chuckwagon racing at the Calgary Stampede owes its genesis to the Stampede's first major promoter, Guy Weadick. As van Herk notes, 'the chucks' were introduced first and foremost to add a thrilling spectacle to conclude the Stampede and to attract larger audiences: 'In search of an exciting event to cap his hyperbolic rodeo, Guy Weadick figured that some kind of wagon race would be crazy and chaotic enough to guarantee audience interest' (2008, p. 242). The first chuckwagon racing competition occurred during the 1923 Stampede (11 years after the inaugural Stampede in 1912), and since that time, has evolved into the massively popular event it is today.

Chuckwagon racing has indeed become the Stampede 'crown jewel' and is aggressively promoted by the Stampede Board itself and by thousands of locals who actively endorse the festival. Many of those who support both the rodeo and the chucks see criticism based on injury to animals as attacks on Calgary's identity or Western ways of life per se—as though either of these things were homogeneous wholes. As noted above, however, these responses are largely misplaced, as chuckwagon racing is not based on any material or factual connection to Calgary (or Western) history; instead, the sport was

³ In what is widely considered "an annual litmus test for the local economy" (Fisher 2016, p. A1), the 2016 Rangeland Derby canvas auction brought in \$2.29 m.

introduced solely to titillate audiences and enhance economic value. Promotion of the chucks heavily underscores the bravado, adrenaline and risk imbued in all rodeo events (Mikklesen 2008; van Herk 2008) and is amply demonstrated by the way the Stampede's own website publicizes itself in unambiguously spectacular ways: 'You'll witness all the heart-stopping action as 36 drivers, 216 horses and the teams vie for over \$1.15 million in prize money.'

The principal controversy underlying much of the debate surrounding the chuckwagon racing relates to the prevalence of (often gruesome) injuries and fatalities that occur as a direct result of racing. Countering its success as a hugely popular attraction (thousands of spectators pour into the Stampede grounds every night) and the undeniably popular view that 'the chucks' are exciting to watch, is the Stampede's equally undeniable—and clearly discouraging—report card where animal safety is concerned.

Reliable statistics on horse racing accidents, injuries and deaths at the Stampede are both difficult to find and rationalized at every turn. To provide some depth to the question of the prevalence of horse injuries and deaths, there are, of course, innumerable news articles posted online describing individual cases of horse injuries and deaths, as well as social responses to such cases raising critical questions about the legitimacy, responsibility, and viability of such obviously high-risk 'sports' (for both human and animal participants) (for example, *CBC News* 2010; *CBC News* 2012). While news of such individual cases is not hard to find, locating reliable quantitative data on horse deaths at the Calgary Stampede, related either to chuckwagon racing or the cluster of other equine activities that the Stampede sanctions, is a different matter altogether. Certainly, sites and lists exist (for example, *Global News* 2012; Ban Chuckwagon Racing 2013; Vancouver Humane Society 2010), but their reliability is again debatable. In all cases, it is not difficult to see that such lists are posted by groups with interests to defend and ideological positions to advance. Similarly, several organizations beyond Calgary and indeed Canada maintain and publish records of equine injuries and fatalities in the form of 'data bases' in racing sports. Within Canada, for instance, Woodbine Racetrack in Ontario, fully accredited by the National Thoroughbred Racing Association, posts current and past archives (e.g., Woodbine Entertainment 2010). Beyond Canada, the British Horseracing Authority, for example, regularly updates racetrack reports (for example, British Horseracing Authority 2014). And finally, organizations such as *Animal Aid* maintain and release a 'Race Horse Death watch' (Animal Aid

2015). A so-called ‘Racehorse Memorial Wall Worldwide’ is also illuminating (Racehorse Memorial 2016). Needless to say, none of these sites cast a flattering light on the question of racing horses at high risk, though many of their findings remain vague and questionable.

