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HAZING IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS: PREVALENCE, ATTITUDES, AND SOLUTIONS

Stephen S. Owen, Ph.D., Tod W. Burke, Ph.D., and David Vichesky

This article reports the results of a survey exploring hazing in student organizations. First, a typology of hazing behaviors was constructed through factor analysis. Second, respondents reported the prevalence of hazing, and results were compared across type of student organization. Third, respondents indicated their attitudes about hazing, and results were compared between perpetrators of hazing and their victims. Finally, respondents assessed the efficacy of various solutions to hazing, and results were compared between those who had perpetrated acts of hazing and those who had not. The results were used to construct a theoretical model of hazing behavior on college campuses, with recommendations for solutions.

Between 1970 and 1985, approximately 30 hazing incidents resulted in death (Richmond, 1987). Hollmann (2002) reports that more hazing and initiation ritual-related deaths occurred since 1990 and 2002 than all college and university campus deaths of that nature on record. The practice of hazing has led some universities to ban fraternities and sororities (Trustee Task Force on Greek Life, 2002) and has also led to concerns about liability in higher education (Rutledge, 1998).

While it is difficult to develop an understanding of why hazing occurs, a number of explanations have been proffered. Reese (1993) asserted that hazing is an issue of fraternity and sorority subculture, arguing that the roots of hazing behavior stem from shared cultural values within these organizations. Ritualistic, often esoteric symbolism is the basis of the bond between members of a fraternal organization (McMinn, 1979). Reese (1993) suggested that symbolism and the larger cultural construct are relevant because they explain why new members are expected to suffer a “rite of passage” (p. 37) to enter the sacredness of the group. Promoting toughness, in and of itself, is one value ascribed to hazing by some fraternities (DeSantis, 2007).

A strong predictor of fraternity and sorority membership is the psychological need to belong to a meaningful social group (Shaw & Morgan, 1990). As Ruffins (1998) noted, this need to belong is so powerful that it can cause potential new members to endure the pains of hazing to join the group. Shaw and Morgan (1990) also noted that those who haze may be exercising hostility on their targets stemming from when they themselves were hazed, which may partially explain why hazing is perpetuated as a tool of initiation among fraternal organizations and other collegiate organizations.

Hazing among males has been considered a form of sadomasochistic, homoerotic bonding (Finley & Finley, 2007; Ruffins, 1998) in which the sacrifice asked of new members is their own masculine dominance. Sweet (1999) considered this view from a sociological perspective, suggesting that sadist hazing requires some sort of latent hostility towards the target, while, in fact, those who haze often care greatly for their new members. Sweet pointed to the regret that the in-group feels when a new member is critically hurt during a hazing incident as evidence of

this connection. However, it could merely be a regret at the hazing behavior being exposed, or being personally subject to administrative and legal consequences.

The role of alcohol in hazing has received widespread scrutiny (Finkel, 2002; Hollmann, 2002; Rutledge, 1998; Nuwer, 1999), not only because it is commonly used on university campuses, but also because it releases social inhibitions. Kuh and Arnold (1993) referred to “liquid bonding” (p. 327), in which fraternity pledges are socialized through the use of alcohol. This enhances the risk of hazing. Rutledge (1998) suggested that as many as 90 percent of initiation ritual and hazing deaths involved excessive alcohol intake.

Prior Studies of Hazing in Collegiate Organizations

In the academic and professional literature, there have been numerous articles decrying hazing, explaining its origins, calling for reforms and policies to end it, and describing specific incidents. However, few studies have explored student attitudes toward and the actual prevalence of hazing. This led Nuwer (1999) to recommend that researchers “replace anecdotal evidence with hard [data]” (p. 223). A brief review of research follows.

Several studies have examined how students conceptualize or define hazing. Two studies focused only on fraternities, sampling members at single institutions; both presented a list of items and asked respondents to indicate whether or not they believed the items were hazing (Baier & Williams, 1983; Jenson, Poremba, Nelson, & Schwartz, 1980). Forced consumption of alcohol received the highest score in both studies, suggesting that concerns about alcohol are long-standing in the discussions of hazing. In a recent single institution study, Ellsworth (2006) compared how different groups (fraternity, sorority, ROTC, NCAA athletes, and marching band members) perceive hazing. He included physical, psychological, and other forms of hazing in his survey, as well as non-hazing activities. While there were a few areas of disagreement, members of the different groups scored the following items highest:

- Forced to consume excessive amounts of alcoholic beverages;
- Struck by an object, such as a ball, baton, fist, or paddle;
- Handcuffed or tied to a building or structure;
- Receive a brand or tattoo;
- Drink or eat substances not intended for normal consumption;
- Deprived of beverages or food by others;
- Perform sexual acts;
- Participate in streaking or other activities while naked;
- Deprived of sleep by others;
- Steal an item. (Ellsworth, 2006, p. 55)

Previous studies have more closely examined the prevalence of hazing behaviors in fraternities (Baier & Williams, 1983; Gordon, Hall, & Blankenship, 1979), sororities (Gordon, Hall, & Blankenship, 1979; Shaw & Morgan, 1990), and athletic teams (Hoover, 1999). Campo, Poulos, and Sipple (2005) surveyed students at one university and found that fraternity members, males, varsity athletes, student leaders, and upperclassmen were more likely to engage in hazing behaviors.

