EXPLANATIONS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS FOR ENGAGING IN HAZING

ACTIVITIES

By

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SIGNED: Jenny Nirh
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Samski and Elorah, you are both my favorite.
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ABSTRACT

In colleges and universities, 55% of students involved in campus organizations participate in hazing activities (Allan & Madden, 2008). While there is research on the prevalence and frequency of hazing, there is little on why students choose to participate. The purpose of this qualitative research is to understand how organizational values, formal or informal, influence hazing as well as the student’s explanations for engaging in hazing activities. The theories of bystander effect and moral disengagement are used to frame why students choose to be involved in potentially harmful situations. According to research on bystander effect, when individuals are in a group setting they are less likely to intervene in a given situation (Latne & Nida, 1981; Fisher et al, 2006; Berkowitz, 2009). Moral disengagement theory tells us that most individuals are unable to engage in morally ambiguous activities until they have been able to justify those activities through a larger purpose (Bandura, 1999). Currently there is no qualitative research that examines hazing through a lens of moral disengagement or the bystander effect. Despite secrecy surrounding the topic, 23 students participated in interviews to discuss their role in hazing activities. Each of the students was involved in one of four organizations that had been found responsible for hazing activities through the same university judicial process. The 23 participants came from three fraternities that lost recognition from the host institution, as well as one women’s club sport team that was sanctioned for hazing. Participants were asked about the hazing activities they participated in, their role in the activities, the organizational values, and their personal values. The participants explained their decisions to participate in hazing using the various ways outlined in moral disengagement theory, and additionally demonstrated the bystander effect through their participation.
CHAPTER 1: NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In colleges and universities, approximately 55% of students involved in clubs and social organizations as well as members of athletic teams are hazed (Allan & Madden, 2008). Hazing—or requiring detrimental, humiliating, or often life-threatening activities or actions for an individual to join an organization—assumes many forms. Hazing can involve more benign actions like being required to run errands, or perform chores for full-fledged members, or more serious activities like forced consumption of alcohol or toxic substances, beatings, skin brandings, and simulated or real sex acts. These actions can be both physically abusive and can cause psychological trauma for the participants (Finkel, 2002; & Madden, 2008). Occasionally, these incidents can escalate; from 1970 to present day, there have been more than 100 deaths and numerous injuries due to hazing practices recorded in the US (Nuwer, 2004; hazingprevention.org). Such deaths can be caused by alcohol poisoning, exposure to the elements, or injuries that are often related to alcohol consumption (Finkel, 2002). Hazing is prevalent in high schools, sports teams, fraternities and sororities, college clubs, the military, and even the workplace (Broward, 2012; Josefowitz & Gadon, 89). Despite these actions being illegal in 44 states, against university policies, against US military regulations, and the policies of certain national sports organizations, hazing continues (Nuwer, 2004; Hazing Prevention, 2010). The questions asked here are, how do organizational values, (formal and perceived) influence hazing behaviors, and how do students explain their participation in hazing activities?
Only two large-scale studies on hazing practices have been conducted in the US and both primarily examine frequency of hazing and types of hazing, but neither examines the underlying reasons for the activities that occur. Hoover’s (1999) quantitative study focused on the experiences of NCAA athletes and “initiations” into their teams. Hoover examined what kind of hazing activities students were required to participate in, and to what extent these practices permeated NCAA athletics. Hoover found that 80% of NCAA athletes were subjected to activities that were considered hazing. Another mixed-methods study surveyed and interviewed college students on hazing. Allan & Madden (2008) examined the frequency and types of hazing among college clubs, organizations, and sports teams. They found that students experienced hazing activities in NCAA sports, fraternities and sororities, honor societies, intramurals teams, bands, department-affiliated groups and religious organizations. Their findings showed that students involved in many types of activities at institutions of higher education are subject to hazing. There has been additional dissertation research conducted on predictors of motivating behavior for hazing, as well as attitudes of fraternity men in regard to hazing (Cimino, 2013 & McCreery, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

While current studies do show the prevalence of hazing among college students, they do not examine why students have continued to engage in such behavior, despite probable hazing education and disciplinary actions, and knowing these activities are deemed potentially dangerous and often illegal. Examining student involvement in hazing activities will permit practitioners to develop new strategies for hazing prevention, and permit scholars to obtain more information on work related to hazing, the bystander
effect, the moral disengagement theory, and peer group influence. Work in all of these areas primarily examines how people in groups are more likely to make decisions that they may not necessarily make independently, and under what circumstances they make these decisions.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the explanations for hazing behavior among college students in student organizations. Using literature on the moral disengagement theory and the bystander effect phenomenon, I examine how students’ interactions and involvement with the group can determine their reaction to involvement in hazing activities. As the study focuses on student organizations and the individual within that organization, it will be most applicable in the study of the social psychology of individuals who engage in hazing behavior. The explanations for hazing behavior will be generally defined as the thought process that students engage in when they are victims of, perpetrators of, or bystanders to hazing activities.

**Research Questions and Methodology**

The purpose for the research is to expand the knowledge base on why college students choose to engage in hazing activities. The research questions were designed to allow for students to provide examples of the hazing they engaged in, why they chose to participate in hazing and what organizational factors may have influenced them.

1. How do students explain their participation in hazing activities?
2. How do organizational values (formal and perceived) influence hazing behaviors?
In order to answer the research questions, it is necessary to allow the students to tell their own stories. This requires asking open-ended questions of the participants and allowing the story to unfold (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). There is currently research available on the prevalence and type of hazing that exists on college campus (Allan & Madden, 2008). Current quantitative research touches on motivations, but there is little about how students explain their participation that is not simply anecdotal.

The research was conducted at a large, public, research extensive institution in the Southwest United States. Each of the 23 participants was involved in a student organization that had been found responsible for hazing through the institutional conduct process. The mission and purpose of each organization as well as information on the hazing practices of each of the four organizations was examined. Each participant was interviewed via phone, or in person, to learn more about why the student chose to engage in hazing activities. Each interview was transcribed, analyzed and coded for themes. The most prominent themes were selected to be discussed as findings.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as very little currently exists on why students choose to participate in hazing activities. Using moral disengagement theory and the bystander effect, there will be more understanding of how students can engage in potentially harmful behaviors, that in other circumstances they would not engage in. Another reason this is significant is that it will add to the evidence base for hazing prevention and education efforts. Additionally, this study will add a deeper qualitative element to
current hazing research being done at the research site by the National Collaborative for Hazing Research and Prevention.

**Organization of the Study**

This study is divided into six chapters. Chapter one provides the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, an introduction to the research design as well as the significance of the study. Chapter two will review the history of hazing, results and consequences of hazing, prevalence of hazing, the importance of rites of passage, and the theoretical framework. Next, chapter three, will detail the methodology including the research site, sample, data collection, analysis, and limitations of the study. Chapters four and five present the qualitative findings. Finally, chapter six includes conclusions, implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

**Summary**

When college students engage in hazing activities that can be violent, harmful or demeaning it is difficult to understand. What makes individuals, who may not normally physically or verbally assault someone decide to do so in the context of their student organization? Are 55% of students on college campuses just interested in being demeaned or injured, or demeaning or injuring others? There is little known about why students choose to engage in hazing as both a victim and aggressor. Using the frameworks of the bystander effect and moral disengagement theory, this study examines students explanations for hazing and demonstrates how formal and informal organizational values contribute to hazing. Utilizing this information may allow practitioners to better understand students in the adjudication and sanctioning process, as
well as how to help members of the organization. With little research available, it is difficult to create strategies for hazing prevention and education. It is important to understand student’s explanations for hazing in order to create alternatives.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The prevalence of hazing has increased in the US and worldwide over the last 100 years (Hollman, 2002; Lipkins, 2006). Not only does hazing occur frequently at colleges and high schools across the country, but it has developed into more serious and violent actions with more than 100 deaths occurring from 1970 to the present day, involving college students (Finkel, 2002 & Nuwer, 2004; hazingprevention.org). The examination of hazing has become more common as many student deaths and student accounts of hazing have become more common in news media (Lohse, 2012; Reitman, 2012).

According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), hazing is defined in the following manner:

Any act committed against someone joining or becoming a member or maintaining membership in any organization that is humiliating, intimidating or demeaning, or endangers the health and safety of the person. Hazing includes active or passive participation in such acts and occurs regardless of the willingness to participate in the activities! Hazing creates an environment/climate in which dignity and respect are absent. (NCAA, 2008)

Further, the Fraternal Information and Programming Group defines hazing as “any action taken or situation created, intentionally, whether on or off fraternity [organization or school] premises to produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule” (FIPG, 2008). This definition from the Fraternal
Insurance Programming Group is the most common one among national fraternities and sororities that are responsible for a large proportion of hazing violations across the country. Although there are many definitions of hazing, some more detailed and explicitly outlining specific hazing practices, the abovementioned definition is clear and simple and will be used as the definition of hazing for the purpose of this study.

According to Allan and Madden (2008), 73% of students in fraternities or sororities experience hazing during their undergraduate membership experience. While not well publicized or well known, 74% of college athletes experience hazing when they join their college team (Allan & Madden, 2008). Further, each national fraternity and sorority, college, university, and athletic department at higher education institutions has a hazing policy (HazingPrevention.Org, 2010). While these policies can vary, the two previously mentioned definitions encompass the general idea of how hazing is defined.

Despite efforts to curb hazing, there are many barriers to eliminating hazing from a group’s culture; these include the widespread prevalence of hazing, lack of consequences for engaging in these behaviors, role of peer groups, moral disengagement, and lack of bystander intervention. The group’s culture includes the traditions, activities, and attitudes that they have created within the organization, which can often include hazing potential new members to the group.

This chapter will discuss the history of hazing in the US higher education system, rites of passage and ritual, influence of peer groups, the frequency and prevalence of hazing in today’s institutions of higher education, and current research on hazing. This will continue into discussing the results and consequences of hazing, including for those
being hazed and those doing the hazing. It will conclude by detailing the theoretical frameworks of this research, bystander effect, and the moral disengagement theory.

**Literature Review**

**History**

The first reported cases of hazing can be traced back to observations made by Plato in 387 B.C.E. and were seen more commonly in colleges and universities beginning in 1340 (Nuwer, 2004). Hazing practices on early college campuses consisted of harassing freshmen by throwing garbage at them or making them wear embarrassing outfits. Moreover, hazing was commonplace in European colleges, and at some institutions it was required for graduation. Pennalism, as it was known at the time, was destined to help “groom” the individual. As Pennalism became more violent, university administrations began banning the practice in the 1700s. Soon after, the term fagging came about and was described as involving personal servitude of younger classmen to upperclassmen and was generally prevalent in preparatory school and universities in England. There are still policies against fagging in the UK (Finkel, 2002; Eton, 1977). The first time students in the US were held accountable for a hazing activity was in 1657 at Harvard University; men were issued a small fine for hazing underclassmen.

Hazing spread among colleges in the US in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and became commonplace in the twentieth century, evolving from minor pranks into the activities we see today. In fraternities, hazing was found from the mid-nineteenth century (Finkel 2002; Nuwer, 2004). Hazing began as pranks unlike the personal servitude that was present in Europe. Institutions had in place “freshmen laws,” whereby
sophomores “tutored” freshmen how to be “men.” According to Syrett (2009), “Freshmen were kidnapped, stripped, carried off on trips, bound, gagged and left in cemeteries” (pg. 19). Not all sophomores participated, but freshmen wanted to haze others as revenge for their own experience (Syrett, 2009). Initially, colleges and universities in the US condoned hazing. An excerpt from a 1931 college yearbook describing the freshmen class stated,

The freshmen class of 1934 passed through the port of stupidity and embarked upon the long and dangerous voyage of higher education early last September. This year’s frosh were tortured (?) and abused (?) by the sophomores and upperclassman since time immemorial has been tortured and abused. The first class meeting of the lowly plebes was held the day after registration and was conducted under the supervision of James Flynn, chairman of the Traditions Committee, whose self-styled “fatherly interest” in the latest “scum” has been a constant solace to every member of this year’s freshmen class. (The Desert, 1931, p. 89)

The seniors at the same institution were described as having spent four years reaching a “glorious” end through “constant effort” and “successful enterprise” (Desert, 1931, p. 47). It was not until later in the twentieth century that institutions began enforcing hazing policies.

**Influences on hazing.** Hazing in the military also became apparent during the early twentieth century, with a large-scale scandal at West Point that involved the hazing of future five-star general Douglas MacArthur (Nuwer, 2004). The passage of the GI Bill,
post WWII, led to increased frequency of hazing in colleges across the country, because men who had served in the US Military went back to college and brought with them the hazing practices they had experienced in the military (Insidehazing.com, 2005). Prior to the passage of the GI Bill, and the end of WWII, hazing in American colleges consisted primarily of “pranks and intense practical jokes” (Insidehazing.com, 2005). After the entrance of the military men, the fraternities began to incorporate some military boot camp-type activities, calisthenics, line-ups, drill sergeant-type yelling, and other athletic feats. Drawing a parallel between pledging and boot camp, “in the eyes of men hardened by war, the pranks and practical jokes popular before them were nothing more than juvenile attempts at humiliation” (Insidehazing.com, 2005). This change in the type of hazing that occurred in organizations has had a lasting effect, and these activities are still prevalent today in student organizations.

**Hazing deaths and injuries.** To date, there have been more than 180 documented hazing-related deaths in the US military, high schools, masonic lodges, student organizations, fraternities, sororities, marching bands, and club sports (Nuwer, 2004; Nuwer, 2009; hazingprevention.org). In fact, a minimum of one death occurred each year from 1970 to 2014. The first recorded hazing-related death, cause unknown, occurred in 1838 at a seminary in Kentucky and was documented by the victim’s family (Nuwer, 2004). From the first reported death in 1838 to 1969, there were 35 hazing-related deaths in the US. In the 1970s, there were 31 student deaths linked to hazing; in the 1980s, there were 22; in the 1990s there were 27; and from 2000–2010, there were 23 (Hollman, 2002; Nuwer, 2004; Draznin & Sanchez, 2014). In only the first four years of the current decade, 14 student deaths have been attributed to hazing (Hollman, 2002; Nuwer, 2004).
In 2011, when this research was proposed, there were multiple alleged hazing-related deaths or critical injuries, beginning with a student at Cornell University and another student attempting suicide at State University of New York-New Paltz due to the hazing she had been enduring in her sorority, and ending with the highly publicized death of a band member at FAMU in November 2011 (Horrigan, 2011; Levs, 2011; Caron, 2011). In 2012, there were eight deaths linked to hazing in the US, one of which was murder as retaliation for hazing that occurred over 50 years earlier (Nuwer, 2004; “1950s Prank”, 2012). In 2013, four men died on college campuses as a result of hazing, and in 2014 one suicide has been linked to the hazing a fraternity man endured (Nuwer, 2004; Draznin & Sanchez, 2014).

The number of hazing-related injuries is difficult to document because the involved individuals often do not seek treatment for, or report their injuries. There is also no clearing house where hazing-related injuries are documented, which makes understanding the breadth of injuries reliant on reports made in the media. The victims of hazing can be compared to domestic violence victims in that if they do seek treatment, they often attempt to disguise the cause of the injury to avoid police intervention within their group (Finkel, 2002). These individuals typically do not want the person or group who caused them injury to be held accountable, because they believe that it will likely increase the amount of violence or psychological abuse the victim has to endure (Finkel, 2002). Individuals also do not report issues because they do not want to be excluded from the group. While scholars are able to document the more violent incidents of hazing, those that do not result in death or serious injury remain hidden.
**Hazing law.** Concerns regarding hazing in schools and the public sector have led many states to criminalize hazing. Currently, 44 US states have created anti-hazing laws in an attempt to curb hazing issues. These states have a variety of thresholds that a hazing incident must meet before it is considered criminal hazing, including the harm that it causes the individual. Additionally, there is a difference in many states with regard to whether consent to participate in an activity can be considered when determining if the action was criminal (Crow & Rosner, 2004). There are only 16 states that have created provisions regarding consent in their hazing laws; however, higher education institutions may include provisions on consent outside of these 16 states (Parks & Southerland, 2013). The law differs with regard to criminal and civil cases as well; criminal courts have primarily rejected consent as a defense, while civil cases have permitted consent as a defense. In civil cases, consent has been permitted as a defense when victims were educated on the possible risks (Parks & Southerland, 2013). The inability to use consent as a defense has been tied to a belief in prevention of harm in society; if an act is physically harmful, consent is not considered a viable defense, because the prevention of violence is good for the entire society, even when individuals are not concerned regarding their own personal safety (Parks & Southerland, 2013). In some cases, the law acknowledges that peer pressure or a desire to belong to the group can force an individual to participate in an activity in which they may not be comfortable. A case in 1987, Quinn v Sigma Rho Chapter of Beta Theta Pi Fraternity, revealed that peer pressures can result in coerced consent and not actual consent (Parks & Southerland, 2013).

However, in most states, these laws only apply to educational settings and not to the public sector, even though hazing can occur in professional sports teams and among
service personnel such as firefighters, EMTs, or other groups that require close-knit ties to be successful.

Despite efforts of high schools, colleges and universities, professional organizations, and state governments, hazing-related injuries and deaths have continued to increase over the previous century (Lipkins, 2006). Understanding the history and current frequency and prevalence of the problem can help inform researchers on to how to better approach further investigation of this issue. Understanding these issues will also aid educators and policymakers in educating individuals and organizations on hazing and alternative rites of passage for their members.

**Results and Consequences of Hazing**

There can be many consequences of hazing including jail time, fines, expulsion from institutions of higher education, civil lawsuits, injury, and death. Commonplace acts of hazing can cause numerous problems for the students who are victimized by hazing and those who are the perpetrators of such activities.

There are many different types of hazing with a variety of consequences. In addition to the legal consequences, hazing can also lead to a variety of medical consequences as identified by Finkel (2002). Using alcohol in activities or binge drinking can lead to aspiration or alcohol-related comas. Beating, paddling, whipping, or striking can cause interabdominal injuries, intracranial injuries, and death. Further, branding or burning can lead to third-degree burns, which may require skin grafts. Calisthenics can result in heat exhaustion or heat stroke, which can cause seizures, confusion, bizarre behavior, or coma. Confinement in a restricted area may cause hypoxia or heat-/cold-
related injuries. Consumption of nonfood substances often results in severe vomiting or poisoning if items are toxic. Forcing individuals to participate in activities at heights or near water can conclude in drowning deaths or blunt trauma and death. In addition, psychological abuse and sexual assault can have countless physical and mental effects on the survivors (Finkel, 2002).

Author Brad Land (2005) wrote a memoir on his own experiences with hazing during his pledge period at a fraternity at Clemson University. Prior to arrival at Clemson, he was kidnapped and severely beaten when he was carjacked. The hazing that he had to subsequently endure at Clemson pushed him to the edge, as he also felt as though he was reliving the traumatizing assault that he had been through. He also wrote of the death of one of his pledge brothers, who endured even more physical and psychological torture and died of a heart attack on the final night of pledging at merely 18 years of age. Although it was not ruled a hazing related death, Land insists that the mental and physical stress his friend endured led to his heart attack. Dr. Hank Nuwer, another author with a strong anti-hazing stance, has dedicated much of his time to documenting hazing issues and cases. In his book, Broken Pledges, Nuwer (1990) details over 375 hazing-related deaths and injuries in the military, marching bands, student groups, and fraternities and sororities.

Students do not often identify the activities that they have been required to participate in as hazing, partially because of their unwillingness to see themselves as victims, or because of the belief that it was just a fun activity. However, while many of these activities have no criminal consequences, because no one is seriously injured or their actions are never reported to authorities, each year other students are seriously
injured or die as results of the same “fun activity.” While hazing is experienced by 55% of students in clubs, organizations, or on sports teams, 55% of college students are not killed or seriously injured through these activities each year (Allan & Madden, 2008). There are many hazing situations in which students will come to no harm, but any case where students do come to harm is a cause for concern.

**Frequency, Prevalence, and Attitudes toward Hazing**

Only a few large-scale studies have been conducted on the frequency of hazing in today’s society. This could be due to the culture of secrecy within hazing organizations, the inability or lack of desire in victims of hazing to identify themselves as such, or the inability to reach the individuals that have engaged in or been victims of these issues. Further, during many studies, students fail to self-identify that they have been victims of hazing, which leads to skewed results as individuals do not understand that the activities that they have required to participate in were acts of hazing. Of the studies described here, two are large-scale studies that were able to identify the types of activities that students were asked to engage in and the frequency of hazing among college students, and one is a study that is currently ongoing at the research site used here.

A study by researchers at the University of Maine surveyed 11,482 students in 53 colleges and universities, and additionally interviewed 300 students and administrators at 18 of the institutions that were surveyed (Allan & Madden, 2008). This was the first national study that examined hazing practices across different types of student organizations. For the purpose of their study, they identified hazing as “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” (p. 2). In this study, Allan and Madden found that among college students who were involved in clubs, teams, and student organizations, 55% had experienced hazing. The study showed that 74% of varsity athletic team members, 73% of social fraternity or sorority members, 64% of club sports participants, 56% of performing arts organizations members, 50% of service fraternities or sororities members, 49% of intramural teams players, 42% of recreation clubs members, 30% of members of other organizations (religiously-affiliated organizations, culture clubs, and student government), 28% of academic club members, and 20% of honor society members had participated in at least one hazing activity to gain membership into their respective group.

The most common practices that students experienced were forced alcohol consumption, humiliation, isolation, sleep-deprivation, and sexual acts. Other disturbing findings were that often others, apart from the members themselves, were aware that these incidents were occurring, including 25% of coaches or student organization advisors; moreover, 25% of the time alumni from the group were present, 48% of the time students had told a peer regarding the incidents, and 26% of the time students told their families of the issues. Over half the time, students posted pictures of the hazing activities on websites like Facebook.com (Allan & Madden, 2008). Further of concern, was the fact that students did not report the issues to university officials 95% of the time, and 90% of the time students did not identify the activities that they were required to participate in as hazing or has having negative consequences.

The University of Maine created the National Collaborative for Hazing Research and Practice to expand the evidence base for hazing prevention efforts. The research site,
a large public southwestern university, is currently participating in the research and has received a preliminary report based on a survey with the university student population. The research is on institutional experiences and attitudes toward hazing. The data was compared to the earlier study by Allan and Madden. The survey was distributed on October 1, 2013 to 12,516 students at the host institution; of these students, 680 began the survey and 500 completed it, and 20 responses were excluded because the participants did not meet the demographic requirements. The survey respondents were 33.0% male, 66.5% female, and 0.5% transgender, and 93% fell into the age group of 18–22 years. Of the 680 participants, 76.5% indicated that they had been involved in at least one student organization at the university. Of the 505 who indicated being involved in campus organizations, 15.1% were involved in fraternities or sororities at the institution and 9.3% were involved in a club sport team.

The students were asked to identify behaviors that they had engaged in as a part of joining or maintaining membership in their student organization. The following are the top 10 hazing behaviors found at the institution:

- associating with specific people and not others,
- participating in drinking games,
- acting as a personal servant,
- sleep deprivation,
- being yelled at,
- screamed or cursed at by other members,
- attending a skit night or roaster where other members are humiliated,
• committing sex acts with another gender,
• singing,
• chanting alone or with other new members in public not related to an event game or practice,
• being awakened at night by other members, and
• drinking large amounts of alcohol.

Overall 23% of the participants had participated in at least one designated hazing behaviors. Of the students who had participated in hazing, twelve identified their experience as hazing, four were members of fraternities or sororities, and two were members of a club sport. Additionally, only nine students indicated that they had ever participated as aggressors in a hazing situation. In this newer study, Allan (2014) examined perceived outcomes from hazing. According to the results, the following outcomes were the most common: felt more like a part of the team or group, felt a sense of accomplishment, felt stronger, did better in classes and looked forward to doing it to others. Students were also asked if they had ever heard of other teams or organizations on campus that engaged in hazing. An overwhelming 66.9% indicated that they were aware of teams or groups on campus that engaged in hazing activities, with 29.3% indicating that they had witnessed the hazing first hand.

In this study, the students were also asked to identify if they would intervene in hazing situations; however this portion of the study had a very low N, only 18 (Allen, 2014). The situations identified involved paddling, forced alcohol consumption, embarrassing outfits, being tested on the history or the organization, and being
blindfolded and dropped off somewhere. The students indicated 70% of the time or more that they were somewhat or very likely to intervene in a situation if they were friends with the new members (NMs), NMs were encouraged to drink excessive amounts of alcohol, NMs were physically harmed, activities were dangerous, NMs were clearly uncomfortable, activities were humiliating or degrading, activities were considered tradition, and NMs went along with the activity. The students also said at slightly higher rates, that they would take action after the activity to stop future hazing activities. A majority of the students also agreed to statements identifying hazing as unnecessary in a student organization.