These measurement problems, notwithstanding, there are strong indicators that chuckwagon racing and equine health are not natural partners. According to the VHS (2011), over 50 chuckwagon horses were fatally injured or had to be euthanized between 1986 and 2011. As noted generally by McBane and Douglas-Coope (2005), and more specifically by the CHS (2011), horses involved in, and being trained for rodeo, face regular physical discomfort and mental distress. Accidents, injuries and fatalities are simply a routine feature of the annual chuckwagon races at the Calgary Stampede. More troubling is the fact that unknown numbers of injuries and fatalities take place behind the scenes in preparation for competition—that is, in situations where the public normally has no access and where injury tolls go unreported. According to both media reports (for example, Ban Chuckwagon Racing 2013) and the aforementioned VHS (2011) report, in 2005, at least nine horses died while being transported to Stampede Park. In 2006, two horses died as a result of chuckwagon races, in 2007 three died, and in 2008, one more horse died. In 2009, two horses died, and in 2010 six horses died (four in chuckwagon racing competitions, and the other two in other rodeo events). Despite well-publicized rule changes to chuckwagon racing in 2011, intended to facilitate enhanced animal welfare on the track, two more horses perished during the 2011 competition, and in 2012, three more died. One horse died in both 2013 and 2014.⁴ Most recently, four more horse deaths in 2015 led the Stampede to finally acknowledge its embarrassing safety record (“Calgary Stampede ‘Not Proud’ of its Animal safety Record as Fourth Horse Dies in Chuckwagon Races,” *National Post* 2015). Almost all of these deaths took place on the chuckwagon track, several due to driver error. The GMC Rangeland Derby is perhaps suitably known as the ‘Half Mile of Hell’.

In some cases horses involved in crashes have had to be euthanized on site in front of spectators before being removed from the track using heavy machinery. However, other instances of abuse related to overtraining or overuse are far removed from the cameras and glare of the public eye (Gerber and Young 2013, p. 537). As viewed through the lens of symbolic

⁴ <http://www.vancouverhumanesociety.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Deaths-at-the-Calgary-Stampede-1986-to-July-2015.pdf>

interactionism (such as the work of Goffman 1959), much of the harm sustained by horses at the Stampede occurs not in the visible 'front regions' of public sensibilities but in the 'back regions'—away from competition, common sight and public consideration.

Theoretical Considerations

The contested nature of the Calgary Stampede and chuckwagon racing conceived of as 'sport' or public entertainment contains obvious potential for critical reflection and sociological analysis. As mentioned above, figurational sociology offers real promise because it allows for the critical study of dynamic structures, processes and meanings that occur in a given setting. Further, figurational approaches are effective in the study of violence (for example, animal abuse) because they can be used to consider the relationship between specific actions and the 'civility' of the wider society. Clearly, the Stampede does not occur in a vacuum. Far from it; it is closely tied to the governance, identity, economy and cultural history of the city of Calgary, and indeed the province of Alberta more generally. As such, several figurational tools may be used to throw explanatory light on harmful Stampede practices and social responses.

Referring to the conceptually central processes of 'civilization', Morrow (2009) acknowledges that sport has always operated as a social barometer of 'civility'. This theme has been developed in many figurational analyses of sport—particularly the social-historical evaluation of violence in the evolution of activities such as soccer, foxhunting and rugby (Elias and Dunning 1986). From this point of view, links have been drawn between violence reduction initiatives in certain sports and broader civilizing processes in society (Morrow 2009, p. 216).

Within the sociology of sport subdiscipline, the study of sports violence has not systematically considered the role of animals, despite the fact that animal cruelty and violence may certainly be seen as one manifestation of sport-related violence (Young 2012). As argued by Gerber and Young (2013) and Young (2014), the study of animal treatment, including equine treatment, has also rarely been at the forefront of sociological research *per se*. Instead, when equine events have been considered, the focus is often on how participants operate within subcultural frameworks or how they derive benefit from horse use in specific contexts (cf., Scott 2005).

Elias argues that as 'ill-mannered' and violent societies increasingly find mechanisms to reform their laws, values and mores, a process occurs whereby various practices which increasingly offend public sensibilities become less

and less acceptable. The collective taste for viewing or participating in certain violent acts, even indirectly as spectators, has been referred to by Elias (2000) as a 'threshold of repugnance'. For Elias, such a 'threshold' is not dormant or stagnant but, rather, shifts dynamically over time in keeping with other social changes.

