

THESIS

HAZED PERCEPTIONS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS'  
DEFINITIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF HAZING IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Submitted by

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## ABSTRACT

### HAZED PERCEPTIONS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' DEFINITIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF HAZING IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

While hazing gains media coverage when tragedy occurs or incidences of hazing activities are leaked to social media, this topic at universities receives little to moderate sociological attention. Many consider hazing a widespread problem given that some research estimates that as many as 55 percent of college or high school students have been involved in these activities. Notably, however, additional evidence indicates that students often resist understanding hazing activities as such. Clearly, these kinds of attitudes are important to consider when developing anti-hazing programming or campaigns, especially as colleges and universities in the United States have witnessed a steady rise in hazing-related deaths and injuries, which have produced complex legal issues and questions. This study uses data obtained through semi-structured qualitative interviews of college students to understand how members of sororities, fraternities, and sports club teams define and understand hazing. These conceptualizations are compared to their university's official policy around hazing, and the differences and similarities between the two are discussed. This research illuminates three primary themes in how students define hazing, as well as a disjuncture between how students define hazing and how they perceive their own experiences of hazing. Policy implications and broader recommendations around hazing prevention will be considered.

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## DEDICATION

To my family: Thank you for always pushing me to be my best and supporting me in my education.

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## SECTION I

### INTRODUCTION

In March of 2008, Dr. Elizabeth Allan and Dr. Mary Madden of the University of Maine's College of Education and Human Development department released an executive summary based on data gathered from survey responses from undergraduate students across 53 colleges and universities within the United States (Allan & Madden 2012). In this national and representative study of student hazing, Allan and Madden found that over half (55%) of college students affiliated with clubs, teams, and student organizations experienced hazing. However, this research also demonstrated that the vast majority (90%) of students who experienced collegiate hazing behaviors did not consider themselves to have been hazed (Allan & Madden 2012:5).

This thesis aims to understand this dissonance between experiences of hazing and student definitions of what constitutes hazing based on qualitative data from a Mountain West public four-year university. Drawing on 15 in-depth semi-structured interviews, this thesis examines how students define and understand the concept of hazing and considers how these definitions impact policy enforcement and creation at the university-level.

While there have been many quantitative assessments of collegiate hazing, there is a paucity of rich, qualitative analyses into this subject. Additionally, much sociological research on collegiate hazing focuses on students that are members of fraternities/sororities and varsity athletics, while the primary topic of concern is limited to what behaviors students identify as hazing. The current project contends with these gaps by utilizing in-depth interviews with students in fraternities/sororities and members of club sports teams to examine the ways in which students define and perceive hazing in relation to university and state definitions of hazing.



Through developing a rich and nuanced perspective of the ways in which students define and understand hazing, I also discuss implications for hazing prevention and offer suggestions for universities based on these findings.

### **Overview**

To address these topics, the next section of this thesis provides an overview of the literature on collegiate hazing practices in the United States and the theoretical lenses that will be utilized to examine these practices. This review includes a synopsis of the literature on the behaviors associated with collegiate hazing and student perceptions of these behaviors. This section also includes a discussion of the evolution of the university relationship in regards to responsibility to students surrounding student rights and legal responsibilities. Finally, this section outlines the current laws and policies governing hazing in the state and university of study. I provide this content to illuminate the context and background of research into these topics that act as foundations to my own research.

The third section of this thesis describes the methodology and research design of this study; it includes a detailed description of methods of data collection and analysis, the sample population and sampling scheme, and methodological challenges experienced during this process. Section four provides the findings regarding student definitions of hazing; in particular, I focus on illuminating how students define hazing, their experiences with hazing, and how students rationalize their experiences with hazing. I also discuss how these findings intersect with state and university-level policy definitions of hazing, their broader implications, and identify additional research areas that researchers should develop to contribute to effective anti-hazing policies and campaigns on college campuses.

## SECTION II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

To address the topics above, this literature review will begin by discussing what hazing is and some of the common ways that hazing manifests in student organizations. I also describe the current prevalence of hazing in the United States today. Here I also explore variations in perceptions and manifestations of hazing behaviors related to differences in gender. Next, I review patterns of student reporting of hazing behaviors to officials based on current examinations of these trends. I follow this conversation by tracing the last 50 years of evolving legal precedence which has transformed how institutions of higher learning treat and police hazing on campus. I also discuss how the state and institutions define hazing today. This information offers context and insight into what hazing looks like in student organizations, as well as how universities have historically dealt with hazing on campuses, which influences how these institutions treat and define this activity today. Then I include a synopsis of the leading perspectives on collegiate hazing, including justifications or rationales associated with hazing, such as rites of passage, tradition, or to achieve group cohesion. By describing these ideas here, I provide background and context based on current research on hazing as a foundation to my own research and findings detailed in this thesis.

#### **What is Hazing and What Does It Look Like?**

Before discussing trends associated with hazing, it is prudent to describe what hazing entails, how it is commonly defined, and some of the ways that hazing typically manifests. Collegiate hazing is a form of interpersonal violence that, similar to bullying, threatens the mental and physical health of students and campus community members. Broadly defined as

“Any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group (such as a student club or team) that humiliates, degrades, abuses or endangers regardless of a person’s willingness to participate,” the term “hazing” covers a wide variety of activities and practices I discuss below (Allan & Madden 2012:1). Notably, hazing is an activity that has been around for centuries, and is used by individuals in positions of power to exert authority or status over other individuals in positions of relative weakness (Johnson & Holman 2004).

Hazing, though, is a distinct activity from bullying. While both activities include aggressive behavior in the context of an interpersonal relationship with an imbalance of power, consistent differences exist between the two behaviors. Hazing, for example, refers specifically to organizations’ initiation and membership practices, while bullying does not need to occur within the context of organizational membership or as rites of passage into a group. Additionally, bullying typically occurs over the span of days, weeks, or even months while hazing may be limited to single incidents. An additional critical difference is that hazing can and does often occur regardless of malice or intent to cause harm, while bullying is typically associated with feelings or emotions of malice or ill-intent (Allan & Madden 2012).

Some of the behaviors that are associated with collegiate hazing in student organizations include: forced participation in a drinking game, forced deprivation of sleep, being yelled/cursed/sworn at, being forced to associate with specific people and not others, forced singing/chanting in public situations that are not related to the group’s primary goals or events, and paddling/whipping/physically assaulting others (Allan & Madden 2012; Nuwer 1990). Another example of severe hazing behavior that is associated with college students is the forced performance or simulation of sex acts with the same or opposite gender, which can have obvious and significant ramifications psychologically and physically for students forced to participate in

these behaviors (Waldron & Kowalski 2009; Kirby & Wintrup 2002). In addition to being detrimental to individuals being hazed, research also provides evidence that these activities have negative consequences on those students implementing these behaviors (Lodewijkx & Syroit 1997).

Across the United States, most colleges and universities have recognized hazing as a significant problem and many have established rules prohibiting hazing activities on their campuses. In addition to institutions establishing rules against hazing, state legislators have passed many laws to help prevent hazing on college campuses. However, as will be displayed in this thesis, it is difficult to document specific hazing activities due to its covert nature, and while universities have become increasingly invested in measuring instances of hazing to assess its prevalence, often there is still a fundamental gap between how students understand and conceptualize hazing, and how universities define and understand hazing.

Despite preventative efforts of educators and institutional policies around the country, national surveys of colleges demonstrate that over half of students report experiencing hazing during their undergraduate years (Allan & Madden, 2012; Campos et al., 2005, Waldron & Kowalski, 2009). To illustrate the prevalence of hazing, Allan and Madden's (2008) national survey of undergraduate students shows that hazing occurs across a broad range of student groups. In this study, the groups with the highest prevalence of hazing were varsity athletic teams with 74% of students on these teams reporting experiencing hazing behaviors, and Greek-letter organizations (fraternities and sororities) with 73% of members reporting experiencing hazing. These groups were then followed by 60% of participants in club sports, 56% of members in performing arts organizations, and 49% of those on intramural sports teams (Allan & Madden 2008), displaying that hazing is pervasive through many student organizations.

To understand what hazing ‘usually’ looks like, Allan and Madden’s study (2008) provides a list of the most frequent or common hazing behaviors that students experience. The activities most frequently reported in this study were participating in a drinking game (26%), being forced to sing/chant by self or with select others in a public situation that is not a related event, game, or practice (17%), being forced to associate with specific people and not others (12%), and drinking large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick or passing out (12%).

Also, Allan and Madden (2012) find that “alcohol consumption, humiliation, isolation, sleep-deprivation, and sex acts,” are hazing activities that are common across many student organizations and groups (Allan & Madden 2012:5, see Table 1 for details).

*Table 1 - Percentages of Hazing Behaviors Reported by Student Groups*

Behavior	Athletes, %	Social fraternities or sororities, %	Service fraternities or sororities, %	Performing arts organizations, %	Recreation club, %	Intramural teams, %	Club sports team, %	Academic club, %	Honor society, %	Other*, %
Participate in a drinking game	47	53	26	23	20	28	41	10	5	10
Sing or chant by self or with select others in public	27	31	18	25	10	13	19	6	5	13
Drink large amounts of non-alcoholic beverage	24	8	6	12	9	16	17	4	3	4
Drink large amounts of alcohol to point of getting sick or passing out	23	26	9	8	8	15	20	4	2	4
Associate with specific people and not others	16	16	9	19	9	10	12	8	7	8
Deprive self of sleep	16	17	10	17	9	7	10	7	6	10
Perform sex acts with opposite gender	16	10	3	5	4	9	7	1	1	2
Wear embarrassing clothing/not part of uniform	9	9	6	4	6	6	9	3	2	3
Be awakened during night by other members	18	19	10	6	6	7	9	3	2	6

\*Other includes religiously affiliated organizations, culture clubs and organizations, and student government.

In addition to this, Allan and Madden (2012) find that one of the leading hazing behaviors that students report across nearly all teams and student organizations is participation in drinking games, with reporting rates ranging from 54% from those in varsity athletics, 53% in social fraternities or sororities, 23% from those in performing arts groups, to 5% of respondents in honor societies reporting participation in drinking games associated with hazing (Allan & Madden, 5-6, Table 1). Importantly, this study also found that one-fourth of coaches or advisors

to these students were aware of their teams' or student clubs' hazing rituals clearly suggesting a hazing supportive of culture at the level of leadership.

In addition to Allan and Madden's large study, additional research on this topic exists. For example, Campos, Paulos, and Sipple (2005) provide an idea of the most common hazing behaviors that college students experience. These researchers conducted this representative, web-based survey to undergraduate students at a mid-sized northeastern university. This research was conducted to examine students' attitudes and beliefs towards hazing, as well as to gauge hazing behaviors that these students encountered. In their study, the most typical hazing activities experienced by respondents were participating in a drinking game/contest (17%), being deprived of sleep (15%), and being forced to carry around unnecessary objects or items (14%), such as cigarettes, lighters, or other items of convenience for active members (140). Their study (2005) revealed that the socio-demographic characteristics that were most strongly associated with hazing activities were "Greeks, males, varsity athletes, leaders, and upperclassmen," (144).

Hoover and Pollard (1999) also offer research on the prevalence of hazing. In an investigation of hazing amongst NCAA athletes across 1,000 colleges and universities, 100 percent of athletes responding to the survey were involved in some form of initiation rites or practices, with 80 percent of these athletes indicating experiencing initiations that are considered to be questionable (humiliating or degrading), alcohol-related, or unacceptable (activities that carry a high probability of danger/injury and could result in criminal charges) (Hoover & Pollard 1999:8).

## *The Role of Gender in the Expression of Hazing Behaviors*

Before discussing the differences in hazing activities associated with gender, it is important to mention that this section does not serve to reinforce gender stereotypes that are associated with misinformation or assumptions about gender. Instead, this section seeks to emphasize empirical generalizations that are based upon peer-reviewed research. However, it is important to understand that there are differences in drawing conclusions that are associated with biological composition (i.e. anatomy and hormones) versus those associated with gender norms (expectations that are placed upon men and women based on societal definitions of what it means to be a man or woman). Indeed, there is more variation that can be found among women and among men than there is between men and women as separate groups. These variations include those that are cognitive, emotional, and psychological in nature and show that there is often less difference between groups of men and women than there is within one gender alone (Nuwer 2004, Fausto-Sterling 1992; Kimmel 2000). Additionally, while the term gender within gender theory does refer to a discussion of masculinities and femininities, it is important to remember that there are more than these singular conceptualizations of these concepts. Regardless, there are documented differences in hazing practices between men and women and this section seeks to delineate and begin to understand these differences in a coherent way. While empirical research on hazing incidents involving women is historically limited, there has been an increase in this research since the 1990s which has contributed to more robust understandings of these behaviors (Cotten & Wolohan, 2010).

Dr. Elizabeth Allan writes, in her discussion of hazing and gender, that one of the predominant beliefs about gender differences in hazing behaviors is that hazing amongst men is often more likely to be violent in nature, while hazing activities and behaviors amongst women

are more likely to be psychological or emotional in nature (Nuwer 2004:276). Hazing among women is also often associated with societal notions and expectations related to femininity. For example, the societal standard of beauty for women to be slim, toned, and without skin imperfections, has become manifest in hazing activities in women's groups. Allan (2003) recounts one such example as she writes, "... I encountered a sorority that required pledges to stand on a table in their underwear while the sisters circled areas of the pledges' bodies that they deemed 'too fat,'" (in Nuwer 2004:291). In this instance, differences in men and women's beauty ideals and societal messages about these ideals shape types of hazing activities, as it is unlikely that men's groups would engage in a similar behavior.

Although some of the forms of hazing may be gendered, recent research indicates that comparable numbers of men and women participate in similar types of hazing behaviors. For instance, hazing has been found to be prevalent across women in organizations, particularly among sorority members (Nuwer 1999). One illustration of this finding is from Allan and Madden's (2012) study to determine the nature and extent of collegiate hazing in the United States. These researchers found that "55% of respondents reported they experienced at least one of these [hazing behaviors] in relation to their involvement in a campus club, team, or student organization, including 61% of males and 52% of females," (4-5).

To add to this discussion, Hoover and Pollard (1999) in compiling findings based on a national survey of college athletes, coaches, and staff members across 224 NCAA institutions, found that those at the greatest risk of being hazed to join a team were: male, non-Greek, swimmers/divers, soccer players, lacrosse players, in the east or south, on a campus with a Greek system, and in a state with no anti-hazing law. Interestingly, Hoover and Pollard report that women were more likely to be involved in hazing activities that were alcohol-related (1999:16).



One such example of women engaging in alcohol-related hazing is apparent in an incident at the University of Colorado involving a seventeen-year-old sorority pledge who was found by campus police. She told them that she had attended a sorority function for new pledges. This young woman had a bloody, swollen lip, a cut on her nose, and testing revealed that her blood-alcohol level was 0.202, over 2.5 times the legal limit for drivers in Colorado (*HECNews* 2001b). Similarly, the University of Colorado, Boulder launched an internal investigation after a new sorority member suffered injuries after falling from the top of the three-story sorority house. The sorority member, who obtained internal injuries and broken bones from the fall, was pressured to drink several shots of alcohol by eight members of her sorority (CU News, 2010).

As for men in college organizations and groups, many ethnographic and qualitative studies have found that socialized stereotypical beliefs of gender, sexism, and homophobia are fundamental in explaining many of the hazing behaviors and activities that emerge (Nuwer 1990, 1999, 2000; Sweet 1999, 2001; Tiger, 1984). These stereotypical notions of masculinity contribute to an increased likelihood of violence against women that come into contact with these groups and organizations (Sanday 1990; Rhoads 1995). In this vein, Sanday depicts how acts of sexual assault such as gang rape become a normative part of a fraternity's group identity, which has clear consequences and implications for the women that these groups encounter. Further, Robinson (1998) provides an example in which new members of a hockey team were forced to watch pornographic videos of women and masturbate, while older team members sat and observed. This form of sexual objectification utilizes women as "props" to facilitate a form of homoerotic hazing amongst male group members (in Nuwer 2004:289). When men's hazing activities involve nudity or sexually-explicit activities, spectators are most often male teammates, fraternity brothers, and even male coaches, alumni, and leadership members (Nuwer 2004:289).

However, sexual objectification of women is not limited to male-only organizations and can be found in groups that are co-ed or all female, as well.

Allan contributes to our understandings of how hazing through objectification and victimization occurs within both single-gender and mixed groups. Here, she finds that, “At both high school and college levels, sexual simulation is a common hazing/initiation practice among women’s groups (athletic teams, sororities, clubs); men are almost always present as voyeurs during the simulations,” (Nuwer 2004:288).

In addition to these nuances of objectification, there are more distinct differences between the forms of hazing that male and female collegiate athletes experience (Hoover & Pollard 1999). For instance, in one study researchers explained that, “Women were much less likely than men to be subjected to unacceptable acts: destroying or stealing property, beating up others, being tied up or taped, being confined to small places, being paddled, beaten, kidnapped, or transported and abandoned,” (1999:3).

However, women’s groups can also seek to mimic or imitate the hazing behaviors associated with men’s groups and masculinity. In seeking status, they may actually replicate the forms of hazing that can produce the image of toughness and strength. These activities include those such as excessive consumption of alcohol, forced sleep deprivation, brandings, paddling, and beatings. Unfortunately, as Allan summarizes, one study has found that violence in women’s organizations actually carries a positive connotation “that makes girls feel powerful, strong, and makes her popular,” (Kimmel 2000:250, Nuwer 2004:290).

### *Reporting of Hazing Behaviors*

Research into hazing behaviors has consistently demonstrated that reporting of activities is typically very low. Many theorize that the shame and degradation associated with some hazing behaviors and activities make participants vulnerable to condemnation from their peers and the general public, and deters reporting these behaviors to officials. In fact, a representative study of hazed university athletes demonstrates that 60 percent of hazed university athletes indicated that they would not report hazing (Hoover & Pollard 1999). While confusion about the definition of hazing behaviors is prevalent in terms of labeling these activities as such and may influence low reporting, many students still choose not to report after identifying the behaviors they have experienced as hazing. According to Allan and Madden (2012), of those who labeled their experience as hazing (after utilizing their provided survey definition), 95 percent responded that they did not report it to campus officials (5).