According to a study conducted by researchers at Alfred University, Hoover (1999) reported that 80% of NCAA athletes are subjected to “questionable” or unacceptable activities as a part of their initiation into their athletic teams. The researchers received responses from more than 325,000 individual athletes at more than 1,000 NCAA schools. They found that one in five athletes experienced illegal activities, such as kidnappings, beatings, solitary abandonment, or had been forced to commit illegal acts like destruction of property (Hoover, 1999). Half of the students surveyed had been required to consume alcohol as part of their initiation and two-thirds faced practices such as being yelled at or sworn at, were forced to wear embarrassing outfits, or had to suffer through sleep, food, or personal hygiene deprivation (Hoover, 1999). Interestingly they found that non-Greek athletes were more likely to be hazed, and women were more likely to engage in alcohol-related hazing rather than any other type of hazing. Further, the students at the highest risk for participation in “unacceptable” initiations were male athletes, swimmers, divers, football players, or water polo players.
and students at Southern or Midwestern institutions. Moreover, athletes at the highest risk for alcohol-related initiations were female athletes, lacrosse players, and students at eastern or western residential institutions. Athletes involved in questionable activities were usually football players and students at campuses in the South or West. They also found that students who were more likely to be engaged in acceptable initiations were women; members of Greek organizations; members of track, fencing, or tennis teams; and students in Midwestern or western urban and commuter campuses (Hoover, 1999). The Alfred study reveals that college athletes engage in the same types of behavior as members of social organizations and that the activities are widespread and often built into the athletic culture in colleges and universities.

The abovementioned studies are different from other studies, because rather than asking whether students have engaged in hazing activities, they listed the activities commonly believed to be hazing—such as being asked/told to consume alcohol, made to wear embarrassing outfits, or engage in embarrassing or humiliating behavior, and sleep or personal hygiene deprivation, and were asked about participation in these activities. This allows students to identify the activities they engaged in without first identifying them as hazing. While these studies have achieved a great deal to create awareness on the prevalence of hazing and have suggested policy changes and education, they have not identified why students continue to engage in behaviors that they know are illegal or that make them uncomfortable.
The Role of Peer Groups in Decision-making

**Groupthink.** The term groupthink has been tied to many political miscalculations and poor decisions made throughout history (Janis, 1983). “Groupthink refers to the deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressures” (Janis, 1983, p.7). The common belief is that groupthink is generally defined as poor decisions made in a group. This concept of groupthink can often be tied to issues regarding hazing and a group’s reaction to a problem.

Groupthink has often caused groups of people to make poor decisions and misjudge serious risks, because they can laugh off or make light of those risks together. It also causes those individuals in the group who might disagree with the group consensus to be convinced that they are actually wrong and believe that the rest of the group is probably correct (Janis, 1983). Studies have also found that group cohesiveness is key to the idea of groupthink: the more cohesive the group, the more solidarity members express for one another; moreover, positive feelings toward group activities are generally higher, thereby resulting in greater loyalty to the group (Janis, 1983). Researchers have also found that group cohesiveness can develop more strongly in groups that undergo external stressors, such as being physically threatened or injured, or faced death together. This idea of group cohesiveness explains why individuals that are hazed are unlikely to report the incident—they face pressures and stressors from their organizations that actually make them more loyal to the organization (Janis, 1983).

The concept of group conformity implies that if an individual expresses dissent with the group’s actions, the group will try to convince the individual that they are
wrong; if they are unsuccessful, they will eventually turn away and exclude the dissenting individual from the group (Janis, 1983). However, group conformity is not always a bad thing; studies show that it can increase productivity and success (Janis, 1983). However, in other groups, conformity can have the opposite effects and make groups destructive and unproductive.

The concept of groupthink is useful in understanding how individuals, who under normal circumstances would not be considered deviants by society, decide that the mistreatment of others through hazing practices is acceptable behavior. This is a problem that any group of people could face, and in the case of college students, these groups that they join and the decisions made in these groups can be extremely destructive.

**Peer groups.** Peer groups are of key importance in college student development both socially and cognitively, as are many of the out-of-classroom experiences that a student may have during their time in college (Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996). Different peer groups can have a negative or positive influence on the growth, development, and success of students in higher education. In some studies, groups such as fraternities, sororities, and athletics have been shown to have a negative effect on the development of the individual (Terenzini, Pascarella, Blimling, 1996). The effect of peer groups is important when discussing the idea of hazing, as the indoctrination of the individual into a hazing group could only strengthen the negative effects that some peer groups have.

Early peer or reference group research, specifically the work of Newcomb (1968), has shown that “membership in established groups usually involves taking on of whole
patterns of interrelated behaviors” (p. 345). Over time, a desire to be accepted into a group or maintain “face” within a group or society will cause individuals to conform their thoughts and activities to those of the larger group (Newcomb, 1968; Goffman, 1967). The likelihood of the individual to go against previously established values is dependent on the strength of the tie that the individual feels toward the group (Charter & Newcomb, 1968).

Goffman (1967) examines individual “Saving Face” within the group; this implies towing the party line of the organization and falling in line with the values and standards of that group. In Goffman’s work, it seems that the individual is attempting to maintain his social hierarchy in a group, which means downplaying the negative aspects of his own demeanor or downplaying or not acknowledging the group activities that he does not agree with. His work appears to be geared toward positive reference groups, but can easily be translated into membership in negative reference groups as well. Those involved in the groups are subject to a different set of rules designated by that group. To be in violation of these rules is a gross violation of the standards of the group (Goffman, 1967). The individual “often follows these rules with very little thought, paying what he feels is but a small tribute to convention.” (p. 248). Those who violate the rules or show no respect for the group lack “pride,” and punishments for the violations “can be harsh” (Goffman, 1967). While Goffman implied that the individual might be cast out of popular society or his social class, these theories ring true within hazing groups. Individuals who choose not to go along with the hazing activities or choose to inform powerful entities of the issues may be ostracized, threatened, or harmed by the members of the group that they are defying.
The Importance of Rites of Passage and Rituals

Admittance into a peer group or in-group is important in the development of college students (Terenzini, Pascarella, Blimling, 1996). The rites of passage, rituals, or initiation are what transfers a student from being an outsider to being an insider within the organizations. Researchers have previously indicated that there are three main phases in rites of passage, or moving from one group or social status to another (Van Gennep, 2004/1960; Turner, 1977; Elkins, Braxton, & James, 2000). These initial phases include separation from the previous group, transition, and incorporation into the new group (Van Gennep, 2004/1960). These rites of passage symbolize the movement from one social group to another, and the advancement of the individual or a change in their status (Van Gennep, 2004/1960; Turner, 1977). The work of Van Gennep has received criticism when it has been used in the context of student persistence in higher education, and was previously criticized when applied to student research on student retentions and departure (Elkins, Braxton, & James, 2000; Tinto, 1988). Here, the work of Van Gennep is being used with regard to the actual initiation of individuals into a defined and closed group, and the activities they participate in within that process.

College students seek ways to move from one status to another, for example, from an out-group to in-group. The students can look to leave a former phase of their life behind by taking steps to become a part of another group on a college campus. These rites of passage, while important in fitting in the new social group, can become misguided because of hazing in student organizations. Hazing can often follow the three phases described by Van Gennep (2004/1960). Individuals can be separated from their prior friends or families and isolated during their new period in the group. In the transition
phase, through acts of “pledging”, they earn their way into the group. Finally, they are incorporated into the group after they meet the requirements and, depending on the group, they participate in some kind of initiation ritual. It is important that the purpose of the rites of passage be acknowledged in allowing a person to transition from one life stage to another and also that these rites be implemented in a positive manner.

Rituals are used to symbolize the phases of the rites of passage and are different for different types of groups. They can be an athletic or talent tryout, an application, or there may be requirements the individual must meet like certain GPAs or a minimum number of community service hours. Rituals, initiations, and ceremonies are important in aiding an individual in becoming part of the in-group. According to Turner (1977),

Formalized or ceremonial behaviors are essentially to be understood as hypostatization or models of common features of the structure and dynamics of social processes. These features… are not in themselves of an essentially “sacred,” “ritual or ceremonial character, and are in many cases dealt with without the aid of “sacred” ceremonial forms. (p. 59)

While rituals are important, and as Turner stated not always “sacred,” they are behaviors that can be modified to be healthier and more purposeful than some of the hazing activities that have become “formalized” or ceremonial behaviors within organizations. Rituals are of importance in organizations and do help people create a sense of belonging, but there are ways to conduct rituals and create belonging without harming individuals. Every fraternity and sorority has ceremonies, some of which have been developed more than 100 years ago to satisfy the need of a ritual to create bonding
within a group. Athletic teams and performing arts groups have tryouts to show that they are sufficiently talented to be involved in the group. Honor societies and department-affiliated groups have grade requirements for membership. There is a link between participating in a ceremony or ritual and attachment to an organization, although there is no link between the process being unhealthy and creating attachment (Johnson, 2006; Johnson, 2002; Lodewijkx & Syroit, 1997).

**Theoretical Framework**

If students are harmed by hazing activities or see others being harmed through such activities, why do they continue to participate? The main concepts that this study will draw from and explain the contradiction are the bystander effect and moral disengagement theory. The concepts used in this study are based on the science of social psychology, or how social interactions effect individuals’ decisions (Smith & Mackie, 2000). As this study focuses on how an individual justifies their behavior as a part of the group, it is most appropriate to consider the social psychology of hazing. Work in social psychology, or the study of how the social interactions of an individual affect the individual suggests that “for all of us, beliefs, attitudes and practices endorsed by the groups to which we belong strongly affect our thoughts, feelings, and actions. This is true even when we are far away from other group members” (Smith & Mackie, 2000, p.5). Social psychology is particularly useful and will be used here because the roles of peer groups and social psychology are directly related when examining the decision of individuals and how they are influenced by group dynamics.
The Bystander Effect

The concept of the bystander effect is not a new one. It is the idea that groups of people can witness something, often someone coming to harm or a crime being committed, and do nothing to stop it. One of the most well-known displays of the bystander effect is that of Kitty Genovese, a woman in New York who was raped and murdered as she walked home. The fiftieth anniversary of her death was in mid-March 2014, and researchers now know more about bystander effect now than when it was referred to as Bad Samaritansism in 1964. Although much of the original story regarding Kitty Genovese was incorrect—there were very few actual bystanders—interest in the bystander effect peaked and enthusiasm for research on the bystander effect increased (Lehman, 2014; Latane & Nida, 1981).

The basic premise of the bystander effect is that while individually people might try to stop a situation, it is less likely in a group setting, usually because individuals look to others to gauge reactions and judge the situation. If everyone in the group is basing their reactions on each other, it is likely that no one will intervene (Fisher et al, 2006; Berkowitz, 2009). Additionally, cohesiveness of the group and how ingrained social responsibility is in the group has been tied to the likelihood of intervention (Rutkowski, Gruder, & Romer, 1983). If social responsibility is highly incorporated into the group or organization, individuals are more likely to intervene when the group is highly cohesive. Furthermore, intervention is less likely in large groups that demonstrate low cohesion (Rutkowski, Gruder & Romer, 1983). In accordance, groups with high cohesion that do not have a strong sense of social responsibility will not encourage bystander intervention. Determining if a group creates an environment that is conducive to intervention is not
linear but depends on the cohesiveness of the group, the social norms of the group, and the size of the groups (Levine & Crowther, 2008).

There are a few main reasons why people do not intervene in situations. First, people do not intervene due to their inability to evaluate the situation and determine if aid is necessary. Furthermore, people may not intervene because they have observed others not intervening, which is due to social influence. Bystanders must realize that the situation is a real issue and that they have to act (Latne, & Nida, 1981). However, the social norms of the group can limit the ability of an individual to realize that intervention is necessary (Levine & Crowther, 2008). The second reason is diffusion of responsibility, or the idea that because others are present, it is not the responsibility of the individual to take action. Individuals must feel like they have a personal obligation to intervene—if they do not have an emotional tie or feel like they do not have the skills to act they will not provide assistance (Latne & Nida, 1981). The third reason is fear of embarrassment or ridicule. A person may be afraid to intervene because they might have misinterpreted the situation and will cause themselves embarrassment. Fear of retaliation is a major concern that is responsible why individuals do not intervene; they are afraid that there will be negative consequences because of their intervention. The fourth and final reason is pluralistic ignorance, or buying into a false majority. The individual feels that they are the only one that could be feeling this way so they should not intervene (Fisher et al., 2006; Berkowitz, 2009). This is also an issue when the individual is confused regarding whether there is an actual issue. When it is evident that there is an issue, they do not look to others and there is not pluralistic ignorance (Latne & Nida, 1981).
The bystander effect is important when examining hazing. Research on the bystander effect supports the idea that individuals in groups are more likely to engage in behaviors that they would have found unacceptable as individuals or are more likely to engage in activities that conflict with their own values to be a part of a group. Knowledge of peer group theory and groupthink supports the idea that the culture created in an organization can allow the group to make poor decisions or act in a destructive manner. The bystander effect also explains how the individual justifies his/her own involvement in the group because of the norms created by the group. When examining the bystander effect, individuals are less likely to intervene in a group situation despite their own feelings that what is occurring is wrong or inappropriate. As hazing often occurs in a group setting, where one group holds the power and is exploiting that power over another group, the bystander effect can explain some of the interactions of the group. Research on group cohesiveness shows that in highly cohesive groups, new member groups, or entire student organizations, it is less likely that someone speaks out against the norms of the group or intervenes.

**The Moral Development and Disengagement Theory**

This research also employs the moral disengagement theory for analyzing hazing. Similar to the bystander effect, the moral disengagement theory demonstrates how individuals are able to participate in activities that might be morally ambiguous and justify those activities.

The basic concept of the moral disengagement theory is spearheaded by the works of Arthur Bandura, as he examines how individuals are able to put aside their own morals
and values and participate in inhumane acts (Bandura, 1999). Much of the research focused on war and the armed forces, but is applicable in other fields as well. The moral disengagement theory depends on the actual acts and the environment in which these acts are committed. This is differs from other moral development theories in that it is “agentic”; individuals make choices as a result of their environment. The theory also holds that people self-regulate and are reactive to situations; most people have the same moral standards and through moral disengagement are able to avoid self-censure their activities (Bandura, 2001; Bandura, 2002). According to Bandura,

People do not ordinarily engage in harmful conduct until they have justified to themselves the morality of their actions. In this process of moral justification, detrimental conduct is made personally and socially acceptable by portraying it as serving socially worthy or moral purposes. People then can act on a moral imperative and preserve their view of themselves as moral agents while inflicting harm on others. (p. 7)

Bandura’s work (1999) cites that the individual is able to justify his/her own actions in various different ways: euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, disregard or distortion of consequences, and dehumanization.

**Euphemistic labeling.** Euphemistic labeling is relabeling something that is harmful with a more respectable name, using an agentless passive voice or sanitizing the language (Bandura, 2002). In the military, innocent victims of war are called “collateral damage.” An agentless, passive voice implies that the individual was not at fault, but
rather a larger force or inanimate object is at fault. Within the context of hazing organizations, the groups regard hazing activities as “bonding activities” or create organization-specific names for the activities. Even the term “hazing” is a euphemistic label for what could be considered harassment, physical assault, sexual assault, or even torture. Students often attribute hazing to the larger organization, as if as members of the organization they did not contribute to the decision.

**Advantageous comparison.** Advantageous comparison is the idea that the ends justify the means, and there is no other option that the one being pursued. A more morally intact act would not be as effective (Bandura, 2002). In the hazing context, advantageous comparison can be present when individuals state that the hazing they engage in is not as bad as what they experienced or is not as bad as that in another group. This is also supported when organizations choose unhealthy teambuilding activities in favor of proven, safe teambuilding activities because the same lessons would not be learned.

**Displacement of responsibility.** Displacement of responsibility occurs when the authority at hand takes responsibility, or responsibility is placed on a larger being. This can often be framed as an individual following orders. Overzealous individuals or isolated incidents are often used to describe the act (Bandura, 2002). Often, hazing incidents are blamed on rogue members, and it is concluded that the issue is not the whole organization. Additionally, an individual can believe that if they are not an organizational officer, then it is not their responsibility to stop the activity. In the case of sanctioning, institutions also play into the displacement of responsibility by sanctioning the overall organization instead of individual members.
**Diffusion of responsibility.** Diffusion of responsibility is essentially group decision–making; if the group as a whole agrees to the act, then it is considered acceptable behavior (Bandura, 1981; Bandura, 2002). Creating group consensus toward hazing can occur in organizations, and discussing it in meetings or practice can cause group members to feel less responsibility for the act.

**Disregard or distortion of consequences.** Disregarding or distorting consequences is when minimization of the activity has not worked, and an individual is able to discredit the possible harmful results of actions. If the person is able to essentially ignore the negative consequences, they feel no responsibility (Bandura, 2002). This disregard or minimization is common amongst hazing organizations as the individuals do not seem to comprehend or care about the possible repercussions of their actions. The individuals do not seem to understand that the physical violence, alcohol consumption etc. that they are asking their member to endure could result in extreme injury or even death (Finkel, 2002; Land, 2005; Levs, 2011; Caron, 2011).

**Dehumanization.** The final way that individuals justify their hazing behavior is through dehumanization. This implies having no sympathy or empathy with the group, making the group the target of victimization, and treating them as unequal or lesser beings. There is little self-censure when the aggressors feel that the victims are “worthy of mistreatment” (Bandura, 2002). This is commonly seen in student groups and fraternities and sororities that call their new members pledges, create humiliating pledge names, or refer to them in derogatory ways.
**Moral disengagement in organizations.** Moral disengagement within an organization allows disengaged individuals in the organization to be more successful. Those who have less self-censure advance more readily (Moore, 2008). In these cases, individuals are able to enhance the interests of a corrupt organization through corrupt means. According to Moore, in these organizations, there is reciprocity for engaging in corrupt acts. This makes sense in an organization corrupted by hazing, because those that engage in hazing can receive benefits for their participation through personal servitude.

**Cycle of moral disengagement.** The more an individual commits acts that he/she find morally repugnant and morally disengaged, the easier it becomes to engage in such acts repeatedly. They are also more likely to view the act as necessary and purposeful (Hymel, Rocke-Henderson, & Bonnano, 2005). Hymel et al.’s research was related to bullying, but there are parallels that can be drawn between the two, as hazing is often described as bullying with a purpose. Individuals who continually commit acts that violate their morals are able to commit increasingly more abhorrent acts with less self-censure with the advent of time. Individuals who demonstrate increased moral disengagement are also less likely to engage in prosocial behavior (Gini, 2006). Environments where moral disengagement is encouraged would then overarchingly discourage prosocial behavior or bystander intervention. This would create a pattern in which hazing increases over time within an organization, with less and less regard for the greater good of the organization. This would allow an organization to ignore the prosocial positive values of the organization in favor of more negative aspects.
Summary of Literature Review

Overall, as hazing and death-related injuries continue to occur, and at more rapid rates, studies and discussions on ending hazing have become more commonplace. Studies have shown that hazing is rather common among college and university students, and that students can experience a great deal of trauma because of these incidents. In spite of this increase in research, much research is still needed on student’s perceptions of their organization, how they balance their own personal moral standards with situations where they treat people poorly or victimize others, and why individuals both within the group and outside choose not to intervene. It will also be important to examine how the morals and values of the groups as a whole can override the morals of the individual.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative methods to examine how students justified their participation in hazing activities within the context of their student groups. An underlying principle of qualitative research described by Marshall and Rossman (2006) is that it allows “the participant’s perspective on the phenomenon of interest [to] unfold as the participants views it… not as the researcher views it (p. 101).” This is an important idea, as hazing can be a polarizing issue, with individuals often having strong opinions on the phenomenon. As hazing occurs within organizations, this research focused on members of four specific student organizations using in-depth interviewing (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In in-depth interviewing, the purpose is to allow the perspective of the interview participant to develop. In this chapter, I provide the research questions, and describe the site locations and the sample. Thereafter, I explain the data collection methods and analysis techniques, how I validated my research, and all the potential biases that could have affected the research.

Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is to answer two primary research questions:

1) How do organizational values (formal and perceived) influence hazing behaviors?

2) How do students explain their participation in hazing activities?
Site

The research site is a large, public, research-extensive institution located in southwest US. The institution has more than 700 registered student organizations and 48 fraternities and sororities. The fraternity and sorority community comprises 14.5% of the student population. The institution also has a history of accountability for organizations believed to be hazing and a degree of transparency in investigations and findings. Additionally, the research site was involved in the original national hazing study of Allan and Madden (2008) and was found to be in line with the hazing issues and frequency identified in their study.

The institution has a hotline to report hazing that is advertised in student organizations, and fraternity and sorority recruitment and training materials. The reporting information is also provided during new student orientation to both parents and students. Training sessions on hazing are provided to staff within residence life, student leaders of athletics and club sports teams, and students in fraternities as sororities. Staff working with fraternities and sororities also requires that all students complete an online workshop on hazing, and during their respective recruitment processes students are provided with hazing education. From Fall 2008 to Fall 2013, the institution received approximately 60 reports related to hazing within student organizations, including fraternities and sororities. Twenty-eight hazing cases were investigated within the same time span, although not all resulted in sanctioning. The office working with fraternities and sororities also publishes findings associated with hazing on their website, and all organization findings will be published beginning in Summer 2014.
The research site was involved in the original Allan and Madden (2008) study, and is currently involved in the follow up study also being conducted by the same researchers at the University of Maine Hazing Consortium. The study by Dr. Elizabeth Allan “is a three-year research initiative to develop evidence based hazing prevention strategies” (Consortium Project, 2014). This study involves surveys, interviews, and document analysis regarding hazing at the institutional level.

Sample

In order to use a sample that would not create a conflict of interest or violation of institutional policy, only members of organizations that were already found responsible for hazing were interviewed. In the research site, any individual who is aware of hazing activities must mandatorily report these activities. Additionally, this created a potential pool in which every individual was involved in a hazing organization.

At the research site, there were 10 separate organizations that were found responsible for hazing in the 2011–2012 and 2012–2013 academic years. The 10 organizations included two fraternities in Fall 2011, four fraternities in Spring 2012, two fraternities in Fall 2012, one sorority, and one women’s club sports team in Spring 2013. The sanctions varied from educational sanctions to loss of university recognition. Four men’s fraternities were sanctioned to loss of recognition during the timeframe of this study. Only three of the men’s fraternities that lost recognition for hazing were approached. Due to the timing of the research process, one fraternity had received the notification of loss of recognition in the same week that the participant emails were sent. Other fraternities and the sorority were not chosen because of the conflict of interest that
could have occurred had previously unknown hazing information been unearthed during interviews. The women’s club sports team was chosen because they had been found responsible for hazing and presented no conflict of interest for the researcher.

**Sample Selection**

When determining the number of interviewees, there are two criteria that must be examined; the first being whether a sufficient number of people have been interviewed to obtain a wide range of information within the group and the second is saturation of information and ensuring that sample repetition does not occur in the interview by limiting the number of interviewees (Seidman, 2006). To obtain a sufficient number of participants, emails were sent to all students in March and April 2013 who were identified as being members or former members of the four identified organizations. The organizations were called Sigma Beta Fraternity, Lambda Beta Fraternity, Iota Alpha Fraternity, and the Lady Tigers Women’s Team. On March, 28, 2013, an email was sent to 254 individuals using a list of all recorded members of the three identified fraternities and the women’s team that had been found responsible for hazing. A secondary email was sent April 7, 2013 to 167 individuals. Students were excluded if they had asked to be after the original email, and active members of Iota Alpha were also excluded on the basis of vitriolic responses. Further, the emails provided the students with a link where they could indicate their interest in participation in the study in exchange for a $20 gift card after completion of the study.
The number of individuals interviewed in each organization varied primarily by the current status of the organization and the feelings of members with regard to the hazing findings associated with the organization. There were multiple respondents to the original emails who indicated their frustration and anger associated with the institutional decision to close their organization, or complete denial that the organization ever had issues with hazing. Members who were still likely to be active members of Iota Alpha were excluded prior to the second recruitment email.

**Participants**

Interviews were conducted with 23 individuals who were at various stages within the group—new initiates, organizational leaders and upperclassmen—and had a variety of experiences within the organizations. Based on the type of organization, 7 participants were women and 16 were men. One of the participants was a graduate student at the institution and the remaining 22 were undergraduate students. Further, of the participants, 22 had completed and participated in the initiation process of the organization or rookie party in the case of the sports team. One individual was not initiated, but participated in the hazing activities leading up to initiation, and due to the hazing investigation during his pledge semester, was not initiated. One of the women on
the Lady Tigers team also had to quit her organization following the rookie party based on her feelings toward her teammates following the hazing incident and lack of cohesiveness within the team. The remaining 21 participants persisted as members of the organization. Interviews were completed with 22 of the 23 participants, as 1 participant decided to end the interview in the middle of the conversation. The individual who ended the interview early became uncomfortable due to his concern regarding confidentiality after he revealed his interest in drug and alcohol abuse.

Table 3.2

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<th>Organization</th>
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*Individual quit the organization.

** Ended the interview early.
Difference in sample size by organization

The number of participants from each organization varied greatly—there were four participants from Sigma Beta Fraternity, two participants from Iota Alpha Fraternity, seven participants from the Lady Tigers sports team, and ten participants from Lambda Beta Fraternity. The differences in sample sizes can be explained by the commitment to the organization that still existed among members and the sanctions received by the organization.

Lambda Beta had the highest number of participants and was the largest organization. Lambda Beta received the loss of recognition 14 months prior to the participant email; of all the emails that were sent to Lambda Beta, only two negative emails were received. It appears that the time period allowed more of the men to have a less visceral reaction to the participant recruitment email.

The women on the Lady Tigers team received the least sanctions and continued functioning as an organization, which possibly led to less animosity toward the institution and judicial process and therefore greater participation in the study.

