Hazing Prevention: From Theory to Practice

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Outline

• What is hazing?
• How common is hazing?
• Why hazing matters
• What causes hazing?
• How to prevent hazing
Then

Now

Photo by Ari Mason, U of CT
What is hazing?
What is hazing?

• No single definition
  – Evolving, academic debate
• Simple definition: abuse of new members
  – Though hazing may include current members
• Differences between campus policies and state laws
  – Laws may not include psychological hazing
  – Laws have higher evidentiary standards
National Study of Student Hazing
(Allan & Madden, 2008)

Hazing is any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person’s willingness to participate.

– is not relevant to the group’s purpose
– or is relevant but excessive

(adapted from Cimino, 2017)
Cornell Code of Conduct Definition (abridged)

- Regardless of a person’s consent to participate,
- an act that, as an **explicit or implicit condition** for initiation to . . . or continued membership in a group or organization,
- could be seen by a **reasonable person**
- as endangering the **physical health** of an individual
- or as causing **mental distress** to an individual through, for example, humiliating, intimidating, or demeaning treatment
- involves the **consumption** of alcohol or drugs,
- or the consumption of other substances to excess
Hazing vs. Bullying

- **Similarities:**
  - Both exert abusive power over another
  - Similar tactics: humiliation, intimidation, violence

- **Differences:**
  - Bullying often focuses on one person; hazing is typically group-on-group
  - Hazing is time-limited with a change in relationship at the end; bullying is ongoing and does not seek a positive relationship
Physical forms
Brutality
Alcohol poisoning
Physical forms
Brutality
Alcohol poisoning

George Desdunes
Michael Deng
Tim Piazza
Physical forms
Brutality
Alcohol poisoning

Mental & physical forms
**Physical forms**
Brutality
Alcohol poisoning

**Mental & physical forms**
Subtle Hazing: Demeaning Treatment

“A member of the women’s basketball team had a ‘light’ hazing such as carrying dirty uniforms after a game, always being the last in line to eat and being the last to choose a seat on the vans to away games.”

“I really didn’t like it because it separates you from feeling a whole part of the team,” she said. “It’s kind of belittling.”
From the movie *Haze*
Scene from *Burning Sands*
Sexual Dimensions of Hazing
Hazing Occurs in a Range of Groups

- Performing Arts Groups
- Service Organizations
- Athletic Teams
- Academic Clubs
- Honor Societies
- Club Sports
- Marching Bands
- Religious Groups
- Military Groups
How Common is Hazing?

- Surveys include a list of behaviors that meet the researchers definition of hazing (without identifying them as hazing). For example, being made to:
  - Drink large quantities of alcohol
  - Endure being yelled/screamed/cursed at
  - Eat something unpalatable
  - Perform humiliating skits
How Common is Hazing?

- Alfred University/NCAA National Study of Sports Teams (Hoover, 1999)
  - 80% of student-athletes experienced hazing
- Initiation Rites in American High Schools: A National Survey (Hoover & Pollard, 2000)
  - 48% experienced hazing
- National Study of Student Hazing (Allan & Madden, 2012)
  - 55% of students in groups/clubs/teams experienced hazing
    - 74% of student-athletes
    - 73% of fraternity and sorority members
- These prevalence data do not tell us whether hazing is increasing or decreasing
What percentage of students who have been hazed (according to surveys) identify their experience as “hazing”? 
“The student says all team members participated in the initiation *voluntarily*, and that it could not be considered hazing as a result.”
“It wasn’t hazing because no one was forced to do it.”
Cornell Code of Conduct: Hazing

“regardless of the person's consent to participate”
Power Differential: 
Continuum of Coercion

- Social Pressure
- Manipulation (fear, deception)
- Physical Force
“For every minute we were late getting back (from the scavenger hunt) we had to drink. If you didn't want to drink, you didn't have to;

- Ivy League varsity athlete
“For every minute we were late getting back (from the scavenger hunt) we had to drink. If you didn't want to drink, you didn't have to; **you had to eat Tabasco sauce or do something worse.**“

- Ivy League varsity athlete
Impairment from Alcohol
Secrecy = *Un*informed Consent

"They keep telling me it’s almost over."