Previous research has also explored justifications for hazing, in an effort to understand why it occurs (Baier & Williams, 1983; Campo et al., 2005; Gordon, Hall, & Blankenship, 1979; Jenson

et al., 1980). A sample of students affiliated with fraternities and sororities at one institution was questioned regarding the value of hazing. The “majority ... felt that hazing of any type is not beneficial to an organization” (Gordon, Hall, & Blankenship, 1979, p. 33), while only a minority believed that it was “an important part of the rituals, initiation procedures or policies” (p. 34). Perhaps these results are encouraging, in that they dispel notions that hazing has always been widely accepted. It appears that a desire to build organizational unity is the most consistent attitudinal predictor of hazing (Baier & Williams, 1983; Campo et al., 2005; Jenson et al., 1980), although a sense of tradition was also cited by two studies (Baier & Williams, 1983; Jenson et al., 1980). In a study suggesting a social norming effect, Campo et al. (2005) found a significant correlation between hazing and positive perceptions of friends’ attitudes toward hazing.

Finally, research has explored perceived efficacy of solutions to hazing. In 1980, Jenson et al. asked open-ended questions about potential solutions to hazing. The responses centered on the promulgation of rules and their enforcement, which remain common solutions offered today. Indeed, Hoover’s (1999) study of NCAA athletes found high levels of support for “strong disciplinary & corrective measures for known cases” (p. 20) and “standards guiding recruitment” (p. 20). Hoover’s (1999) respondents also supported “alternative bonding & recognition events for teams to prevent hazing” (p. 20). Interestingly, Campo et al. (2005) found a positive correlation between hazing activities and non-hazing team-building activities, leading the authors to suggest that they “may be supplemental to, and not a replacement for, hazing” (p. 146).

As illustrated above, the empirical data on hazing attitudes and behaviors are limited. Given the paucity of empirical research on hazing, particularly outside of fraternal organizations, this study took an exploratory approach, seeking to address hazing prevalence and attitudes as a foundation for further research.

Methods

Data Collection

An invitation to complete an online survey (approved by the Institutional Review Board) was distributed to the entire population of undergraduate and graduate students (approximately 9,600) at a mid-sized, southern, comprehensive university. Instrument development drew upon the survey design of Hoover (1999; Hoover & Pollard, 2000). Some students provided written comments in a space provided at the end of the instrument.

Respondents were first asked to think about the single organization (if any) in which they were most actively involved and then indicate the type of organization (e.g., religious, professional, fraternity). Organizations included in the survey were: athletic teams (this was not limited to varsity athletics, and could include club sports); honor societies and honor fraternities designed to recognize academic achievement; professional societies and professional fraternities associated with a discipline or vocational field; music or other performance organizations; religious organizations or campus ministries; service societies and service fraternities focusing on community service; social fraternities recognized by the campus Interfraternity Council (IFC); traditionally African-American social fraternities recognized by the campus National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC); social fraternities not formally recognized by any campus authority (as such, these are not deemed “official” student organizations); social sororities recognized by

the campus Panhellenic Council (PHC); traditionally African-American social sororities recognized by the campus NPHC; social sororities not formally recognized by any campus authority (as such, these are not deemed “official” student organizations); and special interest clubs, focusing on a common interest among members.

Students were then instructed to consider only that organization in answering the remainder of the questions. This allowed respondents to focus on the group that was most important to them, which could likely be a group for which they would be willing to endure hazing experiences. It was also hoped that the approach promoted more thoughtful reflection on the questions. More practically, the strategy permitted an exploration of differences based on type of organization.

Research Questions

This study was designed to examine four broad questions pertinent to hazing in collegiate organizations. First, what specific behaviors do students perceive to be hazing? It was instructive to examine how students, comprising the population of potential hazing victims and perpetrators, operationalized the concept. It was hypothesized that students would not view all behaviors as equally egregious, but rather along a continuum.

All students who completed the instrument were included in the analysis of this first question, regardless of whether they reported an organizational affiliation, as any student has the potential to join groups in which hazing may occur. Survey respondents were presented with a list of 56 behaviors and instructed to rate the degree to which they believed each should be considered hazing, on a scale from 0 (“definitely not hazing”) to 10 (“definitely hazing”). To enhance inter-item discrimination, the list included both activities that are (e.g., “forced consumption of alcohol”) and are not (e.g., “maintaining a specific GPA”) examples of hazing, based on the authors’ more than 50 years of combined experience with student organizations. The list of items was compiled by reviewing previous research on hazing, news items, and anecdotal reports. A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to identify common constructs underlying the list of items. In addition, mean ratings were calculated for each item. Two factors identified by the analysis, labeled “Organizational Harassment” and “Harm to Self and Others,” were explored in the remaining questions.

The second research question asked, what is the prevalence of hazing? The analysis of prevalence focused mainly on frequency of victimization and commission of hazing behaviors and was limited to respondents indicating an organizational affiliation, as these were the individuals likely to be in a context where hazing might occur. It was hypothesized that the amount of hazing would vary across student organization type.

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they had experienced hazing from four perspectives. For each of the 56 hazing behaviors evaluated in the factor analysis, respondents were asked to indicate whether: (1) “Someone did this to me”; (2) “I did this to someone else”; (3) “I saw this happen, but did not participate in it”; or (4) “I’ve heard about this happening, but haven’t seen it or experienced it.” Respondents could select all responses that applied to their experiences. Because victimization is arguably the most serious manifestation of hazing (in terms of the harm posed to those who experience it), it was utilized as the hazing measure in this analysis. A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to determine whether the various organizations’

means differed significantly.

