Defining Hazing & Frequency of Hazing

Hazing Frequency

Allan and Madden (2008) reported:
- 55% of college students involved in organizations/teams experienced hazing.
- 73%+ of athletes and fraternity members experienced hazing
- Only 1 in 10 labeled it hazing.

Allan, Kerschner, and Payne (2019) reported:
- 26% of students belonging to clubs, teams, and organizations reported experiencing at least one hazing behavior
- only 4.4% identified it as hazing

Perlow (2018) found 77.5% of a sample of 400 fraternity members experienced some form of hazing.

Why do you think hazing is still happening a decade later at a high frequency despite prevention efforts?

Is Hazing a Spectrum?

Waldron (2014) identified a spectrum of hazing behaviors, viewed by students as ranging from "harmless fun" (e.g., a team tradition involving embarrassment) to "violence."

The conceptualization of hazing as residing on a scale or spectrum complicates detection and prevention efforts. Why?

McCready (2023) suggests hazing behaviors do not escalate across the spectrum, but instead some groups engage in higher levels of hazing than other types of groups.

Hazing Definitions are Numerous and Varied

Any forced task or activity that requires physical, mental, or emotional outcomes that endanger the physical safety of another person, produces mental or physical discomfort, causes embarrassment, fright, humiliation, or ridicule, or degrades an individual (Ellsworth, 2006; Nuwer, 1999; Sweet, 2004).

Hazing in a group, club, or team context is any activity expected of someone joining or participating that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers, regardless of a person's willingness to participate (Hoover, 1999; Allan & Madden,2008).

Perlow (2018) offers a three-part definition
- Hazing is rooted in group members exerting *power over organization aspirants*;
- This *power dynamic maintains control* over these individuals in compelling them to participate in certain activities;
- The exertion of *power results in physical and/or emotional stress* that can result in harm to aspirant members.

Allan, Sidelko, and Kerschner (2020) highlighted three components:
- *group context*
- *harm*
- *Peer pressure combined with a desire to belong to produce a coercive environment, where coercion impedes consent.*

Cimino (2011) emphasized the notion of cost for defining legitimacy to hazing terminology. In this context, hazing is defined as
- the generation of induction costs (i.e., part of the experiences necessary to be acknowledged as a "legitimate" group member) that appear unattributable to group-relevant assessments, preparations, or chance.

Ellsworth (2006) found there was substantial disagreement on what constitutes hazing between students and administrators.

How might we come to better agreement on the definition of hazing?

Since 2007, there have been 40 hazing deaths with 37 being fraternity/sorority related

"Hazing is an extraordinary activity that, when it occurs often enough, becomes perversely ordinary as those who engage in it grow desensitized to its inhumanity"
(Nuwer, 1999, p. 31)

Individual: Who is Hazed and Who are the Hazers

Who is Hazed?

Numerous studies have found predictors of hazing are:

- Gender
- Athlete status
- Fraternity affiliation

(Allan & Madden, 2008; Campo et al., 2005; Cokley et al., 2001; Gershel et al., 2003; Hamilton, 2011; Hinkle, 2006; Hoover, 1999; Knutson et al., 2011; Kittle, 2012; Owen et al., 2008)

Individuals are more susceptible to hazing when

- They have prior experiences with hazing
- A strong need to belong
- Those close to them hold pro-hazing attitudes.

The more strongly one identifies with the group, the more willing an individual is to participate in hazing activities (Hinkle, 2006).

Desire for solidarity is significantly correlated with tolerance of hazing (McCreary & Schutts, 2015).

Numerous researchers (Allan & Iverson, 2004; McCready, 2019; Perlow, 2018) have suggested that proving one's masculine identity is a primary motivator for enduring hazing.

Fraternity and sorority members are more likely to report (Allan & Madden, 2008; Campo et al., 2005)

- Hazing was fun
- Made them feel more included
- Generated a sense of accomplishment
- Made those who experienced hazing feel a greater sense of resilience compared to non-members

Indicators of Hazing

Participants in a recent Piazza Center (2021) study described several potential identifiers of hazing, including:

- carrying items that they would not normally have (non-smoker carrying cigarettes),
- observing a decrease in GPA or course attendance,
- a decrease in social media presence,
- changes in communications with friends and parents,
- social isolation, or
- changes in physical appearance, hygiene, or beauty.

Where does hazing occur?