For Elias (1986b), people in increasingly 'civilized' societies are expected to control aggressive impulses toward other humans and other living things. As such, as wider civilizing occurs at a macro-societal level, forms of entertainment previously found to be acceptable face increased scrutiny and possible rejection. Elias cites examples from the past of public torture and executions as acts viewed to be increasingly displeasureable, and Pinker (2011) shows how public cruelty toward animals (such as the public burning of cats to exorcise what was seen as the physical incarnation of evil) has changed massively over time. Elias explains how in an overall trend toward civilization societies are prone to both 'spurts' of civilization *and* de-civilization (Elias and Dunning 1986; Dunning 1999; Elias 2000). In the latter case, an event, process, practice or institution may hold out as a bastion of a form of once accepted but now contested behaviour.

Changing views in Canadian society vis-à-vis the appropriate treatment of animals and placing animals at risk for public entertainment and economic profit fall in line with what Eliasian scholars would deem to be a 'civilizing spurt'. The debate over rodeo and chuckwagon racing may well fit with a broader civilizing spurt, but the actual rodeo and chuckwagon events themselves are consistent with what Elias would term 'modern barbarism' (van Krieken 1998, p. 112), what Elias and Dunning (1986, 1999) would deem instances of *de-civilization*. Evidence of de-civilization related to modern chuckwagon races at the Stampede can be found in progressions of the sport itself. Van Herk explains how chuckwagon racing has become faster, riskier and more entertaining for spectators; once heavily set horses have been replaced by hyper-fit, lightweight thoroughbreds that now pull lighter wagons at far greater speeds (2008, p. 243). The audience desire to witness riskier behaviour and experience more excitement with increased risk to driver and horse alike fits within the Eliasian definitions of de-civilizing spurts.

The figurationalist notions of 'civilizing' and 'de-civilizing' are hardly linear in their real world examples. The Calgary Stampede Rangeland Derby is evidence of this. The (de-civilizing) increase of risk and injury in order to build tension and excitement occurs within a broader (and civilizing) societal rejection of, or at least concern with, exposing animals to unnecessary risk for mere entertainment. Even within what could be termed

a de-civilizing process a civilizing spurt can be observed. In recent years, the CHS has been granted increased access to behind-the-scene areas outside of the public view and has made several recommendations to mitigate risks associated with rodeo. The way these processes occur is influenced by broader patterns of morality, ethics and tolerance in society manifested in all social institutions.⁵ Where the Stampede is concerned, despite an evident growth in public disdain over gruesome accidents as summarized above, the local government and its provincial and federal counterparts have assumed a largely passive posture. The Stampede Board, as previously demonstrated the benefactor of millions of dollars in revenue from the rodeo and chucks, has started to show signs of responding to public pressure with attempts to increase safety and better manage risk to animals.

The Stampede's shifting use of rationalizing strategies, or what sociologists Sykes and Matza (1989) would call 'techniques of neutralization' can be analyzed and explained through a further figurational lens. Dunning links the civilizing process in sport with a process of what he calls 'sportization' whereby stricter rules and greater levels of supervision and surveillance of a sporting environment are created, indeed necessary, for an activity to survive in a wider process of growing sensitivity (1999, p. 48). Through the evolution in public sensibility, sport-related regulations and their supervision become more efficient and surveilling:

A central part of this 'sportization' process involved the development of a stricter framework of rules governing sporting competition. Thus rules became more precise, more explicit and more differentiated while, at the same time, supervision of the observance of those rules became more efficient . . . (1999, p. 48).

The link between 'sportization' and the civilizing process is exemplified by the fact that the level of tolerated violence in a sporting pursuit adjusts over time to match the level of violence tolerated by the broader community. As society becomes more repulsed by violence and its outcomes, the level of combative or risky behaviour permitted in sporting events also decreases. Elias argues that sports which are excessively violent by normal social standards are often discredited as 'illegitimate' sports; in many ways this seems to be the growing reputation of chuckwagon racing in some quarters. Why else would the

⁵ Such shifts co-exist with broader developments in philosophical debates on animal welfare/rights which demonstrate notions of civilizing process and no doubt impact on welfare standards in the Stampede. Arguably, there are similarities in the conflict between welfare and rights approach and the civilizing/de-civilizing approach.

Calgary Stampede go so far out of its way to convince the public that it is responsibly and consistently tightening up its rules and regulations?