Similarly, in their study of collegiate marching band members and hazing behaviors, Silveira and Hudson (2015) indicate that among those who observed hazing behaviors, only 8 percent responded that they reported any hazing incident (14). The primary factors that these students indicated their reluctance to report their hazing experiences included: “I was afraid I would lose the respect of my friends,” “I felt it would have a negative effect on my participation in band,” “I didn’t want to lose my friends,” “I was afraid I would lose the respect of my director,” and “I felt ashamed,” (Silveira & Hudson 2015:14). This depicts how fear of social consequences can influence reporting when students witness or experience hazing.

Finally, Iverson and Allan (2003) recount the resistance that students face when attempting to report hazing behaviors, “including threats of physical harm against students made by students who were deeply invested in sustaining hazing traditions,” (in Nuwer 2004:253).

Many respondents also displayed normalization (e.g., “Hazing is a tradition”) and minimization (e.g., “It was no big deal,” “I didn’t consider it hazing”) as justifications for their participation in and non-reporting of these behaviors to group or campus officials or leadership (Silveria & Hudson 2015:19).

Research on hazing also indicates that there has also been an increase in fatalities related to hazing behaviors since the 1970s (Nuwer 2004). Over the past 50 years, at least 150 college students have died because of hazing activities (Hollmann 2002:11). While there is no single organization or agency that collects statistics on hazing deaths in the United States, many have estimated that on average, there will be at least one hazing-related fatality each year, with some groups reporting that there are at least five deaths related to collegiate hazing each year (Hollmann 2002:11). During the 1970s alone, there were twenty-five reported deaths associated with hazing behaviors (Nuwer 2000). This increased to 55 deaths from 1980-1989, and in the year 2000 alone, there were 18 deaths (Hollmann 2002:11). While collegiate populations are increasing, these increases in fatalities follow a much more exponential trajectory. Despite widespread institutional condemnation of hazing activities, these behaviors often come to public attention through news and social media when these activities become fatal to those participating.

Historically, deaths and injuries associated with hazing have been typically physical in nature (for instance, potential group members being struck and killed by cars while being forced to find their way back from remote locations). However, as of late, hazing-related injuries and fatalities tend to be more closely linked with alcohol consumption and abuse. Some suggest this trend is related to portrayals of college put forth by media which emphasize the role of alcohol and parties as crucial components of collegiate socialization (Workman 2001). Depictions of

hazing as typical, humorous, and alcohol-associated can be found in many films (E.g., National Lampoon's *Animal House*, *Dazed and Confused*) which can influence student perceptions of these behaviors and normalize the activities not only for students in these organizations but also for alumni, administrators, and group leaders (Nuwer 2004).

Hazing activities that involve alcohol can take the form of forced participation of drinking games, or forced consumption of large amounts of alcohol, often to the point of getting sick or passing out. Sadly, there are many examples of hazing activities in which alcohol consumption has led to student deaths. One such instance occurred at Alfred University in New York, when a student was forced into the trunk of a vehicle with other fraternity pledges and was coerced to drink a fatal quantity of bourbon, liquor, beer, and wine (Nuwer, 1990). Severe instances of alcohol-related hazing resulting in fatality are not limited to fraternities and sororities. For example, the death of 26-year-old Robert Champion, drum major of the Florida A&M University Marching 100, demonstrates that hazing occurs in other student organizations on college campuses around the country (Alvarez & Brown 2011; Silveria & Hudson 2015). Notably, while this organization did proceed with probation, suspensions, and criminal charges for those associated with facilitation of this hazing event, this was not the first hazing incident in which members of the Florida A&M Marching 100 were involved in physical beatings of members, suggesting that hazing is a perennial activity in which prevention must be an ongoing goal (*HECNews* 2001a).

In identifying these trends around hazing, it is important to note that as institutions have become more interested and invested in tracking hazing, new cases and incidences come to light that may not have been considered hazing in previous decades. In other words, institutions have become increasingly invested in constructing hazing as a social problem. Additionally, as

policies change and adapt to these new behaviors, a net-widening effect occurs where the number incidences increase due to policy change (and enforcement of such policies), as well as due to increases in student populations around the nation, which increase potential instances of interpersonal violence, including hazing.

In light of this information, however, hazing among college students is not well-studied with an exception of understanding the prevalence of particular behaviors. This means that there is a gap in scholarly literature about collegiate hazing. One factor that contributes to the lack of research into hazing is well summarized by Iverson and Allan (2003) who explain that:

Hazing traditions are often cloaked in secrecy and silence and are sustained by powerful cultural norms that make it exceptionally difficult for victims and others to speak out against it. Those who do break the silence are often vulnerable and frequently endure emotional and physical abuse in retaliation for their stance (Nuwer 2004:253).

This means that it is a covert matter amongst those that take part, and there are many ethical considerations for researchers when trying to investigate this topic, especially in terms of the potential consequences for members of student groups and organizations. Therefore, gaining entrée into these organizations and clubs is not an easy task.

Compounding these issues mentioned above, due to the sensitive nature of the topic, social scientists and researchers may have to navigate multiple federal, state, and university-level statutes in gaining access and approval to research hazing. Examples of this include Institutional Review Board concerns of privacy for students and the well-being of those involved due to the nature of the kinds of questions that hazing researchers often ask. Regardless of these investigatory hardships, research must be conducted to understand the perceptions of hazing behaviors by students. This information is critical to the development of policies and prevention programs that reduce instances of hazing to preserve the well-being and safety of students, and to encourage positive group behaviors that instill group solidarity and cohesion in a safe way.

It is important to note, however, that while much of this thesis is critical of student organizations that display hazing behaviors, not all student groups and organizations take part in these activities. These groups do offer many positive outcomes to students, their institutions, and to their communities at large. However, the concern of this thesis is to offer clear and defined information and a sociological perspective that can aid in understanding how collegiate club sports team members, as well as fraternity and sorority members define and conceptualize hazing. It is also a goal to consider these definitions in relation to state and university considerations of hazing to assist group leaders, advisors, and administrators target policy and prevention efforts in a manner more aligned with these understandings. To accomplish this task, the next section looks at the relationship between students and their universities, particularly regarding the rights and responsibilities of institutions in terms of hazing prevention, policing these behaviors, and ultimately maintaining a safe campus community.

### **The Evolving Relationship between Institutions of Higher Education and Students**

There is not a static relationship between universities and their students, but instead one that has evolved greatly over the past several decades. This shifting relationship is largely based on legal precedence of responsibility of universities and the rights of students. This relationship influences the ways in which universities punish, police, and prevent hazing on their campuses. This section will briefly trace this dynamic relationship and explain how it relates to hazing policy and enforcement at universities today. Understanding this relationship is important for this thesis because the legal nature of this relationship has shaped university policies and procedures that regulate hazing. Additionally, these rulings have influenced the role of universities in instituting hazing prevention and educating students on their policies and procedures. To provide

context, I now outline this history and landmark judicial cases that have shaped the relationship between universities and their students.

### *In Loco Parentis Era*

Prior to the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, institutions of higher education followed the doctrine of *in loco parentis*, Latin for “in place of a parent.” This policy largely promoted the image of the parental university: one that dominated the lives of students, and one where most problems were dealt with within the university, by the university, and usually very quietly (Bickel & Lake 1999:17). In this period, the courts recognized that university administrators stood in place of parents while students were on campus. Hazing incidents were handled by the university, however in the period of *in loco parentis*, universities largely did not go out of its way to promote the safety of students. Instead, as Bickel and Lake (1999) write, “... The culture of insularity – ‘let’s work it out internally’ – was a key feature of the *in loco parentis* period,” (17). Most legal issues that did come about were kept out of the courts during this period. However, this was significantly changed after legal challenge to this doctrine in the 1960s and 1970s, as rulings set forth that universities could no longer regulate or be held entirely accountable for all aspects of their students’ lives without considering the students’ broader constitutional rights.

### *End of In Loco Parentis - Dixon v. Alabama (1961)*

The case of *Dixon v. Alabama* came to fruition after Alabama State College expelled a group of black students for participating in a civil rights demonstration in reaction to being refused service at a lunch grill in the Montgomery County Courthouse. The college expelled the



group of students without notice, hearing, or opportunity for appeal, meaning with no respect for their due process rights from the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution. Due process requires that “governmental action not be arbitrary, unreasonable, or discriminatory, and that fair procedures be followed by officials before they carry out any action depriving anyone of ‘life, liberty, or property,’” (Schimmel, Stellman, & Fischer 2011:234).

The Fifth Circuit Court in this case held that “due process requires notice and some opportunity for hearing before a student at a tax-supported college is expelled for misconduct,” (*Dixon v. Alabama* 1961:158). This was a departure from previous cases that held that no process was due because university students consented to an *in loco parentis* relationship with a college upon enrollment. This ruling, however, signaled that public universities and colleges were treated as state actors for purposes of the Constitution, so students of these institutions were protected by the Due Process Clause, dramatically shaping the relationship that universities have with their students.

This meant that student had some due process protections, such as being given notice of the specific charges levied against them that, if proven, would justify expulsion. Additionally, in this case, students were granted the opportunity to present their own defense against charges. Overall, this ruling dramatically and officially increased the level of constitutional protection for state college students, including those facing allegations of hazing.

#### *Bystander or “No Duty” Era - Bradshaw v. Rawlings (1979)*

An appeals court ruling in *Bradshaw v. Rawlings* marked the departure of an era in which it was the institution’s responsibility to protect its students from harm. In this legal case, Delaware Valley College sponsored a sophomore class picnic in which students Bradshaw and

Rawlings attended, and later became intoxicated with alcohol provided at the unsupervised off-campus event. After the picnic, Bradshaw was a passenger in Rawlings' vehicle, which struck a parked car, injuring and paralyzing Bradshaw.

The primary question in this case was whether Delaware Valley College who sponsored the picnic, was negligent in its planning and supervision (or lack thereof). Although no faculty nor staff were present at the picnic, a faculty member assisted in its planning, and co-signed the check used to purchase alcohol for the event. In the Third Circuit, the appeals court dismissed the claim against the institution, emphasizing that the "modern American college is not an insurer of the safety of its students," (Bradshaw v. Rawlings 1979). The court argued that the university held no *in loco parentis* authority to control students and that it had no duty to supervise them, as alcohol use by students was permissible under the state law. This led to the bystander or "no duty" era in higher education which was also maintained during *Rabel v. Illinois Wesleyan University* almost ten years later. This ruling meant that universities had no duty or obligation to ensure the safety of students in cases of hazing.

#### *Rabel v. Illinois Wesleyan University (1987)*

The "no duty" or bystander era held strong and protected institutions from liability for students' safety in the ruling on *Rabel v. Illinois Wesleyan University*, which stated that the institution was not responsible to its students beyond providing them with an education. This case came about after university student Rabel was called from her dorm room by a fraternity member at IWU. She was thrown over the fraternity member's shoulder and was ran through a gauntlet of fraternity men. The plaintiff was injured when the fraternity member holding her tripped and fell, dropping Rabel into a campus sidewalk, which resulted in a skull fracture and

brain concussion, among other injuries. The Court found that the university did not enter into a custodial relationship with its students, and that it would be unrealistic for a university to be charged with the responsibility of safety of their students (*Rabel v. Illinois Wesleyan University*, 1987).

During this bystander period, less preventative safety measures were taken on college campuses due to the changing nature of the relationship between universities and their students. Consequently, campuses were becoming increasingly unsafe for students, as alcohol use and alcohol-related injuries increased (including those injuries related to hazing) (Bickel & Lake 1999).

*Era of Shared Responsibility (Or Legal Compliance) - Furek v. Delaware (1991)*

Following the mid-1980s, the pendulum began to move towards a more shared responsibility between university students and the institutions themselves to maintain a safe campus community, including regarding acts of hazing. *Furek v. Delaware* in 1991 was a turning point in case law as the university was implicated for a student's damages stemming from a hazing incident. In this incident, Furek endured a hazing ritual in a fraternity house on campus that involved a fraternity brother pouring oven cleaner over Furek's head, resulting in severe chemical burns and permanent scarring. Furek subsequently withdrew from the university and forfeited his full football and tuition scholarship. The plaintiff alleged that his injuries were caused proximately by the university's negligence and reckless failure to control the fraternity and its members, putting into question what duty a university had to protect its students (*Furek v. Delaware 1991*).

The Supreme Court of Delaware rejected the precedent established by *Bradshaw v. Rawlings* and found that the university's knowledge of previous hazing incidents, strict policies on hazing, and repeated warnings to students about the risks of hazing constituted an "assumed duty" to protect students from hazing. In fact, they wrote that, "The university's policy against hazing, like its overall commitment to provide security on its campus, thus constituted an assumed duty which became an "indispensable part of the bundle of services which colleges... afford their students,"" (*Furek v. Delaware 1991*). This ruling now meant that colleges could be held liable for the safety of its students and since there were general university policies against hazing, there needed to be a way to ensure the enforcement of those policies. Today, there is a shared relationship (although emphasis still lies on the institution) between students to act responsibly, and for the universities to provide reasonable care, duty, and education.

Overall, these cases illustrate how universities have grown increasingly invested in protecting students and managing risky behavior on campuses. While courts have demonstrated that students have constitutional rights and some responsibility in maintaining a safe campus community, universities have also been implicated and held accountable to the same goal. Therefore, this goal has influenced universities' policies, procedures, and prevention tactics regarding hazing today by requiring universities to produce policies to prevent hazing and maintain safe campus communities for their students. However, outside of this basic requirement, there are no policies, rulings, or pieces of legislation that provide uniform definitions of hazing or consistent punishments for students who engage in hazing. The following section describes the ways in which hazing is defined today in the United States, in the state of Colorado, and at Colorado State University, the site of the current study.

## **Hazing Defined Today: State and Institutional Definitions of Hazing**

As demonstrated, hazing is a broad term that can encompass many activities, behaviors, or situations expected of one individual or group of individuals to experience or complete to gain or maintain membership and acceptance within a dominant group. Hazing has occurred for centuries, however a universally-agreed upon definition has yet to be determined as of 2017, leading to issues of policy generation at the institutional and state levels and disagreement of what constitutes hazing among students, faculty, advisors, coaches, and administration officials at institutions of higher education. In other words, there is conflict regarding what—precisely—hazing is and one consequence of this is that it makes it difficult for institutions to create consistent and effective policy to combat the behavior.

While 44 states currently have anti-hazing statutes, there is a distinct lack of uniformity and consistency among these state statutes. Some examples of these discrepancies include conflicting ideas of what hazing is, disagreement about the legal severity of hazing (most states punish hazing as a misdemeanor, while a few states consider it a felony), and the question of whether consent can exist within the activity of hazing (Hollmann 2002:16). About this, R. Brian Crow (2001) writes that seven states, “Include language that observing hazing and failing to notify authorities or participating in hazing and failing to notify authorities is a crime,” and nineteen states, “Specifically state in their codes that implied or express consent, or a willingness on the part of the victim to participate, is not an available defense” (255).

Finally, some states punish mental or psychological hazing, while others do not. Generally, hazing laws have become stricter; however, it is still unusual when individuals are charged with hazing as a crime. Further, if individuals are found guilty, most are given punishments of less than a few months of jail time (Nuwer 2004:169-179). These inconsistencies

make it difficult for institutions to create coherent and effective policies to combat the behavior. One hurdle for universities to define hazing is deciding what actions constitute hazing, and which actions do not. This problem exists because it is up to each state, university, and student organization to set forth what constitutes appropriate behavior, and what actions can be classified as hazing. Clearly, this can lead to inconsistent definitions regarding what is an act of hazing because what is hazing in one group's view may be acceptable to another. Thus, institutions of higher learning, which frequently address the issue of hazing, do not have a set universal agreement of what definition to apply to hazing. One consequence of this dynamic is that since institutions use different (and sometimes conflicting) definitions of hazing in its policies and procedures, there are few clear guidelines for students, faculty, and staff.

Colorado, the state where this research study takes place, has a state law against hazing which is defined as follows:

- (a) Any activity by which a person recklessly endangers the health or safety of or causes a risk of bodily injury to an individual for the purposes of initiation or admission into or affiliation with any student organization; except that "hazing" does not include customary athletic events or other similar contests or competitions, or authorized training activities conducted by members of the armed forces of the state of Colorado or the United States (Colorado Revised Statutes, 2016).

According to this statute (§ 18-9-124), hazing is considered a class 3 misdemeanor for which the minimum punishment is a fifty dollar fine, while the maximum punishment is six months imprisonment or seven-hundred fifty dollar fine, or both. They further include three examples of hazing, stating:

- (b) "Hazing" Includes but is not limited to:
  - (I) Forced and prolonged physical activity;
  - (II) Forced consumption of any food, beverage, medication or controlled substance, whether or not prescribed, in excess of the usual amounts for human

consumption or forced consumption of any substance generally intended for human consumption;  
(III) Prolonged deprivation of sleep, food, or drink (Colorado Revised Statutes, 2016).

Universities typically write their hazing policies in a way that is consistent with their respective state law (if the law exists). For instance, Colorado State University's official definition of hazing is as follows:

“Any act that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student, or which destroys or removes public or private property for the purpose of initiation, admission into, affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in a group or student organization. The express or implied consent of the victim will not be a defense,” (Colorado State University, University Policies, 2016. See Appendix A).

However, the lack of a federal anti-hazing law with a basic definition of hazing, coupled with the fact that not every state has a form of anti-hazing policy, often weakens the ability of universities to create and enforce policies to reduce instances of these behaviors. Moreover, this lack of consistency can create confusion of students who are most affected by such policies and laws and result in a failure to report instances of hazing that they witness or experience (Ellsworth 2006). Many times, these universities and colleges cannot set forth clear guidance for their faculty, academic and organization advisors, coaches, or faculty. Additionally, there may be incidents of hazing which violate university policies, while not being against state laws. Clearly the lack of a common consideration of hazing at the university and state level can have consequences.