You may feel reluctant to share what you are hearing, seeing, or experiencing. And you may not be sure it constitutes hazing. But joining an organization, group, or team shouldn’t involve humiliation, intimidation, or physical risks. If initiation activity or other situation is harming you or someone you know, please ask for help.

Rethink. React. Regroup.

www.hazing.cornell.edu

This information is brought to you by the Office of the Dean of Students at Cornell
Threat to Identity

“I wanted to walk away, but they kept saying things like, ‘What’s the matter with you? Aren’t you tough enough to handle it?’ They made you feel like you’d be less of a man if you didn’t do it.”
Fear of Consequences for Resisting

- Social rejection
- Worse hazing
Why Hazing Matters?

- Harm
  - Victims
  - Families
  - Perpetrators
  - Groups/teams
  - Institutions

National Hazing Prevention Week
www.HazingPrevention.org
Potential Physical Impact

- Exhaustion (late-night ordeals)
- GI distress (shots of hot sauce)
- Orthopedic injuries
- Burns/brands/blunt trauma (paddled, kicked, falls)
- Sexual trauma
- Alcohol poisoning/death
Psychological Consequences

- Anxiety
- Humiliation & anger
- Depression: helplessness
- Shame/embarrassment/self-blame
- Sexual traumatization
- PTSD/Re-traumatization
- Poor academic performance
Other Potential Reactions

• Not view it as a problem, or ambivalent
  – “It will prepare me for future challenges.”
  – “It made me feel closer to the people that went through it with me.”
• Desire to prove self
• Loyalty: not want to get group in trouble
• Displaced anger: “I can’t wait to do this to the pledges next year.”
WHAT CAUSES HAZING?

• Evidence of “hazing” across history, cultures, and groups
• Little research examining etiology
• Multiple theories and related research on social behavior contribute (no complete theory)
• Evidence of evolutionary influences (Cimino, 2011)
WHY PEOPLE HAZE: CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

• A few bad apples
• Things get out of hand (i.e., “accidents”)
• They don’t realize it is hazing

• Focus is on:
  – Individuals
  – Moment in time
  – Rational thought
WHY PEOPLE HAZE:
A SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

• Bad “barrels” versus bad apples
• Hazing results from a combination of multiple factors interacting over time
  – Motivation + “opportunity” = hazing

• Focus is on:
  – Individual and environment
  – Moment and history
  – Rational thought and unconscious forces
Unconscious Evolutionary Influences
(Cimino, 2011)

• Our ancestors survived by forming groups
• Some group behavior similar to what we call “hazing” may have served a purpose, such as increasing commitment to the group through “testing” and preventing members from benefiting from the group without contributing to it
• We may carry within us unconscious propensities to test new members
• Implication: when groups offer “automatic benefits” from membership (e.g., social status), hazing may be viewed as the “price of admission”
HOW HAZING DEVELOPS IN THE SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT
PHASES OF HAZING**

Precursor → Formation → Preparation → Episode → Perpetuation →

FACTORS*

Individual

Group

Institution/Community

Society

*Adapted from Langford’(2008)
**Adapted from Prochaska & DiClemente (1984)
PHASES OF HAZING**

FACTORS

Individual

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PRECURSORS

• Individual (why students “allow themselves” to be hazed)
  – Need for affiliation, belonging & acceptance
  – “Some brain-scan studies suggest that our brains react to peer exclusion much as they respond to threats to physical health or food supply. At a neural level… we perceive social rejection as a threat to existence.”
    - Teenage Brains, National Geographic 10/20/11
PRECURSORS

• Individual
  – Desire for achievement (heroism)

The Hunger Games

Tough Mudder
PRECURSORS

• Individual
  – Variations in moral reasoning*
    • Care: dislike of others’ pain
    • Loyalty: self-sacrifice for group
    • Authority: leading/following (value tradition)

*Jonathan Haidt, The Righteous Mind
PRECURSORS

• Group
  – Obedience to authority
    • Upside: Civilization
    • Downside: Stanford Prison Experiment
PHASES OF HAZING

Precursor → Formation → Preparation → Episode → Perpetuation

FACTORS

Individual
Group
Institution/Community
Society
FORMATION

- Individual & Group (perpetrator)
  - Motivations to haze*

*Adapted from N. Groth’s Typology of Sex Offenders & A. Cimino’s “Evolution of Hazing: Motivational Mechanisms and the Abuse of Newcomers”
Problematic Motivations

• **Anger/Revenge:**
  – “I had to go through it, so they do too.”