Hazing starts in K-12 and is particularly ingrained in higher education culture (Ellsworth, 2006; Pollard, 2018).

Hazing occurs in

- Religious organizations (Hoover & Pollard, 2000)
- Marching bands (Harris, 2011)
- Secret or honor societies (Walters, 2015)
- Military spaces (Kim et al., 2019; Pershing, 2006)
- Athletics (Tofler, 2016)
- Academic workspaces (Thomas & Meglich, 2019)
- Other student organizations (Owen et al., 2008)

It happens **most frequently** in varsity athletics, fraternities and sororities, and club sports.

Who are Hazers?

Types of behavior demonstrated may depend on subcultural norms.

Athletes tend to engage in higher levels of physical hazing and painful activities compared to fraternity and sorority members (Campo et al., 2005).

Fraternity and sorority members tended to engage in higher levels of embarrassment and deviance than non-Greek students (Campo et al., 2005).

Athletes haze more than non-athletes (Allan & Madden, 2008).

Individuals who are oriented toward hierarchal structures tend to favor activities that reinforce hierarchy and social inequality (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994).

Men generally have a higher orientation toward social dominance than women (Arteta-Garcia, 2015, Pratto et al., 1994).

Men haze more often and more physically than women. Men want more control of new members in initiation practices (Campo et al., 2005).

Hazing among men's groups often involved more physical forms of hazing and almost always involved alcohol (Sasso, 2015).

Men typically hazed to reinforce hegemonic structure, in other words, to attempt to "prove masculinity" (DeSantis, 2007).

Sorority members tend to engage in emotional and mental forms of hazing.

Sorority members assumed their activities were not considered hazing because they often were not physical (Piazza, 2021).

Motivators for Hazing

Allan, Joyce, and Perlow (2020) identified six primary functions of hazing in organizations. Which of these do you find to be the most compelling motivator?

Hazing to align individual and group identity

Hazing helps reinforce shared identity characteristics as new members reshape their own identities in order to fit with the group (Allan & DeAngelis, 2004; Bryshun, 1997; Hollmann, 2002; Sweet, 2004). Through receiving symbols such as t-shirts and decorative paddles and through shared experiences, including hazing, students cement their affiliation.

Once the individual and group identity are aligned, students will work to maintain group norms and protect the group as an extension of their own identity, including supporting unpopular ideas or engaging in detrimental activities such as hazing (Addelson & Stirratt, 1996; Waldron, 2008). Hazing, in effect, inexplicably intertwines meaning of the self with the organizational identity.

Hazing to build group cohesion

Those who are hazed often express the belief that a challenging new member experience creates a more cohesive group (DeSantis, 2007; Hollmann, 2002: Morinis, 1985).

Cohesion is also developed through engaging in "tolerable deviance" or behavior that, while outside accepted norms, has become tolerated as long as it does not harm others (Stebbins, 1988). To break rules or expectations together makes organization members more cohesive.

Campo et al. (2005) found fraternity and sorority members were more likely to participate in activities that caused embarrassment and deviance than non-Greek students.

Hazing as a consequence of moral disengagement

Moral disengagement is the psycho-social process by which individuals convince themselves that ethical standards of behavior do not apply to them in a given context. The unequivocal acceptance of group norms that deviate from social mores and the accompanying complicitness that accompanies this acceptance of group norms can lead to group moral disengagement that takes the shape as dehumanization, attribution of blame to organization aspirants, and diffusion of responsibility for ensuring good treatment (Bandura, 1986, 1999).

A strong correlation has been shown between the likelihood of hazing and moral disengagement (Hamilton, 2011; McCreary, 2012; McCreary et al., 2016).

Men and boys tended to show higher levels of moral disengagement (Hamilton, 2011; McCreary, 2012; Paciello et al., 2008).

Hazing as a rite of passage

Traditional aged college students experiment with their identities, views, personal boundaries, and ethical decision making (Arnett, 2004). Students who endure hazing as part of the joining process, demarcate themselves as members from non-members (Donnelly, 1981; Johnson, 2011; Nuwer, 1999; Sweet, 2004). For many, the process of establishing one's adult self happens concurrently with the hazing rite of passage, thus, organization and identity can become intertwined (Arnett, 2004; Sweet 2004).