Four members of Lambda Beta participated in the study; this group was the smallest of the men’s fraternities included in this study. The organization lost recognition seven months prior to the recruitment email and no negative responses were received in reply to the recruitment email.

Iota Alpha had the lowest participation rate, but the largest membership. At the time of the recruitment emails, the organization had lost university recognition, but was still operating as a chapter at the research site. In addition to the two positive responses
and interviews, seven men replied with negative emails, most of who denied that the fraternity had ever engaged in hazing. The status of the organization at the time and the fact that the men were still involved and dedicated to the organization influenced the number of men who participated in the interviews.

**Data Collection**

The primary method of research was in-depth, semi-structured interviews. These were conducted via phone or in person depending on the availability of the individual during April 2013. The individuals were given the option of a Skype interview but no participants chose this option. The 19 in-person interviews were primarily conducted in a safe private location within an interview room in the campus career center. One interview was conducted in the researcher’s office after the participant indicated that he was not concerned about a third party location. Interviews were also scheduled in a manner that ensured that there was no overlapping of participants, and anonymously to help protect their identity. Only 4 participants chose to interview on the phone.

Because the interview was semi structured, the questions were pre-designed, but allowed for probing questions, thereby enabling the researcher to delve further into the answers of the participants (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). According to Seidman (2006), the purpose of conducting interviews was “an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 9). In this study, this idea was particularly important as the purpose is to understand the thought process of individuals and how they feel about the decisions they made regarding hazing activities. The intent was to understand the actions of college students engaging in
hazing behavior and add value to the student’s stories; conducting the interviews was the best way to achieve this intention (Seidman, 2006; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), qualitative research, particularly interviews, are suitable when the main idea of the study is to add value to the individual’s perspective on the issue; it is the individual’s subjective view that is important.

The interviews were taped for transcription and further review by the researcher. The interviews were expected to last thirty minutes to one hour and in most cases this was true. The interviews ranged from 12 to 84 minutes and averaged 40 minutes in length. Interviews of the women of the Lady Tigers were consistently shorter, as the hazing incident(s) they were involved in only occurred on one evening each year. In contrast, the men involved in fraternities experienced systematic hazing over the course of a semester, and the interviews were generally longer because of this. In the interviews, the individuals were asked more about their role in hazing activities, why they chose to participate, what influenced them, and how these activities were congruent or incongruent with their personal and organizational values.

As a secondary method of data collection, I examined the public risk management policies located on the website of each organization, the policies of the Fraternal Information and Programming Group (FIPG)—of which each fraternity was a member—and the institution with regard to hazing, and the current hazing prevention methods in place. To review the judicial history of the participating groups as well as other campus groups found responsible for hazing within the institution, I obtained judicial information from the university office that deals with conduct on the campus and among fraternities and reviewed their website and materials to determine how they portray these incidents to
the campus and community. I also reviewed news articles and press releases regarding the closure of the fraternities involved. In addition, I also reviewed the mission and value statements of the fraternities located on their website, as well the mission of club sports teams on the university club sport website.

**Data Analysis**

I analyzed the interviews using the analytic procedures set forth by Marshall and Rossman (2006). The analysis was conducted in seven different phases: “a) organizing the data, b) immersion in the data, c) generating categories and themes, d) coding the data, e) offering interpretations through analytic memos, f) searching for alternate understandings, and g) writing the report for the study(p.31)” When organizing and becoming immersed in the data, I transcribed all interviews. Second, I reread all the information to revise and become more intimately acquainted with the data. As I read and reread all of the interviews, I wrote down preliminary themes and categories, similar to the recommended “code book” by Glesne (2006). Thereafter, I generated categories and themes and coded the data, while looking for keywords or commonalities amongst interviews. I went through the interviews again coding sections of participant quotes. After creating codes and general themes, I reviewed all the codes and identified ways to combine or group some codes together as larger themes. Then, I created general descriptions of the codes. Additionally, I reviewed each interview to determine the frequency of each code to determine what might have been interesting but was categorized as outliers. Using the list of codes, I created a chart in which I marked what codes were used in each interview and how often each was used. Using this chart, I created a “logical order” (Glesne, 2006), and determined what I had learned during the
interviews. Based on professional experience and readings, some of the codes were anticipated, while others became obvious during the interviews and review of the transcriptions. During the transcription process, I noted the participants felt a need to defend or explain their actions in some way, in line with the theory of moral disengagement. Based on the interviews, I identified the following themes as explanations for participating in hazing: (a) The line that participants believed would not be crossed; (b) the strong bond created through hazing; (c) the excitement, thrill-seeking, and rites of passage that students were looking for; (d) the purpose or personal gain participants found in the activities; (e) the tradition or cycle of violence; (f) the victim’s choice to participate in the activities; and (g) the misstatement that the violence or hazing was diminishing with time. There were a number of other themes that came to light, but the abovementioned ones were the most prevalent.

Then, I created short bulleted profiles of the interviews to tell the story in full, and also began taking notes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Seidman, 2006). This involved taking the more important aspects of the interview and piecing them together to create a brief synopsis of the interview. From there, I began creating themes regarding how, or if, students explained engagement in hazing activities.

Validity Statement

Although it is difficult to ensure the validity of a study, I took some of the steps outlined by Creswell (2003) to validate the research. I attempted to use triangulation, clarifying bias, and “rich, thick descriptions” to further validate the findings. During the pilot study, I asked the participants about the flow and format of the questions and the
format of the interview. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, it was important that participants felt as though they were not being judged or that the questions were accusatory in any manner. When formulating interview questions, researchers must bear in mind some guidelines: avoiding negative phrasing, avoiding negative terminology, and using appropriate terminology (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Prior to the delivery of the survey instrument, the questions were examined by colleagues with experience in addressing hazing and related issues. Their examination of the questions provided another perspective on how questions are being asked and ensured that they were asked in the most effective manner. Originally, each interview participant was going to be given the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview; however, this was changed due to privacy issues. Based on recommendations made by IRB on data collection, I believed that allowing individuals to review transcripts would provide a link back to the interview participants that would not have otherwise occurred. Using triangulation in research is the idea that you are collecting data using multiple methods or multiple types of sources. In this case, triangulation was attempted by interviewing individuals who had been victims of hazing, individuals conducting the hazing activities, or bystanders to the hazing, and additionally reviewing the institution’s or organization’s response to hazing activities (Creswell, 2003; Glesne, 2006; Schensul et al., 1999).

**Positionality Statement**

In my current position at a higher education institution, it is part of my responsibilities to investigate and determine if fraternities, sororities, and student organizations have engaged in hazing activities; in addition, I am also required to often aid in the adjudication that results from these issues. I am also the chair of the campus...
hazing prevention group that comprises staff from a variety of campus units and students. My position also requires me, in part, to educate campus constituents on hazing, both before an incident occurs and as a part of sanctioning. It was a matter of coincidence that I received the initial hazing reports for each of the groups that I decided to approach for the interviews, but I did not participate in the ensuing investigations.

As a member of a sorority for the past 13.5 years, the relationships formed from that association have had a positive and long-lasting effect on me. While I experienced some activities that I would now consider low-level hazing activities, I benefitted from a largely positive fraternal experience. I have personally developed a very strong stance against actions that would be regarded as hazing. As a professional, I do not believe that hazing has a place or role in student organizations on college campuses and that any positive outcomes that individuals cite as reasons for hazing could be accomplished in a different way. I have also worked with many students who have underlying mental health issues, and past personal issues that have helped me understand the detriment that could be caused by hazing an individual with mental health issues.

When interviewing individuals, I paid special attention to my reactions and verbal cues with regard to their responses. I made every attempt to convey that the individual information that they provided would not be shared with their institution or organization. By interviewing individuals within a group that had already been found responsible for hazing, I hoped to eliminate some of the distrust from the students that I interviewed. It is possible that students still chose to not disclose fully in regard to the hazing activities within their organization. By interviewing members of organizations that had already been held accountable, I also eliminated the conflict that I would have faced due to
reporting requirements. During interviews I did not introduce myself using my professional title, only as a PhD student. A few of the students did indicate they knew my role at the institution, while others seemed unaware that I was also an employee. I also received rejections to my interview advertisement, because some students were aware of my role at the institution.

Confidentiality

The study was sent to the University of Arizona Office for the Responsible Conduct of Research, for approval in the fall of 2012. The study was initially approved in October 2012, pending the receipt of a Certificate of Confidentiality from the National Institute of Health (NIH). In December 2012, the NIH indicated that the study did not meet the requirements for a Certificate of Confidentiality. However, in Spring 2013, the study was approved with revised confidentiality protocols. Because hazing activities violate the campus code of conduct at the institution and depending on the severity, hazing activities can be criminal offenses, all interview participants were asked to read and verbally state that they had read the disclosure. To ensure that there would be no link to specific individuals who were interviewed, they did not sign their agreement. To protect the identity of the interviewees, pseudonyms were used to refer to participants, the organizations, and their role within the organization. During the course of interviews, no participant was addressed by name, and in most instances the organization was not referred to by name. Interviews were conducted over the phone with the interviewer in a private location, in private interview rooms within the career center, or in the interviewer’s private office (in one case). All recorded interviews were kept in a secure location during the transcription process.
Pilot Study

Two individuals were interviewed for the pilot study. Both the individuals are men and fraternity alumni from different institutions and different fraternities. While they both were hazed as new members to their organization and also hazed others when they were full members of their organization they had different views on the role of hazing in their fraternity experience.

The first fraternity alumnus, Clark, said “he had it easy” as a pledge, his twin brother was already a member, and he had been hanging out with the guys for years. However, he had to undergo different stages to become a member of the organization. He described different activities he had to participate in to become a member of his fraternity, which included the mild to the more extreme ones. At a point in his experience, he was required to go “press ham” or moon the students and staff at the medical school library—an activity he said was embarrassing and one he would not have normally done. Further, they played the “match game,” where a pledge was required to light a match and then recite the Greek alphabet before the match burns their fingers. Clark also participated in “pass the spoon,” in which actives pass around a spoon and put strange combinations of food on it; as they pass the spoon to the pledges, if something falls, the pledge has to eat what is on the spoon. Further, he was deprived of sleep during his initiation week and was not allowed to have contact with those outside his fraternity. He and the other pledges had to clean up after parties and were once shot at with a BB gun by an active member while cleaning. The active member was quickly reprimanded for his behavior. The men were also taken on a scavenger hunt, usually not allowed by fraternities, to learn more about the history of their organization, and were educated on
policies and the mission of their organization. Although this seemed to be an educational activity, Clark knew this would likely be frowned upon and knew it could have caused problems for his fraternity. Although most of the activities were not dangerous, the men were required to take shots of hard alcohol if they were not able to recite the founding fathers of their fraternity. Clark went on to say that as an active member “he never did anything to a pledge that hadn’t been done to him.” He continued to perpetuate these activities as a full member when hazing new members. When asked why he participated in these activities he said, “to build brotherhood,” but stated that they were not really vital to the organization. According to Clark, the purpose of his fraternity is to build brotherhood, a strong sense of community, and set high moral standards for its members; moreover, he held that while the scavenger hunt was educational, the rest of activities were not congruent with the values of his organization. Clark also stated that while it was fun and he would not change anything about his own experience, he does not understand why individuals would engage in behavior that is risky and often illegal like certain hazing activities.

The second fraternity alumni member, Chris, had a different experience and a different view about his experience. According to Chris, the first few weeks of his pledge experience were all fun and games and then the full members became aggressive. The process was created to “enforce relying on your pledge brothers” and learning who you could trust, and 99% of the time the activities were fun. Chris engaged in some risky and illegal behaviors during his experience. He also participated in the match game, but some of the activities became more dangerous. Among the more risky activities was the pledge kidnap, in which a member of the pledge class was kidnapped and held hostage
until the other pledges were able to locate him. They were required to drink, “but not every guy drank.” Further, during their initiation week, they were required to dress alike, but disguise it while on campus in order to not attract attention. Chris said he had to run to each of his classes, only talk to chapter members, and had to eat “OPP” or oatmeal, pepper, and peas that week for meals. As a full member, Chris also perpetuated the hazing in his organization and, along with others, took it to another level. When asked if he continued any of the activities when he became a full member, his response was, “yeah I hazed the shit out of them” and “hazing is an important part of an organization.” As a full member of the fraternity, he asked members to do all the things he had done as a pledge. He also “dared a pledge” to drink a full gallon of milk at one go, because they had read it was impossible and would make someone sick but did not believe it. In addition, Chris and others made the pledges participate in “bows and toes,” an activity where a pledge must lie on the floor in a push up-like position, balancing on their elbows and toes for a specific period of time. Chris said that it could be modified by placing bottle caps under their elbows with the ridges digging into their elbows. They would also put wet towels under the men, so if they slumped in the position, the wet towel would touch their pants and give the appearance that they had urinated on themselves. They yelled and demeaned the pledges during activities, saying things like “you stupid fucking pledge,” but never anything “that they couldn’t handle.” Although he said none of the activities ever involved physical harm, he also talked about “ice boxing” where pledges would be hosed down or drenched in water and then put into the freezer for a certain period of time. They also “counted ants,” where the pledges were required to stand with their hands touching the ground and their heads held low so they looked like they were
counting ants. Chris stated that he wanted to participate in each and every activity and that nothing was ever forced on him or the men he hazed. He also said that he never embarrassed anyone in public, as no one was ever supposed to know what they were doing. Chris believes that all the activities he participated in related to his organization and the values of academics, leadership, and gentlemanly conduct. The activities taught the men “who to trust” and “who to follow” and “how to take care of each other.” A lot of what they did was “pointless shit” and they tried to be as “as responsible as possible.” However, they were trying to weed out some of the guys through the activities, because “you don’t want some whiny fucking baby” in your chapter and “you need to keep the dumb fucks out.” In Chris’s perspective, people choose to participate in risky behaviors because “it’s a rush and they enjoy it.” The purpose of Chris’s fraternity is to “make a group of men better” and personally he values being a good person and treating people right. He believes that his fraternity provided the pledges with many constructive activities that provided learning experiences, but the problem is that too many people focus on the negatives.

From these two interviews, it is likely that there will be differences in the manner that the students describe their experience, their personal values, and their organizational values. The purpose of this study is to examine how students rationalize their engagement in these activities, and the current interview protocol seems to allow individuals to open up regarding their experience of and opinions on hazing activities.
Limitations of the Study

This study had a few different limitations. The first limitation has to do with the effectiveness of interview questions. These questions were developed by me and revised through a pilot study; however, they have never been used on a larger scale for research. In this case, the size of the sample being studied implies that the results of the study cannot be generalized. To minimize this limitation, I had colleagues with a good understanding of hazing review and provide feedback on the questions. Further, because the organizations being examined had already been found responsible for hazing allegations, the members of the group, in some cases, were angry or defensive about the issue. This implied that some participants definitely defended their actions and beliefs and were very adamant regarding the importance of their actions. In some cases, the participants are believed to have lied about their experiences based on previous investigations or other interviews with members of the same organization. Based on my position at the institution, individuals may have still chosen not reveal the full extent of hazing activities within the organization, or in some instances chose not to participate. Additionally, there were fewer interviews conducted with members of two of the organizations. Knowing this, more probing questions were asked of these individuals. These interviews were not an opportunity for education with the interviewees, but an opportunity to gain an understanding of hazing behavior. The questions were also designed to probe and ask both direct and indirect questions to learn more about hazing from the participant. An additional and important limitation is that the interviews were conducted and analyzed by an individual who has strong views on the role of hazing in organizations. To appear neutral on the subject of hazing to the participants, I used
neutral language and did not add comments on the participants’ statements. In some instances, in an attempt to be neutral, I may have failed to ask more probing questions for fear of making the participant uncomfortable. The lack of participation from Iota Alpha is an additional limitation in this study. Despite being the largest organization approached, only two men from the fraternity chose to participate in this study.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

PART 1: ORGANIZATIONAL INFLUENCES

This chapter addresses the first research question on how organizational values and purpose (formal and informal) influence individuals to participate in hazing behaviors. First, the participants recounted the type of hazing violations they experienced as victims, participated in as aggressors, or both, which created a better picture of how the organization functioned. Next, organization summaries helped to identify the hazing cultures and the formal and informal values of the four organizations. Finally, the respondents’ opinions on the congruence of values within their organizations allowed a better understanding of how the perceived values influences the hazing activities. The goal of this chapter is create a deeper understanding of how student organizations institutionalize and explain hazing.

Participants in the study were varied in terms of age, academic level, race, gender, and how long ago they experienced the hazing behaviors. Within the participant group that was studied, all individuals had been victims of hazing at some point; additionally, a subset had also become the aggressors as they progressed in the organization. All 23 participants attended the same southwest institution and were involved in one of four student organizations found responsible for hazing through the institutional judicial process.
Organizational Values and Purpose

This section summarizes the hazing activities of the organizations studied, and examines whether the members recognized the activities as congruent or incongruent with the organizational values. It is therefore necessary to first understand the hazing activities that occurred before addressing the connection between values and hazing activities. By summarizing the hazing activities of each student organization, discrepancies between the organizations’ intended values or purpose and actual values and purpose became apparent. In each organization, their actual imbedded values overrode their intended purpose. Within the organizations, members used portions of the intended values to compensate for the disregard of other values.

Sigma Beta

The mission of Sigma Beta is to develop men in their “mental, moral, and social development.”

The Sigma Beta fraternity was established to help men grow and succeed in college and during their years after graduation. The fraternity’s mission included the creation of long-lasting friendships, inspiring civic and community involvement, and encouraging success of members in their chosen vocation. Additionally, according to the fraternity’s purpose, during the collegiate years, Sigma Beta members were required to establish bonds of friendship, become involved in the community, and develop leaders.

The Sigma Beta Fraternity was reported to the university for hazing during the summer of 2012, which led to an investigation into the fraternity. The investigation determined that the fraternity had been systematically hazing new members for a
minimum of the previous two years. It was concluded that the fraternity had violated the institution’s policies through forced alcohol consumption. The university also held that Sigma Beta presented a threat to the health and safety of the campus community. The fraternity was found responsible for the following hazing violations: new members were required to do push-ups, run, perform kidnappings, eat inedible spicy chili, engage in personal servitude, and were blindfolded and taken into the desert. The statements provided below from fraternity members detail some of the hazing offenses as well as others the university was unable to discover during the investigation. The fraternity also had other risk management-related issues that involved hosting events with alcohol that were unsafe. Academically, the members as a whole were not very successful, and during the final semester on their campus, members had a cumulative GPA that was approximately 0.30 lower than the all fraternity men’s GPA average and the campus men’s GPA average.

Response of the University. All the abovementioned activities are the reasons that the organization no longer exists on the university campus. The university determined that these activities undermined the community and put organizational members at risk. Additional risk-related issues also came to light during the investigation; thus, a decision was taken by the institution and national organization to close this chapter of Sigma Beta fraternity.

Student Accounts of Hazing Activities. According to interviews, pledges were required to clean the fraternity house multiple times per week. The men participated in lineups, where every week they would report to the facility in their white t-shirts and jeans, and would be blindfolded. The fraternity would play heavy metal music loudly
during the activity. The men would then be subjected to yelling, and the fraternity would question them on the “fraternity knowledge” that they were expected to memorize. According to Robert from Sigma Beta, it was scary and confusing at the beginning, but then he became accustomed to it.

There was yelling and stuff like that. They would yell at us and, you know, just try to, like, pull the knowledge out of you. A lot of the time, the majority of the brothers took it more as something funny than actual, like, you know, dangerous or insulting. It’s a little confusing at first, I admit, but after a while you can’t help but laugh at the situation, ‘cause despite as real as they try to make it, it just seems kind of fake and played out.

Robert believed that the fraternity did not intend to hurt him and that the lineups were not dangerous. He also believed that if he refused to participate, he would have been kicked out of the fraternity, but he was comfortable with what he did. Another member, Anthony, also relayed that if pledges answered questions on “fraternity knowledge” incorrectly, they were made to do workouts, push-ups, or ab workouts during lineups. A third member, Timothy, described lineups as just an expected part of the experience.

All the lights would be off in the house; then you would walk in with your hand on your shoulder, and then you walk around, and then you would be blindfolded, and then you would stall against a wall and be blasting heavy metal music. You couldn’t even hear yourself think, which actually made it easier to just zone out. You just kind of stand there; they go down the line yelling at everybody. The questions really weren’t that hard, so if you knew the question,
they would come up to you and just yell it out and then move onto the next person. If you kept missing questions or something, you would have to do push-ups.

The fraternity also engaged in pledge missions, which involved submerging their hands in ice for a period of time, stealing pallets from home improvement stores, and the kidnapping of an active, or already initiated, member. Anthony recalled when he and his class kidnapped an active member.

Pledge missions included… there was one where we had to get all these different parts. We had to go get wood, bring back wood from Home Depot. Now get a tarp, we get [bring] back a tarp. Now go get ice, and all these things, and that pledge mission was all day just going back and forth…We had to wear pledge pins, which signifies you are a new candidate for Sigma Beta, … they told us they put it at the bottom of this box that they made out of all the materials we got. It was full of ice and, I don’t know, beer and stuff like that, so we had to dig for them and they ended up not being in the thing. It more was more like a lesson to… I don’t know work together and also be responsible and follow directions. It’s also fun on missions too it involved actives sometimes. I don’t know, one of the missions was [to] kidnap an active, so we’d go get an active and I don’t know fun things like that, it was a lot of fun.

Interviewer: How did you choose which active to pick?

Anthony: I, Um, I don’t remember, I don’t know how we chose. We just kind of went and grabbed the first one we saw, and I mean he…they did the same
missions when they were pledges too, so they understood what was going on, so, I mean, we didn’t have to tie him up to bring him or anything.

Interviewer: So what did y’all do with him when you kidnapped him?

Anthony: We just took him to the house and put in him in the backyard and just tied his hands up with ropes and we, like, put peanut butter on his legs and the dog licked him, and that’s it.

Interviewer: So what, kind of, were you thinking about the situation when you all did that?

Anthony: It was fun; I really enjoyed the time. I mean the active too, it’s like guys, all this stuff is just in jest. Even the active tied to the tree with a dog licking him, he found it super humorous as well. He wasn’t like yelling, “Let go” or cursing. He was just playing along, having a good time too.

Anthony and the rest of this class assumed that everyone was having a good time and that as long as it was not obviously dangerous, then it was an acceptable activity. They believed the man they “kidnapped” and tied to a tree was also having a good time, although they could not be sure. During the course of the university investigation, it was determined that during at least one of the “kidnappings” the active member had not enjoyed the experience and had instead been traumatized during the activity.

Further, initiation week for Sigma Beta Fraternity had some similar components to what the fraternity did during the regular semester. They held an activity similar to lineups during which they were asked a series of questions. Pledges were made to believe that they had failed the quiz and were told that the fraternity would fail because of them. Sigma Beta actives also made pledges answer questions during a Jeopardy-style
game, while blindfolded. The actives would reward the pledges with a cookie or candy when pledges answered correctly and would give them “gross concoctions” when the answers were wrong. According to Timothy, the activity was one of the worst nights that they had.

… I mean there was definitely people throwing up. The more so thing was that they didn’t realize the stuff really wasn’t that bad. You are blindfolded and they are telling you it’s all the heinous things so people are… they put it in their mouth and they instantly think that’s what it is. I was lucky, the first time I put it in my mouth I was nervous, but I instantly knew it was halibut with like mustard and stuff on it, so I was like well, and it really wasn’t that bad in terms of [taste.] There was definitely people who had a very hard [time]… that was probably one of the worst nights.

The pledges also participated in an activity where they were required to eat spicy chili cooked by the active fraternity members. In one case, the pledges used a large stick that had spoons attached to it and they all had to maneuver the stick so that they could all eat simultaneously.

Throughout initiation week, all the new members were required to sleep at the fraternity house in a small room. While the men were in the room, the chapter would play music continuously; one semester, the song was “Go Go Power Rangers.” There was a triangle taped in the middle of the room and each day the triangle would get larger, and allow less room for the men to sleep.

**Student Accounts of Organization Values and Purpose.** The men were also questioned regarding the purpose of the organization and how the hazing activities fit
with the purpose and values of the organization. The purpose and mission of Sigma Beta as a national organization is to help men grow academically, morally, and develop personal and professional achievements. Each of the Sigma Beta men spoke to their perceptions regarding the purpose of their chapter.

*Perceived congruence with organizational purpose and values.* Anthony had a different view of the fraternity and what it represented. He was able to list off the values of the fraternity as a national organization and believed that the fraternity met those values.

I would say it is a pretty fair assessment actually of what they were I mean the guys loved each other in that house. Everyone had each other’s back. Especially because of the pledgeship they learned to have each other’s back the entire time. Even though I didn’t agree with the lineups, like there was lessons learned in that as well. Help, help your brother finish it without him getting hurt or you know so we’d go and help him finish it. It was all teambuilding, we…I felt like we were a family at the end, so that was a really strong value we had.

In addition to believing that the organization was helping people academically and helping them achieve personal and future accomplishments, Anthony believed that all the hazing activities that they participated in, like lineups, were congruent with the values of the organization. Anthony saw lineups as teambuilding and learning to support a brother.

Stan, another Sigma Beta, believed that the purpose of the organization was to be scholars and gentlemen and that the group valued diversity. He also believed that the
organization fulfilled its mission because the hazing and treatment of the new members was not the only thing that the fraternity did.

According to Timothy, some of the activities were very meaningful and even vital to the organization.