### *Dissonance in Student Definitions*

Just as educational and legal institutions struggle to define hazing in a uniform way, college students also face difficulties, not only in defining hazing itself, but in describing behaviors that constitute hazing—especially in ways that are consistent with the stated policy of

the institution. For example, Waldron and Kowalski (2009:296) find that amongst collegiate and former high school athletes, respondents describe hazing as a fun activity, for the hazer, hazee, or even both. Relatedly, Waldron and Kowalski (2009) point out that many individuals in their study indicate that the ambiguity of hazing influences the rationalization process for individuals that are hazed and those that carry out the hazing. For instance, many individuals noted that hazing, in general, is acceptable, as long as behaviors did not physically hurt or explicitly injure a teammate (Waldron & Kowalski 2009:297). Allan and Madden (2012:6) report that many students identified hazing behaviors as involving physical force only (e.g., paddling, whipping, beating, or tying up prospective members). Another factor that complicates student perceptions of hazing involves the perception of the activity as having a “productive purpose, such as maintaining tradition or group bonding,” as mentioned above (Allan & Madden 2012:6).

This rationalization process is linked to a gap between college students’ experiences of hazing behaviors and their willingness to describe it as such an activity. Campo and colleagues (2005) display “a clear discrepancy between self-identification as participating in hazing and participating in hazing as defined by university policy,” meaning that students who self-identified as engaging in hazing activities did not consider themselves to have been hazed as per their university’s definition of hazing (146). Allan and Madden (2012) parallel this finding in their study that involved over 11,000 undergraduate students across 53 colleges and universities. Through their research, they found that, “Of students who reported experiencing behaviors that meet the definition of hazing, 9 out of 10 did not consider themselves to have been hazed,” (2102:6). This finding has been replicated in several studies on hazing and college student perceptions of these behaviors (Hoover & Pollard 1999, Kimbrough 2007). Finally, Silveria and Hudson (2015) report that in their study of marching band participants, less than 5 percent of



participants indicated that they had been hazed, while approximately 20 percent of their respondents indicated experiencing at least two of the delineated hazing behaviors (18-19). This research demonstrates that there is a possible disconnect between how hazing is defined institutionally or legally and what students perceive as hazing.

This disjuncture between definitions was also found in a study of undergraduate team building and initiation activities. This study examined the prevalence of hazing activities on a college campus, and inquired into positive alternative team building and initiation activities that students engaged in to avoid hazing behaviors. Interestingly, when Campos and colleagues (2005) asked about these positive alternative activities, they found that 36% of respondents actually indicated that they had engaged in a behavior that would qualify as hazing (143). This demonstrates that students' perceptions of hazing activities and ways that they define hazing are often disjointed. Moreover, this can influence whether they consider themselves or others to have been hazed. Campo and colleagues (2005) theorize this discrepancy may exist because "students have a narrow definition of hazing, including only extreme forms like being tied up, beaten, or raped," (146). Further, Campos and colleagues (2005) also found that overall, students typically agreed that hazing behaviors were harmful. However, students were generally neutral when asked about their own susceptibility to harm if they participated in hazing behaviors, whether their friends approve of hazing behaviors, their belief that hazing is fun, and their belief that hazing builds cohesion amongst group members (Campos et al. 2005:144). This means that while students believe that hazing is harmful, they were neutral in believing that they were at risk of harm if they participated in hazing behaviors. If a student engages in hazing and does not perceive harm from their own experience, they may feel that hazing broadly is not harmful.

Students, in this study, were also neutral when asked whether their friends approve of hazing behaviors, which points to uncertainty in peer beliefs around hazing. Their study concluded that, “Hazing is occurring on campus, although not always recognized as such by students,” (Campos et al. 2005:137). One item that this research demonstrates are the difficulties in developing a comprehensive program to address hazing at the collegiate level, as students themselves generally do not believe that they are subject to the risks associated with this behavior. Further, since students were neutral towards the ideas that hazing is fun and that hazing builds cohesion among group members, it can be difficult to gauge how to effectively frame hazing in education and prevention programs at universities.

This significant body of research indicates that many college students experience dissonance in terms of how universities and colleges define hazing, and how students themselves label and understand their own experiences with hazing behaviors and activities. These studies also indicate that there is a distinct gap between how hazing is defined legally or institutionally and what college students actually perceive and consider to be hazing, which will be explored in the findings section of this thesis.

### **Perspectives on Hazing**

Several sociological and social-psychological perspectives examine hazing to understand why it occurs. Within this body of research, social scientists have investigated the factors that help explain why those being hazed often choose to endure whatever discomforts or psychological ramifications that are associated with the behavior. In terms of explanations for these behaviors, two leading perspectives are traditions of initiation rites or rites of passage, and group cohesion. As an example of these perspectives in practice, Campos and colleagues (2005)

surveyed undergraduate students to determine students' beliefs towards hazing. In this research, they found that many respondents indicated that hazing fosters organizational respect, discipline, loyalty, and team building. In addition to these broad justifications, the themes of traditions of initiation rites/rites of passage, as well as group cohesion are prevalent explanations in hazing literature. The following sections describe these primary themes in more depth.

### *Traditions of Initiation Rites/Rites of Passage*

Sociologists and psychologists point to the idea that hazing serves as a necessary rite of passage or initiation ritual in which members are inaugurated and socialized into group norms and values through these processes (Hoover & Pollard 1999; Nuwer 1990; Waldron & Kowalski 2009). These rites and rituals are specific to a culture or subculture and are considered to be practices that initiate new members “into the next stage of their cultural, religious, academic, or athletic lives,” (Trota & Johnson 2004:x). While ceremonies and rituals are typical for many groups and organizations, these activities become hazing when behavior becomes centered on humiliating, dangerous, or sometimes even illegal activities. Stephen Sweet (1999) discusses the ways that students define interactions involving hazing, and writes that organizations often frame initiation rites as forms of tradition that involve activities to foster character-building, loyalty, and commitment. These rites are often associated with the development of a group-identity and the transformation of the individual's self-identity through cognitive and behavioral shifts that often are associated with generating conditions of social dependency on the group itself along with other members. As Keating and colleagues (2005) summarize, the conditions of hazing “leave individuals more susceptible to group influence and indoctrination,” (124).

### *Group Cohesion*

Similar to the themes described earlier, the goal of increasing group solidarity or cohesion is also an associated factor that can lead to conditions of hazing in student organizations. Cimino (2001) studied hazing behaviors by surveying participants in strongly cooperative groups and participants in groups that were considered to be weakly cooperative. To gauge the effect of solidarity, Cimino asked research participants to envision themselves in high effort and low effort group activity and determine if they were high or low contributors. The results of this were that respondents desired increased severity of hazing in strong groups than they did in weak groups. This research implies that hazing is evident and more acceptable in groups that are strong such as Greek organizations and that members perceive that increased hazing maintains group solidarity and cooperation among group members (Cimino 2011). However, this does not mean that hazing produces cohesion in groups. In fact, in an empirical test of whether student participation in hazing promotes group cohesion, Van Raalte and colleagues (2007) demonstrated that the more hazing activities student athletes reported witnessing or experiencing, the less cohesive they perceived their team to be in sport-related tasks.

Further, additional inquiry into hazing indicates that a negative relationship exists between severe initiation processes (typically associated with collegiate hazing) and the perceived attractiveness of group membership to new members (Lodewijkx & Syroit 1997). Lodewijkx and Syroit (1997) found that group initiations with increased severity (for example, initiations where members are publically embarrassed and harassed) led to negative feelings and emotions such as loneliness, frustration, and depression along with decreased affiliation with the group (1997:297). This demonstrates a gap between how students perceive hazing (believed to create/facilitate cohesion) and the reality of hazing (which can lead to less cohesion in groups).

As this review of literature indicates, hazing can take many forms and exists in many kinds of groups on college campuses. Men and women demonstrate similar hazing behaviors at increasingly similar levels. The relationship between universities and students, which has changed over the last five decades, now is one based on shared responsibility to strive for and maintain a safe and hospitable campus community -- one that is free from instances of hazing. To achieve this goal, universities must try to overcome discrepant and confusing definitions and understandings of hazing, and to increase student willingness to report hazing, which is historically very low. This review also demonstrates that there is a gap in literature on hazing, outside of describing the typical behaviors that manifest in student organizations and perspectives on why hazing exists. This project contributes to this gap, and provides a more complete and nuanced understanding of how students define and perceive hazing and their own experiences with these behaviors. This research is necessary to inform campus hazing education and prevention policies. In the next section, I unpack the research methodology of this project and how I conducted this research to achieve this goal.

## SECTION III

### RESEARCH METHODS

This section highlights the research methodology and procedures used in this study and traces how I conducted this research project. This section first describes the purpose of this thesis and the research questions that guided this project. I describe and defend a qualitative approach guided by grounded theory, both of which are rare in hazing research and literature. I then describe the recruitment process and sampling scheme that I used in this project, as well as how I collected and analyzed data. Finally, I discuss the methodological challenges and limitations that I encountered during this project. I begin by situating the purpose and overarching research questions that guide this project.

#### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this research study was to examine the ways in which college students perceive and understand common hazing behaviors, as well as the ways in which hazing behaviors manifest within specific university-sanctioned student organizations. Specifically I asked respondents, who were all members of fraternities/sororities and club sports teams on a college campus to identify to what extent they understood listed activities as examples of hazing, as well as how they personally defined and understood hazing. The primary goal of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the individual perceptions and experiences of the research participants. To accomplish this goal, this research project emphasizes the utility of qualitative research methods to measure the perceptions of a limited number of people to increase understanding of the lived-experiences of individuals participating in the study and to shed new light on a pervasive problem. This qualitative research was part of a broader campus-wide group

project involving campus administrators, health educators, faculty, and student leaders at a mid-sized mountain-west university. Affiliation with this group facilitated entrée into the area of study and provided routes to reach potential participants through these gatekeepers.

### *Research Questions*

A key function of this research project is understanding how members of fraternities, sororities, and club sports teams define hazing. The overarching research question that guided this study was: *How do fraternity, sorority, and club sports team members understand hazing on a college campus?* This idea was supplemented with the following specific research questions:

- *Research Question 2:* How do fraternity, sorority, and club sports team members define hazing?
- *Research Question 3:* Are there differences between how fraternity, sorority, and club sports team members define hazing and how the University defines hazing?

I developed these questions by reviewing an earlier survey conducted at the university of study (a brief summary of the findings from this survey can be found in Appendix B). The quantitative survey was developed to ascertain the prevalence of hazing on campus, and to determine what kinds of hazing behaviors students experience and witness on campus. Literature on hazing also helped shape these research questions. Finally, I wanted to address lingering questions that exist regarding how student definitions of hazing impact creation and enforcement of hazing policy.

### *Qualitative Research – Grounded Theory*

I employed a qualitative research study for a variety of reasons, many of which center on the kinds of research questions I asked in this project, which require rich, substantive data to

address. Lofland and colleagues (2006:15) write that qualitative research allows researchers to “collect the richest data possible,” without constricting participants to a pre-determined set of responses; this type of approach is useful given the goals of my research, especially given that there are noted discrepancies in how students understand and define hazing activities and that these discrepancies are not easily measured through quantitative means. Additionally, I relied on a grounded theory approach because it emphasizes gathering rich information from data, and avoids reliance on preconceived ideas, beliefs, or hypotheses (Charmaz 2006:14-21).

Grounded theory historically emphasized empiricism and rigorous codified methods, notions of human agency, the importance of social and subjective meanings, and the open-ended study of processes and action (Charmaz 2006). Today, grounded theory is not a static ‘set’ of methods, but guidelines and best practices that are centered on qualitative data and involves several rounds and levels of coding (Charmaz 2006). Further, Charmaz—the ‘creator’ of the form of grounded theory I employ in this thesis writes that this process also is dependent on organizing these codes into categories, and generating definitions of these categories through development and rigorous exploration of “theoretical codes” (Charmaz 2006:63). Theoretical codes are codes that identify potential relationships between categories of focused codes, and move an analytic story in a theoretical direction (Charmaz 2006:63). By comparing these codes to one another, researchers can uncover emergent themes or findings, which are explanatory concepts of the phenomena under study. Additionally, this process reveals in-depth meanings that are situated in participant narratives, and helps elicit perspectives and views of participants’ subjective worlds (Charmaz 2006:29). To justify my use of this technique, I now describe my approach and engagement with these methods in relation to the purpose of this study and the research questions I address.



With this methodology in mind, I used the initial hazing survey to frame my interview guide to delve deeply into the socially-constructed understandings of hazing held by students, which reflect the reality and context of their lives as members of student organizations on campus. In asking respondents how they define and understand a behavior such as hazing, open-ended dialogue allows me to draw conclusions that are empirically rooted in the respondents' answers. Additionally, this technique fosters both control and flexibility to increase the analytic incisiveness of the resulting analysis. Through collaboration with my advisor, I constructed the interview guide based on the results of the quantitative survey described above to provide insight into the 'why' of hazing through analysis of rich, substantive interview data. The guiding interests that I built this research project around were understandings of hazing and experiences of hazing, so I used these topics as points of departure to form the interview questions, to listen to interviewees address, and to guide my ideas when thinking analytically about my data. This starting point also led to other topics of exploration that emerged throughout the iterative data collection process. In addition to the listed utility of grounded theory, this methodology allows respondents to describe their experiences and perceptions in a way that feels comfortable to them, and helped me establish rapport with the majority of respondents I interviewed, which facilitated insight into a topic that is usually shrouded in secrecy or stigma.

### **Recruitment Process and Sampling Scheme**

Prior to conducting research, I underwent a full Institutional Review Board review at my university from the months of April 2016 to October 2016. During this time, I made requested changes to my recruitment materials and interview guide based on the Institutional Review Board's requests and comments. Per the university IRB, interview subjects signed an informed

consent form prior to the interview and I provided them a copy for their records with my and the university IRB's contact information. My interview recruitment began in November 2016 after the approval of my IRB protocol and ended in May 2017 due to the satisfaction of my purposive sampling criteria. Specifically, I recruited interview participants by sending an IRB-approved recruitment email through the Fraternity and Sorority Life Office and Club Sports Office listservs on campus (see Appendices C and D). I also engaged in snowball sampling to access other individuals in these student organizations who were willing to participate. Snowball sampling is a research sampling technique where existing respondents refer future subjects from among their acquaintances and fellow group members. Snowball sampling has become commonplace for accessing populations considered difficult to approach or find, and therefore proved useful in this project. Participants were asked to forward the initial recruitment email to other students that participated in fraternities, sororities, and sports club teams, and this method yielded some success in contacting other respondents. This sampling technique yielded three research participants.

### **Participants**

My sample for this study included 15 participants total, including six men and nine women from fraternities, sororities, and club sports teams. Demographic information on these participants can be found in Table 1. The average length of interview was 50 minutes, 55 seconds. The age of my participants ranged from 19-23, and the median age of respondents was 21-years-old. All students who participated in this study identified as white, and while this is potentially problematic in terms of generalizability, the demographics of the University of study was over 70 percent white at the time of study (CSU Factbook, 2016).

Table 2 - Participant Demographic Information

#	Pseudonym	Organization, Length of Affiliation	Age	Year in School	Ethnic Identity	Gender Identity	Length of Interview
1.	Kimberly	Social Sorority, .5 yrs.	19	Freshman	White	Female	47:06
2.	Lindsay	Social Sorority, 3 yrs.	21	Senior	White	Female	36:39
3.	April	Social Sorority, 3.5 yrs.	21	Senior	White	Female	33:44
4.	Maura	Social Sorority, 2 yrs.	20	Junior	White	Female	70:29
5.	Laura	Social Sorority, 3.5 yrs.	21	Senior	White	Female	40:57
6.	Steven	Social Fraternity, 3 yrs.	21	Senior	White	Male	64:53
7.	Travis	Social Fraternity, 2.5 yrs. Club Sport Team, 1.5 yrs.	21	Junior	White	Male	56:46
8.	June	Social Sorority, .5 yr.	19	Sophomore	White	Female	50:14
9.	Evan	Social Fraternity, 2 yrs.	21	Junior	White	Male	49:15
10.	Ruth	Social Sorority, Club Sport Team, 3 yrs.	23	Senior	White	Female	49:31
11.	Andrew	Club Sport Team, 1 yr.	21	Senior	White	Male	43:15
12.	Carl	Club Sport Team, 1 yr.	20	Sophomore	White	Male	101:06
13.	Andrea	Club Sport Team, 3 yrs. Honors Fraternity, 3 yrs.	20	Junior	White	Female	35:19
14.	Martha	Club Sport Team, 1 yr.	21	Senior	White	Female	42:11
15.	Timothy	Club Sport Team, 3 yrs.	22	Senior	White	Male	42:27

## **In-Depth Interviews**

In line with qualitative research, I employed a semi-structured interview approach to gather data on perspectives on hazing and ways in which hazing behaviors manifest in student organizations. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent of the participants, and transcribed into a Microsoft Word document by the researcher and research assistant. All interviews were conducted in a private conference room to allow full confidentiality to the participant and establish trust between the researcher and participant. Interview recordings and transcripts were kept in the researcher's possession, with names and identifying information kept in a separate, private cabinet. Given the sensitive nature of the content of interviews, pseudonyms were used in place of names in the transcripts, and identifying information of the participant's organizational affiliation removed. Once the research was complete, I erased the files with identifying information.

The interview guide directed the conversation for the interview and allowed for more in-depth discussion of the respondent's experiences and beliefs (Babbie 2010). The semi-structured interview guide included 15 open-ended questions about perceptions of hazing behaviors and experiences within their predominant organization: the fraternity, sorority, or club sports team (see Appendix E). The first section of the interview guide included demographic questions (e.g., age, year in school, race, and gender identity) to help determine potential associations between demographic characteristics and perceptions of hazing behaviors, along with individual experiences of hazing activities.