Finally, figurationalists contend that the pacification of societies associated with 'civilizing trends' creates a need to find alternative sources of excitement and intrigue (Elias and Dunning 1986). Expansions of regulatory frameworks and policing regimens restrain people's ability to behave emotionally or exuberantly. Van Krieken (1998) describes sport as an example of emotional management in modern societies whereby a tension is created within controlled frameworks (p. 136). Therefore, sport can and indeed often does function as a place where a 'controlled de-controlling' of emotions takes place. Elias (1986) also discusses problems associated with this such as managing the risk of harm to participants while maintaining an enjoyable level of competition. The spectacle and pageantry associated with Calgary Stampede chuckwagon racing encapsulates a space for such a 'managed de-controlling' of emotions. In the nine decades since its induction, chuckwagon racing has become one of the most prestigious and richest sports in the entire province of Alberta (van Herk 2008, p. 241). In excess of 180,000 people attend the 'chucks' every Stampede and many more watch on television. Although some are likely drawn to the more technical aspects of the sport, there seems little denying that many are drawn to the sheer speed, danger and excitement of chuckwagon racing (van Herk 2008).

Response

Of the aforementioned theoretical constructs providing illumination on the treatment of chuckwagon racing horses at Calgary Stampede, perhaps the most tangible and visible is the figurational notion of sportization. A chuckwagon 'sportization' process can be seen in: the introduction of new rules and policies to make the sport safer for both horse and rider; the use of increasing sanctions in the form of fines and penalties for violators; increasingly collegial collaboration with animal welfare groups such as the CHS and the Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA); and the creation of various commissions and groups, such as the Animal Care Advisory Panel (ACAP) and the Chuckwagon Safety Commission (CSC).

As part of the Stampede's stated commitment to 'animal care', such commissions, programs and partnerships are expanding and forms of both internal and external surveillance are becoming more and more obvious. The Stampede has partnered and worked collaboratively with various organizations in Alberta to ensure that its practices are acceptable in terms of animal welfare, including two

animal welfare organizations—the CHS and the ASPCA. These groups consult with the Calgary Stampede throughout the year, and also regulate the Alberta Animal Protection Act (2010)⁶ throughout the duration of the annual Stampede. A number of publicly available sources explain the changing role that the CHS has played in implementing these rule changes. For example, *Thirty-six Ways We've Improved Treatment of Stampede's Animals* (Cameron 2011) explains the role that the CHS has played in enhancing animal welfare in this context. The author, Patricia Cameron, Director of the CHS, explains the goals of the 'partnership' between the two organizations in the following way: '... to engage in long-term relationship building, to foster dialogue, to mutually seek solutions and understanding, to conduct solid research, to educate and to provide evidence-based recommendations' (Cameron 2011, p. A11). Ultimately, this might further legitimize the rules put forward by the Calgary Stampede because they have been collaboratively and visibly agreed upon by an animal welfare organization. In addition to partnering with animal welfare organizations, the Calgary Stampede has also partnered with Moore and Co., an equine veterinary practice, which monitors the care and health of animals throughout the Stampede. Of course, one of the paradoxical consequences of *appearing* to respond to animal welfare is that concerns can be disregarded or put aside even when harm to animals remains very real (see Beirne and South 2007).

Further, the Calgary Stampede has created two independent groups in its pursuit of a more transparent and animal-friendly mandate—the ACAP and the CSC. As outlined on the Calgary Stampede website, the role of such groups is to 'ensure we set the highest standards for proper animal care.' The CSC was developed in 2008, just two years after the Calgary Stampede opted to develop its own rodeo format (as opposed to continuing as a more broadly sanctioned rodeo event). In an article written for *Canadian Geographic*, Dixon (2011) explains that this group '... developed a code of conduct and set stiff fines and penalties for dangerous conduct jeopardizing the horses or drivers.' The purpose of such fines and penalties was to decrease (ideally eliminate) horse deaths which result from avoidable accidents, such as those caused by driver error or track conditions. The ACAP, made up of independent experts from various disciplinary backgrounds, was developed in 2010, and was charged with ensuring that the Calgary Stampede maintains robust animal care practices (see Calgary Stampede 2015a).