I honestly think two of the rituals during hell week I really liked, they really solidified what we stood for and what kind of values were there so those two I would keep and the only reason I would say they were hazing, we were blindfolded, in one of the first portions you were yelled at, but I really liked those. I think those actually helped with the camaraderie of the chapter because at the end of both of those events everyone in the chapter is together and sharing their experiences and really talking about all the different symbolic moments of the night so those two I would definitely have kept so…

Timothy related the activities that he self-identified as hazing as acceptable activities because he was able to relate them to the values of the organization. The activities involved being yelled at and blindfolded and took place during “hell week,” but Timothy believed they created camaraderie and togetherness.

_Incongruence with values and purpose._ Although Timothy believed that the fraternity tried to meet its intended values, he also noted that the chapter had changed over time. Despite saying that some of the activities were harmonious with the spirit of camaraderie, Timothy also indicated the activities did not conform to the fraternity’s values.

Well they are not congruent with what the national organization says, not even close. Maybe in the sense of brotherhood if you want to argue that one. If
you want to look at, “is hazing a necessity to our values?” No. Obviously no. That’s it. Does that help with brotherhood? Probably to a certain extent. At least some of the events, a lot of the hazing was just nonsense it was just stupid stuff so those things I would say, I wouldn’t even consider. I am trying to focus on just things that were actually meaningful. The meaningful ones did help with brotherhood; all the other stuff was just basically just wasting your time until you could put in your weeks, [so] that you could go through the hell week stuff.

Timothy, even as he said that the activities were not congruent with the values of the organization, continued to explain the hazing activities as being beneficial and helpful to the organization. Although he indicated that the activities were not in accordance with the organization, he still suggested that the fraternity chapter and members were abiding by the value of brotherhood.

Robert was unsure what the set purpose of the fraternity was, but believed it was a way for a group of men to hang out.

The purpose of our fraternity? I used to know that. I don’t have a set answer for that…I would say a lot of other stuff but the actual fraternity nationals itself? I think it’s just about having a group of guys… with the shared experience. That’s was I like about the pledging process that you can all relate to [the process] because you all did it and it just really makes you all a lot closer. I think that’s what it is, finding a group of guys with the same like minds.

Robert also did not believe that the fraternity had values as an organization. As with other Sigma Betas, the value of friendship was the most relevant value, but knew
that just being friends did not make them a good fraternity that was upholding the formal values of the organization.

What are the values? Values, Values. I don’t know…we weren’t… I would like to try to legitimize us more as an actual you know better fraternity than we were, but we, we really weren’t. Like we didn’t really, we had like... “Oh we are about brotherhood and charity and you know esteem” but that’s a load of crap. We were just a bunch of guys that like to hang out and just had a national organization sponsoring us.

Robert acknowledged that the activities that he participated in were not consistent with the purpose of the fraternity and stated, “Oh, they were so incongruent with the whole values of the entire organization.” Robert did not use the national formal values to legitimize his fraternity experience and acknowledged the local chapter was not congruent with the intended values of the national organization.

**Influence of Values and Purpose on Hazing Activities.** The participants from Sigma Beta disagreed largely on the values of the fraternity and the stated purpose, but each man interviewed, in their own way did state that brotherhood, or becoming friends with each other, was the main value of the organization. Through this common shared value of brotherhood, they tended to relate hazing with the values of the organization. It must be noted that the values of the organization also influenced the hazing practices in another manner. When the men were able to relate a hazing activity back to the purpose, they were able to convince themselves that the activity was necessary and was what they should be doing.
Therefore, perceived fraternal values were, to a certain extent, an influence on the hazing behaviors. The men of Sigma Beta saw brotherhood as the main and, to some degree, the only purpose of their fraternity. They showed a general disregard for the value of academics, as demonstrated by their poor GPA. Moreover, there were continued health, safety, and policy violations, and which is at odds with their value of “moral development.”

Membership in Sigma Beta created an environment of moral disengagement. In accordance with the moral disengagement theory, the men used the “socially worthy” purpose of brotherhood to allow themselves to participate in demanding and, occasionally, dangerous behaviors. The men used words such as “team building” and creating “shared experiences” to describe the hazing activities that made them “socially worthy.” Thus, hazing became the normalized behavior of the group through the concept of groupthink. As the men spent time away from the group, with the fraternity having been closed for a year at the time of the interview, they began to see that some of their activities did not have the purpose they believed in at the time.

**Lady Tigers**

*The mission of university club sports is to “offer diverse quality sport programs and services to the university community which encourages healthy lifestyles, facilitates community engagement, and enhances personal development through participation and leadership opportunities.”*
Lady Tigers is a women’s club sport team. The team has existed for many years on their university campus, and has recently made efforts to become more competitive and stronger by instituting tryouts. Prior to Fall 2011, the organization was open to anyone interested in playing. According to the website of the institutional department overseeing the team, joining a club sport team should help students make friends, have fun, and live a healthier lifestyle. Although the team (unlike fraternities and sororities) is not a values-based organization, there is an intended value or purpose in its membership.

The Lady Tigers were reported for hazing in Spring 2013. They were investigated by the university conduct office, and it was determined that they held a rookie party during which they provided women with alcohol and required them to participate in activities that involved blindfolding. The university found the team responsible for hazing based on the blindfolding and alcohol consumption, but women detailed more activities during their interviews that are considered hazing according to the definition used in this study. The rookie party was an event that was held in every spring semester at an older teammate’s home.

**Response of the university.** The team was held accountable for hazing activities, university alcohol violations, and health and safety risks. After the investigation, the university sanctioned the team to education regarding alcohol use and hazing; they were also required to complete and unspecified number of community service hours. The organization was required by the university to have 100% of the team attend a “comprehensive alcohol education program,” as well as 100% attendance at a hazing prevention workshop created by the campus hazing prevention coalition chair.
Student Accounts of Hazing Activities. The team held an annual rookie party for the newest members of the team who joined from Fall 2012 onward. The party was traditionally hosted at a teammate’s house off campus and always occurred in the spring semester after the recruitment of new members in the fall. Each year the party has a theme. In Spring 2013, the theme was “Rags to Riches” and rookies were required to wear rags, while older teammates wore nice clothes and dressed up for the party. In Spring 2012, the theme was “Cowboys and Indians,” in which rookies were required to dress as “Indians” and older members were Cowboys. In 2011, the theme was “Cops and Robbers,” and the rookies were required to dress as robbers and the older members as cops. According to Katy, a rookie, all the rookies were told that the party wasn’t a really big deal but that older members posted the following message on their Facebook page: “The better your costume is, the better tonight will be for you.” Julia, a sophomore, said the rookies were “wearing really bad clothes, it was funny”; she continued to say that the women looked “like hobos.” The older members found it amusing that the rookies were dressed in rags, and in some cases covered in dirt, and looked like “hobos.” Although the institution was not aware of these events, other organizations at the institution were previously found responsible for code of conduct violations, or hazing when the costumes they were required to wear were deemed racially or culturally insensitive, or possibly embarrassing to the individual. Additionally, the costumes described here allude to the power dynamic within the organization, where the older teammates dress as the more privileged or powerful group and the rookies dress as members of the more marginalized group. This is similar to the power dynamic in hazing activities.
The women varied greatly in how they interpreted the events of the evening. Katy was critical of the experience as she quit the team shortly after the party because of issues with the way the team was run. Katy indicated that she was forced to drink and participate in hazing activities that evening.

They like said they were going to pick us up and then when we were waiting they told us we had to find our own way there, so we took a cab and it was just like a teammate’s house … They would call us up by name and what they did, you would have like a partner who was also a new member and you would get, you got like a bandana or some kind of fabric that tied your wrists together and that was your partner… The majority of the hazing was just them making us drink like a lot, but they kept saying, like, you can stop if you want to and like you don’t have to do that but they were saying that in practice not at that moment. In that moment they were yelling things and stuff like that and it was just intimidating… After that, …we had to do like Jell-O shots and we had to find the gummy bear [in the shot]… We had to do this thing where we had like a paper plate, and on it there was flour, and at the bottom of it there was a piece of bubble gum… using our hands we had to go through the flour and get the piece of bubble gum and it [the flour] would get like all over and in your nose and your mouth and it was hard to breathe…Once you had the bubble gum you had to chew it and it was covered in flour so you couldn’t chew it, and you had to blow a bubble, and you had to do whatever the plate said. So mine said something like “you have to drink like this and whatever”, and some of them said “you have to moon all the girls”, “you have to make sexual sounds for the next minute” and then like a
bunch of different things. Each plate was different... Then we had to with our original partner we had to make up a dance, and then at point the police officers showed up and then we all hid in a room because they didn’t want us to get in trouble and then after that we left and I went home.

According to Katy, women were tied to one another, blindfolded, in some cases asked to simulate sexual acts, or were forced to drink and embarrass themselves. When Katy recounted the evening, she said women had to search the flour with their hands for the gum, but her subsequent statements and those of others support the story that women had their hands tied behind their backs and searched for the gum with their faces in the plates. While Katy did not enjoy the experience and felt it was negative, the rest of her teammates felt differently. Katy also said that two women were injured and others were in tears after the party. All but one teammate maintained that the event was fun, and everyone enjoyed it. She indicated two rookies were upset at the rookie party post party, but was unsure why. According to Katy, when the older members pushed their faces down into the flour, one of the rookies was pushed and her face hit the cement floor and she bit her lip, causing it to bleed. Another rookie was allergic to flour, but participated in the activity and was coughing afterwards. Both these women remained on the team.

Mandy, who participated in activities that night but didn’t drink because of a medical condition, interpreted the activities differently.

We got together and they told us our partners. We sort of stayed with our partners all night. We did the dance, we, a little bubble gum chewing blow, who could blow the biggest bubble...Whoever finished blowing their bubbles first was the winner.
Mandy also went on to say there had been “social drinking” that she had not participated in, but would have. Multiple women identified that they played the same games at camp, without alcohol, that no one was injured, and everything was fun. They also all confirmed that alcohol was present at the event. According to Julia, an older member, they “iced” people. When someone is “iced,” they see a Smirnoff Ice bottle another person is hiding. The goal of the game is to get people to look at the Smirnoff Ice unintentionally. When someone sees a bottle they have to drink it. According to Martha, the women were told later the Jell-O shots they took did not have alcohol in them. Sarah, a team captain, contradicted this saying the seniors spent time in the kitchen “stealing” the Jell-O shots from the rookies when they were drinking. It is unclear whether women were intentionally providing false information or were confused regarding the events of the evening.

**Student Accounts of Organizational Values and Purpose.** During the interviews, team members were asked what they considered the purpose of the team. In certain cases, team members were additionally asked if they believed there was a purpose to the team beyond merely winning their sport. Regularly, the women indicated that creating a team and forming friendships was an important function of the team. They also suggested that the hazing activities were compatible with the organization, because of the team-building nature of the activities. Some did indicate that drinking activities were possibly not congruent with the values of the team, because alcohol could impair women’s performances on the field.

*Perceived congruence with organizational purpose and values.* Sarah, a team captain, said the purpose of the team was to play a sport they all enjoyed, she elaborated
that the women forged strong friendships and valued hard work, winning, and were competitive.

I think some really strong friendships form with it. I know two of the girls I live with, they are on the team and I met them from the team and a lot of girls from the team end up living together or going out on weekends with each other so... The main purpose of this team is to compete and play the sport and then also there is [sic] friendships and bonds that are formed from this team.

Because Sarah saw the values of the team as competing, winning, and friendship, she considered the hazing activities both congruent and incongruent with the values and purpose of the team. She said the drinking activities were incongruent, but the other activities were congruent because they were team-based and competitive. Karen, a sophomore, only indicated the events were great fun and that all the activities with the organization were aligned with her personal values. Karen also demonstrated her dedication to the organization when she said, “we are really close, like BEST friends.” She continued to describe the values and purpose of the team, as “having each others backs,” and “being a little family.” For Karen, the team played a very strong role in her life—she described them as her family and that she would do anything for them. Mandy echoed Karen’s sentiment, stating the group wanted to be like sisters to each other and create strong friendships. She stated that the activities helped members get to know one another and helped the team learn to rely on one another.

Lack of organizational values or purpose. Katy alleged that the team was focused around winning more than anything else, and that, in general, the women did not treat
each other well, which is why the behavior at the rookie party was congruent with the organizational values.

…There was like a game where we were losing and our coach was like, “great job girls we’re losing” and one of girls was like, “great job coach we are losing” and he was like, “do you want to get off the field I don’t have to play you” and this is one of his favorites, and she was like, “I don’t even fucking care” and he kept her on the field.

Katy continued, frustrated with the way the team and the coach behaved toward each other; she indicated that the same type of behavior is what guided the rookie party. She stated that winning was the most important aspect of the organization, and although there was not much respectful behavior toward one another, she believed that the activities were congruent with the values of the organization.

Influence of Values and Purpose on Hazing Activities. The university placed sanctions on the team because the women functioned in a manner that was counterintuitive to the goals of the organization. The purpose of the team was to promote healthy lifestyles and create positive opportunities for campus involvement; instead, the organization participated in the forced consumption of alcohol and hazing. The hazing activities were incongruent with the goals of healthy lifestyles or opportunities for positive involvement. Most of the women in the organization indicated that the activities corresponded to the organization values because they created bonds within the group, and promoted friendship and teambuilding. The women also related the activities back to the purpose of the organization, even when individual team members differed on what the purpose and values of the organization were. The perceived values the members had
influenced how they proceeded with hazing activities and how they explained those
activities. The women also used the “socially worthy” ideas of friendship and
teambuilding to consider it acceptable to participate in activities where they were
demeaned or mistreated.

**Lambda Beta**

*The Lambda Beta Fraternity “engages men of integrity, further develops their
intellect and enhances community involvement. With a legacy built on acceptance and
trust, each brother realizes his highest potential through a lifelong experience of service
and excellence.”*

The Lambda Beta fraternity began as an organization dedicated to helping and
serving others. The goals of the national organization are to develop men who
understand a lifelong commitment to fraternity, intellectual growth, service, and civic
engagement.

The Lambda Beta fraternity was reported for hazing to its host institution in the
spring and fall semesters of 2011. Following the first investigation into the organization,
the chapter received educational sanctions that should have been completed over the
course of the Fall 2011 semester. The educational sanctions included a restructuring of
the new member program, 100 hours of community service, an alcohol education
program called TIPS for all new and live-in members, a required risk management and
hazing presentation, and general membership education on alcohol and risk management-
related policies. During the fall semester, a second investigation was conducted. Following the second investigation, the fraternity was closed by both the national organization and host institution, effective from February 2012 onward. The fraternity closure was due to hazing that took place from Fall 2008–Fall 2011. The fraternity was found responsible for hazing activities involving forced consumption of alcohol and sleep deprivation. According to press releases from the national organization, the local chapter did not meet the values of the national organization. Additionally, the chapter leadership attempted to cover up activities and lie to university and fraternity officials, thereby contributing to the national organization’s decision to remove recognition.

Academically, the men were not very successful. During the last semester that the fraternity was recognized by the institution, new members had a GPA approximately of 0.30 points below the all men and all fraternity GPA averages for the campus. Their chapter average was also approximately 0.07 below the all men and all fraternity GPA averages. The fraternity had also had five risk management issues and sanctions in the year preceding the loss of recognition from their headquarters and host institution.

**Response of the University.** The fraternity closed in Spring 2012 for continued violations of hazing policies, although the university did not discover some of the hazing activities the organization participated in, such as the food rationing, forced food consumption, or theft. The fraternity also closed due to noncooperation with the national fraternity, because they lied to staff on multiple occasions regarding chapter practices. The fraternity also had ongoing risk-management violations largely due to violations of alcohol policies.
**Student Accounts of Hazing Activities.** Interviews with Lambda Beta members included members who were freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors in the organization at the time of the chapter closure. Interviews with these members yielded the longest list of hazing activities as well as many activities that were not publically revealed in the hazing investigations. Beginning with the most senior members, the hazing included

- physical activities, including running;
- being covered in condiments;
- standing in dark rooms for approximately two hours;
- weekly Thursday night drinking activities;
- photo scavenger hunts;
- cleaning the facility;
- setting up for parties;
- being yelled at during quizzes;
- being sprayed down with a hose;
- forced consumption of food including a mixture of cold soup;
- running errands/personal servitude;
- forced consumption of beer/soda and pizza, with arms tied together, or with rulers taped in place over the inside elbow so pledges could not bend their arms;
- weekly morning activities at 5 am or 6 am, including swimming, running, and pushups;
• pledges required to wear costumes such as a shark fin, penguin, or a tutu, at different times;
• construction and painting projects at the facility;
• cleaning pieces of glass out of a sand pit;
• carrying other new members, sitting on old doors or tables, above their heads as punishment for being late;
• new members made to smash eggs over the heads of one another while being told what they did not like about each another;
• using a “slip and slide” covered in mustard, ketchup, and condiments;
• carrying a cinderblock, brick, or an egg in a jar after losing a pledge pin;
• eating only from PB&Js, tuna, water, pickles, and two cases of soda that the fraternity had given them and portioned out during initiation week;
• theft of a motor scooter;
• performing physical activities with water bottles full of vodka;
• standing in a dark room with strobe lights and “Hi, My name is” or another song playing on repeat for an unspecified period of time, but occasionally over two hours;
• pouring syrup over a pledge’s hands while they had to do a 1,000 piece puzzle or sort the colors in boxes of fruity pebbles;
• paddling of individuals;
• interviews with active members and memorization of personal details;
• scavenger hunts for specific items, with a time limit and punishment for not completing activities in a timely manner.
Information regarding specific activities was received through several Lambda Beta fraternity members. However, according to some, none of these activities were true. The fraternity also held a fake initiation midway through Fall 2011, because they were instructed by the national fraternity to initiate the new members and to end the pledging process. The fraternity told the national organization they had initiated the members, but held their own initiation week subsequently in the semester, which included the traditional hazing activities listed above. They lied to the national organization to continue the hazing activities during the semester. Members from different years in the fraternity confirmed various hazing activities listed above.

Daniel was a freshmen pledge in the last semester the fraternity had a pledge class and participated in the fake and real initiations. In his interview, Daniel detailed much of the hazing that he had gone through, particularly during his initiation weekend.

Hell night was basically a weekend. We had to get there Saturday at like 11am. They told us to bring a bag, a change of clothes, some formal clothes…That’s when we do the hour or two of physical fitness with vodka bottles and the water, um they make us clean the whole house... It was kind of a break honestly. …They made us stand that day as well, for a couple of hours. … They made us do physical fitness … after that they put us in pairs basically, 15 pairs of pledges and started… they taped the paint mixers, the little wooden sticks, [on] all of us to our inner elbow where your forearm is, so you couldn't like bend without breaking [it], you couldn't break it honestly. Some of us to the legs too, but mostly just the arms. They took us out in the middle of the courtyard and there was a couple of tables for 15 of us to sit on each side. Probably like two
dozen pizzas topped with, like some were topped with like, chocolate, some were topped with wasabi and garlic, some were topped with just hot sauce, things you wouldn't put on a pizza, that’s gross. I had like a Asian fusion pizza it was so gross, I swear so gross… Then we had two 30 racks of Milwaukee's best, that was like warm or room temperature…. We had to finish the two 30 racks and the pizza and the brothers were all on top of the railing in the courtyard yelling. After this experience, Daniel said they were yelled at, blindfolded, and made to stand in the courtyard of the facility before being led into a room.

Then the room is completely dark and the only light is a strobe light because they are just trying to fuck with us basically. So they turn off the light it was dark, 30 of us, and then they had these sounds they had going… deafening music so you couldn't talk… "Hi, My Name is" from Slim Shady, that song, that part just over and over again… So we had syrup all over our hands and … we had to complete a 1000 piece puzzle with syrup all over it too… It was just to like mess with our heads and work on something for like an hour, and they gave us like four boxes of fruity pebbles and we had to like color coordinate them with syrup on your hands so some of us just started eating them because it was just easier.

Daniel experienced these hazing activities during the final semester that the organization existed. However, many of those practices occurred in previous years as well. Donald, another member, was a pledge in Fall 2008 and Spring 2009. Donald was unsure of the timing. He had to stand in the dark for what he believed was two hours,
was covered in condiments, and later hosed down in a room. According to Donald, being yelled at is what made other pledges quit.

They would have us standing in one of our rooms that we didn’t use and then they would come in and just yell. It wasn’t as much demeaning, it was like meant to be stressful. It was usually quizzing us on stuff that we were supposed to have learned. So they would come in and ask us all the information we would have to learn and then just all in…try to get in your head a little bit.

Donald continued to say that he had seen other pledges become uncomfortable; they were more timid and non-confrontational than he was. Some of the other men were visibly upset or flustered, and quit because of it. Donald subsequently became the NM/pledge educator and eliminated some of the activities; he said his brothers “hated” him for it. After his tenure as the new member educator, he became inactive with the fraternity by choice, which implies that he was no longer considered a member in good standing and did not participate in fraternity activities.

James, a sophomore when the chapter closed, communicated some of the activities the chapter engaged in; according to him these activities were not a big deal.

Well there were a lot of drinking activities, which was probably the most illegal thing we had to do, because we were all under age. But there were just a lot of team development activities almost, I would call them, where we would either be running or playing dodge ball or we had an egg battle one time, but it didn’t start as an egg battle. Everyone that was in our group was in a circle, and there was a ton of eggs and everyone got one egg and you went to the person you had the biggest beef with and you smash an egg on their head and tell them what you
don’t like about them. It was meant to try to bring everyone closer or whatnot and then it all turned into a big egg battle, but it was a bunch of different stuff. Stuff you wouldn’t want to do. We all had to eat pizzas with our hands tied to each other. Had a slip and slide full of ketchup and mustard and… Things you don’t really want to go through but it’s like really not a big deal …

According to James and other members of the fraternity, the activities were not reason enough to leave the organization. All of them seemed to have reasons to continue being members of the organization.

**Student Accounts of Organizational Values and Purpose.** During each of the interviews, the existing members provided reasons for why they chose to remain in the fraternity, complete the pledging process, or continue the pledge process for other new members. The men varied greatly in what they indicated the fraternity stood for at the national and local levels, and where their activities stood in relation to the fraternity values. The initial mission of the fraternity was to “selflessly serve others,” “develop intellect and enhance community involvement,” and help each individual reach their “highest potential through a lifelong experience of service and excellence.”

*Perceived congruence with organizational purpose and values.* One of the fraternity members, Eric, was most sure of the values of the fraternity and how some of their activities demonstrated these values. For Eric, the purpose of the fraternity was to “celebrate brotherhood and to promote a better world.” He went on to name “brotherhood, and honesty, loyalty and piety” as the values of the fraternity. Eric believed that the most incongruence was in those activities where time was taken away from studying, because it was inconvenient for some of the members. He also considered
the pizza activity where they had to feed one another, a “waste of time.” Eric did consider some activities to be very congruent with the organizational values, particularly an activity that he called “I love you but…”

The “I love you but...” probably was…you’d get in two lines and shift a person over each time after you’d say it…You’d just like get to know a lot about yourself in terms of what you thought about the other people. You know somebody is your friend, but what would you consider their best quality, and for us to learn that on the spot actually makes you appreciate them as a friend more. But then you, you also hear critically what you do wrong and have it come from one of your closest friend[s] made it like trustworthy and meaningful, so I would consider that one of the most congruent.

Eric described the above event as something he believed was most in line with the fraternity’s mission. Based on his description of the event, it seems to be the same event where the pledges would crush eggs on each other’s heads, while saying what they disliked about one another. Eric was an individual that indicated that he did not believe any hazing had taken place within his organization, although he admitted some outsiders would see some activities as hazing. Eric was fully engaged in his fraternity, which led to a rather different interpretation of the activities than that provided by every other member who was interviewed. He knew the values of the organization well, and considered each activity as being referential to formal fraternity values.

During the interviews, members also identified that philanthropy and service to others was one of the main purposes of the fraternity. In some cases, the members would
use the philanthropy and service they did as a way to compensate for the other risky activities.

Gill, another member of Lambda Beta, spoke of his philanthropic activities as a freshman in support of how the fraternity met the values of the national organization. He continued to say that the activities leading up to initiation week were partially consistent with the fraternity’s values because they enabled to create connections with other men. After describing his pledge process—which he admitted included personal servitude, drinking, and cleaning shards of glass out of a sandpit—Gill still maintained that the chapter’s activities were congruent with the national organization’s values.

As I referred to before, one weekend we helped out at that gala at the convention center and I felt like that was really rewarding. [There] were certainly several organizations involved, and we did one small part, and we did it to forward the gala’s goal of raising money for the charity as one example.

Donald had also said the fraternity’s objectives were philanthropy and service and the chapter tried to fulfill these objectives through its activities.

Well the entire organization was built on helping people less fortunate than you, which they helped me out a lot because they gave me scholarships based on my academics, which was really very cool. Our organization, the people in charge were really lazy, didn’t really plan very well, acted stupidly a lot of the times, but they did… we did do philanthropy events every semester so we stuck close to [what] the national organization was trying to do.

Donald considered the chapter as being in agreement with the national fraternity’s mission because they did philanthropic work every semester; however, he contradicted
himself later because he denounced the hazing activities as violating the fraternity’s values.

Confusion regarding organizational values or congruence of purpose. According to Donald, the hazing activities were not compatible with the fraternity’s values, but the chapter was attempting to be congruent with these values through their philanthropic work.