Hazing as a tool to discourage freeloaders

Hazing also requires sacrifice demonstrated by the willingness to give up freedoms, take reputational risks, endure discomfort or embarrassment, and experience physical or emotional pain (Addelson & Stirratt, 1996; Jones, 2000; Malszecki, 2004; Keating et al., 2005; Wellard, 2002).

Through hazing, the organization employs dishonesty, control, and lying to increase the sense of sacrifice among aspirants in order to:
- Guarantee all members to have sacrificed equally (Jones, 2000);
- Prevent freeloaders from reaping the status and benefits of membership in the organization (Cimino, 2011, 2013); and
- Create greater psychological commitment and attraction to the group (Keating et al., 2005).

Hazing as power and dominance

Hazing is also the exertion of power over new members as a mechanism of dominance and control (Holman, 2004; McCready, 2019) and a way to build status among other organizations (DeSantis, 2007; Nuwer, 1999).

Those groups that emphasize hierarchical dominance tend to have more supportive attitudes toward hazing (McCreary & Schutts, 2019).

Hazing amplifies the power differential between leaders and aspirants. Those who are "hazed are less likely to pose any threat to the power structure because they have conformed to the group" (Allan & DeAngelis, 2004, p.73).

Hazing also helps groups assert status and social power.

Hazing, Bullying, and Violence at the Middle School & High School Level

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Important Differentiator
Bullying in the K-12 setting is often intended to exclude.

Hazing is often intended to include (Allan, Hakkola, and Kerschner, 2020; Bellmore et al., 2017).

Bullying in the K-12 Environment

Bullying Frequency
Bullying is also occurring at high rates in secondary schools, with nearly 1 in 5 students reporting they experienced bullying on school grounds; Even more students experience bullying outside of school or on social media.

Long Term Effects
While the motivators for hazing and bullying are somewhat different, research suggests that the long-term physical, emotional, and social effects of victimization are similar.

Hazing in the K-12 Environment
Only a few studies have examined hazing in the grades 6-12 environment.

Those studies show that hazing in the secondary school context is prevalent. Among those who experienced hazing, 25% of participants in the study reported being first hazed before they were 13 years old (Hoover & Pollard, 2000).

- 10% before they were 9 years old
- 15%, among 10-12 yeas old
- 61% among 13- 15 years old
- 15% for 16-18 years old

An estimated 1.5 million high school students experience hazing each year.

High School Hazing
Hoover and Pollard (2000) made several observations in a comprehensive study of high school students.

Hazing is occurring in all facets, including athletics/sports teams, ROTC, band/performing arts, other school activities, and by class year.

- 14% of respondents believed they had been hazed
- 48% had participated in activities that met the definition of hazing
- 29% engaged in activities that were potentially illegal to join a group

Both female and male students reported high levels of hazing Males were at higher risk for dangerous hazing behavior.

Gershel et al. (2003) reported that only 40% of all students defined hazing correctly, and of those who were hazed, 86% maintained the hazing had been "worth it" to join.

The strongest predictor of hazing participation is perception of team approval (Graupensperger, Benson, & Evans, 2017; Waldron, 2015).

The desire to belong and to act as part of the team played a strong role in hazing tolerance as long as no one was injured (Waldron, 2008; Waldron & Kowalski, 2009).

Few researchers have found significant or notable differences in victimization or perpetuation by race/ethnicity, SES, suburban or urban residence or region of the United States.

High school students often felt adults condoned hazing and were more likely to participate in hazing when they felt that adults were accepting of the behavior (Hoover & Pollard, 2000)

K-12 Bullying and Hazing as an Indicator of Future Hazing

Those students who experience multiple forms of interpersonal violence, including peer victimization such as bullying, have a higher chance of experiencing violence, such as hazing, in college (Wilkins et al.,(2014, Pereda and Gallardo Pujol, 2014).

How does this information better equip you to both problematize and address hazing in your context?

Organizational Contributors to Hazing

Hazing must be understood through both the individual and group lens, as hazing often aims to supersede individual identity with group identity.

Organizational Decision Making

Hazing as Tolerable Deviance
Tolerable deviance is behavior that while problematic has become so normalized (Stebbins, 1988).

Entativity
Groups differentiate from other groups by performing distinct forms of hazing, exacerbated by a strong sense of entativity (i.e., a group is considered to be an entity, rather than a collection of individuals). This assumed homogeneity enhances in-group cohesion for members, results in greater in-group stereotyping and restrictive thresholds for determining in-group membership (Pickett & Brewer, 2001). Additionally, groups create and maintain boundaries through the control of resources (Schwalbe et al., 2000). On a college campus this can include managing access to alcohol, social environments, social approval, dating partners, and the transferal of organizational status to the individual (Dalton & Crosby, 2010).