The third research question asked, what are student attitudes toward hazing? Analysis was limited to those students reporting an organizational affiliation. It was hypothesized that perceptions of hazing would vary based on student experience. Namely, as students were victimized by an increasing number of hazing behaviors, attitudes toward hazing would become increasingly negative; and, as students committed an increasing number of hazing behaviors toward others, attitudes toward hazing would become more accepting.

Respondents were presented with a series of statements regarding their attitudes toward hazing. The purpose of the statements was to ascertain how serious of a problem respondents perceived hazing to be and to determine whether respondents found any utility in hazing activities. Each item was answered on a five-point Likert scale anchored by “strongly disagree” (assigned a value of 1) and “strongly agree” (assigned a value of 5). Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated to test the hypotheses.

The fourth research question asked, what are potential solutions or recommendations to minimize hazing? The study explored the perceived efficacy of a number of potential solutions to hazing. It was hypothesized that perpetrators of hazing would view the effectiveness of solutions less favorably than those who had not committed acts of hazing.

Respondents were presented with options for initiatives or actions that could potentially reduce the level of hazing on college campuses. Two options pertaining to reporting (whether respondent would report hazing to somebody inside or outside the organization) were answered on a Likert scale anchored by “strongly disagree” (score of 1) and “strongly agree” (score of 5). For the remaining items, respondents were asked to indicate potential effectiveness on a Likert scale, anchored by “least effective” (score of 1) and “most effective” (score of 5). To test the hypothesis, an independent-samples *t*-test compared the means for the two groups for each potential solution.

Results

Samples

The first research question was addressed utilizing data from all respondents who completed the instrument ($n = 440$), regardless of organizational affiliation. Of the 434 respondents reporting gender, 156 were male (35.9%) and 278 were female (64.1%). There was little racial diversity; of the 432 respondents reporting race, 20 were African American (4.6%), 7 were Asian (1.6%), 13 were Hispanic or Latino (3.0%), three were Native American (0.7%), and 389 were Caucasian (90.0%). These results were consistent with the demographics of the total student population of the institution where the survey was administered.

Analysis of the second, third, and fourth research questions utilized data from only those respondents who reported an organizational affiliation ($n = 342$). Of the 337 respondents reporting gender, 118 were male (35.0%) and 219 (65.0%) were female. The sub-sample was predominantly Caucasian; of the 334 respondents reporting race, 23 were African American (6.9%), six were Asian (1.8%), 11 were Hispanic or Latino (3.3%), three were Native American (0.9%), and 291 were Caucasian (87.1%).

Defining Hazing

Four factors demonstrated high face validity, confirming the hypothesis that respondents would view potential hazing behaviors along a continuum. In addition, Cronbach's alphas indicated sufficient reliability within each factor (per the benchmarks established by DeVellis, 2003). The rotated factor solution accounted for 62.1% of the variance in the sample. Table 1 lists the behaviors that loaded on each factor, as well as the factor score (first column) and the mean rating on the 0-10 scale (second column) for each. Prevalence statistics (third column) will be discussed more fully in the following section.

Factor 1 was titled "Group Obligations and Entry Rituals." This factor contained 18 behaviors that students generally did not perceive to be hazing ($M = 2.34$, $\alpha = .956$), such as maintaining required study hours, paying dues, taking an oath, or wearing letters or other group-related apparel. The common theme uniting these items was that all pertain to basic expectations placed upon new (and in some cases, veteran) members of an organization. Factor 2 was titled "Group Sanctioned Separation" and included suspension for noncompliance with group rules, fines or other penalties for noncompliance with group rules, and barring probationary members from group meetings. On average, students rated the three items on this factor as slightly more serious than the first factor ($M = 4.28$, $\alpha = .794$). The theme uniting these factors was that all involved individuals being punished by and/or denied access to the group. Factor 3, titled "Organizational Harassment," was comprised of 18 behaviors. Students generally found these behaviors to be fairly strong examples of hazing ($M = 6.40$, $\alpha = .949$), including behaviors such as yelling at probationary members or requiring them to do errands for full members, to wear unusual clothing, or to shave their hair. The behaviors in this factor involved inappropriate discomfort, harassment, and incivility, though not necessarily direct harm. Factor 4 consisted of 17 behaviors and was titled "Harm to Self and Others." Items were generally rated as being fairly serious examples of hazing ($M = 8.79$, $\alpha = .957$), including such behaviors as destruction of property, deprivation of food, forced alcohol consumption, or forced sexual contact. Items comprising this factor included the potential for physical harm and/or legal consequences (i.e., misdemeanor or felony criminal charges).

These results proved interesting and may, with further refinement, lead to the development of a classification system for hazing-type behaviors. Clarifying the definition of hazing could help reduce illegal acts, because individuals who discover their conduct is considered hazing may cease problem behaviors, and victims who are more fully aware of hazing laws may be more forthcoming in reporting incidents which they otherwise would not consider to be violations.

The remainder of this article will focus on the behaviors categorized as "Organizational Harassment" and "Harm to Self and Others." These two factors demonstrate face validity (and many overlap with hazing scales and definitions utilized in previous research) as items that are informally or traditionally understood to be illicit or dangerous hazing.