They weren’t congruent at all. Degrading people, belittling people, putting people in compromising situations is not at all close to the…helping someone less fortunate.

Donald distinguished between the general activities of the fraternity and its hazing activities when he spoke of the organizational values. According to him, the hazing activities were not at all in keeping with what the fraternity was supposed to accomplish, which was “helping someone less fortunate.”

James spoke about the organization in a similar manner. He said the hazing activities were “not so much” in congruence, but the fraternity still tried to be in agreement with them through some of their other activities. James was also contradictory in the manner he spoke of the fraternity. He believed that the main purpose was to bring men together as a group.

The stated purpose was an organization of gentlemen, to do philanthropy, and help the community and blah, blah, blah; which I really don’t think at it really was, but I think it’s just a group of friends. It’s a group of people that want to work together like bringing a community together because we get to do cool things. There’s a lot to be said to bringing a group, you know a bunch of small
payments together…what it can do for a group, like I would never have been able to go to Vegas on my own, but as the group we were able to go to Vegas [and] have an amazing time…

James understood what the values of the fraternity were supposed to be, and equated the brotherhood and creating a community, to being able to create a group that could fund a trip to Las Vegas. James misunderstood what helping the community or bringing the community together meant, and instead equated it with funding a trip to Las Vegas as a group. After being questioned further, he also stated what he believed were the values of the fraternity chapter.

I think the values were…we did a lot of philanthropy, but honestly most of it was because we had to, although I liked it…even though we were forced to do it…

James agreed that one of the values of the fraternity was philanthropy, but said the fraternity “forced” members to engage in philanthropic activities. He continued by mentioning that the “philanthropy” they did accomplished something like building a homecoming float or painting the fraternity basketball court. James knew that philanthropy and service was an intended value of the organization and something they were supposed to consider important, but did not understand what service or philanthropy was. James merely knew that he should say the words “service” and “philanthropy” as the fraternity’s values because that is what he had been told, but it was not what the fraternity actually valued.

When another member, Jaime, was asked what the purpose of the fraternity was he also answered, “philanthropy, it’s our national kind of purpose I guess.” He continued
to say that the organization valued “brotherhood, scholarship, being gentlemen overall.”
Jaime’s opinion was that some of their activities were neutral, while others better supported the values; however, he felt “bad” that the fraternity did not do more philanthropy. Jaime also knew that the fraternity should value philanthropy but did not, and that was the failure of the organization.

*Lack of organizational values or purpose.* Some of the members, like Scott, just saw the fraternity as a social or drinking club, designed to help you meet some of your best friends. Scott interpreted the values of the fraternity as friendship and meeting people. Similarly, David said that he made the best friends of his life in this fraternity and believed that putting your brothers before everything else was one of the organization’s values. David said the fraternity did this by supporting brothers in “crazy situations.”

Now that’s a question. Values? I mean probably putting your brothers over anything else and that’s how we kind of lived. If anyone was in trouble, like there were certain times when people got into crazy situations, were it be like family or event, like I remember someone got like robbed coming home and like through the fraternity we like raise[d] his funds to be able to give this kid money, because it was the money that his parents gave him for like the month…. It was always like kind of putting everyone else in front of anything else that kind of mattered. That’s kind of like Lambda Beta over anything, that kind of sense.

David believed that one of the values of the fraternity was brotherhood, which is why he also said the fraternity activities were congruent with the organizational values.
He said the activities during pledging created bonds and were “100%” vital to the organization. According to him, brotherhood was the main purpose of Lambda Beta.

Others, like John, simply considered the organization a social outlet and didn’t care if the organization had values. He joined to drink and “fuck bitches.” He enjoyed his experience because he liked to drink and, “there were a lot of females and I like females, I don’t like dudes.” He also said that the fraternity just “drank a lot and do [sic] drugs” on Thursday nights. When asked about hazing activities, John said he had no idea how the running, pushups, and cleaning related back to the values of the fraternity.

Daniel had a similar view of the fraternity and said he was disillusioned with his experience and was frustrated that the fraternity closed very soon after his initiation.

…I mean the pledging sucked because the frat sucked in general ‘cause they didn’t know how to run an organization or leadership so they… I mean, didn’t do anything right. Like ah, like the payments were a scam. Where the money went, you know wasn’t used properly. Like all they spent [on] was alcohol, didn’t do any charity work.

Daniel said the fraternity members knew what the national values were, because they were required to learn them, but that real mission of the fraternity was to drink.

Their mission, their real mission, the one at [university] was to just get alcohol and have girls over to drink, get blacked out and have fun. I mean we didn’t do any charitable work and we didn’t really get involved in the community…I would say they made jokes that the guys who came before them, the amount of guys that actually graduated that join the frat is pretty low. So, their GPA is low as well, they aren’t the brightest bunch.
Daniel was only a member of the fraternity for his pledge semester, as the fraternity was suspended beginning in December of his first semester, and finally closed in February of the next semester. His only experience was pledging during that final semester.

**Influence of Values and Purpose on Hazing Activities.** The men of Lambda Beta were largely able to communicate the stated values of the national fraternity, but varied greatly on what the values of the local chapter were. For some, these were in keeping with the national organization’s values, to others merely brotherhood, and to some it was simply a social and drinking organization. The Lambda Betas varied in how they addressed value congruence between the stated values of the organization and specific activities of the local fraternity. Some of the men separated the general fraternity activities and pledging when discussing value alignment. Some saw the hazing activities as congruent, because they improved brotherhood or caused personal growth in their opinion. Many of the men said the organization lived up to the values simply because they did philanthropic work. In general, the men indicated the fraternity lived up to the values according to what they believed them to be.

The philanthropic value of the organization was twisted within Lambda Beta to become the end that justified the means. According to the moral disengagement theory, when an individual can find a moral purpose in an activity, they can still view themselves as moral beings. Among the members of Lambda Beta, the belief that they did good deeds through service and philanthropy allowed them to believe they other fraternity activities were also for the good of the organization. The men also used the value of brotherhood in the same manner.
Iota Alpha

The Iota Alpha Fraternity believes that great advantages are to be derived from a brotherhood of college and university men, appreciating that close association may promote friendship, develop character, advance justice, and assist in the acquisition of a sound education.

Prior to the loss of recognition in Spring 2012, the Iota Alpha fraternity had a long history of risk-management violations on their host campus. The fraternity had been investigated for hazing and was derecognized in 2002 for hazing violations that included providing alcohol to members as well as physical and verbal abuse of the pledges. However, the national fraternity chose to keep the chapter open, and the chapter became eligible to be recognized by the institution again in 2004. The fraternity had a variety of risk management violations after being recognized a second time by the institution. The fraternity started a two-year probation in Spring 2010, during which they were found responsible for hazing and alcohol violations. The university again derecognized them in spring of 2012, and Iota Alpha nationally chose to allow the local chapter to remain open. However, the university effectively banned the organization for an unspecified period of time. The primary reason that the fraternity closed was not related to hazing, but because the chapter posed health and safety concerns for the remainder of the university community. Additionally, in their final semester as a part of the community, the chapter had a cumulative GPA that was 0.04 points below the fraternity and all men averages on campus.
**Response of the University.** The hazing incidents described above resulted in sanctions from the university. The continued inability for the organization to follow university policies, meet sanctions, meet the minimum expectations of fraternities, and continued risk management violations resulted in the organization becoming unrecognized by the university. In February 2014, recognition by the national organization was also removed due to continued risk management issues.

**Student Accounts of Hazing Activities.** Only two men from this chapter responded to the interview advertisement. Matt, was a senior in Spring 2013, and Brian was a junior in 2013. The two recalled the following variety of hazing activities: being yelled at regularly, personal servitude, purchasing items for active members, forced drinking, physical fitness activities, being required to sit in a garbage can and have a staring contest with another pledge, “gargoyles,” cleaning the facility while active members threw trash on the ground, and being referred to as “poopie” while part of the pledge class.

As a pledge, Matt recalled being yelled at during serenade practice, and he “wouldn’t take it lying down.” He described himself as frustrated during pledging because actives would try to get physical with him or yell at him. He laughingly described the yelling as just a stream of obscenities, but prided himself on how he remained so calm in the face of the actives yelling at him. He also recounted an instance where he was punished during serenade practice for not doing a sufficiently good job and had to have a staring contest with another pledge while sitting in trashcans.

Brian was able to provide a more detailed account of the organization’s hazing practices. Brian did not have a problem with most of the activities from when he was a
pledge—house cleaning, learning songs for serenades, and doing other “embarrassing activities”. For Brian, drinking was not a concern. During one activity, when Brian was a pledge, the pledge class “met the founding fathers,” Jack Daniels and Jim Beam. They had large bottles of both liquors and these were passed through the circle of pledges until the alcohol was finished. Brian ended up not being initiated into the fraternity because of the hazing report from his pledge semester and an accident that occurred during an activity.

… It didn’t seem that bad until like one day it was a Saturday morning they called us all and had us come in … I lived across the street from there, so when I got the text saying we had to be there in 20 minutes, I was the first person there … I think a bunch of the actives had been like drinking all day and they were pretty rowdy, and I think like 7 or 8 of us, out of the 30, had showed up and they were pretty mad about that. And then a few more straggled in and they were like yelling at us and stuff like that and we had to do pushups and sit-ups and planks and this thing called nose and toes and that is about the time that I realized this is kind of ridiculous, this isn’t ok. There was things we did ok, with like the alphabet where like let’s say we did wall sits one time which was ok, not a big deal, and as long as everyone said the alphabet then we would all be able to stand up. That was kind like…at the time seemed like a team-building thing so it was like not a huge deal I didn’t think. But then when it got to that Saturday, what had happened was we were doing pushups and they had us take these benches, these huge like 80 pound benches and we stood them up against the windows so people couldn’t see into the house and we had…they had been throwing like trash around
and it got really wet and slippery and we were doing these pushups and it wasn’t on purpose or anything like that, but one of the benches had fallen and it had actually hit me on the side of my head and I had to get… I think I passed out for like a minute or two, I don’t really know. Then I came to and I was like really upset and really pissed off because the whole thing was ridiculous, they were only mad because they said we didn’t bring enough girls around the house or something like that so I was like this is stupid you guys are assholes. Sorry!

Brian realized that someone could be seriously hurt and was frustrated with the chapter. He went to the hospital and received staples for his head injury. The chapter called the pledges back to the facility and Brian told everyone not to go. The chapter was reported that same night for hazing and the members assumed Brian had made the call and ostracized him. The university and national Iota Alpha required that all pledges be released and Brian was not initiated.

**Student Accounts of Organizational Values and Purpose.** Both Brian and Matt were asked about the values and purpose of the Iota Alpha fraternity. In contrast with members of other organizations, neither knew the larger purpose or values of the organization. Matt did have his own view on the purpose of the organization and demonstrated that he formed friendships through the organization.

*Lack of organizational values or purpose.* Matt joined Iota Alpha because he wanted a place to drink and could not get into fraternity parties without being a fraternity member. According to Matt, partying is the purpose of his fraternity.

I don’t really think [we] have a purpose, not gonna lie to you. Um, we did all get into [business school] so we must have done something right. But the
purpose when I started was girls and partying and drinking, and then you learn that you get so much more.

Matt saw the social aspect of the fraternity as the purpose, but believed the fraternity valued brotherhood and secrecy as well. Matt was not able to answer the question regarding values congruence, but said the pledging experience was, “challenging, uh difficult, but rewarding and very group and self rewarding.” He did say the fraternity had hazed senselessly at times and that served no purpose. Matt did feel very connected to his fraternity brothers, stating he would be at every single member’s wedding and they were his closest friends.

Brian joined the fraternity partly because his father had been a member. He did not know what the purpose of the organization was.

…I don’t know I could tell you, I wish I had some sliver of knowledge to let me think that that place was going to be ok, but I think that, that just became a glorified drinking club where they just pick on younger kids. That’s how it felt towards the end… It didn’t seem like it was a lot of brotherhood or even an organization at all…

Brian saw no purpose to the organization other than drinking as a group, and simply laughed when he was asked if the activities were congruent or incongruent with the fraternity values.

I mean, if I could even tell you that they had a single value, I am sure I could find something that would help support something they were trying to do, but it was never clear.
Brian continued to wonder if whether he had been initiated, the purpose of some of the hazing activities, or the purpose of the fraternity would have been clear at the end.

**Influence of Values and Purpose on Hazing Activities.** However, Matt and Brian did agree that, in their opinion, the purpose of their Iota Alpha chapter was drinking and having a good time. Matt had a good time in his fraternity, drank, made friends and believed that hazing activities were beneficial to the members. Brian was unable to identify any purpose to the organization beyond drinking and was unable to relate any activities to the values of the fraternity. Matt was a member of the organization long enough to experience the groupthink and moral disengagement, which was similar to the men in the other fraternities. For him, the friendships he gained made all the other activities palatable. Brian never experienced admittance into the organization, so he never became part of the groupthink mentality of the fraternity and never saw value in his fraternity.

**Summary**

Student organizations on a college campus are created to engage students, and have a wide variety purposes. Some are simply to enjoy the company of fellow students, while others are created with a distinct and values-based purpose. The fraternities studied here were each created with a specific purpose, be that helping others or helping their membership develop and grow as men. The women’s sports team was created to provide positive and healthy opportunities for students to connect through athletics. Through hazing activities the organizations had a limited ability to achieve their intended purpose. Individual members were able to use the intended values of the organization as a reference point for all other activities, including hazing activities. Many members of the
participant group were unable to recognize the hazing as violations of the larger values-based purpose, because they believed hazing activities helped to fulfill certain organizational ideals. The students ranked the ideals they believed were created by hazing above all other organization values. To the student participants, the concepts of brotherhood, friendship, or philanthropy compensated for not abiding by the other values of academic success, healthy lifestyles, civic engagement, or leadership development.
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

PART 2: INDIVIDUAL EXPLANATIONS FOR HAZING ACTIVITIES

This section relates to the second research question that asked how students explain engaging in hazing activities. In the interviews described in the previous chapter, students were asked about the activities they participated in, but the focus during interviews was on why the organizations participated in these activities. This section will focus on the member’s accounts of why they as individuals participated in hazing activities and have been grouped into seven different categories: (a) The line that participants believed would not be crossed; (b) the strong bond created through hazing; (c) the excitement, thrill seeking, and rites of passage that students were looking for; (d) the purpose or personal gain participants found in the activities; (e) the tradition or cycle of violence; (f) the victim’s choice to participate in the activities; and (g) the misstatement that the violence or hazing was diminishing with time. Each of these themes is supported by quotations from interview participants and how they described their experiences in engaging in hazing.

The Invisible Line

Throughout all the interviews, the idea of a “line” that will not be crossed was consistently mentioned. Those being hazed routinely relayed that they would not have participated in something that was inherently dangerous, that they would not allow themselves to be hit or hurt in some manner, and they would never have done something
sexual. Hazed individuals also recognized that if something made them uncomfortable, they would not have participated in it and would have walked away. The individuals that participated in hazing as aggressors indicated that they would never physically strike someone, although others might want to, and tried not to cause overt harm. By creating a “line,” the students were able to explain their participation in activities because they did not cross over into what they viewed as more serious hazing. However, hazing policies do not allow for voluntary participation in hazing and do not designate between “minor” or “dangerous” hazing.

In multiple examples, if an individual mentioned issues like a past injury, an allergy to a particular food item, or did not drink because of religion or a family history of drug or alcohol abuse, they were excused from the activity. The hazers in most of the organizations drew a “line” at purposely causing an allergic reaction, physical injury, or violating a religious or personal belief system involving drugs or alcohol. By creating this “line”, both hazers and hazees interpreted a degree of safety in the activity or compassion, which may or may not have been present. Both the hazers and hazees did not realize that the standards for acceptable or unacceptable hazing practices were different throughout the organization. They also did not consider some of the activities dangerous, or that accidents could occur during some of the activities. When individuals do not comprehend or care about the possible results of their actions, Bandura (1999) called this a type of justification, disregard, or distortion of consequences.

The hazers would also seek collective agreement on activities in advance to “ensure” that no one crossed a “line” or did anything excessive. An additional “protective” behavior the organization would practice would be to provide an “out” in
certain activities. Individuals may be ridiculed or told to engage in different activities, but may not be required to participate in the activity that would cross the “line.” All but 2 of the 23 participants mentioned some kind of “line” that they or the organization had created to stop the hazing from being too extreme.

**Personal Limitations.** Some of the hazing victims set personal boundaries on what they would participate in. This allowed them to maintain a sense of control over their actions.

Robert, a Sigma Beta fraternity member, believed that he would have walked away if he had believed he was in harm’s way. Sigma Beta was removed from campus for forced consumption of alcohol, forced physical trainings, and a general concern for student safety.

Like I said, I have always never needed another someone to treat me like crap to be their friend. I always said that if they made me do something I wasn’t comfortable with and they didn’t say “ok that’s fine,” I would leave.

For Robert, his ‘line” was being “treated like crap,” although he did not identify his experience of being yelled at regularly, forced pushups and running, personal servitude, and forced consumption of “gross” things as being treated “like crap”. He went on to detail an instance when the organization blindfolded the men and had them eat unknown substances when they gave wrong answers to questions during a quiz. Robert described why he decided to go forward with the activity even though he knew the food would be “nasty.”
Just because, like I said I don’t really care enough, I trusted them for the most part. I knew it was probably gonna be something gross but it wasn’t gonna be something to hurt me.

Robert had an unfounded sense of trust in a group of individuals that during his pledge period had already yelled at him weekly, required he clean and run errands for members, and do mandatory “workouts.” Robert trusted that these individuals would not cross the line and purposely hurt him during the activity. Timothy, another member of Sigma Beta, was also able to articulate where the “line” was drawn:

Honestly, the hazing they were doing really wasn’t that bad, I have played sports and I can deal with a lot of pressure pretty well so it really wasn’t that bad. They never punched us or hit us or anything like that. It was a lot more psychological, loud music, blindfolded asking you questions, yelling. I always told myself if I ever had to anything sexual or if I was ever struck by somebody that would be the place where I would draw the line, and I told the actives that. Individuals like Timothy also made it clear to older members where their “line” was in advance, which really could permit active members to push the limitations of individual new members.

One member of the Lady Tigers, Katy, drew a “line” that she preemptively told the older members about when she found out there would be drinking activities at their rookie party.

I like knew I was ok with that [drinking], unless it got to the point that I couldn’t handle or couldn’t control what I was doing and um, I have a boyfriend so before the event happened I told one of the captains, “oh yeah I am not going
to do anything that would like jeopardize that.” She was like “ok that’s fine” so like the alcohol that was my only concern. I didn’t want to get to a point where I wouldn’t remember or like do something that like would be bad.

Katy, who quit the team after the rookie party at which the hazing took place, allowed herself to participate in the activities, but only up to a certain point. She had created her own “line” and informed older women of what she was willing to participate in.

**Organizational Limitations.** Members believed that the organizations also had limitations that would not be superseded during hazing activities.

Anthony, also a Sigma Beta member, said that men did not have to participate if they had a strong objection to a certain activity. He described their pledge missions as a semi-regular activity involving theft, kidnapping of other members, and an activity that required the men to keep their hands in icy water. Every pledge participated in every activity. Anthony believed that the active chapter would not force people to participate in the pledge missions, although no pledge ever tested that theory by objecting to participating in an activity when he was a pledge. Anthony also said the chapter had a policy against violence toward the new members: “No one was ever touched, that was like a policy we had, no pledges are ever going to be touched in any way.”

According to Anthony, the members all agreed that they would not hit the pledges, but did not see that some of their activities, including the physical exertion they entailed, could be as physically trying as more dangerous activities.

Stan, a Sigma Beta, was excused from a situation where he believed he could have been injured.
At a certain point you can’t really like, if you had to do a certain amount of pushups and you couldn’t do them at a certain point they just, you did however many you could. It wasn’t like they were…it wasn’t that bad. I know for me one time during I-Week [initiation week] they were doing something where they were banging pots and pans and I had like a ear surgery on my ear and I told them I can’t do this and they were ok with it and they let me leave.

Stan’s experience reinforced his belief and that of his brothers that they would not purposely cause harm. Such exceptions helped Stan and his fraternity brothers explain their hazing activities because they had not crossed the “line” that they had determined. Concessions like allowing an individual with a potential hearing problem to leave during activities like this allow the organization to function as though they do have a “line” that they will not cross.

Stan also reiterated that the fraternity would not hurt anyone. He believed that it was permissible to physically fatigue pledges during the required physical activities, but that paddling them but have been too extreme: “I think there is a certain line and I think they never really tried to cross it. I think some probably do though.”

Stan recognized what others had not. While they believe that there is a “line,” there are some individuals or organizations that cross it and there are no guarantees that hazing would not progress to that point. Physically injuring pledges on purpose is the “line” where a majority of the men interviewed believed that hazing went too far.

The idea of a “line” that must not be crossed was also apparent in the women’s sports team, the Lady Tigers. The Lady Tigers were sanctioned by their university for consumption of alcohol, blindfolding new members, and participating in required
activities like dances. According to one member, Julia, women were encouraged, but “obviously” not forced to drink in case of “religion and stuff like that.”

David, another Lambda Beta, said that the organization would collectively decide what was appropriate or inappropriate to do with the pledges.

…There were definitely ideas that were floating around and people would be like, “dude that’s just like absurd, we’re not making these kids do that, that’s fucking stupid”, sorry for my language. I apologize.

Interviewer: So what were the things that everyone would shoot down that was too much?

David: That’s a good question. I’d say like any activity that took too much time, like activities that you knew if they had to [be] there all day for it, we were just like dude ‘cause us, we stressed academics really hard, because we had like a lot of dumb people …

In this case, the fraternity actively discussed what the “line” for appropriate and inappropriate hazing was for their organization. They decided that activities that detracted too much from studying would not be appropriate. Members also decided that causing physical harm would be a problem, and understood that injury crossed a “line” with regard to hazing activities. According to Greg, the men of Lambda Beta were concerned about injury.

There was one occurrence where the pledges had to swim in the pool or something, and they had to recite the Greek alphabet, and if they screwed up they had to jump in the pool and there was glass in the pool, but we did not know that, and a pledge cut his foot. So we stopped the activity, drove this kid to the
hospital, made sure that he was ok you know. If anyone ever got hurt it was 100%
on accident and we took care of it right away.

Although the Lambda Betas created rules, or a “line,” with the intention that pledges should not be hurt in the pledging process, individuals were still injured in “acceptable” activities.

This idea of the “line” that no one would cross is a way for individuals to explain the hazing activities. The hazers believe that they are engaging in “safe” hazing practices by ensuring that they ask about allergies, do not violate religious principles, and do not engage in physical violence against new members. The organizations attempt to circumvent policy or rationalize their participation in activities by creating these “invisible lines.”

The students were never asked about a “line” unless they brought it up, as it was not included in the original interview questions. Some of the students did not identify what they viewed as a specific “line” that they would not cross, but during the interview they did indicate what activities they were and were not willing to participate in. It became increasingly obvious during the interviews that while students believed that there was a “line” that they as individuals or the organization as a whole would not cross, the “line” was often very flexible. Moreover, the students also did not seem to recognize that while some of the activities that they felt were within the boundaries and would not necessarily cause physical harm, could actually cause psychological harm or accidental injury.
Creating a Bond

A common justification for hazing is that it strengthens bonds between individuals, and bonding with fellow members or teammates was mentioned in every interview. The students also appreciated the aspect of a “shared story” they had with other members and reminiscing with fellow members regarding hazing activities.

The students, who were more critical of their experience as new members, identified that often the intention of the activities was bonding, but that bonding did not occur through the activities. Some participants said they had not bonded with those that hazed them, and there were others that were openly hostile toward the older members. Some also stated that they participated because it was bonding, but later recanted their own statements by saying they were not very connected to their organization or other members. Additionally, as participants discussed what they enjoyed regarding their experience, they generally only bonded with those within their pledge class or group of new members. For the fraternities, many of the bonds created in these organizations were rather tenuous, breaking down after the organization no longer existed or was sanctioned.

**False or Weak Bonds.** Matt, a member of Iota Alpha, a fraternity that lost recognition for a violating a variety of risk management activities, believed that the experiences he shared as a new pledge are what united his friend group.

When you look at someone next to you, and they are doing the same thing, and they are struggling with it, but all just get through it, it’s something that you know… I’ll go outside and meet a friend, and he will be my friend and I’ll know him for a year or two, but he didn’t go through what I went through, what I did with the guy next to me, you know … that that makes a huge difference…
For Matt, the activities were a unifying experience that cannot be matched when creating friendships with those outside his fraternity. However, Matt was not very connected to his organization and asserted that if he had been able to get into the parties without joining a fraternity, he would not have joined Iota Alpha.

One woman from the Lady Tigers, Julia, believed that all the activities that her team participated in were great fun and really bonded the women together. She believed that it helped them get to know each other off the field and in a more comfortable atmosphere. She was an older member during the last rookie party and said the purpose of the activities was to allow women to meet those who they had not gotten to know during the previous semester of playing together. Julia also stated that the team really got along well, and that there was no individual in the organization that was really an outsider. However, she also contradicted her statement that the activities during their rookie party contributed greatly to this fact by stating, “the rookie party didn’t really make everyone that much closer, but being together and traveling together made us more close.”