• **Power/Dominance:**
  – “It makes you feel like a god.”
  – “We do it to weed out the weak ones.”

• **Fun:**
  – “I like to mess with the pledges.”

• **Sadism:**
  – “I enjoy seeing people in pain.”
Motivations to Channel

- **Accountability**: “If we don’t punish them they won’t take it seriously.”
- **Commitment**: “We’re testing their ability to commit to their obligations.”
- **Solidarity**: “We do it to create cohesion.”
- **Reluctance**: “I don’t like doing it, but I don’t know what else we can do.”
FORMATION

- Group
  - Motivation to haze (commitment & solidarity)
  - Misperceived norms
FORMATION

• Group: Misperceived norms

  – I think that most (> 50%) students believe that it is never okay to humiliate or intimidate new members of a club, organization, or team: 41%

  – I believe that it is never okay to humiliate or intimidate a new member: 82%

  – 59% misperceive true norm
FORMATION

Group

- Motivations
- Misperceived norms
- History of hazing (cyclical)
- Secrecy
- Sense of impunity
PHASES OF HAZING**

FAC T O R S

Individual
Group
Institution/Community
Society
FORMATION

- Institution/community
  - Bystander conditions (risk factors)
    - Culture of tolerance: history of weak sanctions
    - Denial: “no hazing when I was in the house”
    - Euphemisms: “sophomoric behavior”
    - Tacit permission: silence of alumni
    - Insufficient support for non-hazing group-building
PHASES OF HAZING

Precursor → Formation → Preparation → Episode → Perpetuation

FACTORS

Individual

Group

Institution/Community

Society
PERPETUATION

Individual

- Cognitive dissonance: “Effort justification” leads one to tolerate suffering by increasing liking of the group

“As the effort people invest in getting initiated into a social group, such as a fraternity or tenured faculty becomes more wearisome, painful, and humiliating, the more its members value the group.”

– Dan Ariely, The Upside of Irrationality
PERPETUATION

► Group

- Shared coping among victims
  ✓ “These are the guys that will be in my wedding.”
- Enthusiastic acceptance by perpetrators
  ✓ Reward: dopamine
How Do We Prevent Hazing?

• Draw from theory & literature on related issues (e.g., AOD)
  – No published studies showing effective prevention
• Align strategies with causes
  – Education is necessary but not sufficient
  – Must address abuse of power
• Take a public health approach: all levels of socio-ecological model
• Focus on disrupting formation phase (upstream)
How Do We Prevent Hazing?

• **Approach strategically**
  – **Assess problem**
    • Violations, suspected cases, survey data
  – **Identify strategies (comprehensive)**
    • Gauge assets/capacity/resources
    • Consider cultural issues
  – **Generate institutional will**
    • Engage senior leaders
    • Foster partnerships: AOD, mental health, sexual violence, bias
    • Develop/incorporate into structures (Hazing Committee/Coalition)
  – **Implement & evaluate (repeat)**
Cornell Context

- Small city, rural NY
- Private university, NYS Land Grant
- 14K undergraduates, 7K grad/professional
- 60+ fraternities/sororities (1/3 students)
- 8% student-athletes
- 1000+ student organizations
Cornell Hazing Prevention Timeline

2001  Hazing Task Force established policy
2005  Hazing website created
2011  Fraternity hazing death (Greek policy initiatives)
2013  Athletic hazing case
       - Joined Hazing Prevention Consortium
       Survey 1
2015  Survey 2
2018  Presidential mandates for Greek-letter organizations
Cornell’s Hazing Prevention Leadership Structures

VP for Student & Campus Life Cabinet

Behavioral Health Committee (MH, AOD, SV, Hazing)

Hazing case review team

Coalition on Health & Well-Being (MH, AOD, Hazing)
- Staff, students, faculty
Public Health Approach to Hazing Prevention

Addresses individuals, groups, institution, community, society
Culture Change and Leadership Statements

“There are things that were acceptable when I was in college 40 years ago that people would probably go to jail for today. Same thing 10 years ago, five years ago. We need to preserve traditions while eliminating aspects that are not fit for the 21st Century.”