Table 1
 Hazing Factor Analysis

<i>Factor 1: Entry Obligations and Rituals</i>			
Item	Factor Score ^{a, c}	Mean ^{b, c}	% Experienced ^d
Memorizing Organizational Facts	.876	1.90	66.7 (n = 228)
Wearing a Pledge Pin or Other Signifier	.857	2.08	58.2 (n = 199)
Taking an Oath	.807	2.01	62.9 (n = 215)
Completing Required Test of Knowledge/Skill	.799	2.35	61.4 (n = 210)
Keeping Entries in a Pledge Book	.790	2.88	46.2 (n = 158)
Memorizing the Greek Alphabet	.789	1.93	60.5 (n = 207)
Fulfilling Required Study Hours	.735	1.70	60.5 (n = 207)
Memorizing Ritual	.733	3.15	49.4 (n = 169)
Carrying a Pledge Book or Manual	.731	3.00	38.6 (n = 132)
Completing Required Attendance at Events	.724	2.41	70.8 (n = 242)
Wearing Letters or Group-Related Apparel	.721	2.27	66.1 (n = 226)
Completing Required Community Service	.710	1.20	65.5 (n = 224)
Singing, Chanting, or Cheering as a Group	.695	2.47	61.7 (n = 211)
Being Called a Pledge	.676	2.42	57.6 (n = 197)
Paying Dues	.673	2.22	71.6 (n = 245)
Maintaining a Certain GPA	.648	0.86	69.3 (n = 237)
Being Required to Carry an Object	.603	4.41	35.1 (n = 120)
Participating in Scavenger Hunts	.553	2.92	50.0 (n = 171)
<i>Factor 2: Group Sanctioned Separation</i>			
Item	Factor Score ^{a, c}	Mean ^{b, c}	% Experienced ^d
Suspension for Noncompliance	.604	3.79	8.5 (n = 29)
Fines or Penalties for Noncompliance	.548	5.19	28.9 (n = 99)
Probationary Members Barred from Meetings	.486	3.86	36.5 (n = 125)
<i>Factor 3: Organizational Harassment</i>			
Item	Factor Score ^{a, c}	Mean ^{b, c}	% Experienced ^d
Required to Do Errands for Members	.711	6.17	29.8 (n=102)
Required to Perform Calisthenics	.691	6.64	24.3 (n=83)
Addressed with Insulting Language	.687	7.44	19.6 (n=67)
Required to Participate in Unplanned Trip	.665	6.71	18.1 (n=62)
Required to Stay in Uncomfortable Quarters	.659	7.51	17.0 (n=58)
Prohibited from Talking to Other Members	.651	5.87	12.3 (n=42)
Required to Sit with Members in Public	.649	6.39	13.5 (n=46)
Required to Wear Unusual Clothing	.636	5.38	35.7 (n=122)
Prohibited from Talking to Non-Members	.627	7.33	9.4 (n=32)
Required to Complete Pranks Against Others	.593	6.05	17.5 (n=60)
Ordered to Shave Hair	.590	7.76	10.2 (n=35)
Addressed with Unsolicited/Not Chosen Nickname	.571	4.67	30.7 (n=105)
Yelled at by Initiated Members	.567	6.80	27.8 (n=95)
Blindfolded	.524	5.13	42.7 (n=146)
Required to Eat Unusual Food	.520	7.91	17.5 (n=60)
Deceived about Initiation	.496	5.37	29.5 (n=101)
Required to Participate in Lineups	.478	5.38	29.8 (n=102)
Forced to Consume Non-Alcoholic Beverage	.443	6.77	17.0 (n=58)

Table 1, cont.**Hazing Factor Analysis**

<i>Factor 4: Harm to Self and Others</i>			
Item	Factor Score ^{a, c}	Mean ^{b, c}	% Experienced ^d
Forced Sexual Contact with Object	.866	9.47	2.3 (n = 8)
Forced Use of Illegal Drugs	.855	9.09	5.0 (n = 17)
Forced Same-Sex Contact	.841	9.46	1.5 (n = 5)
Hitting, Kicking, or Slapping	.813	9.23	7.0 (n = 24)
Deprivation of Food	.809	9.02	6.7 (n = 23)
Being Tied Up or Confined	.794	8.96	11.7 (n = 40)
Forced Act that Violates Law	.773	8.76	9.9 (n = 34)
Forced Destroying or Vandalizing of Property	.771	8.58	5.6 (n = 19)
Forced Opposite-Sex Contact	.762	9.00	3.5 (n = 12)
Paddling	.698	8.58	11.1 (n = 38)
Tattooing, Piercing, or Branding	.681	8.63	4.4 (n = 15)
Forced Alcohol Consumption	.644	8.51	27.8 (n = 95)
Required Stripping of Clothes	.639	8.69	10.8 (n = 37)
Depriving Sleep	.616	8.49	12.9 (n = 44)
Forced Cruelty to Animals	.587	8.46	2.0 (n = 7)
Forbidding Bathing	.575	8.30	8.8 (n = 30)
Forced Insulting/Demeaning of Others	.561	8.16	9.1 (n = 31)

^a Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation

^b On 0-10 scale (0 = “definitely not hazing” and 10 = “definitely is hazing”)

^c Analysis includes all who responded to the complete scale of hazing behaviors; *n* = 440

^d Analysis limited to respondents reporting organizational affiliation; *n* = 342

Prevalence of Hazing

The third column of Table 1 presents the percentage of organizational members who have experienced each behavioral item listed in the survey. Prevalence decreases from Factor 1 to Factor 4. This is logical, as severity generally increases from Factor 1 to Factor 4. Upon further exploration of how respondents experienced hazing, some interesting patterns emerged. In the following discussion, percentages indicate the proportion of respondents involved in at least one hazing behavior classified as “Organizational Harassment” or “Harm to Self and Others.”