Gill, a Lambda Beta, believed much of the bonding he experienced happened in the week leading up to initiation. He was able to get to know the other members of his pledge class in the week that they were required to spend at the facility, working on projects for the fraternity.

It was one of those things where I got closer to my pledge class, you know 30 people, it’s hard to get to know that many people in depth in such a short amount of time. That [initiation week] did help with that.
By his own admission, Gill was not an involved fraternity member after his initiation. While he believed that the hazing activities bonded the members, he also realized that his own values were incongruent with the activities. This caused him to disengage from the fraternity experience and he found himself critical of his experience thereafter. For Gill, the idea of bonding through the hazing activities did not really keep him tied to the organization.

As I mentioned, one of the reasons I joined was just to have a base of friends that I could hang out with basically, when I was first in college, and didn’t know any people. So after that first semester where I pledged, I had met some friends, I met quite a few people outside the fraternity. I guess I felt more of a connection with the people outside of the fraternity than with the fraternity.

Thus, it is evident that although the activities allowed Gill to get to know fraternity brothers better through the forced togetherness, it did not exceed those bonds that he created outside the fraternity through other means. Each of the students indicated bonding was why they participated in hazing or was the intent behind the hazing. In each case, the students also admitted they hadn’t been involved members after the hazing took place. The hazing was the not unifying experience they believed it to be.

**Separate Bonds.** Some of the men indicated that the hazing brought them together as a group and bonding was a key reason hazing exists. However, the men only bonded with individuals they were being hazed with, not those that were haz ing them.

According to Anthony from Sigma Beta, all the hazing activities—the forced alcohol consumption, lineups, and pledge missions—contributed positively to how the members got along with one another.
I think they’ve contributed positively, we all shared experiences and that’s the biggest thing. We all have shared these activities that we all thought were fun, and we didn’t take it seriously at all when they were saying, “you are the worst pledge class ever”. We all had to hide our giggles when they said that to us, especially at the end of it when we got to know the actives. I fully expected to be [like the] alumni who’d come from the 70s, who had pictures of the house back in the 70s, like “we were idiots back then, it’s so fun” and expect it to be the same way for us. Just looking back on good memories and things we did, that no one else in college experienced.

Anthony favored hazing and appreciated the bonds that it created for him within the organization; however, he contradicted himself when discussing his experiences after his pledging semester ended. He believed that everything went well for an additional semester, but that the lack of interest in pledging activities hurt the chapter.

When actives were involved, it was like really meaningful, fun events, and then I mean after I got initiated I didn’t go around the house much, like moved out and all that stuff. I just was kind of over it. I just remember hearing actives were not involved at all in the pledgeship, just like the pledges getting hazed, and then the actives not hanging out with them, so it’s just kind of what I mean about how important it was that actives were involved in the pledgeship to make it meaningful for the pledges. Getting hazed, and then you turn around and you have like no friends in the house either.

Despite stating that he had bonded with the individuals in his pledge class through the hazing activities that he participated in, Anthony was never fully engaged or involved
with the organization after his pledge semester, or with pledges who joined the
organization after him. He used bonding as the reason to participate in the hazing
activities, but did not appear to form an actual connection with the actives. Anthony was
one of the members he himself alluded to; he was hazed and then had no friends in the
chapter after the experience ended.

James, another Lambda Beta, had a different experience from that of Gill’s,
although they joined in the same semester. James believed that the hazing activities and
the experience helped people bond with those they normally would not be friends with.

We got along, we were all friends though, even like you could see two
people who look like they are from completely different groups and yet, they will
call each other brother, and they’ll hangout and drink with each other, be on a
beer pong team together. But you know, it was kind of nice I like that…

This experience was more unifying for James, as he was able to create friendships
based on the forced bonding and togetherness with the other member of his class. For
James, the hazing he endured that week—which included only two to four hours of sleep
each night, only PB&J sandwiches and tuna to eat, forced workouts, and his eventual
physical collapse—was all worth it. He said his pledge brothers helped him make it
through.

It was basically just momentum that kept me going… Never having to do
this crap, and finally telling the people I hate to screw off and never talk to me
again. And I wouldn’t have wanted to quit because like, it’s like family almost.
Me and my pledge brothers [sic] were really close and they helped me, they were
all helping me. I had a couple of people carry me to the library, ‘cause they wanted me to make it through you know.

James said that the hazing activities discouraged any cliquish tendencies in the group and allowed members to bond, but he only bonded with his pledge class. He actually indicated he hated the older members in his organization. Those that hazed him, he never wanted to talk to again. Moreover, he also explained his participation in activities that caused him harm, because he and his pledge brothers got through it like a family. Experiencing hardship as a group often creates groupthink. In this instance, the hazing created an “opportunity” for cohesiveness, and a belief in bonding that united the pledge class against the larger fraternity.

Donald, a Lambda Beta, believed that there were things the fraternity could have done that were not focused on hazing; however, he still believed that bonding did occur at least in the pledge classes.

It was like us versus them, so the members that were going through those activities, like the pledges, definitely became closer having gone through all that things. A sense of pride, a sense of accomplishment through it, so I would say each semester that group of people would be extremely close, depending on how well you did the activities, or if you messed up or didn’t know, answer questions they asked, so it kind of brought people together.

Donald acknowledged that members in each pledge class were close, but did not say that it contributed to all the members of the organization getting to know or like one another.
All the students who were interviewed believed that one of the purposes, intents, or outcomes of the hazing activities that they participated in was bonding, and this was part of the reason that they willingly participated. However, bonding meant different things to different people. Some of them believed that they earned friends of a lifetime or created a new family, while some believed that this allowed them to have a shared story with these people to look back on. Moreover, for some, this bond weathered over time and changes in their respective organizations; for others, it lasted for only the semester that they were new. Each individual joined these student organizations for some kind of camaraderie and were willing to participate in the activities as a way to get to know the other individuals in the group.

**Excitement and Thrill-Seeking Behavior**

Students who enter college seek something, and in many cases it is a wild, exciting and impulsive experience. They believe that college is going to be the best time of their lives and that they need to act in a manner that is in accordance with this belief. Having a good time is very important to the students who join the four student organizations discussed here. By joining an organization, students look for a way to expand their experience beyond just academia and create a favorable social atmosphere for themselves. In addition to creating a shared experience, the students wanted to have a story that was impressive to others. Students often enter college, or a new organization, interested in participating in hazing and expecting hazing to be a part of the experience; in some cases, they even want to be hazed. All but one participant indicated that having fun was one of the reasons they continued to participate in hazing activities.
An Entertaining and Enjoyable Experience. The men who were interviewed looked forward to the hazing and believed that everyone enjoyed the activities. According to John from Lambda Beta, Matt from Iota Alpha, and Anthony from Sigma Beta, the pledge semester is the most fun you “never want to repeat.” The men interviewed from Sigma Beta enjoyed their hazing experiences and relished what they participated in. When asked whether he ever considered intervening or stopping one of the drinking activities, Robert said there was no need because everyone wanted to participate “was really excited about it.” Anthony elaborated more upon his feelings regarding the first semester and his experiences as a new member.

The most fun that you never want to have again I guess. When you are young and you are joining something new like a fraternity, and you are just out of high school, or in my case I already had a year of college, but I mean it was fun. Freshmen year is like one of the best years. But I think joining the fraternity, my first semester being a pledge, was probably the most fun I have had in college. Men from all the three fraternities echoed this sentiment, and every man that participated said he had fun during his pledge semester or when he was hazing others as an active member.

Further, students were also looking for a way to connect with friends, teammates, and other members in a fun manner. Julia, a Lady Tigers member, believed that the rookie party gave her that opportunity. Julia was asked how she was feeling during the party.

I mean I drank anyways, but I felt like I had to drink because it was a party for us kind of, I guess. Um and I don’t know it was just fun, it was fun to get out
of practice, and finally be able to be, like able to do whatever you want with your team. Be able to get to know them and stuff like that. I really liked it.

She had not had the opportunity to get to know her teammates in a fun way during the previous semester on the team. Some of her teammates felt the same. According to Martha, “It was really fun, like I honestly enjoyed myself so much and felt a lot closer to them so…” Martha also believed that the intent behind the hazing was to have fun, “…they really just wanted to have fun with it and just made us closer and stuff, a lot of it was just for fun.” Another teammate, Mandy, believed that everyone would want to do what they did, and would think it was a good time as long as they were in college.

If I had seen it from the outside, I think I would think it would be fun. I think people our age think it would be fun and like, “oh wow it’s kind of cool that they are doing that” but I could see how a parent, or someone like in charge of something …would see this could sort of be questionable. But I think most kids my age would see and think that’s kind of fun.

Mandy believed that college students would enjoy the activities, but others wouldn’t understand. She participated because she thought it was fun, thereby making it acceptable to participate.

**Thrill and Excitement.** The students were also looking for thrill and excitement, some kind of rush. All participants were asked why students engage in behaviors that are illegal and often risky or dangerous, in addition to why they believe students engage in hazing activities. Anthony said it was for the rush.

I would say really for the thrill of it honestly. It’s just an adrenaline rush sometimes. We honestly got put in high stress situations, like after you finish it
you feel really good, it’s that reward of accomplishing something like that. As far as illegal stuff … just adrenaline. I remember stealing those wooden pallets during I-week [initiation week] was probably, definitely, illegal, and going though it I was feeling really nervous. I was like “aw man”, once we got away and got all of them. It’s just like skydiving. I went skydiving, same feeling, like “oh my god” I shouldn’t do this, I could lose my life, then all of a sudden it’s a real blast.

Such thrill-seeking behavior and that rush that it gave the students helped them feel like the activity benefitted them in some manner.

Donald, a Lambda Beta, also believed that the reason students engage in some of the illegal or risky behaviors is for thrill and excitement. “Excitement I suppose, see how much stuff you can get away with. Yeah, just growing up and being a kid and doing stupid things.” Daniel, a Lambda Beta, seemed to best express the experiences in his fraternity and the activities that they engaged in.

Like the hazing stuff, ok I get it, it’s part of the whole thing, you have to accept that, you have to put regular life away, because frat life is different. It’s kind of the same thing, you are in an organization, so you have to put your real world away. …I wanted to look for a good time. Meet good friends and I mean growing up, you always hear people that are like, “college years are the best years, college is great.”

He was also looking for fun in his experiences, which is why he was willing to “put regular life away.” He had been told that college was for having fun, so he was able to explain the hazing because it was a part of college or frat life, not real life.
David, a Lambda Beta, who referred to the week leading to initiation week as Super Happy Fun Week, believed that the fraternity was just about having a good time and that’s why they did everything they did. David was seeking that once-in-a-lifetime thrilling experience and something out of the ordinary. He believed that students engage in illegal or risky behaviors for the thrill and because one can only do this in college.

Other than college, I am not going to go get hazed to join Morgan Stanley Smith Barney that’s just you know …Now is the time to do whatever, like you complete your bucket list in college per say, then come up with a new one as an adult…

For David, the rite of passage of college was to behave in a manner that he would not be able to later. The thrill and excitement of hazing outweighed the potential costs of participation. Greg, a Lambda Beta, added “the rush is a part of it, part of it is a rush, whenever you do something that is illegal, you get a rush inside of you.”

The participants used fun, the need to have a good time in college, and looking for a thrill as justification for participation in their organizations’ hazing activities. Some of the pledges had a good time, and that is why they considered it acceptable in their mind to allow themselves to be hazed or hazed others as a part of their membership. Students are often told that college will be the best time of their lives. Through the idea that everything fun ends after graduation, they are able to reconcile many risky or illegal behaviors. Society has created an expectation that college students should live life to the fullest regardless of consequences. Behaving with abandon in college is viewed as a rite of passage and hazing has been fed by this idea. Students want a rite of passage and engage in hazing that they see as fun, thrilling and a rush to fill the need.
Creating Purpose, Personal Growth, and Personal Gain

During their interviews, more than half of the participants stated that they had grown, or gained something, by participating in the activities. For some of the men, as long as there was a manufactured purpose that could be associated with the activity, the activity was acceptable. The men were able to identify the advantages of being hazed, or hazing others, as well as convey what they believed to be the purpose of the activities. The women interviewed rarely referenced any purpose to their activities beyond having fun, and many of the women believed that they could have accomplished their goals of teambuilding and getting to know each other through other means.

The feelings of personal growth varied, but for some dealing with the hazing activities allowed them to “become men” by teaching them to deal with things, cleaning or PT, or getting along with people they did not like. In certain instances, the personal gain they sought was someone to run errands or clean their rooms after they were initiated. Similarly when they were pledges, the men were able to explain running errands and cleaning for others, because there was a purpose for the servitude. An additional gain for some of the men was achieving the badge order, or ranking, to live in the facility that they wanted. For some fraternities, an individual’s worth as a member is defined by the badge, or initiation order, that one is given. If someone was ranked first in the class, that person was a better pledge and received more privileges as an active member. In Lambda Beta and Sigma Beta, they earned this distinction by doing chores, running errands, being on time, or doing a good job at PT.

Personal Gain. Multiple men believed that the activities helped them become better or stronger people. David, a Lambda Beta, told a story of when he did a scavenger
hunt where he had to collect items from sorority women, and that without his brothers he would never have had the courage to talk to the women. He was proud of his growth in being able to talk to the women. He also relayed that when they were required to run or do PT for the fraternity, it was not a big deal because he was not going to the gym; he was “just loafing.” From David’s perspective, the more you put into an organization the more you get out of it, and that is why he participated in the activities and believed that others should too.

You aren’t going to gain anything if you don’t put anything into it. I mean what am I going to gain if I just joined a group? I don’t want to be there. I put hours into this fraternity, I wanted to be a member of eboard, I wanted to make the fraternity a better place because I mean, it was my home. I put countless hours into this place and I made other people make sure that, like, we were pledging in people that put in the same effort that we all did.

David asserted that by pledging and making the necessary effort, the men were going to contribute to the betterment of the fraternity in some manner and would leave the organization better off than when they joined. For David, the hazing he participated in had a purpose—he gained a better appreciation for the fraternity. When he made sure other people put forth the “same effort”, he “helped” them gain the same appreciation.

Being hazed taught Greg, a Lambda Beta, that sometimes people need to do things that they do not want to do in life.

… I remember thinking after I got initiated on that Saturday, that that experience just changed me as a person. It really taught [me] that in life you are going [to] face things that you don’t want to do. You know, whatever it is,
regardless if it’s pain creation or applying and taking this interview, or taking a test or anything in between, there’s always gonna be things that you don’t want to do. Sometimes you just gotta suck it up and do it. I mean obviously getting hazed isn’t a good example, but it made us all grow as people, all of a sudden in one semester we transformed from boys to men, it happened with everyone in my pledge class.

For Greg “suck it up” was a vital lesson that needed to be learned, and the growth that the hazing activities presented was essential. According to him, being transformed from a boy to a man through the hazing activities meant that he would participate regardless of what the activity was.

I think they are vital to every organization. Even if they are not applicable to the organization itself, or they don’t relate at all, it just about learning to suck it up. I know that I have said that a couple of times, but it really is just a lesson in just shut up and do it. Some of the things are harsh, some of the things are not that bad, but even if it doesn’t relate to the history of Lambda Beta, or this brother’s career, you know um it’s just about learning to do things that you don’t want to do.

Greg believed there was always a lesson to be learned from an experience and that he grew as an individual because of all of them.

**Purposeful Activities.** Many of the men, particularly those in Lambda Beta believed they had benefitted in a way from some of the hazing activities. The men of Lambda Beta heavily utilized the badge number system, and routinely provided new members with reasons as to why they needed to participate in activities.
Both Greg and Jaime, Lambda Betas, considered that one could gain skills from pledging. For Jaime, it was more about specific skill sets that were developed through pledging activities, which he considered vital to the organization.

Like I said, I was taught many good life lessons, leadership skills, things of that nature that I wouldn’t have gotten without my pledge semester, that I wouldn’t have gotten without the fraternity, so I do think that, yeah there were some vital activities.

In addition to just expressing his opinion on the skills that were created, Jaime also saw a specific need for some of the activities and said that he and his class tried to eliminate some of the activities that they considered less purposeful. The Lambda Betas touted a scavenger hunt as being a purposeful activity they learned from and that helped them grow as individuals. During the scavenger hunt, they visited “meaningful” and helpful places around campus, which, according to interviews, allowed them to familiarize themselves with campus and learn the history of the fraternity. The Lambda Beta men used this activity to show purpose behind hazing activities and explain their participation. One fraternity activity was to have pledges be at the house at 5am or 6am every Friday morning to do a variety of activities. These mornings could include activities in the pool, or courtyard, or PT. Jaime considered this event very helpful for some of the members.

It was all the kids in my pledge class we went to the house we’d go do stuff. Sometimes we went on like jogs in the morning, sometimes we played volleyball on the courts outside of Cortez (residence hall), stuff like that. They were meant for kids to get up and actually go to class. A lot of kids actually had
like 8am, 9am, 10ams and they wouldn’t go, so it helped kids get up and go to those.

Jaime was able to explain the 5am activities through his belief that it helped the men academically by helping them get to class on time. Multiple men were able to explain cleaning and running errands in a similar manner. Robert, a Sigma Beta, believed that they needed to help clean the fraternity because they made the mess. Robert also knew that it would help him in the future, but he never reaped the benefits as he “never had the opportunity if I wanted to haze somebody” due to the closure of the chapter.

Eric, a Lambda Beta, finished first in his pledge class, and saw a purpose behind each of the activities. During initiation week, the men were tasked with cleaning a room in the house known as the “death room,” because it was such a mess. Eric called it a gift for the chapter that he and his brothers decided to clean, and that the time they spent working on the “death room” was their contribution to the chapter. Eric said that his perspective differed from those of others because he always chose to have a good attitude. Similarly, as Eric was often a host of what the fraternity referred to as Wine Wednesdays and his room would get really dirty, he would ask pledges to come and clean with him on Thursdays. Eric believed that the fairest thing to do was to ask them to help.

Because I didn’t make all the mess, and it’s not like everyone that was at the party was my specific guest, and they were somebody else’s’ guest and they bounced into my room because music was playing in there and that type of thing. It just felt like the fair thing to do.
Eric was able to reason that the chores and cleanings were not only necessary, but also fair, because he had not made all the mess and his asking the pledges to do it served a fair purpose. Eric saw a purpose in all the activities he participated in, or asked others to participate in: scavenger hunts helped pledges learn campus geography, the required cleaning and working at the facility was really a gift and contribution to the chapter, and it was only fair that the pledges help him clean up his room after he hosted parties weekly. Eric was an outlier among the men, as he still did not seem to want to admit that any of the activities that the chapter organized were mandatory or that anything the organization did was hazing. However, through his continued efforts to portray the activities as purposeful, he demonstrated the personal gains he received by earning a good badge order could explain and even change his interpretation of the activities. Eric was able to live in the facility and was appointed to an officer position after his pledge semester. Eric was “saving face” within the organization by downplaying any negative aspects of the organization. He tried to maintain his social hierarchy within the groups by buying in and construing all the hazing activities in a positive light. Other men did this as well, but none to the extent of Eric. In his work on peer groups, Goffman (1967) wrote that those dedicated to maintaining their membership in the group will downplay negatives to ensure they are still in accordance with group norms. Eric continued to do this after the group was closed, because maintaining his stature was still important to him.

The men were able to find a purpose in hazing through multiple constructs. Attaching purpose to the activities made the men more comfortable with their actions. For them, hazing again filled a need for a rite of passage, to help them grow as people. They were also comfortable acting as servants, being ordered around and being
treated without respect because they could find a larger reason behind it. Seeing the purpose allowed them to be comfortable with the mistreatment they experienced.

**Considering Participation Voluntary**

A common aspect that was revealed in the interviews was that members considered participation in all hazing-related activities voluntary and, therefore, acceptable and not hazing. However, the concept of “voluntary” had different implications for different organizations. The women believed that by asking permission to haze, or telling to the rookies in advance they didn’t have to participate, the activities were not hazing. In the case of the fraternities, voluntary participation meant that if they did not participate, they were given a separate task, a consequence, or would be removed as new members of the organization. The men believed that if someone was not forced through bodily harm or by other strong-arm tactics it was voluntary. According to some men, simply by trying to join a fraternity one is acquiescing to hazing activities, as it is a known part of the process. To a certain extent, men blamed those being hazed for participation, as they considered the process as voluntary.

**Participant Permission.** Within the women’s team, the older team members felt they had told the rookies the events weren’t required and they didn’t have to participate if they didn’t want to. For the Lady Tigers, women could choose not to participate if they wanted, but would then feel excluded. During six of the seven interviews, the women’s organization members used voluntary participation as an explanation for participation. For some, the Lady Tigers were sending mixed messages to the rookies, letting them know in advance of the rookie party that everything was voluntary, but during the event the members were yelled at and told to participate.
The Lady Tigers consistently said they wanted to participate in the activities during their rookie parties to some extent. They also believed that because the event was not required and not every woman attended, the activities were acceptable. Although many said that the Spring 2013 party was not compulsory and not everyone attended, according to one team member the only woman who was absent was a second-year returner. Martha, a rookie, voluntarily participated and suggested that the rest of the women had the same choice and only attended if they wanted to. For Martha, simply being there was giving permission, because participating in the activity was not required to be on the team. Martha considered the activities as voluntary, and was therefore confused with regard to why anyone would participate if they did not want to. “From the way I saw it, everyone was having fun, but I know a couple of girls were a little mad after, but we just like were really confused, because they could have said something during it.”

Martha did not realize that often people participate even if they are uncomfortable, to be accepted by the organization or because they do not consider an activity as optional.

Some of the women were adamant that they had wanted to participate in the activities, and would provide that as an addendum when speaking about what they participated in. Karen—one of the women who was very defensive of the organization—stated, “we like dressed up as different things but just ‘cause we wanted to.”

Karen continued, using her rookie party as an example, to reiterate why the activities the women participated in were acceptable.
I mean I did it my freshman year, we had like a rookie team kind of thing, whatever, but I didn’t drink so they knew it and never asked me to drink. So people this year didn’t drink either and it was fine and it was your choice whether you want to or not.

Karen stridently defended the actions of the organization because she had voluntarily participated and enjoyed her experience.

The team held meetings after the 2013 rookie party to ask if anyone had been uncomfortable at the party, but received no negative responses from the members. Jane was asked if she believed that any of the activities she had participated in as a rookie, or as an older member in 2013, were hazing. She assumed the activities were not hazing, because they were voluntary and no one had been upset.

Everyone is given a choice, and I think hazing is more like you are forced to do it. We had so many meetings after and were like, silently tell us if you felt uncomfortable, and having gone through it myself I didn’t feel uncomfortable or bad about anything I did.

Jane inferred that everyone had the same experience she had and that they wanted to participate. Thus, according to the Lady Tigers, because they allowed people to miss the event and gave everyone the option to step out, they did not consider their activities hazing and considered them acceptable. The women did not understand the role peer pressure plays when providing consent to participate or the difficulty in being the sole person to speak out. Bystander theory tell us, fear of embarrassment, ridicule, or retaliation and pluralistic ignorance will often prevent individuals from stepping forward when they do not agree with group actions.
Non-Participation Has Consequences. Voluntary participation fell into two categories for the men interviewed: (1) The activity is voluntary, but if you do not do it, you do not get in; (2) the activity is voluntary, but if you do not do it there will be a consequence. The men saw the activities as voluntary in that there was always an option to quit, they weren’t “forced” to stay. Eric, a Lambda Beta, enjoyed the entire process as a new member and reiterated that everything was voluntary and that nothing he did was hazing.

You know because there always was the option to walk away or to say no. If you spoke your mind I mean, and you know there was never necessarily a systematic punishment. You, you chose to not show up to things, and you chose to risk your badge dropping and not being able to live in the house, or losing respect and not being able to get involved in terms of a position, but that was your choice. I guess because there wasn’t, there was never any forcing to it, that made it feel like it was [voluntary].

Eric’s explanations for participation fall within both categories listed above—men could walk away and leave the organization; moreover, he implied that there was a punishment for saying no, or a benefit for saying yes. Numerous men considered the activities as voluntary because men could leave if they wanted to. James, Lambda Beta, who agrees with hazing as a general concept, was asked whether the activities were vital to the organization.

Maybe not the specific activities that I did, but I actually agree with hazing in general, because it’s your choice. We were always told you can walk out at anytime. You don’t have to be here, you are paying to be here basically... but
there are benefits and costs and you have to go through this because everybody else did, and I thought it was cool.

In James’ opinion, he could have walked away at anytime, it was his choice to stay. However, he saw membership as a larger benefit, so he voluntarily participated in the activities. According to Greg, a Lambda Beta, he voluntarily participated, but also felt like he was under pressure to do so.

I knew throughout the whole experience, I didn’t have to do any of these things. At any point I could have chose[n] to opt out, but you know you are doing it with all your…with all these other freshmen, who are your pledge brothers, and you feel this common bond of unity and nobody…yeah there is a little bit of pressure to not back out, but at the same time it’s like we are going to through this together kind of thing. There’s definitely some pressure from the older brothers. Definitely a few of them are, you know just really mean people, and you know the way they treat us pledges was just not ok, but that’s definitely not every brother. It’s probably four or five but there was pressure, but it was kind of welcome.

Greg welcomed the activities and voluntarily participated in them, yet he felt pressurized to participate. He saw walking away as an option, but was pressurized to stay and participate.

Other men participated willingly, but knew there would be some kind of consequence should they speak out against the activity, or not participate. Stan, a Sigma Beta, knew that if he didn’t do something he would be yelled at.

