

Examining and Transforming Campus Hazing Cultures



A Research Project
with
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The Issue of Hazing

Despite the documented problems related to hazing there has been minimal scholarly attention to the issue. Once thought of as simply aberrant behavior perpetrated by a few isolated collegiate groups or teams and/or the military, it is increasingly evident that hazing behaviors are far more widespread involving students of diverse identities and experiences. Scholars are now considering how hazing is shaped by many social and institutional forces rather than understanding it as solely a problem rooted in personality traits or other individual characteristics.

Viewing hazing as simply a problem of Greek-letter organizations, athletes or any other particular type of student organization, or as one limited to college campuses, is shortsighted and may jeopardize the health and safety of students involved with hazing in many other arenas. In the end, this will hinder the overall quality of learning environments in schools and postsecondary institutions.

The consequences of campus hazing can be profound. For individuals, psychological and physical harm are common outcomes. For educational institutions, the risks include student attrition, abusive campus climates, loss of human potential, and negative publicity to name a few. Despite news accounts, anecdotal reports and growing research indicating that hazing persists among college students, to date, we do not have foundational data to provide a baseline for monitoring hazing trends across the U.S.

Research Overview

The research project will investigate the nature and prevalence of hazing practices across a range of student groups within diverse types of postsecondary institutions in the U.S. The study will provide foundational data from which to assess campus climates and to inform best practices for hazing prevention and intervention. It also aims to generate breadth of knowledge and promote more in-depth understanding about hazing with possible applications to other populations.

This proposal outlines funding needed to prepare for and implement the national study-- *Examining and Transforming the Campus Hazing Culture*.

More specifically, the goals of this research are to:

- Investigate the prevalence and nature of hazing behaviors among students in U.S. colleges and universities.
- Offer research-based strategies for responding to and preventing the problem of hazing among college students with transferability to middle and secondary schools.

This proposed investigation has garnered broad-based national support. More than 20 national associations and organizations have signed on as Project Partners and a Research Advisory Group that includes leading scholars and practitioners has been established.

The study is designed in three phases:

Phase I—a regional pilot study (completed in Spring 2005)

Phase II—data collection and analysis

Phase III—dissemination of findings with research-based recommendations for intervention and prevention.

Phase I: 2005

In 2004-2005, the North American Interfraternal Foundation with support from the NASPA Foundation and other collaborating partners, provided funding for the development and implementation of **Phase I—a Pilot Study** for this investigation. The pilot study exceeded expectations and yielded numerous gains including the development of reliable data collection tools and analysis procedures, testing sampling strategies, and generating data from both surveys and interviews. Also during this year, the project has continued to gain public visibility—one result of which has been an expanded list of project partners—evidence of the broad-based support for this initiative.

This initial phase of the investigation was conducted with students and staff at four postsecondary institutions in the Northeastern United States. A total of 1789 students at these campuses responded to a 70-item web-based survey on hazing which included questions about both college and high school experiences related to hazing. Additionally, 90 individual in-depth interviews were conducted with students and staff from the participating institutions. Analysis of the data is underway.

Phase I Key Findings

- 1 in 20 students responded that they had been hazed at the postsecondary institution they currently attend. A much larger number of students report experiencing specific behaviors that meet standard definitions of hazing.

- Many students who report being subjected to specific hazing behaviors do not consider themselves to have been hazed providing explanations such as “nothing happened to me that I did not agree to” or “it was all in fun.”
- 40% of the students who reported being involved in hazing behaviors report that a coach or organization advisor was aware of the activity. 22% report that the coach or advisor was involved in the hazing.
- 2 out of every 5 students say they are aware of hazing behaviors occurring within teams and student organizations on their campus. More than 1 in 5 report that they witnessed these hazing behaviors.
- Despite the existence of hazing at postsecondary institutions, only 28% of students say they were told about anti-hazing policies when joining a team or student organization and only 22% say they were given a written copy of campus policies.
- Many students come to college having experienced hazing. While 1 in 20 students say they have been hazed in college, 1 in 10 students say they were hazed in high school.

Phases II and III: 2006 – 2007

The goal of Phase II is to expand data collection to include a larger sample of undergraduate students enrolled in a wider range of colleges and universities throughout the U.S. Data will include student responses to an established web-based survey as well as in-depth interviews with students, staff, administrators and faculty. Analysis will be implemented in the following two stages: 1) web-based survey to students, and 2) individual interviews with students, staff, administrators, and faculty.

Costs associated with Phase II include expenses related to the researchers Dr. Elizabeth Allan and Dr. Mary Madden, an administrative assistant, and research assistant for 13 months, interviewers, data collection and web-based research expenses, website development (www.hazingstudy.com), participant recruitment incentives, telephone, and travel for data collection.

The goal of Phase III is to communicate findings and make recommendations for hazing intervention and prevention for educators, policy-makers and the general public. Results of this research will serve to promote awareness of the ways in which hazing affects college students and the campus community. Data derived from both the pilot and the national study will inform the development of policies, educational programming, and accountability measures that prevent hazing among higher education institutions as well as secondary schools.

The total costs for Phases II and III of the project total is projected to be \$371,055.

How You and Your Organization Can Help

The North American Interfraternal Foundation (NIF), is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to promote and support leadership, educational and research initiatives that advance the North American college fraternal experience. The NIF was quick to recognize the significance and impact of Dr. Allan's research project and, with the support of more than 20 research partners, has underwritten the Phase I project expenses.

To accomplish Phases II and III, the financial support of individuals, organizations whose focus is on higher education and students, fraternities and sororities, and professional associations is imperative. Organizations that gift or pledge (over 3-5 years) a gift of \$5,000 or more will be kept informed of research progress, have first access to research results and be provided an opportunity to schedule Dr. Allan for a presentation at their expense.

<i>Bronze Level Partner</i>	<i>\$ 5,000</i>	<i>Gold Level Partner</i>	<i>\$25,000</i>
<i>Silver Level Partner</i>	<i>\$10,000</i>	<i>Platinum Level Partner</i>	<i>\$50,000</i>

For additional information please visit www.stophazing.org and www.NIF-inc.net.



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