The most common way that hazing was experienced was indirect, with the largest proportion of respondents indicating that they had heard about but not directly experienced hazing in their group (71.9% heard about “Organizational Harassment”; 66.4% heard about “Harm to Self and Others”). This could be explained in a number of ways. Methodologically, embarrassment or a social desirability bias could cause an underreporting of more direct experiences with hazing (e.g., being victimized, committing, or witnessing). It is also possible that a small number of incidents are communicated to a larger number of members through emails, Facebook, or informal meetings. It is even possible that the respondents heard about hazing that was committed far in the past, even prior to their membership in the organization. Such a finding suggests that the actual prevalence of hazing may be exaggerated. The second most common method of experiencing hazing was by witnessing the behavior (67.3% witnessed “Organizational Harassment”; 46.8% witnessed “Harm to Self and Others”). This could also reflect a social desirability bias and/or a relatively small number of hazing incidents observed by a larger crowd. Finally, the percentage of respondents reporting that they had committed acts of hazing was substantially lower than the percentage reporting victimization (46.5% vs. 67.3% for

“Organizational Harassment”; 22.2% vs. 34.8% for “Harm to Self and Others”). These results suggest that there may be a small number of active perpetrators who are responsible for hazing a larger number of potential victims. This is consistent with criminal studies, where a small number of offenders generated a large volume of criminal activity (Wolfgang, Figlio, & Sellin, 1972; replicated with similar results by Shannon, McKim, Curry, & Haffner, 1988; and Tracy, Wolfgang, & Figlio, 1990). This is also consistent with studies of organizational deviance, such as Sherman’s (1974) work on police corruption, which attributed corruption in some agencies to “rotten apples” (deviant individuals) and “rotten pockets” (small deviant groups) (p. 7). This may result in deviant activities that are disorganized and non-pervasive within an otherwise honest organization.

It was hypothesized that differences would exist among organizational types. Table 2 presents the prevalence of victimization, by type of group, for behaviors categorized as “Organizational Harassment” and “Harm to Self and Others.” The table lists the mean number of items by which members of each type of group have been victimized. Two findings stand out. First, no group is immune from hazing behaviors. Second, fraternity respondents (especially IFC fraternities) reported being victimized by the highest numbers of behaviors. Significant differences in group means were detected for “Organizational Harassment” (Kruskal-Wallis $\chi^2 = 115.24$, $df = 12$, $p < .001$) and “Harm to Self and Others” (Kruskal-Wallis $\chi^2 = 91.48$, $df = 12$, $p < .001$) behaviors. This supported the hypothesis of organizational differences.

Table 2
 Prevalence of “Serious” Hazing by Type of Organization

Type of Organization	Org. Harassment ^a	Harm to Self/Others ^b
Athletic Team ($n = 37$)	M = 4.0, SD = 4.7	M = 1.4, SD = 2.8
Honor Society/Fraternity ($n = 38$)	M = 2.0, SD = 2.3	M = 0.1, SD = 0.3
Professional Society/Fraternity ($n = 35$)	M = 2.2, SD = 2.6	M = 0.4, SD = 0.9
Music or Performance Organization ($n = 10$)	M = 2.9, SD = 5.5	M = 1.8, SD = 5.3
Religious Organization or Campus Ministry ($n = 31$)	M = 1.3, SD = 4.5	M = 1.1, SD = 4.0
Service Society/Fraternity ($n = 18$)	M = 2.1, SD = 1.5	M = 0.2, SD = 0.5
Social Fraternity Governed by IFC ($n = 46$)	M = 10.4, SD = 5.6	M = 4.8, SD = 4.2
Social Fraternity Governed by NPHC ($n = 12$)	M = 6.5, SD = 6.0	M = 2.5, SD = 2.9
Social Fraternity Not Officially Recognized ($n = 14$)	M = 7.2, SD = 6.6	M = 3.5, SD = 5.5
Social Sorority, Governed by PHC ($n = 35$)	M = 3.4, SD = 2.8	M = 0.5, SD = 0.8
Social Sorority, Governed by NPHC ($n = 31$)	M = 4.2, SD = 2.8	M = 0.6, SD = 0.7
Social Sorority Not Officially Recognized ($n = 9$)	M = 5.0, SD = 4.8	M = 1.0, SD = 1.3
Special Interest Club or Organization ($n = 26$)	M = 0.7, SD = 2.1	M = 0.4, SD = 1.5

^a “Organizational Harassment” includes 18 behavioral items identified in the factor analysis

^b “Harm to Self/Others” includes 17 behavioral items identified in the factor analysis

Note: Limited to respondents indicating organizational affiliation, $n = 342$

Fraternity members, on average, experienced the greatest number of hazing behaviors in each category. The low values for members of athletic teams were unexpected, given prior research on collegiate athletes (Hover, 1999). Regardless, it is important to acknowledge that hazing may occur in any college organization.

Attitudes Toward Hazing

Table 3 presents attitudinal statements about hazing. The first column presents the mean

response (on the 1-5 Likert scale described previously) for each item. Several interesting patterns emerged. First, respondents found little value in hazing. On average, respondents did not agree that hazing is socially acceptable, that it made probationary members stronger, that it allowed probationary members to bond, that it let probationary members prove their toughness, that it was justified because the respondent was hazed and was not permanently harmed, or that it made people stronger. Second, respondents tended to agree that hazing was a serious problem. These results are encouraging in that they suggest that students do not accept hazing as a healthy part of the college experience.