I feel like if you really didn’t want to they wouldn’t make you. They would make you do something else, or I don’t know yell at you for a
second...They would have found an alternative thing or yelled at you, they wouldn’t have made you do it though.

Stan laughingly recalled why it was acceptable to participate in hazing activities; the men were not forcing others to do it. In Lambda Beta, there were more specific consequences for not participating. David remembered a time when he asked to sit out of running because he was hurt and did not want to participate. In this case, his pledge brothers were held responsible for his lack of participation.

…I hurt myself playing football during the semester so I like told them, “Like, yo, I rolled my ankle the other day like really bad and I can’t run” and they’re like, “sit on the sidelines” and what they did was when I sat on the sidelines and it was cold everyone had to give me their sweatshirts...so everyone kind of hated me, but it was at the same time like you were never, if you couldn’t do it, it was just ok to take a break.

The embarrassment or possible ridicule from his pledge brothers did not stop David from participating, but could have caused other men to participate even when they did not want to. He continued to express his opinion on the choice to continue in a drinking event.

You had the choice, there was always the choice and if you didn’t do it then you were just ridiculed, and even being ridiculed was just like alright whatever, like I care and no one was ever really mad at you for doing it in your pledge class. If you don’t want to do it dude, don’t do it and that’s just how it was. Thus, David explained the actions of Lambda Beta members by saying participation was voluntary; if someone did not participate they would just be ridiculed in
some way. However, by having a consequence for participation, participation was in fact not really voluntary.

In most hazing policies, and for those used here, voluntary participation is actually not considered when determining whether activities are hazing. The students interviewed here support this position. While those who were hazed voluntarily completed the tasks, there were consequences for those that chose not to do so, which could have just been exclusion, ridicule, or being yelled at. By using voluntary participation as a justification, individuals are really using displacement or diffusion of responsibility, part of moral disengagement theory. The responsibility for participation is placed back on the hazing victim, and then is not considered the aggressor’s fault. For these students, they offered an out for all participants and therefore were not at fault. It became easier to explain forced drinking, physical exhaustion or humiliation because participations were there “willingly.”

**Tradition and a Cycle of Violence**

Tradition, or a cycle of violence, was expected to be more prominent in interviews when students explain participating in hazing. While it was a theme, it was not as common as those previously mentioned. Because of the circle of violence and secrecy involved, hazing has been previously compared to domestic violence. In the case of hazing and the circle of violence, the violence can manifest in physically, mentally or emotionally trying situations, and the desire for members to continue the activity as aggressors after they were victims. The activities of the fraternities and women’s team included here were no exception. All but four interview participants, somehow tied tradition, or the circle of violence, into why they or others in their organization
participated in the hazing. In these cases, the circle of violence is a pattern wherein if something was done to one member, they then in turn want it to happen the members that follow them in the organization. Students that allowed themselves to be hazed, more often mentioned that the reason they participated was that everyone before them had engaged in the activity as well—it was a tradition that they needed to be a part of. There were also differences in how the organizations referenced tradition, some saw the traditions as an important and historical part of their organization, some believed that was the expectations, and other saw tradition as retribution for what they had endured as new members. While there was crossover in how they spoke of tradition and hazing, the traditions were rooted differently in the organizations.

**Tradition and History.** The men of Sigma Beta were tied to the idea of tradition and history with hazing activities. The men interviewed were under the impression that many of the “rituals” that they completed were engaged in by every member of Sigma Beta “since the dawn of time.” It was very important to them that the activities be continued, despite the fact that they did not appear in any fraternity ritual book or officer manual. The men also used the justification that certain activities of fraternity pledging, like cleaning the facility, had always occurred. Robert participated in cleaning because it had always been done that way; he was asked how cleaning the facility related to membership in the organization.

How did they relate it to membership? It’s kind of like it’s sort of the whole mindset with everything they do in the whole process. It’s like we did [it], the class before it did it, and so on and so on, until the beginning of time kind of
thing. They did it so you should do it too. That’s kind of the whole driving force behind, like, cleaning and all that other stuff.

Sigma Beta imposed a sense of tradition into the membership that suggested that as long as the activity had “always been done,” it was acceptable to continue to do. All of the Sigma Betas mentioned a version of “we have done this since the beginning of time” to describe their involvement in fraternity hazing activities. In Anthony’s case, these activities that had been happening for many years, were among those most meaningful for him.

We had like an event at the end of the week (initiation week) where we like went out in the desert and had like a ceremony, it’s the last ceremony before we become an active, and it’s something that Sigma Betas have done from the beginning of time. It’s like a ritual where they just like have, you have all these items in your bag and at the end they have you like… they take them out of the bag and they explain the meaning of every single item...

Anthony found a good deal of meaning in this activity and another activity that took place during his initiation week.

Every minute we weren’t in class, we were at the house for initiation week. Then there was that ritual, and then the 2nd day of the week I think, there’s another ritual that’s very famous to like Sigma Beta’s ritual that everyone’s been doing since like the beginning of time [and] that’s obviously really meaningful, that one was at the house…

Anthony continued to detail why the activity was meaningful for him and what it entailed. The fraternity explained the journey from pledge to active as they led the
pledges around the house while blindfolded. This activity was also important to Timothy, whose father had been a member of the same chapter over 20 years earlier. Timothy also indicated that they had been yelled at in the beginning of the “ritual”. Timothy appreciated the history behind the activity, although he admitted, “they are not in the ritual book, but I mean I would argue 80% of Sigma Beta [have] done it.” These rituals were not sanctioned rituals of the fraternity, but the tradition the men associated with them kept the rituals going for many years. Both Anthony and Timothy said that the downfall of their fraternity was when the younger members lost touch with the history and purpose and just engaged in hazing as part of a circle of violence.

Those sophomores overpowered the old guys to the point where they just got initiated and just wanted to haze. So that’s kind of where things started going downhill, it was like two semesters after I initiated, just too many young guys, all they wanted to do was haze just ‘cause they got hazed the semester before...

Anthony stated that the circle is how other men explained their own actions to others. Timothy had done a class presentation earlier, before the interview, about hazing for a course he was in. He was frustrated that his fraternity had been closed, and considered the cycle of violence in hazing as virtually unbreakable and the reason that his fraternity closed. The Sigma Beta’s believed the hazing was acceptable as long as it was rooted in tradition, and when it became more about revenge they believed the hazing became purposeless.

**Tradition: Hazing as an Expectation.** The women of the Lady Tigers do not have an organization with a history of over 40, such as Sigma Beta, but they still had established traditions from at least 3 years prior. The Lady Tigers were not as rooted in
the traditions as the fraternity men, but still saw the events from their rookie party as traditions that should continue. After sanctioning in the Spring 2013 semester, the team realized that they would have to change their activities to avoid future issues with the institution. Martha was a rookie in Spring 2013, and said that she would have asked women to do the same activities at the next rookie party if it was possible, citing tradition as her reasoning: “Yeah, just the fact that it’s something that we have done every year. It’s just a tradition in a sense.”

Many of the women, including Martha, did not believe that their rookie party activities were hazing, just that they were a team tradition. Katy, the woman who did say she had been hazed, understood why the women who hazed her did it.

I understand what some of the girls did, just because they…some of the logic of some of the girls when we were talking about it, since it happened to them they felt like they had to carry on the tradition, if they got the opportunity. Like it happened to me, I get to do it to you. So, that was probably one of the most understandable reasons behind it, but I still wouldn’t be able to do that ‘cause like just because something happened to you doesn’t mean that you deserve it and stuff like that. I don’t know, I would never be able to do that I guess.

Thus, Katy was able to understand why the others engaged in hazing—they considered it tradition; however, she still did not believe in what they were doing. Although most of the women indicated that what they had done was not hazing, they were able to articulate why they believed others hazed. Sarah also believed that it was based in tradition.
Because it’s tradition, they had it done to them, so they feel the need to do it to the next group. I don’t know, I know my parents got hazed, their parents got hazed and they were on sports teams, and in sports in general. In high school I was technically hazed because its groupthink, because everyone does it, you feel like its ok to do it.

Sarah had been hazed in high school, and had heard about hazing from her parents and grandparents when they were on sports teams. For Sarah, it was an expected and traditional part of being an athlete. The women were not very tied to their traditions but seemed as if they believed it was just an expectation that they should continue. They hadn’t considered they should have a rookie party with degrading costumes and forced alcohol until there was an intervention.

**Tradition: Hazing as Retribution.** Men in both Lambda Beta and Iota Alpha saw the continuance of hazing as retribution for what they had been through as new members. The hazing activities of Lambda Beta were more severe that those of Sigma Beta and the Lady Tigers, and less to do with a tradition based in history and more to do with the circle of behavior. Gill indicated the hazing was a way for men to express superiority over the pledges.

Well in regards to hazing, it is that superiority complex, “I have been in this organization longer than you, you are a freshman. I am older than you, I know more that you, I am better [than] that,” that whole line of thinking. I think that is a big reason. Another reason is, I feel that not only just kind of a superiority complex… that “I had to do it so you have to do,” that kind of thinking as well.
Those two reasons are the overarching ways [that] people engage in this behavior are thinking.

Gill provided insight to his and his fraternity brothers’ motivation for participating in hazing in their organization. Greg reiterated some of the same sentiments. Greg was disappointed that the men after him did not have to engage in many of the same activities, and that their experience did not involve as much hazing as his did. According to Greg, the organization had been under scrutiny from the university, so the men in the two pledge classes after him had an easier experience, but he would have wanted them to do the same thing.

You gotta pay your dues and I think that’s the most valuable lesson you learn through getting hazed, it’s about paying dues, regardless of where you do it, it’s one of those things where everyone older than you has gone through it already, and you just gotta suck it up and do it. I know it sounds pretty blunt that way, but especially once you have gone through it, you expect everyone else to do the same.

Greg said the chance in the pledge experience and change in the cycle implied that he did not like the men that came after him.

We didn’t haze them, but we had no respect for them. You know when I lived in the house, I didn’t want them in my room, I didn’t want to go out of my way to meet them and hang out with them because they hadn’t gone through what I had gone through... they think they had it hard, but they don’t know what we have all been through before them. We were kind of disrespectful to them I would say, and they got that, they understand that they kind of stuck to
themselves when they were pledges. We just didn’t want to be around them, it kind of disheartened us that we had gone through all this stuff just a semester ago, and now nobody would ever…we wouldn’t be able to put people through it.

Greg lacked respect or interest in the pledges that came after him because, according to him, they had not experienced the same hazing. Although by the accounts of men in the final semester that Lambda Beta existed, they engaged in essentially the same activities. For Greg, when the circle was allegedly interrupted, it implied that the new members could not be treated as equals in the organization. He would have continued the cycle to ensure that they became good members of the organization. He was able to explain the hazing, because the circle was necessary to ensure positive interactions between chapter members after they were initiated.

Brian from Iota Alpha considered it a revenge of sorts from those who had been mistreated previously. Brian believed that hazing was more revenge-motivated, and that those who received the worst hazing would be the ones to continue the cycle and become the worst hazers in the organization.

I think there’s a turning point, where someone comes through and they have a bad experience, and they decide to take out their frustration and anger on the kids that come after them, and then I think the whole things just kind of escalates because people that had the biggest horror stories from hazing were the people who were hazing us. So the kid that you found out was in the middle of the basketball court being sprayed down by a hose and crying, is the kid throwing trash on us and yelling at us in one situation. So it was like one of those [things]
where the people doing the hazing do it for a sense of revenge or getting even or something...

In Brian’s experience, the worst hazers were those who had been hazed severely; moreover, although he quit the organization, he seemed to find it understandable that because someone had been treated poorly, they would then continue the cycle of treating others poorly.

Although tradition or cycles of violence were not among the most frequent explanations for hazing participation, they were strong motivators for some of the students. The Sigma Betas explained their activities through the long history of the organization. The Lady Tigers had less history, but still saw the rookie party as a tradition that was fun and should have been continued. The men of Lambda Beta and Iota Alpha considered the need to continue the cycle, or take revenge, as strong motivators for the continued presence of hazing in the organizations.

Peer group research has shown the acceptance into a group means adoption of the behaviors of the group and setting aside individual values and beliefs to further the group. The continuance of tradition was an important component in helping the older members accept the newer members. If the tradition couldn’t be continued, the new members wouldn’t be accepted.

**Participation in a Less Demanding Process**

For the men of Sigma Beta, Lambda Beta and Iota Alpha, one reason it was acceptable to be hazed or to haze others is that it was not as bad as it could be; this concept is also known as “advantageous comparison.” According to the concept of advantageous comparison, individuals put aside their own judgment through moral
disengagement, because of the belief that the victims are not experiencing the worst situation possible. Some believed that because men in other organizations, or at other campuses, had experienced far worse, it made their own experience more palatable. For some, it was that older members had stories of worse treatment. A few of the men had experienced worse in high school, which made the process of joining a fraternity easier.

The older members of Lambda Beta posited that their process became so easy that the hazing endured by the pledges in their final year of the fraternity was acceptable. The pledges in the fraternity also explained how they were treated, by stating that it was less than what anyone else had done in prior years. Some used the less drastic activities as the reason they chose never to intervene when they witnessed hazing in their own organization. James, the Lambda Beta who collapsed during his initiation week, said he would not have participated had it had been like the stories he had heard. “You know, I actually think that everything that happened to me was fine, but some of the stories I have heard happening to the older kids, I definitely would not have done.”

Gill held the same sentiment about what he did as a new member; he and James were in the same pledge class.

It was one of those things where I was pledging, the things that we had to do… we were always told that it seemed that you know what we had to do, was really pale in comparison to what members that had pledged previously had to do…

For both, the experiences of previous pledge classes served as a reasoning to continue with their own pledge process. James continued to say that because those that came after him had it so much easier, he would not have considered intervening in the
hazing. “It got so much easier after me...Because it was, they didn’t have to do anything, they didn’t even have to clean by themselves, the brothers cleaned with them and stuff, because the rules were getting so tight.”

James had also prepared himself for a worse experience because of stories he had heard about joining a fraternity, and he indicated that his experience was tame in comparison to what he had been told. John, another Lambda Beta, indicated the hazing had never been that bad, he had done the same kind of things in high school. For John, the fraternity was easier: “In the frat they didn’t really hit us, in high school you get hit all the time, like to and from practice.”

Daniel knew other men that experienced hazing worse than his own, which helped him add context to his situation and enabled him to continue to participate.

Getting forced to binge drink, I guess it wasn’t really that bad. It really wasn’t ‘cause you compare it to other people. I just know people who have gotten hazed worse, it’s just how it worked out. The Friday mornings sucked because it was 6am, but compared with what you hear stories of, I feel like we weren’t hazed that bad. …They really did take steps to haze us less within the inner workings of Lambda Beta.

David, who had been on the “pledge education” committee in the final semester, stated they had reduced the pledges activities and all the pledges had to do now were the drinking activities. His primary justification was that the activities were nothing compared to what other fraternities did, and he compared Lambda Beta to the other fraternities on the same campus.
I mean again, hazing is to each his own, I mean one man’s… I mean you look at another fraternity on campus like Iota Alpha and their stuffs insane. They aren’t even affiliated with the school, you look at them [and] they would laugh at our hazing and they would say, “that’s not hazing,” but I mean I went through it and I consider myself hazed. But other people, you go to Texas and these kids would be like, “that’s not hazing.” Like we never had to do the Harry Potter pledge, where you go into a classroom and run out on like a broomstick or something like that, there was never anything like that.

David believed that his fraternity was persecuted even though the hazing was not as bad as other organizations on the same campus. To him, the rules were “too strict” because Lambda Beta was not as bad as other groups, but yet their chapter was closed due to their hazing activities. He said, “I think that there’s too many people that get away with way worse than other fraternities, like Sigma Beta. Sigma Beta was definitely worse than we were.”

The Iota Alphas echoed the sentiments of the Lambda Betas. In Matt’s experience, hazing decreased each year until the pledges did not have to do anything at all.

I have heard it since I was a freshman. The seniors had it the worst, the juniors had it a little better, the sophomores had it a little bit better and the freshmen just got nothing. You know they had the easiest one. Now it’s the same way, when I look at it, at what they were doing now, there’s…it’s nothing.

Matt was able to reflect and use his experience that hazing had decreased to explain the actions of Iota Alpha, because the experience was “nothing” compared to
what it had been. When Matt was a pledge, he also knew it was not as bad for him as it was for other men in his pledge class, which helped him take the hazing in stride.

The men of Lambda Beta and Iota Alpha used the reasoning that as long as the hazing wasn’t as bad as “X fraternity” or “X pledge class,” it was acceptable to participate. Through a “decrease” in the hazing activities from each pledge class to the next, members also explained the decrease in respect that they had for the men who joined after them. Comparing the different fraternities allowed them to feel superior and explained in their actions, reasoning that they were not as bad as those of other fraternities.

Summary

In this study, the students were able to explain their participation in hazing in a number of ways. Primarily, the explanations were similar to those outlined in the moral disengagement theory. The students were able to participate in activities that are beyond what is considered acceptable behavior, because they were able to find virtue in their actions. For these students, the mistreatment of others was acceptable as long as it would relate to a larger purpose, leaving them feeling morally intact and generally having no guilt for their participation. Thus, the answer to the research question that asked how students explain engaging in hazing activities was provided here.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this research was to identify the influence of organizational values and purpose, both formal and informal, on the participation of individuals in hazing activities as well as to identify individuals’ explanations for engaging in hazing activities. Hazing is a widespread phenomenon on college campuses, existing in fraternities and sororities, clubs and sports teams. Despite hazing being commonplace, and the more recent media attention that hazing has garnered, there is little research on why people choose to participate in hazing. To learn more about the motivations of individuals to participate in hazing as both the hazee and hazer, qualitative methods were employed to obtain a deeper understanding.

Currently, there is little empirical evidence to aid in educating students on hazing and to prevent it. It is hoped that the research can contribute to a greater understanding among practitioners regarding why college students participate in hazing, as well as to the creation of better prevention and intervention efforts. This final chapter summarizes the findings from the research, contributions to the literature, as well as implications for future research and practice.

Summary of Major Findings

Organizational Values and Purpose

After conducting interviews with the 23 research participants, and reviewing the mission statements of each organization, it became apparent that each chose to participate in hazing for individual reasons, but there were certain commonalities. While individual
explanations varied, the formal and informal organizational values, had a distinct influence on how students explained their own participation. Students were able to use the formal values of the organization to explain the participation, as well as some of the negative informal values to explain why they chose to engage in hazing. The men interviewed from Sigma Beta used what they understood was the main value of the organization or brotherhood to explain why they chose to participate in hazing. Hazing to them was normalized within Sigma Beta, which enabled the men to participate in the hazing activities with little guilt or concern. The women in the Lady Tigers team primarily concluded that bonding and having fun was important and the hazing that occurred at the rookie party created that atmosphere. They were able to explain their participation in activities because they held that it created a sense of community. Further, the men of Lambda Beta considered adherence to the values of philanthropy and brotherhood as an aspect that explained hazing. Many of the men indicated that because they did other positive activities like philanthropic work, it was ok that they engaged in hazing and other non-values based activities. Despite the small sample, the men of Iota Alpha agreed that the purpose of the fraternity was drinking and having fun. All of the activities they engaged in were focused around those two concepts.

The students in all the organizations were able to explain their participation in hazing activities by relating it to what they understood to be the values of the organization. Some of the students considered the values of the organization to be positive, while others considered them negative.
Individual Explanations for Hazing Activities

The second research questioned addressed how individual students explained their participation in hazing activities. After reviewing and analyzing the interviews, seven themes were created to encompass the breadth of response. The themes below are ordered by the frequency of participant responses related to the theme and the regularity of the theme within the individual interviews.

The line that participants believed would not be crossed. The most prevalent theme within the participant interviews was the idea that there was a known line that would not be crossed during hazing activities. The aggressors believed that they would not have new individuals do something that would cause personal injury or serious harm. When the students were the recipients of the hazing, they supposed that they would only go to a certain self-defined point and would stop participation in the activities at that point. Moreover, the recipients of hazing also trusted in the aggressors to not cross the line into a potentially harmful situation.

The students did not understand in every case the potential risk management issues that could have resulted from some of the activities or the disregard or distortion of the consequences for their actions. Participants did not realize that while there were some commonalities in what they collectively viewed as hazing that had gone too far, they each had a different perspective on what would have been too much. Many participants articulated they would have walked away if any of the activities had been excessive, although only one did. They also did not realize how uncommon it is for
individuals to challenge the group norm—in this case, the entrenched hazing within the organizations.

The groups often sought collective agreement upon the activities so that individuals do not feel personally responsible for planning a hazing activity and as a sort of checks and balances system. This collective agreement and diffusion of responsibility created a sense of false security regarding the safety of the activities. Creating this collective agreement and creating a diffusion of responsibility allowed moral disengagement to occur. In this instance there is also a disregard or distortion of consequences, as they often did not acknowledge the potential risk associated with the activity. Bandura has indicated diffusion of responsibility and disregard or distortion of consequences allow individuals to justify their behaviors and therefore be able to engage in the act. The line that individuals or organizations created allowed a false sense of security because of the distortion of possible consequences.

**The strong bond created through hazing.** Many participants indicated that the bonds created through hazing were an ends to justify the means. The creation of a shared story that could be reminisced upon and used as a connection to each other was also valued. Despite the belief of some individuals that hazing creates bonding, it became apparent that this idea could be broken down even further. The students who were more critical of the experience believed that the activities were intended to create bonds; however, a close-knit group could have been created through other, more positive means. Others who concluded that bonding occurred, indicated through their interviews that the bonds created through hazing were weak or false bonds. They were not friends after the experiences were over. In many instances hazing led to the creation of sub-
groups, only bonding those in the same rookie or pledge class and pitting them against the older members or aggressors.

Although some did not acknowledge directly that strong closeness had not developed, they intimated as much through their lack of engagement in the organization beyond their first semester, or lack of connection to other members. Some did acknowledge that they were primarily close with those who had experienced hazing with them as victims, and did not like the members in the organization who had acted as the aggressors. This cycle continued so only those joining at the same time were close. All the participants indicated that they were looking for a sense of camaraderie in joining their organization and were then willing to deal with mistreatment to join. By calling the hazing activities bonding, the students were able to place a euphemistic label on the hazing activities, making them more palatable. Through this mechanism of moral disengagement in addition to distortion of consequences, individuals indicated they felt closer with other members, even if that did not last. In the moment they did not acknowledge the potential disharmony hazing could create, rather they interpreted the activities as bonding and positive for membership.

**Excitement and thrill-seeking behavior.** Students noted that having a socially enjoyable college experience was of the utmost importance and viewed hazing as a means to fulfill that need. Students who attempted to join organizations and those who are already members need to have a way to prove that they are worthy or the organization and have crossed over to full membership in the group. Many also saw hazing as a rite of passage, because it does not happen after they leave their undergraduate career; it is something they can prove they can handle while in college. Through the interviews, it
also became apparent that some of the motivation for participation came from a perspective of thrill-seeking. Some indicated that there is a rush that they feel when they are doing something illegal or risky, which motivated them to participate in hazing activities. By labeling the hazing activities as fun, or a rite of passage, students again placed a euphemistic label on the activities. In addition to simply seeking fun and excitement, students were able to handle the activity by saying it was fun and new and exciting.

Creating purpose, personal growth, and personal gain. During the interviews, many of the participants communicated that they had experienced personal growth or personal gain due to the hazing activities. Many of the men also declared that there was a specific purpose to the activities to help the individual or the organization. The women who were interviewed saw little purpose to the activities beyond having an enjoyable time in one another’s company. Some men believed that the hazing activities allowed them the opportunity to grow and become men, or to learn how to effectively handle uncomfortable situations. The men interviewed also sought or received personal gains as a result of hazing. Some indicated that they participated in hazing to have a higher badge number, to be able to command pledges when they were members, to not have to clean their own rooms or run errands, and a better chance to receive housing. Another way the male participants framed the hazing activities was that the activities served a distinct and beneficial purpose. The men of Lambda Beta who were interviewed advocated mandatory workouts were helpful because they would not have otherwise been working out. They also posited that being required to be at the facility at five or six in the morning to clean and workout was helpful because it encouraged them to go to classes, as they
were already awake. Further, the male participants were able to attach a moral purpose related to the hazing activities which made it acceptable for them to participate in such activities within the organization. In general the men in particular were able to see the activities as serving a larger purpose, which allowed them to behave in a manner they might not have otherwise.

The victim’s choice of participating in hazing activities. A common theme within interviews was the idea that participation in hazing activities was voluntary or that permission was granted by the individual being hazed. How the students defined voluntary participation differed between men and women. A majority of the women interviewed referenced that prior to the party where the hazing took place, the rookies were told that everything was voluntary and that they did not have to drink. The women who enjoyed the experience also assumed that the other rookies were having the same degree of fun and chose to participate. Some of the women indicated that everything was acceptable to participate in because they wanted to do it. During the party, there were mixed messages sent and the women were instructed to participate in the drinking games. According to some of the women, those who were uncomfortable should have spoken out and let the older members know they were uncomfortable. The women interviewed did not understand that it is uncommon for one person to speak out against the group’s normalized behavior. Though women may have been uncomfortable with what they were doing, they were unlikely to indicate that. The women demonstrated the bystander effect, according to interviews women were uncomfortable, but did not read the situation correctly or may have believed they were the only individuals feeling that way. Individuals are less likely to stop something from occurring in a group because
individuals base their reaction on the reactions of the group. Though the bystander effect usually applies when something is happening to a group outsider, here it can be applied as the rookies are both an in group and out group. They themselves do belong to the group, but do not have the same social capital as the returners. Goffman’s work also supports this idea as the women were willing to not demonstrate their dislike of activities in order to maintain social hierarchy within the organization. Additionally work on groupthink demonstrates that when an in-group member speaks out against the actions of the organization they will be ostracized.