- Former Mississippi University for Women President Dr. Jim Borsig
"We must end the current **system** of pledging, often perpetuated through traditions handed down over generations, because it fosters hazing and other activities based on humiliation or risky behavior that often pose psychological harm and immediate physical danger to those involved."

- David Skorton, MD
  Former President, Cornell University
“I have been hazed during my time at Cornell in an effort to gain acceptance and respect from my peers, but upon reflection I have realized how the justification for hazing — an act that is supposed to promote unity and respect — is built upon false principles.”

- Trustee Viewpoint: Hey, I Was Hazed Too , Cornell Daily Sun, 1/22/18
An important health and safety message from Vice President Lombardi

Jan. 23, 2018

Dear Campus Community,

The health and safety of Cornell students is fundamental to the educational mission of our university. I write to ask for your help in addressing a recognized serious risk to our students’ health, safety, and well-being: hazing.

This past year, the nation was jarred by the hazing deaths of four young men who were joining fraternities on other campuses. These new members were subjected to lethal amounts of alcohol or physical abuse. Cornell is not immune. In 2011, one of our students died from alcohol poisoning in a fraternity hazing incident.
President Pollack initiates reforms for Greek letter organizations

May 4, 2018

Dear Ithaca Campus Community,

Greek letter organizations have a long history at Cornell University and have been a prominent feature of the undergraduate experience since 1868. Members of these organizations have made great contributions to our university; year after year, sororities and fraternities have helped to foster a vibrant community spirit on our campus and in Ithaca through leadership, volunteer work and other forms of engagement.
Culture Change & Leadership Strategies
Fraternity-Sorority Policy Initiatives

2011 (post death)
• Language change from “pledging” or “orientation”
• All orientation plans reviewed by alumni, national, and university
• New member orientation reduced from 8 to 4 weeks

2018
• All chapters caught hazing will be suspended (3 year minimum for most)
• Live-in advisors in all chapters within 3 years
Healthy Recruitment & Group-Building Activities
Greek Leadership Academy

Cornell Outdoor Education
Hiking

Nazareth College Women’s Soccer
Attend athletic events together
Community Service
Group Meals
Bowling
Trampoline Park
Vancouver Canuck’s Team Building

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mtaqb_6BaRE
Educational and Bystander Initiatives

• For students, staff, faculty, parents & alumni
  – Increase:
    • knowledge of what constitutes hazing
    • awareness of judicial/legal consequences
    • empathy through recognition of harm
    • motivation & ability to intervene
  – Correct misperceived norms
Media Campaign: What is Hazing?

Q: Which of the following might be hazing?

- Scavenger hunts
- Skits
- Sarenuadas
- Calisthenics
- Drinking alcohol
- "Pranks"

A) None of the thee above
B) All of the above
C) Either A or B

Answer: C
(CONTEXT MATTERS)

Rethink. React. Regroup.

www.hazing.cornell.edu

This information is brought to you by the Office of the Dean of Students at Cornell.
Increase Recognition of Hidden Harm (Connect Hazing to Mental Health)
Cornell University

Bullied as child, struggling with depression

Depressed & considered suicide

Sexually assaulted last year

Anxiety disorder & asthma

Alcohol problem

Happy & healthy

Doing okay, physically & emotionally abused as a child

Feeling great, doing great

Grandfather just died
One activity, many experiences
Free shots!
This is great!
Free shots! This is great!

I don’t drink, but I’m afraid to say so
Free shots! This is great!

I don’t drink, but I’m afraid to say so.

I’m really scared of what else they might do to us.
Free shots! This is great!

I don’t drink, but I’m afraid to say so.

I’m really scared of what else they might do to us.

I lose control whenever I drink.
Perceived and Real Norms

87% of Cornell students believe:

it's never ok to humiliate or intimidate new members.

... not in a group, team, or organization.
It's never ok.


www.hazing.cornell.edu

*This message is brought to you by the Office of the Dean of Students, the Office of Panhellenic, Sororities, and Independent Living, the Department of Athletics and Physical Education, Cornell Health Services, Institutional Research and Planning, Residential and New Student Programs, and the Cornell Police.
This statement may be personally shocking, offensive, or disturbing. It is meant to challenge commonly held perceptions and generate conversations about actual characteristics of the Cornell community.