The interviews then moved to discuss the student organization of which the student is a member including, but not limited to, a discussion of the weekly time commitments of their organization, the types of activities that their group does together, and the most important values

that the member associates with their student organization. Through this discussion, I was able to gauge the respondent's level of participation and engagement with their organization, and also give us time to have more relaxed conversation before broaching the concept of hazing.

The next topic explored how students define hazing and why they thought groups engaged in hazing behaviors. This set of questions also included the university definition of hazing. I included this specifically to explore differences in definitions in a systematic way (how students define and understand this term and how the university understands and defines this term).

Next, the interviews focused on specific hazing behaviors and explored how respondents perceived these activities. To facilitate this discussion, I provided participants with a list of 15 common hazing behaviors (which are available at the end of the interview guide, Appendix E), which mirrors many existing hazing studies. During this conversation, I asked students to identify behaviors that were severe or significant, which activities they did not consider to be severe or significant, and which activities they did or did not identify as hazing. Also during this time, I asked participants to identify which (if any) behaviors they had experienced themselves, either as members of their student organization or club sport team, or as part of their student experience, more broadly (this specification is necessary as a few students identified experiencing hazing during their high school years).

Risks associated with the research study were minimal but I did not expect students to answer any question if they felt uncomfortable or did not want to talk about a particular subject; however, no respondent opted out of any questions during the course of the interview. At the end of each interview, I provided respondents with a resource sheet that included information of their institution's mental health services, sexual assault reporting, and hazing reporting services,

including a short description of each service and contact information for each service. I offered this due to the sensitive and potentially triggering nature of the subject of hazing, interpersonal violence, and sexual assault that could have been discussed during the interview. Participants were also given a \$20 Visa gift card as compensation for their time after the interview.

### **Data Analysis**

After the majority of interviews, I sat down and wrote out broad themes that emerged throughout the course of the interview in order to familiarize myself with the data from the start. I systematically coded and analyzed data in several stages using NVIVO software, as prescribed by grounded theory. This process allowed me to “retrieve, recode, refile, and enumerate coded items and relate them to one another in a much more consistent and rapid fashion than was formerly possible,” (Lofland et al. 2006:203). In other words, this technique allowed me to categorize and re-code my data in an efficient manner.

More specifically, I carefully analyzed each respondent’s individual interview to assess the consistencies and contrasting themes across interviews conducted. This means that through several rounds of coding, I compared data across interviews, as well as refined and modified codes as necessary throughout this process. In addition to the methodology above, I also practiced analytical memo writing as I examined the text transcripts. This procedure allowed me to develop the theoretical orientations and related findings based on the respondent’s narratives, and to ensure that conclusions drawn were rooted in data obtained from participants (Charmaz 2006).

Utilizing a grounded theory approach as described earlier, I coded each interview by grouping statements into meaningful units, looking for common patterns or themes among the

interview narratives (Charmaz 2006). Through this coding method, I built an analysis from the ground up based on the data developed from interviews, rather than running the risk of potentially superimposing my own preconceived ideas and notions on the data itself (Charmaz 2006:51). While I was aware of reoccurring themes that I encountered throughout the interview process, a grounded theory approach fostered my ability to systematically identify new themes that emerged through rounds of data analysis.

Throughout the data analysis process, I generated approximately 20 codes (see Appendix F for the full codebook), some being descriptive such as *defining hazing* while others were more abstract codes such as *values*. I engaged with descriptive coding and sub-coding schemes, which nested ideas under primary codes, and provide detail or nuance to the primary code, such as nesting *challenges to reporting* under *behaviors to report*. In this process, I relied heavily on grounded theory as I remained open to exploring theoretical possibilities, compared data to data, and carefully worked sentence-to-sentence to stay close to the data (Charmaz 2006). I developed a variety of codes to provide foundation to a next cycle of coding, which lead to a solid conceptual framework. During ‘focused’ coding, I combined codes, determined less fruitful codes, and ultimately focused in on the areas I discuss in the findings section. Here I used the most significant codes and more defined themes to work through the large amount of data at hand.

### **Methodological Challenges and Limitations**

During my research, I encountered a few methodological challenges and limitations. In this section, I briefly discuss limitations as they pertain to my research methods and sampling. Participants were self-selected after being recruited via email listservs sent from the Fraternity

and Sorority Life Office as well as the Club Sports Office on campus. Therefore, I am limited to the students who responded to this email and were willing to discuss their experiences with their organization, creating a potential bias in the results. I tried to assuage this through supplemental snowball sampling, however the limitation still exists. Therefore, this research cannot and should not be considered particularly generalizable to all sorority/fraternity and club sports team members on college campuses. However, considering the secrecy that is typically associated with student organizations such as fraternities and sororities on college campuses, this limitation was expected. Additionally, grounded theory as per Charmaz, emphasizes developing theory that helps researchers understand phenomena in depth, and does not aim to make broad generalizations.

I also interviewed more women than men, however this limitation was also expected, particularly in relation to fraternities. Historically, male fraternities display increased levels of secrecy and often have defined rules regarding information that can be shared to the public. In fact, the fraternity men that I interviewed alluded to this secrecy and often stated that their fraternity emphasizes a principle of not sharing sensitive details about their rituals, creeds, or oaths. In addition to this, college-aged women are often more likely to display altruistic citizenship behavior, such as volunteering as research participants, which also influenced this disparity (Heilman & Chen 2005).

Lack of diversity within the sample, particularly in terms of racial and ethnic diversity, is another critical limitation for this study. All participants I interviewed in this study identified as white. However, because the racial makeup of the undergraduate class at the study university for the 2016-2017 school year was over 70 percent white, this outcome is not entirely unexpected (CSU Factbook 2016). Further research should engage fraternity and sorority members who are



racially and ethnically diverse, particularly including those in predominantly black sororities and fraternities to understand the differences of experiences in these groups across racial identities. Additionally, studying individuals who are alumni of fraternities and sororities may also provide an insightful nuance to this kind of research.

Considering these methodological limitations however, this study is still unique in that it engages fraternity, sorority, and club sports team members in qualitative interviews to gain a deeper understanding of hazing on college campuses. Surely I may not have obtained all possible information from these interviews, however, my study does contribute to the existing literature on this topic and sheds light on lingering research gaps, informs policies on hazing, and generates public discourse on a subject that is shrouded in secrecy, stigma, and contention.

## SECTION IV

### FINDINGS

In this section, I present the study findings within the context of topics covered during the interview. I begin by describing how students define and understand the activity of hazing through their own words. I then discuss respondents' own experiences of hazing, including behaviors they have encountered personally and those that they have witnessed or heard about second-hand from other students. I compare the two sections because, as literature demonstrates, student beliefs about hazing are often influenced by their own experiences and encounters with the behavior (Campos et al. 2005). After this discussion, I compare respondent definitions and understandings of hazing with the University's Student Conduct Code definition of hazing to determine if there are similarities or differences between student definitions and the university definition. Together I use this data to provide suggestions and recommendations to hazing educators and prevention administrators. Finally, there is a discussion of participant rationales of hazing; in particular, I explore why respondents believe that groups engage in hazing behaviors and what functions they believe hazing serves for their organizations.

Throughout this section, I present a rich and thick description of the data to ensure that participants' voices are conveyed in a genuine fashion. The most significant takeaway from this data I present next is that while students generally understand hazing to involve (1) the use of force, (2) the potential for physical or mental harm, and/or (3) displays or demonstrations of new member willingness to participate, those who have experienced or witnessed hazing typically do not ascribe these three themes to *their* own experiences. Moreover, those who indicate witnessing hazing behaviors are unsure whether they would apply the label of hazing at all (even if the event features all three facets of their definition). In other words, as this findings section

shows, there is a disjuncture between how students define and understand hazing, and how they explain their own experiences with it; this replicates much of the existing hazing literature (Allan & Madden 2012; Waldron & Kowalski 2009; Hoover & Pollard 1999; Kimbrough 2007; Silveria & Hudson 2015). I begin by describing how students personally define hazing to serve as a foundation.

### **Defining Hazing**

This section addresses how students understand and define hazing as an activity. This section features three main themes that emerged in student definitions of hazing: use of force, physical or mental abuse, and new member commitment/worthiness. This discussion helps elucidate what aspects of official hazing definitions are memorable or important to students and which parts of these definitions participants do not include or seem to consider as less important. What is of interest here are the themes that emerge between student definitions, the nuances that exist across definitions, as well as the discrepancies that exist between the definitions provided by students and how they conceptualize their own experiences. In the next section, I will use the data I present here as foundation to compare and contrast how students define hazing and how they perceive their experiences of hazing.

#### *Theme #1 – Use of Force*

When asked to define hazing, over half of respondents (n=10) identify hazing as forcing or pressuring individuals to do things that they normally would not do under typical circumstances. This was a consistent theme in participants' definitions and descriptions of hazing. Most students that drew on the idea of force explicitly used that term in their description;

for example, Steven<sup>1</sup> stated that hazing is, “Forcing.... Forcing or like pressuring people who are trying to join an organization to do things that they wouldn’t regularly do.” Similarly, Maura explicitly used the term as she stated that hazing is, “Forcing someone to do something that they wouldn't normally do on their own in order for them to be considered worthy of becoming a member of something”. Students that drew on the idea of force in their definition indicate that hazing explicitly involves members of an organization forcing new or potential members to engage in activities that they normally would not do, in order to be a member of the desired organization.

Other students drew on a more nuanced version of this theme and the ways in which force or pressure is sometimes used to coerce students into these behaviors. For example, Kimberly—while using the word “force” in her definition of hazing—explained that it meant something more coercive:

Encouraging or like making someone, either through threat of not belonging in the group or just through force, to participate, or do anything like that because it doesn’t really have to be negative. Like a lot of time it is [negative], but like hazing’s like... just make them uncomfortable with that.

As she worked through her definition, Kimberly explains that hazing can manifest through force or threat of force, but also can take the form of behaviors that are seemingly benign, such as pressuring potential members to commit acts in order to gain membership to a group. Evan offered a similar definition as he stated that hazing is, “Anything you make another individual do that makes them feel uncomfortable... in the context of a group setting where peer pressure is implied or real.”

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<sup>1</sup> All names used are pseudonyms assigned to participants to protect their identity and to maintain confidentiality.

Carl also drew on a nuanced understanding of force when he offered his definition of hazing. He explains that hazing can be achieved through coercion of new members. He stated:

I would have to say, I think hazing is like, when you're basically coercing people into doing, you know, being part of your ideal group by unethical or immoral means or illegal means, too....Doesn't have to be making pledges do something. I would say, when you're kind of like, "I want to be a part of this group:", you have to show your loyalty or obedience.

These narratives indicate that, for these respondents, hazing can take the form of peer pressure or coercion of new members to participate in activities to be accepted into their group. This contrasts with those respondents who believe that hazing only involves explicit use of force to make new members participate in activities to gain membership or affiliation with the desired group. This theme of hazing through peer pressure or coercion expressed by participants in the current study contrasts with some of the research on hazing in which students strongly associate hazing with physical force alone (Allan & Madden 2008). This could indicate that more specific definitions and examples of hazing that involve physical force, peer pressure, and coercion, are being distributed to student bodies and internalized into student definitions of hazing. Therefore, ongoing hazing programming should continue to emphasize this aspect of hazing in their messaging to students. Taken as a whole, these narratives indicate that most students (n=10) understand hazing to involve the use or threat of force. The theme of force was indicated by members of fraternities, sororities, and club sports teams, meaning that this aspect of the definition of hazing spans widely across student organizations. However, there are differences in this theme as some participants offer more subtle understandings of the idea "force" and explain that explicit force is not necessary for an act to be considered hazing, and that peer pressure and coercion are also important factors in their definitions of hazing.

## *Theme #2 - Physical and Mental Abuse*

The second theme that emerged from student descriptions of hazing includes the concepts of physical or mental abuse or discomfort. Six respondents drew on this theme when defining hazing. In particular, they explained that hazing is not just about the use of force or coercion from the perpetrator(s), but that for an action to be considered hazing it must also cause the member some kind of mental distress or physical harm. As the narratives below indicate, participants typically drew on words like creating “distress”, “discomfort”, or “harm” to “victims” in order to illuminate this attitude. Travis illustrates this idea well when he explained that hazing is, “Something that causes emotional, physical, or psychological distress to somebody, against their will.” Similarly, Evan explained that hazing is, “Anything you make another individual do that makes them feel uncomfortable. I guess in the context of a group setting where peer pressure is implied or real.” This consideration of creating potential harm is also in April’s definition where she states that hazing is, “Making people do something that makes them feel uncomfortable. Something they don’t want to do that could harm them, mentally or physically.” Notably, all three of these participants also explain how the use of force is central to defining hazing.

Like the first theme that addressed the use of force or coercion as central to their understanding of hazing, participants across fraternities, sororities, and club sports also pointed to the creation of discomfort, distress, and/or harm in their definition of hazing; notably, though, this theme was less prevalent. Moreover, as I will unpack more fully later and as I have stated in earlier sections, while participants understand this idea as part and parcel to their definition of hazing, they typically do not define hazing activities that they have experienced or witnessed as harmful.

### *Theme #3 – New Member Commitment/Worthiness*

The final major theme in student definitions of hazing was the idea that hazing involves new or potential members showing or demonstrating values such as commitment or worthiness to be accepted into a desired group. Five respondents drew on this theme when providing their definition of hazing. For example, Martha, a club sports team member, stated that hazing is, “Like a challenge that you have to overcome to be accepted into a group.” Ruth offers a similar definition as she stated that hazing is: “Forcing someone to do something that they wouldn't normally do on their own in order for them to be considered worthy of becoming a member of something.” Carl, who’s definition is listed earlier, also understands hazing as an activity in which new members show their willingness and commitment to take on the values of the dominant group, much like Martha and Ruth. Further, Carl associates hazing with fostering values such as loyalty or obedience.

Overall, then, for one-third of respondents, recruiting and shaping the best new members is an integral component of student definitions of hazing. Additionally, unlike the first two themes where participants were equally likely to integrate them into their definitions of hazing, more club sports team members (n=3) (20%) indicated this theme than did fraternity members (n=1) (7%) or sorority members (n=1) (7%). This means that the idea of new member worthiness may be more strongly associated with club sports teams, in which new members must successfully try-out to gain membership on certain teams<sup>2</sup>. This information could be used to develop hazing prevention/education programming that is different and more targeted for those in club sports than the hazing programming created for sororities or fraternities.

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<sup>2</sup> Note: While many club sports teams require try-outs to be placed onto the team, not all club sports teams have this requirement.

### *Differences/Discrepancies Between Student Definitions and University Definition*

With student definitions as a foundation for discussion, this section unpacks the differences that emerge between how students define hazing and how the university defines hazing. During our interviews, after respondents offered their own definitions, we would compare and contrast their definitions with the university definitions, which I would read aloud and offer them to look at on paper. To frame this discussion, I offer the university definition of hazing before describing these differences. The definition of hazing is as follows:

Any act that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student, or which destroys or removes public or private property for the purpose of initiation, admission into, affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in a group or student organization. The express or implied consent of the victim will not be a defense (CSU Student Conduct Code, 2016).

I include this section because understanding discrepancies between the university definition and respondent definitions can help inform administrators and educators better frame the concept of hazing to students in a way that resonates more clearly and persuasively to them.

### *Theme #1 – University Definition Perceived as Too Broad*

The first theme that describes the differences between student definitions and the university definition of hazing is that respondents perceive the University Student Code of Conduct definition as a broad and encompassing definition that is meant to cover too wide of a variety of behaviors, often to a fault. Students define hazing in a narrower way than the university, and this means that student definitions do not often include activities that are, according to the University, hazing behaviors. For instance, after providing his initial definition of hazing, Travis stated that:

I understand [my definition] doesn't really fit with [the university's] which is a more



broad strokes, that way they can cover a lot more. But that's something I've come to, where it's like if [an activity] fits our values, you should wanna participate in it.

While he does provide a definition of hazing that includes the use of force and the potential for harm, (see section above), Travis also indicates in this narrative that he believes that his definition is purposefully less specific than his university's policy. Moreover, one reason offers a more specialized definition is to rationalize and include activities that are aligned with his fraternity's values and creed, which he acknowledges the university might consider to be hazing.

Like Travis, Lindsey believes that the university definition of hazing is too broad. About this, she stated that, “[The university's] definition is a lot more broad. I mean, I personally think [my chapter], we can't hardly do anything because it's always considered hazing.” Unlike Travis who justifies his fraternity's behaviors by drawing on his fraternity values and creed, Lindsay views the University definition as too narrow because she believes it significantly limits the activities her group participates in. Interestingly, Lindsey did not indicate that her sorority avoids hazing for the good of her group or to protect new members, but to AVOID the label of hazing and the consequences that are associated with this label. Together, these examples illustrate student perceptions about the breadth of the university definition, student concerns about this breadth, and – thus—why dissonance exists between student and university definitions of hazing.

### *Theme #2 - Hazing as related to group/organizational membership*

While the university definition clearly delineates hazing as something that occurs alongside initiation or membership to a group, a full one-third of respondents (N=5) in the current study did not identify hazing as relating to group or organizational membership whatsoever. This is slightly contradictory to the 3<sup>rd</sup> theme of student definitions (new member commitment/worthiness), however this indicates that there is dissonance or confusion of how to

define hazing between respondents of this study, as 33 percent of respondents relate hazing with being a member of a group, while another 33 percent did not identify hazing as related with group membership. For example, June states that her definition of hazing is, “Making someone do something that they’re not exactly wanting to do to be accepted.” Here, it is evident that her understanding of hazing does not have any organizational component associated with the behavior, although acceptance of others is clearly important in her definition. April also omits the concept of group or organizational membership from her definition as she states that hazing is, “Making people do something that makes them feel uncomfortable. Something they don’t want to do that could harm them, mentally or physically.” Andrea, who has been a member of a club sports team for three years, provides another example of an inconsistent definition of hazing that does not include the idea being related to organizational membership. She states that:

Hazing is, in a way, pressuring someone to do something, even if it’s something that they wanted to do, or didn’t want to do. Just putting that pressure on them to do a certain thing that they normally wouldn’t do.