Respondents did perceive that hazing is a routine practice. This is suggested by moderate agreement that probationary members expected to be hazed and fairly strong agreement that hazing was common on the respondents' campus. Of particular interest is that respondents perceived hazing to be more serious in groups other than their own; indeed, this item yielded the highest average score. This partially corroborates earlier speculation that perceptions regarding the prevalence of hazing are shaped by campus mythology and that inaccuracies in information increase as experiences are retold.

Table 3
Attitudes Toward Hazing

Hazing...	Mean Response ^a	Correlation with Hazing Committed ^b	Correlation with Hazing Victimization ^b
is a serious problem	3.64 (n = 332)	$r_s = -.27^{***}$ (n = 159)	$r_s = -.14^*$ (n = 226)
is common on my campus	3.93 (n = 330)	$r_s = .27^{***}$ (n = 158)	$r_s = .37^{***}$ (n = 225)
is more serious in other groups than mine	4.05 (n = 333)	$r_s = -.24^{**}$ (n = 159)	$r_s = -.39^{***}$ (n = 227)
is socially acceptable	2.40 (n = 332)	$r_s = .31^{***}$ (n = 159)	$r_s = .28^{***}$ (n = 226)
makes probationary members stronger	2.59 (n = 325)	$r_s = .36^{***}$ (n = 156)	$r_s = .25^{***}$ (n = 222)
allows probationary members to bond	2.39 (n = 326)	$r_s = .39^{***}$ (n = 156)	$r_s = .26^{***}$ (n = 221)
lets probationary members prove toughness	2.30 (n = 326)	$r_s = .31^{***}$ (n = 156)	$r_s = .24^{***}$ (n = 221)
is OK because I was hazed & came out OK	2.26 (n = 325)	$r_s = .30^{***}$ (n = 156)	$r_s = .29^{***}$ (n = 220)
is expected by probationary members	3.15 (n = 326)	$r_s = .31^{***}$ (n = 156)	$r_s = .35^{***}$ (n = 221)
makes people stronger	2.17 (n = 326)	$r_s = .35^{***}$ (n = 156)	$r_s = .26^{***}$ (n = 221)

^a On a 1-5 scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree); includes respondents with organizational affiliation

^b Number of "Organizational Harassment" and/or "Harm to Self and Others" behaviors committed/experienced

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$

The second and third columns of Table 3 present correlations to test the hypothesis that those victimized by hazing hold different attitudes than those who commit acts of hazing. The second column includes only respondents who reported an organizational affiliation and who also reported doing to others one or more of the behaviors classified as "Organizational Harassment" and/or "Harm to Self and Others." The third column includes only respondents who reported an organizational affiliation and who also reported being victimized by one or more of the behaviors classified as "Organizational Harassment" and/or "Harm to Self and Others." Each column presents a Spearman correlation coefficient between number of hazing items and responses to

each attitudinal statement.

The hypothesis predicting differences in attitudes between those who committed acts of hazing and those who were victimized by hazing was not supported. Respondents who committed acts of hazing reported attitudes as predicted; in every case, as the number of acts committed increased, attitudes toward hazing became more accepting. The correlations were statistically significant. However, contrary to the hypothesis, the attitudes of respondents who were victimized by hazing varied in the same manner; in every case, as the number of acts experienced increased, attitudes toward hazing became more positive. The correlations were also statistically significant.

Results suggest that both perpetrators of hazing and their victims share similar attitudinal patterns toward hazing. There was a positive correlation between the number of items a respondent had experienced and the number that the respondent had committed against another person ($r = .540, p \leq .001, n = 342$). This suggests that hazing approximates a cycle of violence (Widom, 1989) whereby the high-rate victims (in this case, those who are victimized by hazing) have a greater tendency to become high-rate abusers (in this case, the perpetrators of hazing), both with increasingly positive attitudes toward hazing.

Solutions to Hazing

Taken together, the first two columns of Table 4 summarize how respondents perceived the effectiveness of potential solutions. The first column reports results for perpetrators of hazing (respondents who indicated organizational affiliation and who also reported having committed one or more acts identified in the factor analysis as “Organizational Harassment” or “Harm to Self and Others”). The second column reports results for non-perpetrators (respondents who indicated organizational affiliation and who also reported having committed no acts identified in the factor analysis as “Organizational Harassment” or “Harm to Self and Others”). The third column of Table 4 reports the results of an independent-samples *t*-test comparing the means of the two groups for each potential solution. Several themes emerged.

First, perpetrators of hazing consistently rated each potential solution more negatively than the non-perpetrators. For six of the nine items, the difference is statistically significant. This suggests that perpetrators may see hazing activities as more endemic or normalized, and thus less preventable, than the non-perpetrators. Such a view is consistent with the cycle of violence argument noted above.

Second, the data also suggest that solutions within the group are more likely to be effective than those outside the group. Perpetrators and non-perpetrators alike reported that they would be more likely to report hazing to an authority within the organization (such as an executive board officer, advisor, or alumnus/alumna) than an authority outside the organization. In addition, both perpetrators and non-perpetrators believed that an organizational anti-hazing policy would be more effective than a university anti-hazing policy. Perpetrators and non-perpetrators did not differ in their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of organizational solutions; both shared positive views of internal reporting and internal anti-hazing policies, suggesting consensus regarding their efficacy as potential solutions.