* Perceptions of Undergraduate (male) Student Experiences (PULSE) Survey, Spring, 2010 (N=1,820; 36% response rate)
Real-Time Polling in Workshops

For example, “As long as no one is physically injured or dies, hazing is okay.”
Positive Organization Expectations (POE)

- Developed by University of Virginia
- 1-hour peer-led program
- Interactive
- Data driven
- Examines social norms
Increasing Bystander Behavior
(\textit{Intervene})

http://www.cornell.edu/video/intervene
Hazing Framework

- Leadership initiatives & culture change strategies
- Healthy recruitment & group-building activities
- Educational & bystander initiatives
- Clear & confidential reporting options
- Consistent enforcement & firm consequences
- Individualized support for victims
- Public reporting of violations & sanctions
Clear & Confidential Reporting Options

Hazing at Cornell

Definitions
Prevention
Reporting
Violations
Resources

Reporting (Confidentially)

If you have been hazed, have witnessed hazing, or suspect that someone you know has been hazed, you can report your observations confidentially to Cornell officials.

- Submit an online report here - OR -
- Make a phone call to a university staff member. If desired, you can remain anonymous when calling in a report.
- Discuss concerns about a specific group:
  - Athletics & Physical Education (for concerns about an athletic team): 607-255-8832

Friend suffering in secrecy?
Saw something that concerns you?
Know that a situation is just "not quite right?"
Consistent Enforcement & Firm Consequences
(Cost-Benefit Analysis: Motivating Effect of Deterrence)

“The pledges told me that the brothers said that hazing isn’t worth the risk anymore. So that’s why they’ve stopped doing it.”

– Resident Advisor
Individualized Support for Victims

Pre-disclosure

Joining a group should never put your health or well-being at risk.
If an initiation is harming your physical or emotional health, please talk with one of our staff.

Post-disclosure

• Advocacy
  – Reporting options

• Services
  – Mental & medical health

• Title IX as warranted

• Protection
  – Scapegoating & retaliation

You may be thinking...
"They keep telling me it’s almost over."
"I want it to stop, but I don’t want to get the group in trouble."
"I want to prove that I can do it, but I also wonder what would happen if I just walked away."
"They made us promise not to tell anyone what happened."

This is a safe place to talk.
More info: hazing.cornell.edu
Public Reporting of Violations & Sanctions

Hazing at Cornell

Definitions  Prevention  Reporting  Violations  Resources

Violations

2016-17 Academic Year
Hazing practices are carefully guarded secrets within organizations.
To overcome secrecy and to help prospective members know about a group’s history of hazing, the university has created the list below of violations by campus organizations and teams.
Additionally, any matter adjudicated under the Campus Code of Conduct by a University Hearing Board, University Review.

2015-16 Academic Year

2014-15 Academic Year

2013-14 Academic Year

“We recognize that this organization has a deep history at Cornell, and..."
Cornell details hazing incident that led to men's lacrosse team suspension

Cornell University has suspended its entire men's lacrosse program for the fall after an alcohol-related hazing of freshmen recruits, which involved a beer-drinking competition, the school says.

Bloomberg News reports the suspension began Sept. 13 and wipes out the nationally competitive squad's fall schedule, including exhibition games.

The team's members will reportedly be permitted to practice and train during the censure, but will have to undergo anti-hazing education programs and workshops.

"It's a team-wide penalty for a team-wide incident," John Carberry, a Cornell representative, told Bloomberg News via telephone. "It involved coerced alcohol consumption."

More from Fox News
This post has been updated.

After a temporary suspension was put in place Sept. 2, Cayuga’s Waiters — Cornell’s oldest all-male a cappella group — has been “permanently dismissed,” according to the University.

During the investigation following the suspension, the organization was discovered to be allegedly involved in hazing activities throughout the fall 2015 and spring 2016 semesters.

These activities included requiring new members and non-senior members to "sit naked in an ice bath in a bathroom during an organization trip; apply icy Hot to their genitals; and race up and down a street and then consume food," according to the University hazing website.
Hazing Prevention Consortium: StopHazing
Planning Resource (StopHazing & Clery Center)
https://hazingprevention.institute/
Prevention Works: Breaking the Cycle

“The people I’m closest to—my family—never humiliated or intimidated me. So if we’re supposed to be ‘brothers,’ why would we do those things to the pledges?”

• Fraternity member from a chapter caught hazing
References & Suggested Reading

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