Respondents who did not include the idea of hazing being related to organizational membership include members of club sports teams, sororities, and fraternities. This contradiction with the earlier theme of New Member Commitment/Worthiness indicates that there is a discrepancy or confusion in respondent understandings of the organizational component of hazing. Overall, education on hazing at this particular university may need to be clarified to ensure that students in all organizations understand how hazing is defined by the university.

### *Theme #3 - Consent*

The final key difference between the university definition of hazing and how students define hazing involves the issue of consent. The majority of respondents (n=11) did not initially

include the idea of the inability to consent to hazing in their definition. Whereas the university explicitly states that, “Express or implied consent of the victim will not be a defense” against hazing, most participant definitions did not draw on or include this idea. The majority of respondents did not indicate that hazing occurs regardless of one’s willingness to engage in the activity. This is an important concept to highlight as the power imbalance alongside force or peer pressure of hazing behaviors renders one unable to consent to the activity.

After respondents offered their definitions of hazing, we would compare and contrast their ideas with the university definition of hazing. Those respondents who did not initially include the idea of consent in their definition typically agreed that they should have included it in their definition. For example, Martha stated she would include it, “Because even if you say yes or no, it’s either because you were under pressure or scared.” However, in stark contrast, there was a minority of respondents (n=2) who did not agree with this part of the official definition of hazing and state that they would not include it in their own understanding of hazing. As described below, these students provide very similar reasons for not including the notion of consent (or the inability to consent) in their definitions.

Steven: It's like, like you're not putting a gun to a pledges' head. They chose to do it, and that takes away their... you're deeming them unfit to make choices for their own safety... At any moment a pledge or any person who is being hazed could be like, “Okay,” [and leave].

Travis: Because I think [my definition] gives a lot more credit to the people asking the initiates to do something, because you can obviously coerce somebody into being like, “Yeah, you guys are really cool! I wanna do this! I'll eat that egg!” Whereas, I guess I put a little bit more faith in we're doing this [activity] because of our values... like scavenger hunts is a really big hot topic with hazing. Everybody's like, “Scavenger hunts are stupid,” but I feel like if you do it where you learn about the school, go through downtown, find all these landmarks and there's paragraphs about them, and here's like our local chapter history with this or that. Like it could be structured much better I think so, whether or not they want to do it, essentially, it's like for the better for you.

Here, Steven and Travis, both fraternity members, imply that to officially disallow students from being able to consent to hazing behaviors stripes individuals of their agency or ability to make decisions about the activities in which they participate. These participants believe that the inability to consent to hazing behaviors goes against their ability to choose what behaviors to engage in and instead, these decisions can and should be left to individual members who have the power to say “yes” or “no.”

These explanations are similar to the mindset held during the bystander or no duty era of higher education in which universities held no responsibility in the activities in which their students participated. In this era from the late 1970s through the mid-1980s, court rulings dictated that universities had no authority or obligation to ensure the safety of students in cases of hazing. While this is not the case today, many students, faculty, and staff still hold the mindset that universities have no responsibility to students outside of providing an education. However, because of the power imbalance often associated with hazing activities, along with the force or implied peer pressure to engage in hazing activities, this institution removes consent of the victim as a protection for those who haze. While students may hold the mindset that they can consent and agree to be hazed, this is still against university policy on hazing. Additionally, the nature of these responses is connected to the importance of education on consent, such as what it is, how to give consent, and situations or factors that can void the ability to consent to activities (such as those in which someone is intoxicated, or when there is a power imbalance between individuals).

Therefore, this university’s hazing education and prevention campaigns may need to emphasize the shared responsibility between students and university officials in ensuring a safe campus community. Further, it may be useful for this university to more clearly articulate the

relationship between their definition and policy on hazing and the inability to consent to hazing behaviors.

Thus, the findings presented so far in this thesis show that there are three main themes in student definitions of hazing which are (1) use of force, (2) the potential for mental or physical abuse or harm, and (3) new member commitment/worthiness. Further, I have outlined key differences in student definitions and the university definition of hazing, which are (1) student definitions are more narrow than the university definition (2) hazing as related to group/organizational membership and (3) consent or the lack thereof, which is an integral part of the university definition yet contested among respondents. These findings largely replicate existing hazing literature (Allan & Madden 2012; Waldron & Kowalski 2009; Hoover & Pollard 1999; Kimbrough 2007; Silveria & Hudson 2015); however, the findings from this qualitative project add depth and nuance to these understandings. More specifically, they illustrate the discrepancies between student definitions and the university definition of hazing, as well as providing a discussion on why these discrepancies may exist. Now that I have provided a foundation of how respondents personally define hazing and how these definitions do not correspond with the university's definition, I describe respondents' own experiences and accounts of hazing.

### **Experiences of Hazing**

In this section, I describe respondents' own experiences of hazing that they disclosed in our interviews. I include these narratives because existing hazing research indicates that experiencing hazing personally can influence how one perceives hazing activities (and thus how they define or understand hazing) (Campos et al. 2005). As Campos and colleagues explain,

susceptibility and perceptions of harm are important factors in an individual's decision to engage in a given behavior (2005:147). Specifically, they find that "If a student engages in hazing and does not perceive great harm, the student may feel positively toward the experience and in turn, may feel that [they are] both less susceptible to hazing and that hazing is not harmful," (Campos et al. 2005:147).

To evaluate this relationship between hazing experiences and perceptions of harm in this project, I unpack how participants understood their own experiences with hazing (if they occurred), and whether those students considered them to be serious, minor, or somewhere in between. As I indicate below, most students who experienced hazing did not associate significant negative consequences with their experiences. As expressed in the data I present next, respondents' experiences with hazing are often not congruent with their expressed definitions or understandings of it. While harm is central to students own definition of hazing, they perceive their own experiences and accounts as not harmful or serious. Clearly, this perception is critical to understanding why the participants in this study do not conceptualize their experiences as hazing.

Of all participants, 67 percent (n=10), reported either personally experiencing or witnessing behaviors that they considered hazing. There are respondents who experienced multiple hazing behaviors within the context of their organization (e.g. being kidnapped by older members and being forced to consume large amounts of alcohol in the context of one organization). The data I report in this section includes not only participant direct experience with hazing but also accounts of hazing that friends reported to participants; in other words, the data I discuss below includes both first and second-hand accounts of hazing. I include this category because friends' experiences and susceptibilities to hazing can also impact how one

thinks about hazing; specifically, student perceptions of friends' attitudes toward hazing is a significant predictor of participation in hazing activities (Campos et al. 2005). Table 3-5 demonstrates the forms of hazing that participants in the current study reported experiencing.

*Table 3. Description of Reported Experiences of Hazing*

Relationship to Hazing Experience		
Self-Experience	Secondhand Account	Both Self & Secondhand
7	6	3

*Table 4. Hazing Experiences or Secondhand Accounts*

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Experience or Account</b>	<b>Form of Hazing Behavior</b>
Fraternity	Experience	Forced to drink a large amount of alcohol
Fraternity	Account	Kidnapping/transporting and abandoning others
Fraternity	Account	Forced to drink a large amount of alcohol
Fraternity	Experience	Forced to drink a large amount of alcohol
Fraternity	Account	Being forced to associate with specific people and not others
Fraternity	Account	Being forced to sing or chant
Fraternity	Experience	Being yelled/cursed/sworn at
Sorority	Experience	Being yelled/cursed/sworn at
Sorority	Account	Being forced to sing or chant
Club Sports Team	Experience	Being forced to wear embarrassing clothing
Club Sports Team	Experience	Being forced to wear embarrassing clothing
Club Sports Team	Account	Forced to drink a large amount of alcohol
Club Sports Team	Experience	Kidnapping/transporting and abandoning others

*Table 5. Percentages of Hazing Behaviors Experienced/Reported*

Form of Behavior	Count and Percentage of Hazing Behavior
Forced to drink a large amount of alcohol	n=4, 30.8%
Kidnapping/transporting and abandoning others	n=2, 15.3%
Being forced to wear embarrassing clothing	n=2, 15.3%
Being forced to sing or chant	n=2, 15.3%
Being yelled/cursed/sworn at	n=2, 15.3%
Being forced to associate with specific people and not others	n=1, 7.6%
	Total = 13, 100%.

As these tables illustrate, around 31 percent of hazing experiences or accounts involved forced alcohol consumption. Following this behavior, there are four activities that are indicated by similar numbers of respondents: being yelled/cursed/sworn at (15.3%), kidnapping/transporting and abandoning others (15.3%), being forced to sing or chant (15.3%), and being forced to wear embarrassing clothing (15.3%). My research demonstrates that forced consumption of alcohol is a prevalent hazing activity, which is similar to existing understandings of hazing (Allan & Madden 2008; Campos et al. 2005). Fraternity members reported experiencing hazing through forced alcohol consumption more often than members of sororities or club sports teams, a trend that is evident in hazing literature (Allan & Madden 2008). Finally, this data also shows that while experiences of hazing are prevalent in fraternities, they also exist in sororities and club sports teams. Because the current study focuses on an organization outside



of Greek life – club sports – these findings help fill a gap in the research which has historically been limited to Greek organizations and varsity athletic teams.

Some experiences of hazing occurred during recruitment or initial processes of joining the desired group, which is unsurprising considering the organizational membership component of hazing. Steven who has been in his fraternity for three years, had the most pervasive and detailed experiences of hazing in the context of recruitment and initiation of all interviews thus I discuss his experience at length here. He stated he had multiple encounters with hazing throughout his own fraternity recruitment and initiation process. As he discussed, during their rushing semester, all recruits must pass multiple tests, with subjects ranging from fraternity history to core values. These tests, according to Steven, are very high stakes, and recruits are often reminded that, “Everyone needs to get a 70 percent or there will be problems,” indicating that negative consequences will occur for all recruits if they do not pass this threshold. Steven then described the psychological stress that recruits endured as they prepared for these tests. Recruited members are yelled and cursed at about passing these tests, often being told, “You’re not going to fucking make it,” “Why the fuck don’t you have a pass? I told you to fucking do it,” throughout this time. Steven emphasized the pervasiveness of this harassment as he mentioned that this occurred at weekly meetings for potential members during their rushing semester.

Steven explained that in addition to passing tests, all recruits must receive signatures from at least 90 percent of active members in the fraternity before gaining admission. To obtain these signatures, recruits must engage in a multitude of activities, which are determined by the active members. This requirement alone sets up a power differential that creates the potential for hazing activities. Specifically, by requiring new members to obtain current members’ signatures, current members are in a position of power over new members and have the ability to influence

new members to do whatever it takes to obtain their signature. Steven describes this process by stating:

There's like incentives too... Now pledges are like, "Hey I have like a meal swipe if you want an interview. But I rushed as a sophomore so I couldn't offer meal swipes. So I had to find a time. But [the meetings are] usually in the library so I'd sit down with them. It depends, like if they were in a rush, though, there'll be like asking four or five questions... Other brothers are pretty stingy though, like, "No I want good questions." And some are like, "Just go through and talk to me and I'll sign."

Finally, and most troubling, Steven recounted the climax of his recruitment process, or the last hurdle before his recruitment cohort was initiated. To describe the week leading up to the main recruitment event, Steven stated:

The Tuesday before was [our] last meeting and [we] took the tests. And then they'd be like, "Everyone needs to pass this test or you guys aren't getting in." But the next day, the pledge educator will text like, "You guys are trouble, three of you failed," or something like that like where you know, like don't talk to [the pledges] or associate with them like throughout the rest of the week. If we see him you know, no eye contact the whole week, like "Shit. What the fuck. What did we do?"

The last day of the recruitment process for Steven was a night up in the mountains in which his recruitment class must go through multiple stations of questions while being harassed and berated. Steven described this by saying:

[Active brothers] are like "Show up at the house in two hours and dress warm[ly]," so you're like, "Okay, what is that?" ... And it's like snowing out... And then we would just go up to the mountains and then like do our like, ritualized thing... So it's just like, go up to the mountain and then you're paired with another brother and you just go through, I guess these, stations are what they're called and at each station, there's brothers there and they like, say one of our core values or ritualistic things and then you go through this process like at the top of the mountain. And they're just like, yelling at you, like, "We told you like to get it, like you didn't. You failed!"

In reference to this high-stress event when he was going through the initiation process, Steven states, "I was really scared as a pledge... Am I going to get in? Like the active brothers aren't my friends," indicating that this process made him feel fear, uncertainty at the prospect of being

admitted, and even alienated from the active members of the fraternity. However, this event did not dissuade Steven from engaging in hazing behaviors during his active membership in the fraternity. Later in our conversation, he describes a night in which he and other members kidnapped a new member of the fraternity, which is prohibited by the university hazing policy and the national fraternity policy. During this night, he and other members engaged in several tasks with the kidnapped new member, including drinking alcohol on the steps of a university building and trespassing onto university property after hours.

While Steven's experience with hazing should be considered more extreme because of his repeated experiences with it, April also experienced hazing during her recruitment process. April, who has been in her sorority for three-and-a-half years stated that through the course of Work Week (another term for their Recruitment Week), her Recruitment Chair often yelled at sorority members. April also mentioned that sorority women engage in ritualistic singing and chanting throughout the recruitment and initiation process. During our interview, I asked which, from a list of hazing behaviors, she had experienced. She responded by stating: "Definitely the singing and chanting; it happens all the times for all sorts of things. Most of it isn't bad stuff, mostly performances. Um, I guess we get yelled at, Work Week, it's like "Ladies, shush, get in line!" April considers being yelled at to be a hazing behavior and identifies that she has experienced this behavior; however immediately after indicating she had experienced this, she indicates that it is within the broader context of recruitment and is not necessarily harmful or derogatory in her mind ("Most of it isn't bad stuff"). Both April and Steven's experiences highlight hazing as part of the learning process of being in a student organization: Recruitment Chairs provide discipline and show new members 'how to be' in a fraternity or sorority,

including their typical norms, rules, and procedures. This can sometimes lead to acts of hazing to achieve these goals.

Laura, another sorority woman, reported witnessing and experiencing hazing as part of recruitment. During the weekly mandatory dinners throughout her three-and-a-half years in the sorority, fraternity recruits visit the dinners and must sing to the sorority women before they are allowed to begin to eat. In these instances, new member educators from the fraternity introduce the hopeful fraternity members and then the pledging members sing to the sorority women. Once they are finished, they introduce themselves by name and often hand the women roses before leaving the sorority house. In this instance, both men and women are forced to participate in this hazing behavior, as the men must serenade the women and the women must sit and receive the serenade and rose before they are allowed to eat dinner.

This type of hazing also brings in question the gendered relationship and stereotypes that exist between sorority women being serenaded and the recruited fraternity men doing so. Fraternities often emphasize heterosexual masculinity (Clemons 2015) and in this event, men that may not identify as heterosexual could feel marginalized. However, in the context of seeking admission to the fraternity, they may feel pressure to participate and the need to suppress their sexuality and emphasize hegemonic masculinity in order to fit in and gain admission into the fraternity (Clemons 2015; Nuwer 2004). Similarly, women who do not identify as heterosexual may feel a similar conflict as they are being serenaded and given roses by the potential fraternity members.

Like Laura's account of hazing that is very tied into societal notions of masculinity, Ruth, a senior who has been on a club sports team for three years has witnessed acts of hazing between members of another club sports team. She told me that during social events, the men on the team,

“Are always forcing each other to drink more,” and often challenge one another to consume more alcohol when in group settings. However, Ruth discounts the seriousness of these activities due to stereotypical nature of men, by stating that “I feel like they’re just boys and they’re just playing,” drawing on notions of patriarchy that dismiss the seriousness of men’s actions and naturalize masculine aggression and engagement in potentially harmful activities such as excessive drinking.

Travis echoed this idea of hazing associated with excessive drinking when providing an account of a close friend’s night of hazing. Travis, whose group membership included being a fraternity member for two-and-a-half years and a club sport’s team member for a year-and-a-half drew on an account that a close friend had divulged to him. This discussion centered on a night of hazing that one of his fraternity brothers had experienced as part of another fraternity’s initiation. This event ultimately influenced his friend to end the initiation process with the other fraternity, before seeking out Travis’s current organization. When describing this event, he stated:

They hazed the hell out of him...The only thing I was able to really get out from him was, ‘They got us really fucked up (intoxicated), they drove out to the woods, they dropped us off...’

I asked him to elaborate more fully on the event and wanted to know how he perceived his brother’s emotions regarding the event. He continued:

He sounded very frightened. He isn’t one to be shaken but he was pretty shaken by it. With a group of people that you trust and they’re like, “Hey, put this bag on your head,” and then it gets really serious. “I thought we were having a good time here,” and they’re like, “Oh we’re going to have a good time. Put this bag on your head,” kind of thing.... Middle of the night, threw him in a van, car whatever, and took him up into the mountains. They were like, “Alright, you guys need to survive the night. Here’s a bunch of booze, you need to have that killed by the time we get back.” And of course when they (pledging brothers) get back and they’re like, “Fuck you guys, what the hell is this?” They’re (active brothers) just like... “It’s just a prank, bro!” Like, “We didn’t mean that you actually had to do it!”

In this description, Travis's friend was kidnapped and transported to another location and told that they had to drink a large amount of alcohol. However, when confronted by the recruited members, active members discounted the entire event as a 'prank,' and shirked responsibility for the incident. After this event, Travis's friend dropped out of pledging this fraternity and instead came to Travis's current fraternity.

While almost all personal accounts of hazing occurred during the respondents' college experience (n=9), this was not the case for all respondents. One example of this is evident in Martha's account of a hazing tradition for new members of the softball team during her junior year of high school. Martha, who is a member of a club sports team, told me that her parents had been 'in' on the activities, which included being blindfolded and kidnapped in the middle of the night from her house, dressed up as "hobos" and being forced to wear the embarrassing outfits the next day at school until they had softball practice in the afternoon. In addition to the outfit, she told me that each new member had to carry around an embarrassing sign around their neck, her sign reading, "Something about 'feed me, I have no money,'" because the coach knew that she loved food. Further, Martha stated that the event was posted on social media and was "All over Facebook the whole day," including numerous pictures of the new members dressed up as hobos with their signs.