Practical Drift
Small deviations from the rules and experiences grow unnoticeably until the organization's actions are vastly divergent from initially established rules or values (Ortmann, 2010). Occurs with low organizational transparency, perceived positive outcomes associated with violating rules, lack of clarity about rules, and limited enforceability (Lehman & Ramanujam, 2009).

Organizational Goals and Norms

Pursuit of Status
The perceived toughness of a new member program can also determine organization status (DeSantis, 2007). This can be iterative in that once an organization achieves high status, increasing the difficulty in joining helps preserve that status and serves as a gatekeeping function to ensure only those willing to protect the status are able to join. In high status groups whose membership was perceived to bring high individual benefit, group members supported hazing that was more dominance oriented, required higher levels of sacrifice, and included initiation practices that supported maltreatment (Cimino et al., 2019).

Conformity to Group Norms
Groups who reinforce a high social dominance orientation, particularly in male-only environments valuing risk-taking, heterosexual presentation, and objectification of women, generally want to ensure their organization is dominant and therefore prefer activities that foster social inequality, such as hazing (Allan & DeAngelis, 2004; Arteta-Garcia, 2015; McCready, 2020).

Conformity makes changing an organization's hazing supportive practices difficult. One's sense of self as an organizational member is entrenched through hazing activities (Sweet, 2004). Changing hazing practices would require members to redefine their sense of self. Thus, students replicate experiences and reinforce hazing supportive attitudes because to change would mean the identity they achieved through hazing would need to be reestablished.

Work vs. Play
When hazing is enacted as play, it ensures norm conformity, often through behaviors such as teasing, practical jokes, harassment, and sometimes physical correction (Houseman, 2001). Even engagement in the play communicates the desire to be included in the group. Because play is often deemed temporary and unserious, players experiment, bend norms, and behave in deviant ways. This kind of deep play (Geertz,1973) encourages risk-taking and reinforces shared group norms.

In contrast, students who joined for values were less likely to support hazing supportive new member outcomes. Students who reported their group valued the norm of work/productivity were also less likely to engage in hazing (Perlow, 2018).

Questions to Consider

- Who is the organization admitting and what was their collective high school experience?
- What gender norms do you see enacted?
- What does the facility (if applicable) look like? Do members take care of it? Is the work of maintaining it shared or only a select group (ex. new members)?
- What type of reputation does the group have in the community? How long have they maintained that status? Is their reputation increasing or decreasing?
- How is this status communicated to external audiences?
- How does the group make decisions – consensus, committee or individual leaders?
- How are sub-groups within a group getting along? Is there infighting over goals and roles? Are members motivated to work toward goals?

Community Contributors to Hazing

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Unethical Pro-organizational Behavior (UPB)

UPB increases when there is high interorganizational competition and a high sense of organizational identity (Alexander, & Opsal, 2021; Chen et al., 2016; Umphress & Bingham, 2011). The perceived difficulty of joining serves a differentiator with competing organizations. As a result, hazing behaviors in all groups may escalate over time.

Presence of Environmental Cues

Environmental cues send messages about whether hazing is a normative part of the culture. These cues might include visible indicators that hazing is commonplace and accepted, such as the presence of uniforms being worn around the campus, shared brands among organization members, shaved heads, or blacked out windows. Their presence may lead to a perceived indifference on the part of the university.

Mixed Messaging by Stakeholders

Mixed messaging from both the university broadly as well as from coaches, advisors, and other staff about whether hazing is acceptable.

In two studies involving college athletes, 33% and 40% of athletes reported their coach had knowledge about the team's hazing activities and 25% and 33% reported their coaches were present (Allan et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2018).

Community Wide Public Health Issues

Community norms around related public health challenges like violence acceptance, alcohol abuse, and campus or organizational rule following or deviance all play a role in the culture that supports or disrupts hazing.

Examples: 55% of college athletes experienced hazing in the form of drinking games (Allan & Madden, 2013; Hamilton et al., 2016). 71% of students who witnessed hazing indicated that alcohol was involved in some way (WITH US Center for Bystander Intervention, 2020).