Table 4
Possible Solutions to Hazing

Solution	Mean Effectiveness for Perpetrators of Hazing ^a	<i>t</i> -Test for Non- Perpetrators ^a	Group Differences
Would report hazing to authority outside group ^b	2.76 (<i>n</i> = 160)	3.24 (<i>n</i> = 173)	<i>t</i> = 3.286, <i>df</i> = 331**
Would report hazing to someone within group ^b	3.24 (<i>n</i> = 159)	3.27 (<i>n</i> = 172)	n.s.
Written anti-hazing policy (college) ^c	2.25 (<i>n</i> = 159)	2.59 (<i>n</i> = 172)	<i>t</i> = 2.246, <i>df</i> = 329**
Written anti-hazing policy (organization) ^c	3.17 (<i>n</i> = 159)	3.31 (<i>n</i> = 170)	n.s.
Police investigation and prosecution ^c	3.80 (<i>n</i> = 157)	4.26 (<i>n</i> = 171)	<i>t</i> = 3.227, <i>df</i> = 326**
Hazing workshops for all organizations ^c	2.69 (<i>n</i> = 157)	2.88 (<i>n</i> = 171)	n.s.
Report hazing to neutral ombudsman ^c	3.01 (<i>n</i> = 158)	3.37 (<i>n</i> = 172)	<i>t</i> = 2.426, <i>df</i> = 328*
Peer-based anti-hazing activities ^c	2.48 (<i>n</i> = 157)	2.83 (<i>n</i> = 172)	<i>t</i> = 2.271, <i>df</i> = 327*
Signed no-hazing agreement ^c	2.39 (<i>n</i> = 157)	2.86 (<i>n</i> = 173)	<i>t</i> = 2.761, <i>df</i> = 328*

^a Respondents with organizational affiliation who did/did not commit one or more forms of “Organizational Harassment” and/or “Harm to Self and Others” hazing

^b On a 1-5 scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

^c On a 1-5 scale (1 = Least Effective, 5 = Most Effective)

* *p* ≤ .05; ** *p* ≤ .01; ****p* ≤ .001

Third, both perpetrators and non-perpetrators believed (though non-perpetrators’ beliefs were significantly stronger according to the *t*-tests) that involvement of two outside parties could be effective. Reporting hazing to a neutral person (e.g., an ombudsman representing neither the university nor the respondents’ organization) was viewed as moderately effective, and reporting to the police followed by investigation and prosecution was viewed as the most effective solution by both groups.

Accordingly, the results suggest that colleges and universities have little power, on their own, to tame hazing; both hazing and non-hazing respondents indicated that university policies and workshops, for instance, were not likely to be effective. This is consistent with the finding that IFC fraternities indicated the highest levels of hazing – even more than the unrecognized “off campus” fraternities.

Discussion

The results of this research may be summarized as follows. First, students at the study institution viewed potential hazing behaviors along a continuum, with items labeled “Organizational Harassment” and “Harm to Self and Others” most likely to be perceived as hazing. Second, hazing behaviors may occur in any student organization, although members of fraternities reported the highest levels of both hazing victimization and offending. More respondents reported being hazed than reported doing hazing, yet the most common exposure to hazing was through hearing stories from others. Third, respondents believed that hazing is common (though in organizations other than their own) and expected by probationary members, though they did not believe that hazing activities have inherent value. As the number of hazing behaviors

experienced increased, attitudes toward hazing became more positive (accepting); this held true for both victims and those who committed acts of hazing. Fourth, respondents reported that the four most effective solutions to hazing would be police investigation and prosecution, reporting hazing to an ombudsman, reporting hazing to somebody within the group, and having an organizational anti-hazing policy. However, perpetrators of hazing were less likely than non-perpetrators to perceive any solutions as effective.

These results may be contextualized in a theoretical model of hazing. The model is best understood as a three-stage cycle that repeats indefinitely. First, *hazing occurs*. As demonstrated above, “Organizational Harassment” and “Harm to Self and Others” hazing behaviors occur across all groups, though in some more than others.

Second, *victims process the hazing through organizational sensemaking*. The sensemaking perspective of organizational analysis was developed by Weick (1995), who defines it tautologically as “the making of sense” (p. 4) of an organization’s activities. This process allows individuals to create meanings based on their experiences, group norms, and their interactions with others. Rather than arriving at a final, accurate interpretation of events, individuals reach tentative but changing conclusions that reflect perceived realities. Persons who are hazed engage in sensemaking to understand what they are experiencing.

Sensemaking may be triggered by cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), in which an individual’s exposure to hazing is dissonant with his or her self-interest. To resolve the dissonance, the individual may change his or her perception to believe that hazing is good, or beneficial; this occurs when there are peers “who would agree with and support his new opinion” (p. 21). Aronson and Mills (1959) found that severe initiations could produce positive views of a group, supporting Wicklund and Brehm’s (1976) observation that, “when dissonance is created through a commitment, subsequent shifts of attitude in a commitment-consistent direction will be in proportion to the dissonance created” (p. 24).

Regardless of the precise psychological mechanism, individuals who are hazed must make sense of their experience, and they appear to do so in a pro-hazing way. While survey respondents generally believed hazing to have little value, perceptions of hazing became more positive with an increase in the forms of hazing experienced. This suggests that hazed persons come to accept the experience. Hazing may then be normalized and accepted by the victims. For anti-hazing policies and laws to be effective, they must acknowledge that consent is not a legitimate defense to hazing behaviors.