These narratives of hazing experiences demonstrate that hazing can vary widely in its form and that it exists in a variety of student organizations. In this research, fraternity members (n=7) indicated experiencing hazing behaviors more so than those in sororities (n=2) or on club sports teams (n=4). The majority of hazing experiences (54%) were associated with group initiation or recruitment, which reinforces and contributes to hazing literature on rites of passage (Hoover & Pollard 1999; Nuwer 1990; Waldron & Kowalski 2009; Sweet 1999). Finally, forced

alcohol consumption is a primary physical hazing activity, with over half of reports indicating this activity (57%) (Allan & Madden 2008; Campos et al. 2005).

*How do experiences of hazing influence how students think about hazing?*

Directly experiencing or witnessing hazing behaviors did not seem to have an adverse effect on respondents in this study. For instance, Martha, who was hazed during high school as part of her membership on a sports team stated that “Looking back, it was just as harmless as it felt” and she explained that she was not negatively emotionally or psychologically impacted by the event. This experience and the lack of harm that she associates with it could influence how she perceives other acts of hazing, particularly when thinking about her susceptibility of harm in further hazing activities (Campos et al. 2005). This means that based on her own experience of hazing, which she considers to be harmless, she could be acceptable of more dangerous hazing in the future. Additionally, this could lead her to perceive future hazing events that others experience as benign or harmless, as well (Campos et al. 2005). In a future situation of hazing, this belief could impact whether she formally reports the incident or even if she seeks help in dangerous hazing situations.

Similarly, Steven who had experienced pervasive hazing throughout his recruitment and initiation experience, still chose to subject new members to hazing behaviors, perpetuating the cycle of hazing in which those who are hazed later become hazers to new recruits. This finding is supported by and reinforces the existing literature that documents the cyclical nature of hazing (Campos et al. 2005; Keating et al. 2005; Nuwer 1990; Sweet 1999).

While these narratives are fairly similar in their assessment of the harmfulness of hazing, this is not true for all respondents. While those who personally experienced hazing generally did

not indicate they had been strongly negatively affected, those who provided secondhand accounts of hazing were generally not even certain whether they had witnessed hazing or not. Laura, who described experiencing fraternity serenades at her sorority dinners, displayed uncertainty regarding what she had witnessed and experienced throughout the years with her sorority. She stated, “I can’t decide if it’s hazing or not though... it’s just been kind of a tradition for a lot of fraternities.” In this statement, Laura exemplifies the idea of hazing as tradition, yet is clearly conflicted about whether this activity, which she has witnessed multiple times, should be classified as hazing.

More concerned than Laura is Ruth, who witnessed male sports club team members challenging each other to consume more alcohol during their initial membership celebrations. She highlighted her uncertainty in what was considered typical group antics and what crossed the line into hazing territory. Ruth described these feelings by saying:

I think there is a very fine line between knowing [what hazing is and what hazing is not] and I wish that I knew better. What that line is of when you need to call and get him actual help, or if it’s just one of those things where it’s like, ‘give him a lot of water, he needs sleep.’

This description indicates that Ruth is uncertain regarding what behaviors should be classified as hazing, and that she wants to ‘know better’ and that she would potentially be receptive to receiving additional education and information about hazing. Laura and Ruth’s narratives together show an uncertainty of what behaviors should be classified as hazing and how to spot hazing in real-life settings.

These narratives together show that respondents who have been hazed or have accounts of hazing do not feel strongly about their experiences in a particularly negative way. Ruth, the respondent who felt conflicted about the hazing that she witnessed, felt so largely out of



confusion of what she should consider typical banter and horseplay and what is considered hazing and dangerous alcohol consumption. This finding may inform how those invested in hazing prevention and education should frame their tactics; it may not be enough to have a speaker discuss their own negative experiences of hazing, as these do not seem to strongly resonate with students, because their own experiences with hazing can negate or neutralize perceived harm associated with hazing.

Based on these narratives, it is evident that respondents have encountered a variety of hazing activities. Interestingly, these experiences and accounts indicate there is a disjuncture between how respondents define hazing and how they classify their own experiences. While students generally define hazing as any activity involving use of force or pressure, that may induce physical or mental distress, discomfort, or harm, and is meant to show or prove new member worthiness or commitment, respondents rationalize their own experiences of hazing behaviors as non-severe or inconsequential. In the next section, I discuss respondents' rationales for hazing, or why students believe that hazing occurs. This is important to include as it provides information for educators and administrators to use as the basis of alternative activities for groups to engage in that can fill the role or function that students turn to hazing to achieve.

### **Why Do Groups Haze?**

The next topic covered during the interviews centers on student opinion of why groups haze, or the broader rationale for why hazing exists in student organizations today. This section also unpacks some of the functions that respondents believe hazing serves. This discussion sheds light on the disjuncture that exists between how students define hazing and how they understand their own experiences. In particular, respondents offer three main themes of bonding,

tradition/cycle of hazing, and elitism as functions or explanations of why hazing occurs. By understanding some of the purposes that respondents associate with hazing, educators can use this information to emphasize alternatives activities to achieve similar purposes.

### *Bonding*

One of the most common rationales or utilities that respondents associate with hazing is its ability to bond members together (n=7). Students believe that hazing exists to foster and develop cohesion between members in student organizations and groups. This is evident in my conversation with Steven, the 21-year-old senior. In his discussion of why groups engage in hazing activities, he stated, “If you want to be in a group you've gotta show that you want to be in the group and that you're willing to be. Show your effort and that makes pledges feel closer... Like you're not gonna just get in because you want to.”

This narrative shows how Steven thinks that hazing ensures new members put forth effort before they are allowed membership into a group. Along these lines, other participants indicate that they perceived hazing as a way to increase group cohesion. For instance, Timothy, stated that hazing brings people together because, “If everyone has to do that one shitty thing, that's the one thing that brings everyone together. It's like the common denominator for everyone on the team.” Being on his team for three years, Timothy understands hazing as an activity to bond new members both with other new members, but also with the active/existing members of the group or team. Like Timothy, Maura, a junior in a sorority, notes that hazing functions to bring people together through a shared negative or difficult experience, and that this experience serves as a common bond for all new members. She states that:

[Hazing's] like a unifying factor of like, 'This is how you bond and this is how you have a shared experience'... If you go through something horrible together you'll all be like, "Wow, that was really shitty but we did it together."

Finally, April, the sorority member who experienced being yelled at by her Recruitment Chair during each Recruitment Week's proceedings, neutralizes the severity of her experience by explaining why the behavior occurs. April states:

It's like, you have to learn those things to recruit girls... But Greek life isn't my whole life kind of thing. A lot of people take it very seriously but to me, I'm like, 'Oh my goodness; this is so silly.' They're important in the end, I guess.

For this participant, being yelled at by her Recruitment Chair is just a normal part of the recruitment process, and therefore she rationalizes this experience due to this belief. April made it clear that while the ritual of Work Week isn't something that she takes as seriously as other members of the sorority, it is still a vital part of the recruitment process to other women in her sorority. She explained that the purpose of hazing, to bond women together and provide a sense of identity to those in the sorority, overrides the negative outcomes that could be associated with the behavior. When asked how she felt about these experiences, April normalized the activity and minimized her relationship with the sorority ("Greek life isn't my whole life"), while indicating that some sorority sisters only identify as a sorority woman. This means that in April's perspective, many of her sorority sisters organize their identity around their sorority status, and this could mean that the women are willing to endure hazing behaviors to achieve this status with their sorority sisters.

These narratives taken together provide a clear picture of a major function that respondents believe that hazing serves, which is to bond new members together as a group, but also to bond new members with the existing members of an organization. For this reason, respondents may not perceive hazing experiences as such because they serve the higher function

of bringing members together. This theme is strongly supported by hazing literature that demonstrates that many believe that hazing bonds group members together (Campos et al. 2005). Importantly though, this literature also indicates that while bonding is a perceived benefit of hazing, researchers find that severe hazing activities actually produce emotions of loneliness, frustration, and alienation from the group (Lodewijkx & Syroit 1997). This was not entirely evident in my data, as respondents broadly did not associate strong negative consequences with hazing they have witnessed or experiences. Alternatively, students may feel uncomfortable discussing these negative feelings face-to-face with a researcher. With this knowledge in mind, university administrators and individuals involved in education and prevention campaigns can emphasize alternative activities to bond groups together, potentially reducing the necessity for hazing amongst groups on campus.

### *Tradition/Cycle of Hazing*

The next function or rationale respondents provided is that hazing occurs as a cycle, and it is perpetuated by those who endured it previously. Those who have been prior victims of hazing want to be done to the newcomers what was done to them. Several students (n=5) provided this response as a feature of hazing. For instance, Carl from club sports stated that hazing serves a purpose of tradition. He elaborated by stating, “If you’re a member of this group that’s already been through hazing, it’s kind of like, ‘If I had to go through it, you have to go through it.’ There’s no change allowed...” In this description, Carl understands hazing as a rigid form of tradition, and those that endure hazing must then inflict it on the next group of recruited members. Evan echoes this belief and states that it occurs because of the mindset that, “This happened to me, so it’s gonna happen to the next group.”

Andrea, who has been on a club sports team for three years, stated that hazing occurs because, “They’ve all been through the same thing and it’s like a rite of passage, or like the older people think they can look down or are above the new people.” Andrea describes the cyclical nature of hazing where older members haze new members because they were hazed previously. In her analysis, Andrea also views hazing as establishing a power differential between active and new members.

Respondents who drew on this theme indicate that hazing functions as a cycle in which hazing becomes hazing after they are affirmed into the group. Students may neutralize the harm of their experiences of hazing, especially after the fact, because “it’s just tradition,” which further perpetuates this cycle of behavior because it minimizes harm and constructs it as important to the mission of the group. This theme contributes to existing literature on hazing, specifically literature on the cycle of hazing and rites of passage, in which, “Pledges are asked to perform hazing practices...after their hazing ends, new members become hazers, thus perpetuating a hazing cycle,” (Campos et al. 2005:138; Nuwer 1990; Nuwer 2001; Ramzy & Bryant 1962; Sweet 1999; Jones 2000). This theme demonstrates why university hazing prevention can be so difficult to achieve: the cyclical manner of the behavior, coupled with the student turnover for any group, means that hazing prevention must be an ongoing pursuit for any university seeking to achieve campus safety. This theme also offers a point of entrance for hazing educators which is to offer ideas for new student traditions that are not centered on hazing behaviors.

### *Elitism*

Finally, a less common theme (n=4) that emerged on this topic is the idea that student groups haze new members to foster elitism within their organizations. Those who want to be

granted admission must demonstrate that they are ‘the best,’ and this means enduring particular hazing behaviors to achieve this status. For example, Kimberly, the freshman sorority member states that:

I think some people hold the mindset that like, they need to make the group elite and to do that they need the best of the best, so they need the people that can like withstand the hazing.

This means that to admit only “the best” members into their group, organizations engage in hazing to filter out individuals perceived as weaker or in some way inferior. This is echoed in Carl’s discussion where he mentions that hazing is a way for new members to show loyalty and obedience to active members. This rationale for hazing is very similar to Theme #3 from definitions of hazing, which discusses new member commitment or willingness to participate in activities, meaning that students may link this outcome of elitism to their definitions of hazing. This theme reinforces research on hazing that finds perceived benefits of hazing include fostering organizational respect, discipline, and loyalty (Campos et al. 2005) and the selection of committed group members (Cimino 2011).

### *Summary*

As described throughout this section, student definitions of hazing revolve around the main themes of use of force, physical or mental harm, and demonstrating new member commitment/worthiness. Students were able to identify and include these tenets of hazing into their definitions. However, the concepts of consent and group/organizational membership were often left out of student definitions. This means that a) these students either do not consider these components important to the definition of hazing, or b) they do not consider these components to be in their definitions at all.

Additionally, respondent narratives indicate that hazing ultimately takes a variety of forms and manifests as varying behaviors for students in fraternities, sororities, and club sports teams. Those in all three organizations indicate that they have either experienced or witnessed forced alcohol consumption; this prevalence echoes existing literature findings on this topic (Hoover & Pollard 1999; Allan & Madden 2012). However, there are also activities that seem to be specific to the organization type, such as being yelled/sworn/cursed at in Greek organizations, and being forced to wear embarrassing clothes in club sports teams. Broadly though, there is a disjuncture between how students define hazing themselves, and how they consider their own experiences with the activities. For instance, those who experienced hazing do not consider their own experiences to have been harmful. Those who only witnessed hazing behaviors (such as forced alcohol consumption) were not sure whether to classify the activity as hazing at all. This disjuncture largely replicates what exists in hazing literature (Waldron & Kowalski 2009; Allan & Madden 2012; Hoover & Pollard 1999; Kimbrough 2007; Silveria & Hudson 2015).

Finally, when asked to describe why groups engage in hazing or what purposes hazing activities serve, three themes emerged: bonding, tradition/cycle of hazing, and elitism. These factors or functions of hazing help explain the disjuncture between student definitions of hazing and student experiences or accounts of hazing. This information is useful to consider as education and prevention initiatives can use these rationales to emphasize alternative activities that bond members together, and can form the basis of new, positive traditions.

## SECTION V

### DISCUSSION

In this thesis, I analyzed data from in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews with 15 students who are members of fraternities, sororities, and club sports teams. To address a gap in the literature, I describe the ways in which respondents personally define hazing and the major themes that emerge from these narratives. I also demonstrate the hazing behaviors that respondents have encountered. This data illuminated a significant disjuncture between student definitions of hazing and their own experiences with hazing. Finally, I provided an explanation for how students navigate this gap, predominantly through rationalization based on the perceived benefits or utilities of hazing.

This research contributes to the slowly-growing body of hazing research. This project is unique however, as it is one of the few deep and nuanced studies of hazing in student organizations on college campuses. This research also is distinct in that it goes beyond asking students to indicate whether they consider certain behaviors to be hazing and extends to asking respondents to define hazing and to compare their own definitions to their university definition of hazing. Further, this project examines the rationales or justifications that students associate with hazing behaviors. Using respondents' definitions of hazing allows common themes to emerge in a way that circumvents potential response bias in which students provide socially acceptable responses to questions asked by researchers. Finally, this research contributes to a gap in the literature about hazing in sororities and club sports teams. While hazing research has significantly addressed trends in fraternities and varsity athletics, club sports teams and sororities (to a lesser degree) have been neglected, therefore I designed this research project to better address this gap.



These findings can be used to help hazing educators and those invested in hazing prevention better frame programming and policies on college campuses. This in-depth perspective demonstrates how students define and understand their own experiences and accounts of hazing, and can yield more effective hazing prevention, particularly in highlighting behaviors that students often encounter or experience.

Since there are inconsistencies in institutional policies and state laws throughout the United States (Crow & Rosner 2002; Hollmann 2002), there is a strong recommendation for the standardization of institutional policies on hazing, along with the adoption of hazing prevention policies that emphasize continuity. However, with the adoption of a standardized definition of hazing, I recommend that examples of common hazing behaviors be included with this definition. While a university definition should include hazing behaviors common to all student groups, specific organization hazing policies should emphasize hazing activities and behaviors that are typical of that group. For instance, while all group definitions should include the example of forced alcohol consumption since it is widely associated with hazing in most student organizations, fraternities and sorority definitions could include being yelled/cursed/sworn at, while club sports team definitions could emphasize being forced to wear embarrassing clothes as hazing behaviors specific to the type of organization.

Finally, narrative descriptions of the utilities or functions of hazing provide two insights. The first finding provides explanation for the disjuncture between how students define hazing and how they perceive their own experiences. The second outcome is direct information that hazing educators and administrators can use to emphasize alternative activities that achieve the goals or functions that students associate with hazing behaviors. For instance, the primary utility that respondents associated with hazing is to bond or generate cohesion between group members.

Hazing prevention officials can use this information to promote activities such as adventure courses that achieve group bonding and promote feelings of cohesion (Johnson & Chin 2016).

### *Further Research*

Considering the discrepancy in student perception of hazing behaviors and how hazing is defined by the university, it is clearly necessary to extend research into hazing education and the dissemination of hazing prevention campaigns. This research should be targeted to those in student organizations, as well as to those who are not in student organizations, as those unaffiliated with groups still have the potential to intervene in hazing activities that they witness, as well as report or recommend reporting hazing behaviors that their friends and classmates have experienced. Additionally, since this in-depth qualitative study is not generalizable to the student body, it is advised to pair this kind of research with broader data (such as survey data) to ensure that it corresponds to trends in the target population.

The homogeneity of the racial composition of respondents is a major limitation to this research project. The racial composition of the university at which this research was conducted is largely white (over 70 percent), and the racial makeup of participants in this study reflects this composition. Therefore, I strongly suggest that further research focuses on cultural and racial differences amongst perceptions of students in regards to hazing behaviors and manifestations of these activities in these groups. Much research is necessary to enhance the understandings of these dynamics and their impacts on hazing in student organization. Additional investigation is necessary to illuminate the ways in which hazing might be influenced by gender and other identity differences and intersectionalities.

## *Conclusion*

This study used in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews with 15 students in fraternities, sororities, and club sports teams to understand how members of these groups define, understand, and experience hazing. By employing grounded theory, I am able to offer a nuanced perspective to illuminate a disjuncture between how students define and understand hazing as a concept, and how they experience or witness hazing behaviors. This gap is best understood by the utilities or functions that students believe hazing serves, such as to promote bonding and cohesion, as a tradition, and to foster elitism amongst new members. By unpacking these themes, I provide recommendations to hazing educators and those committed to hazing prevention based on empirical evidence from student narratives. It is my hope that this research yields more effective and holistic approaches to hazing prevention on college campuses.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix A – Colorado State University’s Hazing Policy (1 pg).