The messages that communicate acceptability of one related set of behaviors around dangerous and binge drinking are also inexplicably intertwined with normative messages, attitudes, and behaviors about how to build relationships and show commitment to an organization.

Resource and Reward Allocation

The ways in which resources and rewards are allocated also can influence hazing behavior.

Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) suggests individuals are motivated to act when they expect to receive positive benefits from their actions. This creates a belief that harder work will result in greater rewards, placing a high value for the rewards given. This can mean that experiencing the hardship of hazing is an expected part of joining a group or team to attain the valued reward of membership.

Examples: Fraternity members reside together off-campus, but sorority members live in university supervised spaces. This power differential motivates sorority women who might not challenge hazing for fear that they may lose access to high value rewards such as invitations to the fraternity facility, access to parties, or access to alcohol.

Similarly, a coach who may tolerate hazing behaviors or even tacitly approves sends the message that one way to win favor with coaching staff is to engage in hazing.

Hazing Transmits Across Organizations

If students participate in hazing in one student-constructed space, often those experiences are carried to other organizations (Sasso, 2019). Organizations interconnected with one another through individuals with shared cross-organizational membership or prior shared experiences (e.g. all members of the same high school team where hazing occurred join the same/similar organizations and introduce high school traditions) can lead to cross-organizational transmission.

Boundary Spanners: influential peers whose influence spreads across multiple organizations. These individuals may spread or impede the spread of dangerous or detrimental practices (Zhang et al., 2021).

Questions to Consider

- What data do you have on drinking trends of groups/councils compared to campus averages?
- Are there any trends toward groups drinking more over time (individual vs. organizational conduct statistics, or national surveys such as the Fraternity and Sorority Experience Survey and ACHA data)?
- What community trends do you see in group hazing motivations?
- What is the culture of involvement on your campus? Do individuals tend to cross organizational boundaries (student involvement data, NSSE data)?
- What campus wide traditions support or encourage risky behaviors that are co-mingled with hazing (campus conduct data, police reports, neighbor complaint records)?

Challenges of Hazing Prevention & Intervention

The Challenges of Hazing Prevention

Hazing prevention work is challenging to measure and enforcement of policies and laws have been inconsistent and unclear. Much of "what works" for hazing remains anecdotal or based on participant perceptions or researcher self-reports. However, the existing research offers some insight.

Moratoriums

Moratoriums or pauses in operation, which have become popular (see for example, Luczak, 2018; Satullo, 2020; Solomon, 2021), have not been demonstrated to empirically work.

One exploratory study found that moratoriums on two campuses led to unintended disruption of organizational functions that deflected attention from the goals of the moratorium and impacted risky behavior only briefly (Esquenazi, 2021).

Prevention Training Videos

Use of video vignettes has also shown participants to have greater definitional alignment with current hazing definitions (Allan & Kerschner, 2020). However, there is no substantial evidence that increasing knowledge of hazing reduces intentions (Capretto & Keeler, 2012).