The so-called 'Fitness to Compete' program illustrates another level of codification through which the health and well-being of the horse is more formally surveilled; this plays a crucial role in minimizing the danger faced by

⁶ <http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/a41.pdf>

Stampede horses. Specifically, it allows veterinarians to police the health of horses, and to regulate the frequency of their participation. Through a microchip inserted under the animal's skin, regulators can ensure that competitors are not 'stretching' or breaking the rules that have been implemented to protect horses (such as the rules that prevent over-use of a horse and preventing unhealthy or unfit horses from competing—discussed below).

In addition to such partnerships and commissions, all clearly indicative of an ongoing, and importantly, surveilled sportization process, in 2011 the Calgary Stampede undertook a number of significant rule and safety changes to chuckwagon racing, making that year particularly interesting to look at through the lens of sportization. These rules include limiting the use of horses in chuckwagon racing to four consecutive days (to lower the risk of injury and accidents from fatigue or over-use), requiring that horses used in a race be identified 'pre-race' so that they can be examined by a veterinarian before running (to prevent an unfit horse from racing), reducing the number of outriders from four to two (to decrease the number of horses on the track during a race), and increasing track maintenance by harrowing the track after every second race (to improve footing, and therefore safety, for the horses) (Calgary Stampede 2015b). These rule changes persist as the focus of media attention and debate, so much so that one news article suggested that the 2011 Stampede '... will likely be remembered as the year new animal care rules were instituted and declared a tentative success even in the wake of two horse deaths' (Stone and Tetley 2011, p. A1). It is also important to note that not only has the Stampede implemented these rules, but that it has also widely publicized these changes throughout the local and national media. The sheer number of articles which reference the rule changes illustrate the important role that rules and regulations play in the debate over horse-use. These examples suggest that the Calgary Stampede has attempted to legitimize the continued existence of chuckwagon racing as 'sport' by implementing and publicizing a variety of rules aimed at minimizing the violence (by way of injuries and fatalities), so as to fall within a socially acceptable level. Clearly, what is at stake in programs such as 'Fitness to Compete' is as much about marketing and public image as it is about animal safety, especially in the face of ongoing harm to horses.

Conclusion

As an example of how modern societies are increasingly reconciling questions of humanity against common practices that harm animals, this chapter examines a cultural institution of the Canadian West—the Calgary Stampede. Using

chuckwagon racing as a case study, and couching the high-risk use of horses in the figurational language of Elias, Dunning and others, it considers shifting views toward the ‘civility’ of the self-proclaimed ‘Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth’. As just one site in the broader debate regarding animal rights and social justice, the Calgary Stampede represents a fascinating setting for the assessment of a changing social climate regarding the use of animals in all aspects of life, from factory farming to pharmaceutical testing to sport, games and play for popular entertainment. The use of horses (and animals more broadly) at the Calgary Stampede has become extremely contentious and there now exists a clear struggle between supporters or traditionalists and proponents of change. At the center of this debate is the thorny question of how humans should treat what Brandt called our ‘equine companions’ (2009, p. 315), and whether the ‘techniques of neutralization’ that have been used to rationalize risk, pain and death in this century-old tradition are as compelling as they once were.

With specific respect to equine welfare in chuckwagon racing at the Calgary Stampede, and in conclusion, this chapter makes four essential arguments: (i) chuckwagon racing provides clear evidence of changing social perceptions toward the use/abuse of animals in entertainment/sport; (ii) there are obvious and acknowledged examples of harm/abuse toward the animals involved, although it is difficult to provide an accurate account of this due to limited data/research/transparency; (iii) the figurational approach (and especially its core concepts of civilization/de-civilization and sportization) are helpful for understanding these shifts in social perceptions and how they are linked concretely to changing practices; and (iv) although it is questionable as to whether current social responses are enough (in terms of preventing harm to animals), the appearance of more caring approaches to animal welfare may have the paradoxical effect of softening concern even as potential harm to animals remains very real, and injury continues.

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Kevin Young is Professor of Sociology at the University of Calgary. His research interests bridge Criminology and the Sociology of Sport.

His most recent books include *Sport, Violence and Society* (Routledge, 2012) and *Sport, Social Development and Peace* (Emerald, 2014).