P U R P O S E O F T H I S	Policy Title: Hazing	Category: Student Affairs
	Owner: Vice President for Student Affairs	Policy ID#: 8-8004-003
	Contact: Vice President for Student Affairs	Original Effective Date: 1/1/2000 Last Major Revision: 6/19/2017
	Web: <a href="http://www.studentaffairs.colostate.edu/">http://www.studentaffairs.colostate.edu/</a> Email: <a href="mailto:ypsa@colostate.edu">ypsa@colostate.edu</a>	

### S POLICY

Colorado State University is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for its students, and one that promotes the acquisition of knowledge and nurtures the growth of the individual. Hazing is considered a serious abuse of individuals’ rights and an endangerment of their safety, health and well-being. The purpose of this policy is to define hazing, advise the campus community that it is absolutely prohibited at CSU, and provide resources for anyone who is impacted by hazing.

### APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

This policy applies to all students, faculty and other employees, academic and business units and auxiliaries of the University, and all others subject to the jurisdiction of the University.

### DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS POLICY

*Hazing* means any act that endangers the mental, physical, and/or emotional health or safety of a student, or which destroys or removes public or private property for the purpose of initiation, admission into, affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in a group or student organization.

### POLICY STATEMENT

Hazing is against the law in the state of Colorado and is a violation of University policies, including the [Student Conduct Code](#). This prohibition includes participating in, condoning, encouraging, requiring, or allowing an opportunity for hazing. Apathy or acquiescence in the presence of hazing are not neutral; they are violations of this rule. The express or implied consent of the victim will not be a defense. For more information about hazing, Colorado laws regarding hazing, and resources for those who encounter it, and how to report instances of hazing, see the CSU [End Hazing website](#).

### COMPLIANCE WITH THIS POLICY

Perpetrators of hazing will face disciplinary action in accordance with policies and procedures as applicable to faculty, staff and students, up to and including termination from the University.

### REFERENCES

[Colorado Hazing Law](#)

### APPROVALS

Revision 1.01 approved by Lynn Johnson, Vice President for University Operations, June 19, 2017



### Experiencing/Witnessing Hazing

#### Most common hazing behaviors indicated in survey:

1. Being forced to participate in drinking games/consume large amounts of alcohol: 10%
2. Being forced to sing or chant in public in a situation that is not related to the group's purpose in the process of joining or maintaining membership: 9%
3. Being deprived of sleep in the process of joining or maintaining membership in an organization or team: 8.75%
4. Being forced to associate with specific people and not others in the process of joining or maintaining membership in a student organization or team: 7.5%

#### Behaviors Witnessed/Experienced, by Organization\*

When I experienced or witnessed this activity as a CSU student, it was as part of the following organizations:

1. Forced participation in drinking games: Fraternity/sorority (37%), club sport team (18%), varsity athletic team (12%), IM sport team (8%)
2. Forced singing/chanting: Fraternity/sorority (34%), club sport team (17%), varsity athletic team (12%), performing arts org/club (10%), religious organization (9%), ROTC mentioned several times in the 'other' category
3. Forced association/exclusion: Fraternity/sorority (48%), religious organization (13%), academic club (10%), club sport team (8%)
4. Forced to drink large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick/passing out: Fraternity/sorority (35%), club sport team (22%), varsity athletic team (18%), IM sport team (7%)
5. Being deprived of sleep: Fraternity/sorority (35%), performing arts org/club (12%), varsity athletic team (10%), club sport team (9%)
6. Be screamed, yelled, or cursed at: Fraternity/sorority (29%), varsity athletic team (16%), club sport team (15%), IM sport team (10%), ROTC mentioned in 'other' category
7. Being forced to attend a skit or roast where members are humiliated: Fraternity/sorority (30%), club sport team (17%), varsity athletic team (10%), IM sport team (10%), performing arts org/club (10%)
8. Being forced to participate in aerobic activities: Fraternity/sorority (29%), club sport team (22%), varsity athletic team (16%)
9. Being forced to steal or destroy property: Fraternity/sorority (39%), club sport team (19%), IM sport team (10%)
10. Being forced to engage in or simulate sex acts: Fraternity/sorority (33%), varsity athletic team (14%), club sport team (14%), IM sport team (14%)
11. Being hit, kicked, or assaulted: Fraternity/sorority (25%), club sport team (25%), varsity athletic team (19%)

\* Keep in mind that experiencing/witnessing is relatively low for all activities indicated.

### **Perceptions of Hazing Activities**

Percentage of students that believe that an activity could be physically or emotionally harmful to somebody, by activity:

1. Forced participation in drinking games: 53% strongly agree, 34% agree
2. Forced singing/chanting: 17% strongly agree, 37% agree
3. Forced association/exclusion: 33% strongly agree, 41% agree
4. Forced to drink large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick/passing out: 84% strongly agree, 13% agree
5. Being deprived of sleep: 53% strongly agree, 31% agree
6. Be screamed, yelled, or cursed at: 53% strongly agree, 35% agree
7. Being forced to attend a skit or roast where members are humiliated: 58% strongly agree, 30% agree
8. Being forced to participate in aerobic activities: 27% strongly agree, 31% agree
9. Being forced to steal or destroy property: 65% strongly agree, 24% agree
10. Being forced to engage in or simulate sex acts: 85% strongly agree, 11% agree
11. Being hit, kicked, or assaulted: 89% strongly agree, 9% agree

Contentious Definitions of Hazing Behaviors (Does this behavior fit under the University's definition of hazing?)

- Sleep deprivation (8% disagree, 4% strongly disagree, 13% unsure)
- Forced singing/chanting as part of membership (11% disagree, 7% strongly disagree, 19% were unsure)
- Forced participation in aerobic activities unrelated to the group's purpose (14% disagree, 7% strong agree, 25% were unsure)

Gender Differences in Perceptions of What Constitutes Hazing

- Forced association/exclusion: 17% gap between men and women that strongly agree/agree that this activity falls under the University's definition of hazing (men reported at 62% strongly agree/agree, women at 79% strongly agree/agree).
- Skit/roast where members are humiliated as part of membership: 16% gap between men that strongly agree/agree (76%) and women that strongly agree/agree (93%).

Class Year/Level Differences in Perceptions of What Constitutes Hazing

- Upperclassmen were grade levels more likely to most strongly disagree with perceiving many behaviors as hazing (particularly among juniors)
  - Examples: Percentages that strongly disagree that the behaviors meets the definition of hazing
    - Forced participation in drinking games: 9% of juniors, 7% of seniors
    - Forced singing/chanting: 9% of juniors, 9% of seniors
    - Forced association/exclusion: 10% of juniors, 9% of seniors
    - Forced participation in aerobic activities: 13% of juniors, 7% of seniors

- Upperclassmen were also more likely to disagree with the potential physical and emotional harm that these behaviors can cause:
  - Percentages of students who strongly disagree that the activity could be physically/emotionally harmful to somebody:
    - Aerobic activities: 11% of juniors, 8% seniors (vs. average of 7% across all respondents)
    - Be screamed, yelled, or cursed at: 6% of juniors (vs. average of 3.2% across all respondents)
    - Forced association/exclusion: 8% of juniors (vs. average of 4% across all respondents)

### **Reporting Behaviors**

Reporting overall is quite low for majority of behaviors. If students do talk about hazing, they are most likely conversing with a friend inside/outside of their group and not going through official venues such as leadership, police, or the anonymous hazing reporting website for CSU.

Behaviors with highest reporting rates were:

- Being forced to destroy/steal property in the process of joining or maintaining membership: 72% of those who witnessed reported the behavior.
- Being hit, kicked, or assaulted in the process of joining or maintaining membership: 68% of those who witnessed reported the behavior.
- Being forced to engage in or simulate sex acts in the process of joining or maintaining membership: 64% of those who witnessed reported the behavior.

Hazing is most often not reported because 1. Students don't feel the activity or behavior is wrong or harmful (28%), and 2. They were unsure whether the activity or behavior qualified as hazing.

Appendix C - Recruitment Email for Listserv (1 pg.)

Subject Line: Invitation to Participate in Research

Body of email:

Dear Student,

Do you want to earn a \$20 Visa gift card? If so, please contact me about participating in a research project I am conducting. I hope you decide to participate—your input is really important!

***Details on the research***

- I am a graduate student at CSU who is working on her M.A. degree.
- I'm conducting research on the experiences of students who are members of student organizations such as fraternities/sororities, band, military/ROTC program, student academic organizations, and varsity athletics (and because you're receiving this email, it means that you qualify!)
- Participating means talking with a member of our research team (primarily myself) for an hour about:
  - ✓ What life is like for you as a member of your organization (for example: what kinds of activities your group does, what being a member of your organization means to you, etc.)
  - ✓ Your perceptions of hazing at CSU and your attitudes about behaviors that may constitute acts of hazing.
  - ✓ Your experiences and perceptions of reporting activities that may constitute hazing at CSU.

Have questions? Interested in participating? Contact me by email or phone:  
kellie.alexander@colostate.edu or (770)-757-7065

Thanks!

Kellie Alexander

Graduate Student, M.A. Candidate

Department of Sociology

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
Colorado State University**

**TITLE OF STUDY:** Prevalence and Attitudes towards Hazing

You are being invited to participate in a study conducted by Tara Opsal and Kellie Alexander at Colorado State University. Generally, the purpose of this study is to understand CSU student perspectives on and experiences with hazing.

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Tara Opsal, Ph.D Sociology, Department of Sociology,  
[tara.opsal@colostate.edu](mailto:tara.opsal@colostate.edu)

**CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Kellie Alexander, B.A. Sociology. M.A. Candidate,  
Department of Sociology, [kellie.alexander@colostate.edu](mailto:kellie.alexander@colostate.edu)

**WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a student enrolled at Colorado State University and you are a member of a student organization.

**WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?** This study will take place in a private space in the sociology department (private office or reserved basement space). Your time commitment is estimated at 60 minutes for the total interview process, however may extend longer depending on the interview.

**WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?**

For no more than two hours, at a mutually agreed upon location (for example, a study room at CSU), we will talk about your experiences being a member of a CSU student organization, your opinions on how CSU defines hazing, and whether or not you have witnessed or experienced any type of hazing in the context of your group at CSU. Remember, if you do not want to answer any of the questions that we ask just say so and we can move on. With your permission, the conversation will be audio recorded.

**What are the possible risks, discomforts, or benefits of participating in this research?**

There are no known risks associated with participating in this study. Although it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study.

**Do I have to take part in the study?**

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Who will see the information that I give?**

All of the information we talk about will be kept in the strictest confidence. We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. For this study, we will assign a code to your data (for example, a number) so that the only place your name will appear in our records is on the consent form and in our data spreadsheet which links you to your code. Only the research team will have access to the link between you, your code, and your data. The only exceptions to this are if we are asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee. In addition, for funded studies, the CSU financial management team may also request an audit of research expenditures. For financial audits, only the fact that you participated would be shared, not any research data. Additionally, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if we believe you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

Finally, when we write about the study and share it with other researchers or publish the results you will not be identified; we will keep your name and any other identifying information private.

**Will I receive any compensation for taking part in this study?**

Participants will receive a \$20 Visa gift card for participating in this study.

**What if I have questions?**

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the primary investigator, Tara Opsal 970-491-5438. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: [RICRO\\_IRB@mail.colostate.edu](mailto:RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu); 970-491-1553. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you so you have this information.

**What else do I need to know?**

We would also like to record the conversation we have together. We will stop recording at any time if you ask. We will keep transcripts of the recorded interviews in a locked storage box and won't share the recordings with anybody. The recordings will be destroyed after transcription is complete.

Please initial below whether you agree to have the interview recorded.

Yes, I agree to be digitally recorded \_\_\_\_\_

No, I do not agree to be digitally recorded \_\_\_\_\_

---

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

---

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study      Date

---

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

---

Name of person providing information to participant    Date

---

## Appendix E - Interview Schedule (5 pgs.)

Thank you for participating in this study. As a reminder, the interview shouldn't take more than 60 minutes. The goal of this study is to talk to students like you who are members of organizations in order to better understand the state of hazing on campus, so that policy initiatives can better address these activities. Most of the questions are about your perceptions of hazing, including your experiences and what you have heard or witnessed about hazing on and off campus among other students.

If there are any questions that make you feel uncomfortable, just tell me you don't want to talk about it and we can skip that question. Additionally, if there are any questions that you don't get what I'm trying to ask or say, let me know, and I will try to make it more clear. Before we start, I also would like to tape record this interview if that is okay. It is only for me – which means I will not share the tape with anybody. What questions or concerns do you have before we begin?

### **Short Background Information:**

Age:

Year in School:

Race you identify with:

Gender you identify with:

### Subculture of the Group

1. Tell me what groups you're involved with on campus?
  - a. If multiple, which group do you spend more time with? This group will be the dominant group we'll focus
  - b. How long have you been involved with this group?
2. What do you do with this group?
  - a. Describe the most common types of activities you do with your group.
  - b. What kind of formal scheduled activities do you typically participate in?
  - c. What kind of informal unplanned activities do you typically do together with members of your group?
3. What do you think are the two most important values of the group?
4. What did joining your group look like?
  - a. How did you decide you wanted to become a part of the group?
  - b. Was there a process that you had to go through to join, and what did that look like?
  - c. What do new members now have to go through to join the group?
5. What kind of activities do you feel like most bring your group together?

### Perceptions of Hazing

1. What does hazing mean to you?



2. Why do you think groups haze?

3. CSU's official definition of hazing is as follows: "Any act that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student, or which destroys or removes public or private property for the purpose of initiation, admission into, affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in a group or student organization. The express or implied consent of the victim will not be a defense."

What do you think are the major differences between your definition and CSU's?

#### Conceptualization of Hazing

1. Looking at this list of activities (see below), in your own opinion, which ones seem to be the most significant or severe? Why?
2. Looking at this list of activities, which ones have you experienced or witnessed?
  - a. Did this happen on a weekday or weekend, day or evening?
  - b. Who initiated the activity? What was the member's role in the activity?
  - c. Was there alcohol present during this?
  - d. Was anybody taking photos or posting information about the activity on social media, such as Facebook, Snapchat, Vine?
  - e. How did you feel during the activity, or what was going through your mind while this was happening?
  - f. How did you feel in the days after it happened?
  - g. Why do you think this activity occurred in your group setting?
  - h. What do you think was the overall purpose of this activity?
3. Considering the list of activities again, has another member of your group ever told you about an event that includes any of these activities, that has happened without you there?
  - a. How did you respond to this member?
  - b. Did you consider reporting the event to anyone?
    - i. Why or why not?
  - c. How did this conversation with your co-member make you feel?

#### Reporting

1. Thinking back to the situation we just were talking about that you experienced or witnessed, did you tell anyone about the situation?
  - a. (If there is no applicable situation from the earlier section): Looking through the list of hazing activities that we've been talking about, which do you think you would be most likely to report?
2. Have you ever felt discouraged by your group or members to report activities that you've found personally troubling?
  - a. If so, why do you think you've felt this way?
3. If you were to report, whom do you think you would report to? Why would you report to that person? Is there someone in your group that facilitates complaints for these kinds of

situations?

**Additional Comments**

1. Are there any additional comments that you would like to add to this interview that we haven't already addressed?

## List of Hazing Activities

1. Singing/chant by self or with select others in public in a situation that is not related to an event, rehearsal, or performance.
2. Forced participation in a drinking game.
3. Deprivation of sleep.
4. Being forced to eat or drink large amounts of food or nonalcoholic beverage.
5. Drinking large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick or passing out.
6. Being forced to perform or simulate sex acts with the same or opposite gender.
7. Being forced to wear embarrassing clothing
8. Forced participation in physical activities not related to the group's function.
9. Acting as a personal servant to other members.
10. Forced participation in the destruction or theft of property.
11. Tying up, taping, or confining members in a small space.
12. Paddling, whipping, or physically beating others.
13. Kidnapping or transporting and abandoning others.
14. Being forced to associate with specific people and not others.
15. Being yelled, cursed, or sworn at.

## Resource Sheet (Post Interview)

We've discussed a potentially triggering subject during the interview today. This resource information is available to you in case you want to reach out to someone either for your own well-being or if you would like to report violence or hazing you've already experienced or witnessed or if an event occurs in the future.

### Mental Health at CSU:

CSU has an exceptional Health Network Counseling Service which is available whether you're experiencing a situational problem, an immediate crisis, or have a longstanding medical health concern. They are dedicated to affirming respect, compassion, and acceptance for all.

Phone Number: 970-491-6053

Website: <http://health.colostate.edu/services/counseling-services/>

### Sexual Assault Reporting:

CSU also offers trained advocates to provide confidential emotional support and information to survivors of sexual assault. Advocates complete an extensive training program and understand the complex nature of sexual assault and can assist students in making decisions and obtaining resources. Advocates are available to help you navigate decisions about reporting to police or university authorities.

Victim Assistant Team: (970) 492-4242

<http://health.colostate.edu/resources/sexual-assault-violence-prevention/>

### Hazing Reporting:

As a community, CSU offers a holistic approach for students, faculty and staff to take care of one another and to take steps in situations that may constitute acts of hazing. To facilitate reporting, CSU offers online reporting of behaviors that may be harmful to others. Information shared in the online report will be treated with discretion and a reasonable expectation of confidentiality, and you can report anonymously if you so choose.

Report Hazing Online: <http://www.endhazing.colostate.edu/report-hazing>

Appendix F - Codebook (15 pgs.)