Students who watched the film, *We Don't Haze*, reported being more likely than their peers to gain knowledge about hazing prevention and to assist in the development of inclusive group dynamics (Allan & Kerschner, 2020). After students viewed *Intervene*, a film demonstrating ways student bystanders could successfully intervene in a wide range of high-risk scenarios involving hazing, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, emotional distress, alcohol emergency, and bias, they were more likely to intervene in bystander situations compared to the control group who did not view the video (Allan & Kerschner).
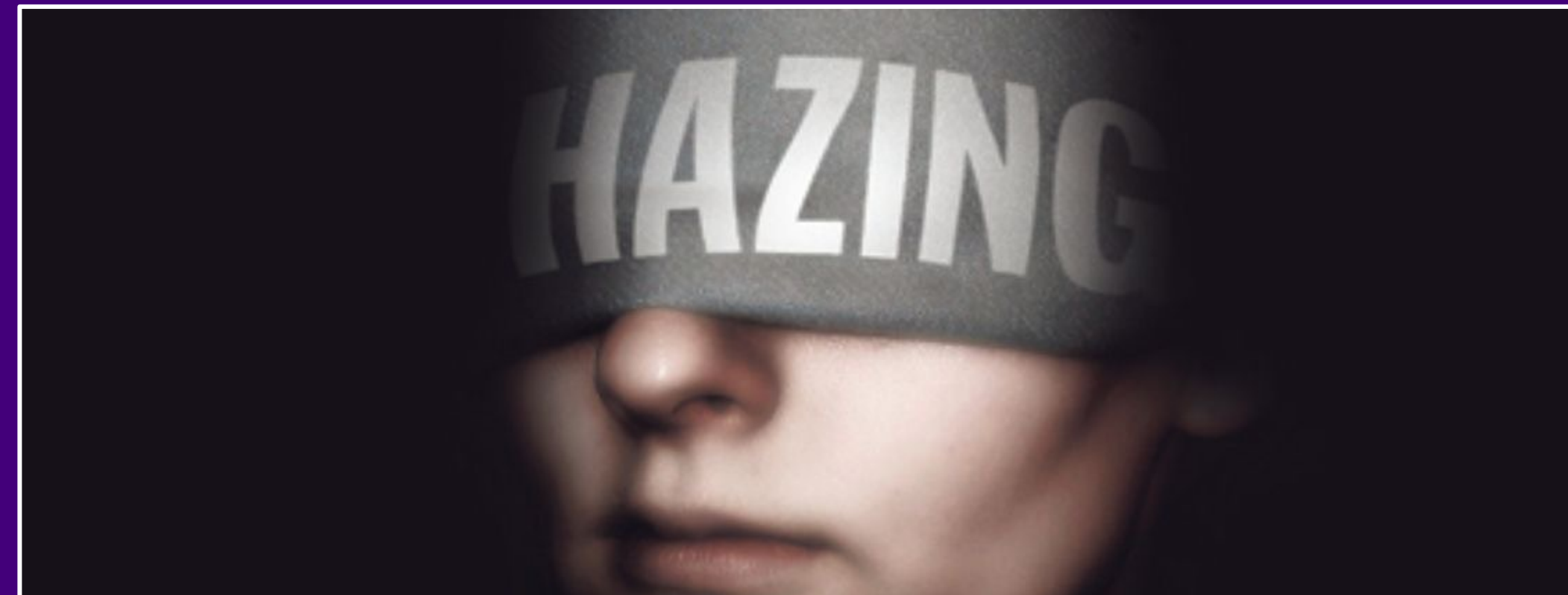
Educational Efforts

In the 2000s and 2010s, prevention efforts focused on educating students on unintended harm associated with hazing. The Hazing Prevention Network created a number of campaigns associated with hidden harm and numerous speakers educated students about the impacts of hazing in bringing forward prior trauma.

Other efforts focused on encouraging bystander intervention behavior (Long, 2012). A pilot intervention at two high schools showed some early evidence that staff and student participants benefited from the hazing interventions through increases in perceived and measured knowledge, awareness of hazing and hazing prevention strategies, and enhanced understanding of bystander intervention (Hakkola, Allan, & Kerschner, 2019).

Knowledge of hazing policies depended on the school where the students were enrolled, with knowledge being higher at the high school that had a hazing related athletics case (where hazing was more of a conversation within the school). Students at that school were more aware of the hazing prevention policies, but also more of them expressed faith that their teachers, coaches, and administrators would sufficiently address hazing and enact the policies if needed (Hakkola, Allan, & Kerschner, 2019).

Zero Tolerance Policies

Zero tolerance hazing policies have not been shown to be effective in preventing hazing (Borgwald & Theixos, 2012; Parks, 2021).

In the K-12 schooling system, the practice has been shown to negatively impact graduation rates, increase additional disruptive behavior, and make communities and schools less safe (Teske, 2011; Wald & Losen, 2003). A meta-analysis of zero tolerance policies designed to prevent bullying showed no benefit in most cases and a minor benefit in a very small number of cases (Smith et al., 2004).

Investigations

Meriwether (2020) offered several practices for addressing hazing. This included that
- investigations of hazing should consider the source
- start immediately within 24 hours
- separate the accused and victims
- communicate appropriately to all stakeholders
- issue a final written report.

These actions create a culture of reporting and responsiveness.

Meriwether suggested that nuances should be considered between student sorority/fraternity councils such as NPC, NALFO, and APIDA organizations.

Anti-Hazing Legislation

While hazing is a felony in 14 states, in many states hazing is considered a misdemeanor no more severe than a traffic violation. For example, in MA, the maximum penalty for hazing is one year in jail or a $1,000 fine (Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 269, § 17, 1985). In many hazing situations, colleges and universities and state and local law only hold the *organization* accountable. This can shield individual students from repercussion.