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Hazing Paper

Hazing is a very dangerous form of bullying. About 70 people have been killed by hazing in the last 20 years (Facts.com 2). “Hazing’ refers to any activity expected of someone joining a group ... that humiliates, degrades or risks emotional and/or physical harm, regardless of the person's willingness to participate” (Hazing Defined 1). Most hazing deaths occur because the act goes too far; the hazers get carried away. Their intention is to have a team building activity or make sure members are up to snuff (Facts.com 2). However, this is not what really happens. The acts often cross the line, and the victims do not complain because they want to join the group (Facts.com 2). Teens often want to outdo one another; each year, teens do something more dangerous than what happened to them while they were the victims (Bowers 1; Bushweller 3). Not only can these acts be dangerous, but they are also an “abuse of power and [a] violation of human dignity” (High School Hazing). If teens can be educated that this hurtful and inhumane act of bullying is forbidden in high school, then they will know that it is not acceptable in college, where hazing becomes the most dangerous.

Although high school hazing starts out and seems harmless, it can quickly escalate to being harmful, dangerous, and illegal. However, in most cases, the victim will still take part because they want to join the group. Take for instance, Casey Culpepper. She wanted to join the volleyball team her first year in high school. All through the summer, the threat of the "initiation" haunted her. One day she and her friends were attacked by seniors after class and

smearred with concoctions that included canned dog food, eggs, ketchup, mustard, horse manure and pet feces. They were then hosed off so hard that it hurt (Bowers 1). Other students at Western Branch High School were attacked with chemicals and waste from portable toilets. These students must now take powerful HIV drugs and undergo frequent screenings for AIDS (Bowers 1). Their lives will never be the same after this harmful experience. Nick Haben was 18 when he was forced to consume large amounts of hard liquor and beer, jump over bonfires, and swim in a creek. He was just trying to join the college lacrosse team at Western Illinois University. He later passed out into a coma and died that night in his dorm. No one bothered to bring him to a hospital and save his life (Bushweller 2).

Unfortunately, the problem only gets worse after high school. Fraternities and sororities, tight social clubs in college based off the Greek system, are notorious for their dangerous hazing practices. The movie "Animal House," is a showcase of the problem in popular culture. Hazing and physical abuse in fraternities began with class fights between freshmen and seniors in the late 19th century and was based off military initiation rituals (Facts.com 5). By the 1970's, alcohol became a part of almost every fraternity function, including hazing (Facts.com 6). Alcohol impairs one's ability of judgment and the ability to know when to stop a dangerous situation. In fact, according to Eileen Stevens, the president of the Committee to Halt Useless College Killings (CHUCK), alcohol is a factor in 98% of all fatal hazing incidents (qtd. in Facts.com 6). In addition, this figure does not contain the incidents that college officials classified only as alcohol-related incidents (qtd. in Facts.com 6). This is why college is when most hazing turns fatal. However, teens in high school also drink alcohol and their judgment becomes impaired too. If students in high school learn that hazing is unacceptable, they will say no to hazing in college. Hopefully, they will recognize that they are being put in a dangerous

situation and ask the hazers to stop. However, most victims are afraid to speak up when they are being victimized by hazing.

Hazing victims do not speak up and ask for the hazing to stop because of peer pressure (High School Hazing). Victims believe that the hazing is necessary to join the group, club, team, or activity (Bushweller 2). However, peer pressure not only forces the victim to go along with the act, but also forces the hazers to continue and the coaches to overlook it. Administrators, coaches, and teachers, as well as the hazers, believe the hazing is an acceptable tradition that should be allowed to continue (High School Hazing). Also, the older students are afraid to speak up and stop their friends from hazing others. They are afraid of peer pressure. Teachers and coaches do not know the dangers of hazing and are unwilling to stop it (High School Hazing). This must change. But still, through peer pressure, no one speaks up about hazing – not the victims or the hazers. This allows dangerous situations to occur, both in high school and through into college.

However, the problem has gotten better. High schools and colleges now educate students about the dangers of hazing (Facts.com 11). Forty-four states have also passed laws against hazing (Bowers 2). School districts are creating anti-hazing policies (Bushweller 2). That means that hazing is no longer “being swept under the rug” in most places (Facts.com 11). However, hazing goes on and continues to put lives at risk.