Third, *pro-hazing norms become internalized, leading to groupthink*. There is a high correlation between hazing received and hazing committed, suggesting a cycle of violence (Widom, 1989). Given that sensemaking essentially generates a socially constructed vision of an organization, it is instructive to consider Morgan’s (1986) metaphor of organizations as psychic prisons. He notes that, “while organizations may be socially constructed realities, these constructions are often attributed an existence and power of their own that allow them to exercise a measure of control over their creators” (p. 199). In other words, internalized organization-level norms have staying power and may, in turn, influence members.

The stage is then set for groupthink to emerge in an organization that has constructed hazing as a normal or even desirable behavior. Groupthink refers to a group's inability to make rational or informed decisions due to its own organizational closed-mindedness. Hazing organizations may fall prey to two criteria of groupthink identified by Janis (1982): "the illusion of invulnerability" (p. 35), as perpetrators of hazing are less likely than non-perpetrators to believe prevention and enforcement strategies are effective, and "self-appointed mindguards" (p. 40), in the form of high-rate perpetrators who rate hazing positively and defend its practice. It is also possible that non-perpetrators may choose to not make an issue of hazing, thereby granting it tacit approval, in order to maintain group harmony. This is what Janis calls "the illusion of unanimity" (p. 37).

What Can Be Done?

The results of this study suggest three potential solutions to hazing, one of which addresses each stage of the cycle. First, *stop the hazing currently being conducted on campus*. As noted by survey respondents, police investigation and prosecution of offenses may be an immediately effective intervention. In addition to interrupting the cycle and exposing current incidents of hazing, enforcement may serve a deterrent function. However, this is unlikely to be an effective long-term solution. Philosophically, it may appear paternalistic to criminalize acts that, while considered hazing, do not violate any other laws. This leads to Nuwer's (1999) observation: "In many states the bottom line is that without bodily harm, there is no hazing" (p. 168). Practically, detection of hazing is difficult (Richmond, 1987), as hazing organizations often have closed cultures. In addition, research has found deterrence to be ineffective, as Kleck, Sever, Li and Gertz (2005) noted. When deterrence is effective, the effect is often short-term, decaying over time (Nagin, 1998).

Accordingly, the lasting impact of enhanced enforcement and prosecution is limited. The goal should be to stop the hazing that is currently happening to facilitate the next two recommendations.

Second, *utilize a social norms anti-hazing strategy*. As victims of hazing engage in sensemaking, they do so with perceptions that hazing is common, and they may be swayed by similar arguments from those who have victimized them. The method of a social norms approach is communicating actual student norms to dispel myths (Perkins, 2002). Students may be more likely to resist a behavior, or to not accept it in the sensemaking process, if they believe that it is a deviation from the norm.

The social norms approach has been used widely, and successfully, in combating alcohol abuse on campus (Perkins, 2002; Perkins, Haines, & Rice, 2005). It would be logical to consider a social norms approach for hazing (as suggested by Campo, et al., 2005), given the perception that hazing is common, especially in groups other than the respondent's own, and the prevalence of hazing in high schools (Hoover & Pollard, 2000) that can establish norms before students arrive at college. A social norms approach could also enhance the ability to effectively deter perpetrators. Research suggests that deterrent effects may be strengthened when social norms oppose, rather than accept, a deviant behavior (Wenzel, 2004).

Third, work to *change the culture of hazing organizations*. If groupthink can be broken, hazing may decrease. However, this is the most difficult recommendation to implement. While it is

possible to change organizational cultures (Bernstein, Levitsky, & Itskovich, n.d.; Bureau, 2005), it is difficult to promote or compel such “positive deviance” (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004, p. 828) from delinquent norms. Student affairs administrators must navigate the fine line between allowing organizational autonomy and providing resources and support for positive organizational change.

The three solutions presented above proceed from easier to more difficult, and from largely external to the organization to intimately intertwined with the organization. It is important to recognize several caveats to these recommendations: First, they should focus on all student organizations, not just those stereotypically associated with hazing. Second, student affairs professionals should undertake research in order to understand the specific nature of hazing at their respective institutions. Third, there is not a one-size-fits-all strategy, so even social norms approaches may need to be tailored to the varied needs and expectations of different audiences on the same campus.

Conclusion

Results from this study were both troubling, in confirming that hazing occurs in a variety of organizations, but particularly in fraternities, and encouraging, in noting that students generally perceive hazing negatively and believe some solutions have the potential to reduce hazing. These results were used to posit a theoretical model of hazing and to develop corresponding recommendations to reduce hazing.

Research should continue along a number of lines, utilizing different samples. First, replications should validate the scales and theoretical model, studying different institutions and additional organizations (e.g., Reserve Officer Training Corps, residence hall associations, and student government). Second, future study should focus on organizational culture. In their study of alcohol in fraternity pledging, Kuh and Arnold (1993) note that, “inducing cultural change in fraternities requires familiarity with cultural perspectives” (p. 332). An understanding of organizational culture is important for the success of social norms campaigns and other efforts at organizational change. Third, student affairs professionals and other administrators must recognize the limitations of a deterrence-based, enforcement-only approach to hazing. Pilot programs, subject to careful evaluation, should develop a social norms approach to hazing and investigate how organizational change can be encouraged in high-hazing groups. Inter/national organizations can assist their chapters in these efforts by offering programs, education, and policies.

Hazing is a social problem with potentially severe consequences and one with which college student affairs professionals must contend. As more research is conducted, it may be incorporated into data-driven policies and practices to combat hazing. Doing so will benefit campuses, student organizations, and most importantly, the students themselves.

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