Focused Coding	Initial Codes/ Thoughts	Description/ Example	Keep/Combine/ Drop/Ponder/Dev elop, etc.	Notes/Exceptions
<p><u>Defining Hazing</u></p> <p>How students themselves would define hazing. What it looks like.</p>	<p>Forcing discomfort</p> <p>“Hazing” not always viewed as entirely negative.</p> <p>Related to surrounding membership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging/making someone do something they don’t want to do through threat of force or not <u>belonging</u>.</li> <li>• Not seen as universally negative.</li> <li>• Discomfort</li> <li>• April – Mentions mental physical harm (while laughing however).</li> <li>• Only one respondent viewed hazing as “against somebody’s will”</li> <li>• Travis – “If [an activity] fits our values, you should wanna participate in it, I guess.”</li> </ul>	Keep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents predominantly serious during this topic.</li> <li>• April (21 y/o sorority, female, briefest interview) laughed during this definition (lighthearted through interview).</li> </ul>
<p><u>Differences in Definition</u></p> <p>Concepts that students either include in their definition that are not in CSU’s def., or pieces in CSU’s definition that students would remove</p>	<p>“Broad strokes”</p> <p>The hazed consent to it</p> <p>CSU considers hazing entirely “negative”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many view CSU definition as an umbrella encapsulating many activities</li> <li>• Respondents do not mention willingness or lack thereof (IE inability to consent to this).</li> <li>• Some fraternity men (Travis and Steven) would not include this</li> </ul>	Keep	

in their definition  
 – putting  
 responsibility on  
 the hazing.  
 Otherwise you're  
 "deeming them  
 unfit to make  
 choices."

- "It's not like  
 you're putting a  
 gun to the  
 pledges' head...  
 They chose to do  
 it."

Hazing at CSU

How students  
 view student  
 culture around  
 hazing at CSU,  
 including  
 policies/enforce  
 ment, etc.  
 Football/basketb  
 all teams are  
 untouchable

Less hazing at  
 CSU than other  
 campuses  
 (campuses in the  
 south).

Strict  
 (increasingly  
 so).  
 Broad  
 Confusing  
 Associated  
 with  
 fraternities  
 Sports club  
 teams –  
 Hockey,  
 lacrosse

Orgs. Have to  
 be more PC  
 now

Perceived to be growing  
 stricter every year.  
 Groups try to 'hide'  
 hazing from CSU (don't  
 wear their letters, jackets,  
 colors out in situations  
 that could be viewed as  
 hazing).  
 CSU is preoccupied with  
 FSL and not looking at  
 varsity athletics,  
 purposefully.

Why do you think it's  
 more PC now? Is it the  
 students? "I think one is  
 the people but I think  
 another driving factor  
 that just is, where  
 anything can be  
 considered hazing now.  
 So we have to like watch  
 our back or else we'll get  
 kicked off as a chapter,  
 you know, for anything  
 now."

"Um, but I think that [the  
 university] hates Greek.  
 With like how easy it is  
 to kicked out, we don't  
 want to risk that."

Keep

Behaviors to

Dangerous

Sex acts

Ponder for

<p><u>Report</u></p>	<p>Damaging Limits (not knowing limits when it comes to drinking, particularly for freshmen)</p> <p>More limited list of activities compared to 'severe activities'</p> <p>Activities that 'look' illegal (kidnapping, confining in a small space, physical activities)</p>	<p>Physical hazing – beating each other</p> <p>Forcing members to drink large amounts of alcohol</p> <p>“...If I’m seeing blood or a kid who really looks like he’s terrified or if he’s crying because he’s in pain. I would first be like, “Stop,” and then if I saw it happen, I would be like, maybe report it.”</p>	<p>recommendations</p>
<p><u>Challenges to Reporting</u></p> <p>(nested under behaviors to report)</p> <p>Boys will be boys (playing)</p>	<p>Activities seen as situational</p> <p>Don’t want to incorrectly interpret a situation and get others in trouble</p> <p>Secondhand stories/reports are like hearsay</p>	<p>“It’s so hard to be situational about it. If I felt they were in danger, I definitely would, but otherwise, I don’t want to get their chapter closed down for something I interpreted wrong. It’s silly. They want to close down the chapter so easily here that I wouldn’t want to ruin that for them. For something that was not significant (laughter).”</p> <p>Heard things but not entirely reliable.</p> <p>“See, I say no only because I feel like, I guess I don’t look at it as that severe. ‘Cause I feel like they’re just boys and they’re just playing. “You drink, I’ll drink. You drink, I’ll drink.” (laughter), kind of a thing.”</p>	<p>Keep/recommendations</p>

Reporting to Whom?  (nested under behaviors to report).	FSL office (comfortably identified many times “open-door environment”), FSL director (identified by name).  Anonymous reporting  Want to avoid group collusion (Ex. wouldn’t report to a fraternity itself if the president knew it was occurring) (See attached)	“Going to the top” – directly reporting to FSL office, especially if leadership is involved.  “I wouldn’t just jump to the police. I mean, unless it was like forcing somebody to do sex acts, then I would go to the police... I’d be like, “This individual sexually assaulted somebody else.” I’d call them out.” (I. By that person, not the group?) “Yeah, I wouldn’t associate it with the group itself.”	Recommendations
<u>Hazing experiences</u> <u>Why groups don’t haze/hazing prevention</u>	Everyone’s on the same level (holds same power) in org.	Delayed initiation (waiting a semester). <u>prohibiting hierarchy</u> (everyone is on the same level). emphasizing other bonding events (ropes course). Fear of being disbanded.	Keep/consider for recommendations
What students in orgs. Are doing now to prevent hazing	We don’t need to haze to be close		
Reasons that students say they don’t need to engage in hazing	Open communication from those in leadership positions – encouragement to report		
<u>Initiation</u>  The initiation process, what it looks like, what’s involved, etc.  MUCH different	Sororities – Very ritualistic: prayer, songs, lighting of candles, dances, overall a lengthy process (45 min. for two	Fraternity – Passing tests with high marks – “Why didn’t you fucking pass?” Don’t associate with certain members if they fail (including avoidance of eye contact). Must receive signatures of active members and to	Ponder  • Initiation process itself for one fraternity brother -- Initiation weekend in mountains=



in sports clubs – most clubs take all that apply. Some members kept as ‘practice’ members, but based on performance in training/tryouts.

girls, 8 hrsX3 days total).

Fraternities – Must pass multiple tests, several steps/processes involved. Very high pressure

do so, members must be convinced to do so. Some pledges offer meal swipes in exchange for the signature. Some have to answer very specific, personal questions.

=

Made to dress warmly.

Drinking at stations and answering questions in a high-stress, fast-paced situation.

They’re told that they failed as a group, and then told that only a few failed. Then they’re made to choose whether they get in individually (and leave their pledge brothers out) or they can all walk away. If they chose to walk away as a group (pledge class of one) then they pass the final question and they’re happy to call you their brother.

To be initiated, members are ranked, worst person goes first leading up to the ‘best’ pledge. Say oath (similar to Boy Scout initiation process).

Values

Values that groups hold important in their org.

Brotherhood – Bonding (similar to actual familial ties) .

Secrecy Traditions/Rituals (mutual trust between brothers)

Brotherhood – “Like they’re actually like your family members, and anything goes wrong you know that you can call anyone up and they’ll be there for you. Regardless of the situation...”

Sisterhood - Positive group meetings and

Sisterhood – outings to meet other girls and maintain friendships (pumpkin patch, laser tag, spreading faith, network of individuals).

Friendship/support, bonding

Scholarship

Philanthropy

Community

Commitment (ensuring legacy)– sports club teams

Teamwork – club sports teams

Communication – Club sports teams

GPA minimums, study hours, helping each other study “Scholarship before social obligation.”

Commitment – “We’re a brand new team... So trying to ensure that we’re building a cohesive team that will stick throughout the years, and not just like, fall to shambles once the people that wanted to make this team are gone.”

Why groups haze

Why groups choose to haze, what purpose they believe it serves

Attitude Belonging

Bravado, elitism, proving mental/physical toughness, show they “want it [membership]”, bonding (belonging), tradition, admiration for groups that do haze (military given as an example).

Insecurity of members

Accountability

Parental

- Haze so that only the best members are selected for the group. Groups with clear hierarchies (fraternities) have greater potential for hazing due to this (“show them their place”). You are hazed to show dedication to the group, you’re not going to be let in just because you want it (fraternities).
  - Hierarchies – showing power or dominance over new members.
- Bonding – Hazing brings group

Keep/Develop

“Like in the fraternities or sororities or sports teams, it’s like, “We’re hot shit... We’re badass because of it.””

influence

members together,  
closer.

- Tradition – “it happened to me, so it has to happen to you.” Hazing as common historically, no reason to stop what seems to work.
  - Parents as members of organizations, trying to impress them.
- Admiration for other seemingly close groups that exhibit potential hazing behaviors – Military/ROTC
- “... I know people get a lot of their behaviors from their parents to, so it’s really hard to be able to step back and be like, I don’t have to believe in everything my parent believes in and kind of make your own person. Because there’s a lot of dads that are like, “Oh that’s hilarious. Yeah, get in there! And be cool, make this team!” You know? And the son’s just like, “I just want to impress my dad.”

Team-Building  
Activities

Activities that members’ feel brings their

Spending time together (doing anything really)  
Ropes courses

BBQs, watching movies, dinners  
One club sport’s team brought in a speaker to develop a speech and

Keep (recommendations)

group together	General friendship - sharing personal details, triumphs, losses)	facilitate a team-building ropes course.		
<u>Perceptions of hazing activities</u>	. See attached below			
What they think about common hazing activities				
<u>Activities not perceived as hazing</u>	Situational/Context-dependent  Silly	Forcing members to wear embarrassing clothing. Singing and chanting. Activities are associated with 'fun'.	Keep/develop	As long as it's not revealing clothing such as undergarments.
(Nested under perceptions of hazing activities). Which behaviors are not considered hazing, why not.		April – "Like one (forced singing/chanting), seven (wearing embarrassing clothing) is very situational. I think, I don't know. I guess, in a performance if we're doing Greek Week we would wear something silly, but not like underwear or anything like that. That would be unacceptable"		
<u>Hazing and the media</u>	"What college is like"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "That actually made me think of The Breakfast Club. Where the jock tapes that kid's butt cheeks together, and he did it 'cause his dad didn't accept him, and then his dad was like, "That's awesome," kind of a thing. And then he realized that's not how he wanted to be. And what's sad is that actually plays out into like, actual kids here."</li> </ul>	Lose (for now)	
(nested under perceptions of hazing activities). Involves discussion of popular portrayals of hazing in media and how this may influence hazing on college campuses	Movies glorifying activities similar to hazing			

<p><u>Severe hazing activities</u> (nested under perceptions of hazing activities) Which activities students perceive as severe and why</p>	<p>Physical Physically damaging Mentally damaging Anxiety Traumatic Existing trauma (childhoods)  Forceful  Can easily escalate (alcohol consumption)  Damaging self-worth  Breaching consent (sex acts)  Illegal</p>	<p>Forced participation in drinking games (health risks, can escalate quickly, one student referenced the Penn State hazing death), forced consumption of food/beverage, sex acts (many brought up issue of consent and sexual assault), destruction/theft of property (legal consequences), tying and confining members (potential mental damage), physically beating others, kidnapping/abandoning members. Yelled cursed sworn at.</p>	<p>Keep</p>	<p>Fraternity men mentioned personal responsibility in terms of forced alcohol consumption (“At some point there has to be personal responsibility... if no one is force-feeding you the drinks... I can see how that might not be considered hazing.”)  Sports club members (regardless of gender), sorority women – recognize almost all as severe activities.</p>
<p>Rationale for joining  Why they were interested in their student org.</p>	<p>Friend convinced them  Interest in the sport</p>	<p>Varying stories, most revolving around social connections  Friend asked them to come to meeting with them  Saw a movie about a sport and became interested</p>	<p>Lose</p>	
<p>Misc.  Hazing culture  Fraternities focusing on</p>	<p>Millennial generation  Rests on the individual</p>	<p>Recruited to help colonize a fraternity here “I think my generation’s kind of like in this thing where they kind of joke about everything and they think that if it’s a joke, it’s okay. And I</p>	<p>Develop/ponder</p>	

sexual assault,  
avoiding it,  
reducing  
potential  
situations where  
it can occur.

think that they think a lot  
of inappropriate stuff is  
funny, and kind of brush  
it off.”

“I don’t think it’s that  
much about addressing it.  
I think it’s with the  
personal, or with the  
individual because I  
know that I’m strong  
enough to be like, “No,  
I’m not doing that...”

“You can tell people  
about hazing all you  
want, but you need the  
individuals to be able to  
step up and say no,  
whereas we don’t have  
that.”

“I think our group and  
ourselves, I think we do,  
kind of naturally, I think  
we’re gentleman. that’s  
like installed and stuff. I  
just think we’re very  
social with sororities on  
campus, so we like have  
a lot of friends who are  
females and stuff. ... And  
like, when we are with  
brothers, we have a lot of  
sorority girls so because  
we get close to those  
females, it’s like, we  
wouldn’t want somebody  
raping that girl. Or even  
like a sister; a lot of us  
have sisters, I know if I  
ever saw something, it  
wouldn’t be good.”

Attitudes:

toward hazing policy, enforcement, education:

Travis – The university’s definition is “more broad strokes” to cover more hazing behaviors, while their fraternity definition/idea of hazing is specific, against someone’s will, and causes emotional, physical, or psychological distress to somebody.

Students perceive that there hazing is enforced differentially between varsity athletics and FSL/other organizations. Not enforced or “look the other way” for varsity athletics (football team). Linked to the money they bring in to the school. Hazing education shouldn’t emphasize that particular groups are doing “okay” if they’re hazing less than other groups.

- “I think the university is turning a blind eye to the bad stuff, like in sports teams.”
- NCAA sports associated with bringing in money or sponsors to the school, so some perceive that they can get away with more due to this.
- Football is seen as having an “untouchable status”; referred to as the Prodigal Son of D-1 sports.

Negative view on hazing education as “scare tactics” that do not correspond with less severe hazing behaviors that students are more likely to witness/experience. Also routine/low engagement education delegitimizes the education (hazing bingo that they do every year – what college student is engaged by hazing bingo?).

## Perceptions of Hazing Behaviors

### Activities Perceived as Severe –

- Forced participation in drinking games (almost unanimously)
  - Putting your body into a harmful situation, hazardous to health.
  - Doesn't accomplish goal of bringing groups closer together.
  - Students (freshman in particular) don't know their drinking limits, so it can be dangerous to force them to drink in excess.
- Forced to eat or drink large amounts of food
- Forced to perform or simulate sex acts
  - Potential for sexual assault, shouldn't be forced into that.
  - Legal consequences
- Forced participation in destruction or theft of property
  - Associated with breaking the law, broader legal consequences.
  - Has no inherent value of bringing groups closer together.
- Tying up, taping, or confining members
  - Potential for triggering anxiety, mentally damaging.
  - Everyone deserves to have freedom (American values referenced here)
- Paddling, whipping, or physically beating others
  - Not okay in any situation.
  - Don't have the right to touch another person, even if you're given consent to haze
- Being forced to associate with specific people and not others
  - Mean, can cause interpersonal problems later on ("burning bridges")
- Being yelled/cursed/sworn at
  - Damaging to self-worth
- Kidnapping, transporting, and abandoning members
- Deprivation of sleep
  - Associated with physical harm
  - Can cause grades to slip (seen as antithetical to many fraternity goals/creeds of scholarship)

### Rationale?

- Activities with potential for severe consequences are considered to be hazing, and are considered severe forms of hazing.



- Physical hazing behaviors (beating, confining to small spaces, paddling, etc) as significant for potential harm.

#### Activities Perceived as Not-So-Severe

- Being forced to wear embarrassing clothing
  - Can be seen as acceptable in a performance with other people
  - Can be considered uncomfortable but not particularly ‘damaging’
  - Seen as severe when conceptualized as scandalous or no clothing
- Forced singing/chanting
  - Seen as very situational
  - If it’s not embarrassing singing, it’s fine.
  - Hard to separate from chanting/singing positive songs or as part of initiation.

#### Hazing Experiences: What do students report as either direct hazing experiences or experiences they’ve heard firsthand?

- Kidnapping, transporting, and abandoning members
  - Story about a member’s fraternity brother who switched fraternities after being hazed:
    - They made the pledges put bags over their heads, dropped them off in the mountains, and forced them to finish alcohol before they picked them up.
- Story about sorority member’s mom who was blindfolded and dropped off at Horsetooth Reservoir, forced to walk home.
- Sorority at another university forced members to walk up 23-floor building in heels.
- Drinking together – “We’re going to get you drunk!” but then not *forcing* if they start to say no.
  - Forced drinking in fraternities – telling them to drink and holding the bottle up.
  - Men on soccer team forcing each other to drink.
- Fraternity men forced to wear embarrassing clothing (dresses) downtown to bar.
- Singing/chanting – happens all the time in sororities (mentioned in three separate interviews)
- Yelled/cursed/sworn at as a whole chapter – sorority and fraternities
  - Happens very much so in respondent’s fraternity. In the weekly meetings, the pledge educator yells (severity and duration over weeks).
    - ““Blah, blah, blah. You’re not going to fucking make it.” And then as the month, or as the weeks go, then it’s fail/pass. “Why the fuck don’t you have a pass? I told you to fucking do it.”
- Paddling, whipping, or physically beating others
  - While attending a football game, fraternity brothers are not wearing shirts. Brothers slapping each other on the back attempting to leave red marks. Photos taken on Snapchat.

- In high school, witnessing the band making members 'run the gauntlet' and beating members as they run down the bus.
- Fraternities paddle members (pledge gets hit with paddle by every active brother)
- Scavenger hunt – In a fraternity, story below.
  - Shotgunning beers on Admin steps
  - Taking a picture in Hughes Stadium (trespassing)
  - Kidnap a pledge – blindfolded and taken a picture. Forced to drive the group for the rest of the scavenger hunt.
    - Afterwards, the members who participated went to a Judicial Board within the fraternity, there were no repercussions however. The Judicial Board was held to show that some steps were taken. All members (including higher-ups) knew what was happening, so no formal reprimands occurred due to complicity of the group.
- Deprivation of sleep
- Forcing members to perform or simulate sex acts
  - Tangential story about friend in a sorority at another university: “They made their pledges down in Texas do, they lined them all up, they stripped them down and they said, “Which guy in X fraternity would you want to fuck your brains out?” And they had to shout it out. It was out on the IM fields or something in the middle of the night. They were all blindfolded and when they were done, they took the blindfolds off, the whole chapter that they were talking about was standing right there.”