Teens have a tendency to want to outdo one another (Bowers 1). They want to do something better and harsher than what was done to them when they first joined the team (Bowers 1). This leads to an endless cycle of “hazing creep” (Bowers 1). If hazing can not be stopped, it will grow progressively worse over time. Today’s media also contributes to the problem (Bowers 1). Teens see television shows such as “Fear Factor” and try to replicate the

stunts without realizing that such stunts are closely supervised by trained professionals. In addition, teens may observe their peers doing crazy things. As a result of peer pressure an endless cycle of hazing creep continues. Hazing will get progressively worse if it can not be stopped soon.

Hazing is just wrong! Kids should not need to go through humiliation rituals to join a club or team. There is no need for these activities to take place. Hazing defenders say that hazing helps build team solidarity (Facts.com 3). "Prolonged hazing works to break down a person's earlier group allegiances and replace them with new beliefs and loyalties" says James Ogloff, a psychology professor at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada (qtd. in Facts.com 3). However, there are much more constructive ways to build team camaraderie. Games that build trust are better than ones that destroy trust and cause suffering. There are no valid excuses to why hazing should be practiced. "A landmark 2000 study of U.S. high school hazing by Alfred University in New York found that almost half the students who joined school or youth organizations were hazed--1.5 million students a year--and more than a quarter were expected to perform potentially illegal acts" (qtd. in Bowers). In addition other organizations besides school clubs and teams hazed. The study also found that one quarter of youths joining church groups were hazed (Bowers 2).

Hazing ruins many students' lives by not letting them pursue their hobbies and interests. Many groups will not let a student join if they refuse to be hazed. For instance, take Jack Lukic. Hazing ruined his life. At Cox High School, Jack wanted to join theater as an extracurricular activity and for something fun. However, when he joined he was forced to put on a costume and bark on command for a week. He said, "It was just humiliating. You walk in, and they all laugh at you." He quit on the second day and never returned to theater ever. Even in college with

different kids, he never felt like going back. "I kind of had a bad taste for theater" (Bowers 3). Hazing ruined his life; because of a silly, supposedly harmless prank, he could never again pursue this hobby. There are many other stories like Jack's out there, where kids are not allowed to pursue their hobbies and interests. Hazing restricts their freedom to live their lives how they want, and to join the club or sport that they want to be a part of.

Most students who are hazed, do not complain. "Some [students] say 'I had a great time.' Others say 'I had a miserable time.' And others see it as a necessary evil" (qtd. in Bushweller 2). This is what makes hazing a difficult subject, the issue of consent. "Psychologists say [that] most students endure hazing and never tell anyone outside the group because of an overwhelming need to belong" (qtd. in Bushweller 2). One student even said, "I enjoyed it. It was fun. It's a bonding experience for us."

However, Art Taylor, a psychologist at the Center for the Study of Sport in Society at Northeastern University in Massachusetts, says, "That's bull. Humiliating hazing rituals are more likely to tear people apart, destroy trust, and cause feelings of hatred. [Also, B]oys and men who enjoy hazing others in brutal or humiliating ways are more likely to become abusive husbands or fathers" (qtd. in Bushweller 2). Even though some victims claim they enjoy hazing, it is still harmful and inhumane to some. To others, well they are most likely bluffing that they enjoyed being hazed. These students just want to fit in. This is a good example of peer pressure at work.

Hazing, although it appears harmless, can quickly become harmful and dangerous. About 70 people have been killed by hazing in the last 20 years (Facts.com 2). Most of these deaths occurred in college, and as a result of alcohol. However, hazing can still be dangerous in high school. Not only can hazing cause physical harm, it can also cause psychological damage.

Hazing is caused by a need to belong and to fit in with one's peers. Hazing is not combated because it is believed to be an innocent act by uneducated students, coaches, and administrators. Victims do not speak up because of their willingness to join the team or group. In addition, hazing is just wrong. It is an abuse of human dignity. There are better ways to build team solidarity and trust, then to destroy it under the guise of building such trust. Hazing can and has ruined people's lives and the freedom to pursue the hobbies, sports, and activities that they want to. It is a destructive force, not a constructive force. Hazing is not enjoyed by most victims, even though many say its fun. Every way you look at it, hazing is just appalling and unnecessary.

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