However, voluntarily participating seemed different to the men who were interviewed. Aggressors considered hazing voluntary because no one was forcing the new members to join and they could always quit. Victims believed participation was their choice as they could have walked away. Both groups indicated that actions were voluntary because new members could opt not to participate and then be given a different activity during which they would likely be ridiculed. The fraternity participants seemed to think that because there was no physical restraint involved, the new members could always leave. The participants underestimated the need to belong that some felt as well as how uncommon it is to be the one person to walk away from a situation. In many instances, voluntary participation is not an acceptable excuse for engaging in hazing, and institutions and organizations will still find groups at fault for hazing despite the willingness of the participants. This pays tribute to the idea that the pressure individuals feel to engage is very powerful and not even always known to the participant. Peer group research by Newcomb (1968) and by Goffman (1967) reference that individuals are willing to put aside their own values to take part in the organization, and are more willing
to voluntarily do so, if they feel a stronger tie to the organization. Again groupthink comes into play in this situation, in that individuals will feel a pressure to conform to the group as they feel more involved in the group.

**The tradition or cycle of violence.** Tradition played a key role in how students explained hazing in their organizations, and it was referenced in multiple ways. One was tradition as the history of the organization. The participants from Sigma Beta were sure that the hazing activities had been engaged in for many years by many generations of fraternity members. The ability to tie the hazing back to what they saw as decades-long traditions allowed them to explain why the activities were important. Some, including members of the Lady Tigers, expected hazing on the team because of stories from older members, friends, and family. They saw the rookie party as a tradition to be continued until the institution intervened. Finally, the participants also viewed tradition as retribution creating a cycle of violence. The male participants, particularly those in Lambda Beta and Iota Alpha, saw hazing as a tradition that should be continued because they had experienced it. They wanted the individuals who came after them to have to experience it as well and wanted to be able to do it to other individuals. In the instance of tradition, the organization members place the euphemistic label of tradition on the hazing activities to disguise what is in some organizations retribution and a cycle of violence. This allows the individual to feel more comfortable repeating the acts, as they are tradition. Additionally, continuing the acts shows respect for the group and group pride, this is inline with Goffman (1967) saying that individuals are willing to go along with little question of the organization “rules” to maintain status in the organization.
The misstatement that the violence or hazing was diminishing with time. An unexpected theme was the idea that the hazing experience was acceptable because others had experienced worse. This appeared only in interviews with fraternity men, and they used examples of their own chapter, other fraternities on the same campus, rumors that they had heard, and organizations at other institutions to explain why what they had to do was not unacceptable behavior. Men indicated that they had heard stories of members older than they, who had to do much worse, and would then describe the activities. As men from the different chapters were distributed among several new member classes, it became apparent that the men believed that the fraternity had lessened the hazing over time. In reality the activities were generally the same and in some cases had become more erroneous with time. Some seemed to have glorified their own personal experience to the point that they were unaccepting of younger members because they had not had to endure the same level of hardship. Similar to the concept of a line that members would not cross, the rumors of activities that other men had to endure allowed the participants to believe they had an easier process and thereby it was acceptable to participate in such activities. The perception that the hazing within organizations also allowed members to believe that they were better than they had been before, because they had cut down on the hazing they had done previously, thereby making the behavior more acceptable. This reasoning falls inline with moral disengagement through advantageous comparison. By comparing the activities to more harsh activities the individuals were more comfortable.

Contribution to the Literature

This section will describe the ways in which this research has contributed to literature on hazing, the moral disengagement theory, and the bystander theory. The
primary contribution of this research stems from the lack of qualitative research on students motivations for participating in hazing. There is extensive research on frequency, prevalence and the type of hazing activities, but little on why participants choose to participate (Allan & Madden, 2008; Hoover, 1999). New unpublished research does provide some insight into what students consider the results of hazing both positive and negative (Allan, 2014). Currently, there is the research by Cimino (2013) regarding motivations for hazing, but the research was done by individuals who were engaged in theoretical situations. He also interviewed and observed members of one fraternity, in regard to predictors for hazing motivations from an anthropological perspective. There has also been a dissertation published in 2013, that examined the intersection of moral disengagement theory and hazing using quantitate analysis. It seems that the present research is the only qualitative research that examines the motivations of students who had all been involved in hazing activities. By obtaining a better understanding of the motivations of individuals who have been hazing participants, practitioners will be able to create better evidence-based approaches to hazing prevention.

One of the theoretical frameworks utilized here was that of the bystander effect, or the idea that an individual can witness an activity, criminal, or someone coming to harm another and do nothing to stop it. The individual uses the social cues of those around them to determine if they should intervene or if the behavior is acceptable (Fisher et al, 2006; Berkowitz, 2009). The bystander effect occurs for a variety of reasons: the inability to judge the situation as a problem, diffusion of responsibility, fear of embarrassment or ridicule, fear of retaliation, and pluralistic ignorance (Fisher et al, 2006; Berkowitz, 2009). This research aids in research on bystander effect because of the
ways that students explained their participation in hazing activities. The student participants were often unable to judge the activities as hazing due to the concepts that they were having fun, the activity was tradition, had a positive effect like bonding, or that there was personal gain for the participants. Through discussing activities in advance as an organization or asking new members permission to haze them there was a diffusion of responsibility to intervene. Aggressors were able to place the onus back on the hazing victims as being willing participants to explain their lack of intervention. Victims indicated that while they “voluntarily” participated, there would be consequences in the form of embarrassment or ridicule had they chosen not to complete a task. Finally, pluralistic ignorance comes into play in two ways. The first is that an individual enjoys hazing and therefore believes that all the other members do as well, which is not truly known to them, or, individuals say nothing during the tasks because they feel they are the only individuals who dislike the activity. The research conducted here supports this bystander effect with regard to hazing situations in organizations. Bystander research also tells us that individuals are willing to contradict their own values to be a member of the group, and the norms created by the group aids individuals in violating their personal values in situations. After examining the four separate organizations and their values, it became apparent the inherent values of the group did have a relationship with how students viewed hazing.

An additional perspective used here was that of the moral disengagement theory. The moral disengagement theory examines how individuals are able to engage in morally corrupt activities by casting aside their own morals and values. According to Bandura (1999), individuals will only engage in reprehensible activities after they have found a
way to explain or justify their participation in a manner that will make it more palatable. The moral disengagement theory has been previously applied in times of combat, and how individuals deal with being in combat. Bandura (1999) outlined the different ways in which individuals can justify an activity: euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, disregard or distortion of consequences, and dehumanization. Throughout our interviews, the work of Bandura was supported in many ways. The men of Sigma Beta referred to some of the hazing activities as rituals, which in fraternities are used to describe meaningful ceremonies created by the national organization. Neither the Sigma Betas nor Lambda Betas referred to being locked in rooms with blaring music on repeat as hazing, or torture, even though in 2008 investigators found evidence of the same practice used at Guantanamo Bay (Neal, 2012). The research here also supported the idea of advantageous comparison as a means of explaining hazing participation. Individuals compared their own experience to that of past organization members and individuals in other organizations on the same campus to explain what they were doing to new members or experiencing as new members was acceptable.

Further, research participants spoke of voluntary participation as an explanation for hazing, which is another form of diffusion of responsibility. Much of the responsibility for participation was placed back on the victim. By creating a line that they believe keeps hazing safe and believing that they will not cause real harm to participants, the aggressors and victims distort the possible consequences of their actions. Finally, this research project supported that individuals will dehumanize others to conduct a heinous activity. By renaming new members pledges or “poopies,” and requiring them to engage
in personal servitude, they ensure that they view the new members as lower beings and deserving of being hazed.

An additional contribution is the idea that students are choosing to engage in hazing activities not only because they are able to morally disengage and put aside their own personal values, but that by joining a group they create an alternative sense of values associated with that organization. They are then ranking the values they have associated with the student organization above their own internal prescribed values set. The values of belonging, bonding and creating friendships, and having a good time supersede all of their other values. In the case of hazing organizations the students are able to use the positive values of friendship and fun to allow them to engage in other morally ambiguous activities. This alternative values set is created partially through the groupthink that occurs within the organization. As these organizations are cohesive, although rifts or cliques occur internally, the cohesiveness of the organization creates significant loyalty to the organization.

The additional desire of the students to have fun, bond and find a sense of belonging is why hazing continues to exist in institutions of higher education. The need to belong in an organization and be accepted by that group is often very important, and peer reference group research tells us that individuals will disregard any misgivings they have about behaviors or will adopt the behaviors of the organization to belong. They will question little in order to be accepted as a group member. As they became more engrained in the group the sense of values will also become more engrained. The stratification of their values and the placement of their new set of values related to the group will continue to take precedent over their internal previously held values.
The desire to have fun and a sense of excitement plays into the need for rituals. However the organizations often create their own traditions and rituals that may focus on the fun and exciting aspect of membership rather than the historical traditions of the organization. The creation of these rituals allows that sense of excitement and fun, which also aids in the differentiation and promotion of the alternative values set above the individuals previous values.

**Implications for future research**

During the course of this research and interview analysis, some other questions arose. This section will examine possible research areas that could or should be explored in the future.

*Scale and geography.* Future research should be expanded to include individual motivations or justifications for engaging in hazing on a larger scale. Hazing does differ across types of institutions and area of the country (Allan 2014); thus, one could infer that motivations for hazing could differ as well. To compare individuals compare their own experience to that of others, it is important to understand hazing motivations across the country.

*Longitudinal data.* There is a need to collect long-term data on hazing in terms of aspects such as how the activities in college affect the individual later, if how they view hazing changes, and how they subsequently relate to the organization. Some of the explanations for hazing included bonding, having fun, and a collegiate rite of passage. Research that shows how individuals view hazing after college could be very informative to practitioners. Results that demonstrate that hazing has a negative effect on an
individual or how the individual views the institution or organization could motivate organizations and institutions of higher education to dedicate resources to hazing prevention.

**Gender.** An area that should be further explored is how gender plays a role in why individuals participate in hazing. When interviewing participants, it became clear that while the women often defended their actions, they were not as tied to hazing as the men. This could be a function of the type of organization or the role of gender in hazing. To create a better evidence-based approach to hazing intervention and prevention, being able to tailor initiatives would be crucial. Research has demonstrated that men are able to engage in higher levels of moral disengagement than women, and research should be conducted to determine if this applies in the realm of hazing as well.

**Personal and organizational values.** Research should also be conducted on members of student groups, particularly fraternal organizations, to determine if they are able to articulate the values and purpose of their organization as well as how they articulate the values of the organization. Further research should be conducted to ascertain if students are able to state how they help meet the organizational mission. Additional research should also be conducted on how individual students are able to articulate their own personal values and take ownership of their adherence to their own beliefs.

**Implications for future practice**

There is currently little known about how to prevent or provide effective interventions for hazing. According to a conversation with Dr. Elizabeth Allan, a hazing
researcher, there is currently no proven way to prevent hazing on a college campus. The research done here can be incorporated into hazing prevention planning initiatives and to inform campus and national organization practitioners.

Currently, code of conduct and hazing investigations at the research site include attempting to determine what types of hazing activities occurred. By incorporating questions related to motivations for hazing into conduct investigations or as a part of the sanctioning process, more effective means of sanctioning the group could be created. Action plans for the organization could be better tailored to the needs of the group, or the information could be used to better educate other groups on the same campus. Additionally, there needs to be more transparency when organizations are found responsible for hazing. During interviews, it became apparent that many of the participants did not fully understand what their organization had been found responsible for, and were functioning on the basis of partially or fully incorrect information.

Many alternatives to hazing suggestions offered on college campuses do not address the need for excitement or a rite of passage. Rites of passage are important to college students, and if positive healthy rites of passage do not exist within organizations, often inappropriate activities will be engaged in. Institutions should work with organizations to create opportunities for organizational members to be able to prove that they should be accepted into the group that are relevant to the group. As the current research suggested, some individuals need to be able to prove themselves in a physical manner—creating healthy alternatives to forced pushups, running, and wall sits will channel that need in a more positive direction.
Groups also need positive ways to bond that are healthy, fun, and not childish. Institutions need to work with student groups to help them come up with ideas that their members will enjoy, that allow them to get to know one another, and that are tailored to their organization.

More leadership development needs to be done with student organization members to help them understand the dissimilarities among members. Understanding the identities of others and more about their backgrounds will help groups to be better functioning organizations and to also understand the role of positive conflict and communication. With better communication and an appreciation for healthy conflict in a group, individuals who do not agree with group actions may feel more comfortable stepping forward. Similarly, work needs to be done with members of organizations, particularly new members, to create onus within the organization. Each member needs to have a better understanding of their role and responsibilities as a member of the organization and be made to feel that they are influential members of the organization.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to learn about the motivations, explanations, and justifications for engaging in hazing activities. Much of what is known of hazing has been gleaned through personal experience and investigations, with little that was able to be proven through research. Although this study cannot be generalized, it provides support for what many practitioners believe they know and creates a better link between theory and practice. Some results were not unexpected; it is commonly believed that voluntary participation and tradition are used as reasons for hazing. However, there were
some surprises during the research, including the use of advantageous comparison, in explaining hazing. Further, the use of organizational values to explain hazing creates a dilemma, as the national fraternal movement focuses on challenging fraternities and sororities to become more true to the organizational values.
## APPENDIX A: MATRIX OF THEORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Methods</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Bystander Effect Phenomenon</strong></td>
<td>1. How do students explain their participation in hazing activities?</td>
<td>Qualitative semi-structured Interviews will be conducted with students to question them about behaviors they have engaged in and their feelings about those activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. What kinds of hazing activities have students participated in, in order to join an organization, team or club?</td>
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<td>b. What kinds of hazing activities have students asked others to do in order to an organization team or club?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c. What kinds of hazing activities have students witnessed other do in order to join your organization, team or club?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d. Why were students asked to engage in these activities?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e. Do students agree with all of the activities they participated in, asked other to participate in or witnessed?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>f. Why are these activities acceptable or unacceptable?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>g. Do students differ in the way they justify their actions according to race, gender, age or year in college?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Moral Disengagement Theory</strong></td>
<td>2. How do organizational values (formal and perceived) influence hazing behaviors?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Do students explain their actions differently based on the type of organization they belong to?</td>
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APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Demographic questions:
   a. What is your age, race, gender and year in college?
2. What types of organization do you belong to?
3. If any, what type of leadership positions have you held within the organization?
4. Why did you decide to join this group?
5. What kind of knowledge or impression did you have of the group before you joined?
6. Please describe for me what your experience was like when you were new to these organizations?
7. What was the process like for joining the organization?
8. Were you asked to engage in any particular activities in order to join?
   Prompt Questions if needed:
   a. Were you asked to drink alcohol as a part of teambuilding or new member activities?
   b. Were you asked to do something in public you wouldn’t normally do?
   c. Were you asked to limit your associations with people outside your group?
   d. Were you deprived of sleep?
   e. Were you ever yelled or demeaned by other members?
   f. Were you ever asked to wear embarrassing clothing?
   g. Were you ever hit, or injured in some way?
   h. Were you ever asked to run errands or do chores for other members?
   i. Were you ever asked to drink large amounts of liquid to the point you became ill?
   j. Were you ever asked to eat specific items toxic or non-toxic?
   k. Were you ever asked to do something else to join or be accepted by the organization?

*** Possible prompt questions for the activities:
   a. If so, when, what was that experience like for you?
   b. Why were you asked to engage in that activity?
   c. Did you want to engage in that activity?
   d. Did you feel like you had to engage in that activity?
   e. What would have happened if you hadn’t engaged in that activity
   f. How did this relate to membership in the organization?
   g. Did you ever consider not engaging in the activity? Why or Why not?
   h. Why did you decide to continue with the activity?
   i. Would you ask someone else to engage in this activity in order to join? Why or Why not?

9. Have you ever asked others to engage in any particular activities to join?
   a. Have you asked others to drink alcohol as a part of teambuilding or new member activities?
   b. Have you asked others to humiliate themselves in public?
c. Have you asked others to limit associations with people outside your
group?
d. Have you deprived others of sleep?
e. Have you ever yelled or demeaned other members?
f. Have you ever asked others to wear embarrassing clothing?
g. Have you ever hit, or injured other members in some way?
h. Have you ever asked others/new members to run errands or do chores for
yourself or other members?
i. Have you ever asked others to drink large amounts of liquid to the point
you became ill?
j. Have you ever asked someone to do something I didn’t mention in order
to join?

*** After each sub question or named activity ask:
   a. If so, when, what was that experience like for you?
   b. Did you have to do that activity when you were new?
   c. Why were they asked to engage in that activity?
   d. Did they want to engage in that activity? How did you know?
   e. Did you make them feel like they had to engage in that activity?
   f. What would have happened if they hadn’t engaged in that activity
   g. How did this relate to membership in the organization?
   h. Did you ever consider not having them engage in the activity?

10. Have you ever witnessed individuals engaging in particular activities in order to
    join your organization?
   a. Have you seen/heard others asked to drink alcohol as a part of
      teambuilding or new member activities?
   b. Have you seen/heard others asked to humiliate themselves in public?
   c. Have you seen/heard others asked to limit associations with people outside
      your group?
   d. Have you seen/heard of other members deprived of sleep?
   e. Have you ever seen/heard new members yelled or demeaned by other
      members?
   f. Have you ever seen/heard others asked to wear embarrassing clothing?
   g. Have you ever seen/heard that members were hit, paddled or hurt by other
      members?
   h. Have you ever seen/heard others/new members to run errands or do chores
      for yourself or other members?
   i. Have you ever seen/heard others asked to drink large amounts of liquid to
      the point they became ill?
   j. Have you ever seen/heard others asked to eat specific items toxic or non-
      toxic?

*** After each sub question ask:
   a. If so, when, what was that experience like for you?
b. Did you have to do that activity when you were new?
c. Why were they asked to engage in that activity?
d. Did they want to engage in that activity? How did you know?
e. Were they made to feel like they had to engage in that activity?
f. What would have happened if they hadn’t engaged in that activity?
g. How did this relate to membership in the organization?
h. Did you consider intervening?

11. What do you think outsiders would think of these activities?
12. How do you think outsiders would react to witnessing these activities?
13. Describe how members of your organization interact with one another.
   a. How did these activities contribute?

14. Do you think that activities that you participated in, asked others to do, or
    witnessed were vital to your organization?
   a. Why?
   b. Why not?
15. What is the purpose of your organization?
16. What do you think the values of your organization are?
17. What do you value personally?
18. How are these activities congruent or incongruent with your values?
19. How are these activities congruent or incongruent with your organization values?
20. How would you define hazing?
21. What terms would you use to describe these activities if they were not within the
    context of your group?
    a. Prompt if necessary
22. Do you think any of the activities that you participated in, asked others to do or
    witnessed were hazing?
    a. Why or why not?
23. Do you think outsiders would think that the activities that you participated in,
    asked others to do or witnessed were hazing?
    a. Why or Why not?
24. Tell me about your experience with education regarding hazing?
25. Are you aware of any policies at your institution or within your organization?

26. What is your opinion on current hazing policies and laws?

27. If asked to do any of these activities today how would you react?
28. Would you change anything about your participation in any of the activities?
29. Why do you think people engage in behaviors that are risky and often illegal?
30. Why do you think that students continue to engage in some hazing activities?
### Table 3: Program of Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ascertainment of race/ethnicity, gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Ascertainment of income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Ascertainment of education level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Physical illness or disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Mental illness or disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Substance use disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Trauma-related condition</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Injury or accident</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Violence or threatened violence</td>
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<td>J</td>
<td>Economic condition</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Access to health care</td>
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<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Language/communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Social support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Community connections</td>
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<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Access to care</td>
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<td>Q</td>
<td>Health care utilization</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>Health education</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>Health promotion</td>
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<td>T</td>
<td>Health information</td>
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<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>Health outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Health status</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>Health outcomes for treatment</td>
</tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td>Health outcomes for prevention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Health outcomes for promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Other health outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend for Code:**
- A: Ascertainment of race/ethnicity, gender
- B: Ascertainment of income
- C: Ascertainment of education level
- D: Physical illness or disability
- E: Mental illness or disability
- F: Substance use disorder
- G: Trauma-related condition
- H: Injury or accident
- I: Violence or threatened violence
- J: Economic condition
- K: Access to health care
- L: Language/communication
- M: Social support
- N: Community connections
- O: Environment
- P: Access to care
- Q: Health care utilization
- R: Health education
- S: Health promotion
- T: Health information
- U: Health outcomes
- V: Health status
- W: Health outcomes for treatment
- X: Health outcomes for prevention
- Y: Health outcomes for promotion
- Z: Other health outcomes
- Other: As determined by the user
APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear __insert name_______,

I am a doctoral student in the College of Education, Center for the Study of Higher Education. I am inviting you to participate in my research study to explore why students choose to participate in hazing activities within their student organization, specifically their fraternity, sorority or student club. You were identified as a possible participant because your organization, __insert org_________, was recently found responsible for hazing activities.

As a participant you would engage in an interview in which we would discuss the past hazing practices of your student organization. The interview will take approximately 1 hour. The purpose of the study is to better understand why students choose to participate in hazing. Often investigations and research focus on what actions an individual or organization may have taken. I am interested in why an individual would participate.

Your answers will be confidential and your participation will be anonymous. All participants will be given a pseudonym, as will their organization so that they can maintain anonymity. Participating in the interview is voluntary. The only risk to participants is that talking about past experiences could remind them of things that make them uncomfortable or upset. All recordings of interviews will be kept in password-protected documents on secure computers.

If you would like to know more information about this study, an informed consent letter is attached to the survey where you will provide your contact information and availability for an interview. All participants will receive compensation in the form of a $20.00 gift card.

If you have questions about this study, please contact me by phone (520-626-5608) or email French@email.arizona.edu or my advisor, Dr. Jenny Lee by phone (520-621-0954) or email at jennylee@email.arizona.edu.

Follow this link to more information about participation: Take the survey

Or copy and paste the URL below into your Internet browser:

Follow this link to opt out of future emails:

Thank you,

Jenny French Nirh
Principal Investigator

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APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The University of Arizona Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Student’s Justifications for Engaging in Hazing Behavior

Principal Investigator: Jenny Nirh, BA, MA, PhD Candidate

Sponsor: Dr. Jenny Lee

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to discuss the study with your friends and family and to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate.

You may or may not benefit as a result of participating in this study. Also, as explained below, your participation may result in unintended or harmful effects for you that may be minor or may be serious, depending on the nature of the research.

1. Why is this study being done?
   The purpose of the research is to inform practitioners and researchers to help in future education on hazing activities and prevention of hazing activities within the larger higher education community.

2. How many people will take part in this study?
   30-40 individuals will be interviewed as a part of this study.

3. What will happen if I take part in this study?
   If you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by Jenny Nirh the primary investigator in this study. The interview will take approximately 1 hour.

4. How long will I be in the study?
   The interview will last approximately 1 hour. The entire study will take place over the course of 1 year.

5. Can I stop being in the study?
   Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part in the study, you may leave the study at any time. No matter what decision you make, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any of your usual benefits. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The University of Arizona. If you are a student or employee at the University of Arizona, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status. Your participation will not affect your grades.
or employment at your college or university. Your participation will not affect your involvement in your organization.

6. What risks, side effects or discomforts can I expect from being in the study?
Hazing activities can often be violent or demeaning and could leave a lasting psychological impact on those individuals involved. Individuals involved in the research may be at risk of further psychological impact by discussing those activities during the interview process. The researcher will make available contact information for the individuals’ institutional psychological services.

7. What benefits can I expect from being in the study?
There will be no immediate benefits to the subjects involved in research beyond having the opportunity to discuss their experience and explain why they participated in the activities.

8. What other choices do I have if I do not take part in the study?
You may choose not to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

9. Will my study-related information be kept confidential?
Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law.

Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):
- The University of Arizona Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices

10. What are the costs of taking part in this study?
There are no monetary or non-monetary costs associated with this study.

11. Will I be paid for taking part in this study?
All participants that complete an interview will receive a $20.00 gift card.
By law, payments to subjects may be considered taxable income.
12. What happens if I am injured because I took part in this study?

If you suffer an injury from participating in this study, you should seek treatment. The University of Arizona has no funds set aside for the payment of treatment expenses for this study.

13. What are my rights if I take part in this study?

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

You will be provided with any new information that develops during the course of the research that may affect your decision whether or not to continue participation in the study.

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The University of Arizona reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

14. Who can answer my questions about the study?

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Jenny Nirk, French@email.arizona.edu or at her office, 520-626-5688.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact the Human Subjects Protection Program at 520-626-6721 or online at http://ocr.arizona.edu/hsp.

If you are injured as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-related injury, you may contact Jenny Nirk, French@email.arizona.edu or at her office, 520-626-5688.
REFERENCES


McCreery, G. (2012). *The impact of moral judgment and moral disengagement on hazing*


