

Why They Haze:

A Critical Analysis of Why Hazing Occurs within Black Greek Letter Organizations

Amanda M. Sharp & Alejandro J. Suñé

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Introduction

As members of fraternal organizations, one phenomenon among all others – hazing – takes front and center stage amidst risky behaviors associated with such collegiate student organizations. While hazing has existed for centuries, this psychological and social behavior seems to have the least amount of research available especially in the area of prevention. Only within the past decade has prominence and attention been given to prevention. In an effort to better understand the root causes of hazing, we believe a critical and analytical approach to the topic will provide us the appropriate perspectives to educate students on prevention initiatives.

Specific to our research, we will focus on the intersection of hazing and culture/race through the examination of hazing within Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs). Amanda, as a member of a BGLO sorority, and Alex, as the Black Greek Council Advisor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, believe firmly in the power of prevention and education. More importantly, these organizations provide unique opportunities for young collegiate men and women to gain co-curricular experiences not typically gained in a general student organization. BGLOs also provide a cohort and network for underrepresented students through which they can be supported in ensuring they graduate with academic success. However, due to the size of the organizations and their assets on the national level, many fraternities and sororities have come close to losing it all. By unfortunate means of hazing, these national organizations are often hit with multi-million dollar lawsuits which have placed a large financial burden on their membership. Unlike other prominent national fraternities and sororities which have been around for much longer and are capable of withstanding lawsuits of these magnitudes, should hazing continue within BGLOs, there is a likely possibility the next lawsuit may decimate the existence of the organization both nationally and on college campuses, where

their true benefit is embraced. Through thought provoking research, we will find new and innovative ways to challenge the precepts of our micro-society to provide a safer environment for future student populations to develop and grow.

The field of student affairs, in particular the area of student life, is vibrant with student engagement. Moreover, student organizations provide an unparalleled dimension to leadership, personal and professional growth. As professionals, we desire an authentic experience where students are able to utilize their capabilities within the laboratory of life a.k.a. the university; however, sometimes these real life experiences come with a negative price – a cost of being hazed. Participation in student organizations, while beneficial to students, offer more than just positive growth and development. Engagement in fraternities and sororities or any organization in which membership is the golden ticket becomes more of a game in which young adults must weigh the options of benefits received versus the detrimental consequences contrary to providing “an atmosphere where all members...feel safe by ensuring respect for human dignity” (Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity, 2012).

Our research on hazing and hazing within BGLOs in particular is important to the field of higher education for a variety of reasons including an increased focus on inclusion and cultural appreciation. As future higher education and student affairs administrators, it is obligatory for us to take an in-depth look at these behaviors, the history of these behaviors and why these behaviors occur. Furthermore, as litigation among student organizations engaging in these particular risky behaviors increases, it will be ever more important to remain abreast of the changing aspects associated with hazing.

On a personal level, our interest in researching hazing and hazing within BGLOs stems from our experiences as undergraduate members; both as individuals who were hazed and

actively participated in hazing, we now desire to educate students on the reasons why hazing has no place on a college campus, much less as a part of society.

Thematically, our research focuses on the history of hazing, history of Black Greek Letter Organizations, and history of hazing within BGLOs. Moreover, we also examine the psychological and social factors associated with hazing. The why is a sought out question which drives our desire to learn more about the intersection of hazing and culture/race particularly within BGLOs. Findings in the aforementioned areas vary greatly primarily due to the limited resources and specialized research. Nevertheless, our quest to better understand why as undergraduates we engaged in these behaviors from a psychological perspective will advance us on our path toward creating better and more impactful prevention education.

History of Hazing

Hazing has been prevalent in the educational system for two thousand years, dating back to Plato's academy in 387 B.C. (Nuwer, 1999, p. 92). Hazing was marked as "practical jokes played by unruly young men that injured and hazed the citizens who got in the way" (Nuwer, 1999 p. 92). In the middle ages, hazing spread to the European universities which led to the birth of modern hazing (Parks, 2015, p. 7). Students would have to "submit to brutal hazing by older students just as they had to pay for university fees and to buy books" (Nuwer, 1999, p.94). These practices, or "fagging", were deemed as rituals and were accepted into the culture of higher education institutions. The purpose of these acts was to "teach newcomers precedence" but the young students willingly took the abuse to advance as a sociality scholar, often earning a title of master or doctor (Nuwer, 1999 p. 94-96). Two types of hazing became prevalent in the middle ages, which continue today, physical and psychological hazing. The custom of paddling prevailed as first year students were hit "with a book or frying pan", this "gratified alike the

bullying instinct, the social instinct, and the desire to find at one the excuse and the means for a carouse" (Nuwer, 1999, p. 95). Physiological tactics created an environment which humiliated the younger students, making them wear caps with yellow bills to differentiate the newcomers and using the wealthier student to buy expensive clothing and food for the hazers.

These acts developed and evolved in Europe and continued in American higher education institutes such as Harvard. Joseph Webb, class of 1684, was the first Harvard student punished for hazing acts. He was expelled for hitting first-year students as well as "requiring them to perform acts of servitude" (Nuwer, 1999, p. 100). Two months later, he repented and was able to return to Harvard to graduate.

History of Black Greek Letter Organizations

While our literature review has a focus on negative behaviors, we believe it is important to articulate the founding principles and positive historical initiatives of Black Greek Letter Organizations.

African American Greek Lettered organizations were founded in times of racial exclusion through the early and mid-20th century. They were also founded at times where the need for social activism was at its highest in our society. A year after W.E.B. Du Bois's Niagara Movement, a black civil rights organization which called for opposition to racial segregation, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, the first collegiate BGLO, was founded in 1906 at Cornell University, a predominantly white institution (Goss, Harris, Spencer, & Hughley, 2014). Following closely behind in 1908, the first collegiate BGLO sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, was founded at Howard University. The success of these two organization shaped a pathway for seven more historically African American fraternities and sororities to follow between 1908 and 1963. These organizations, commonly referred to as the Divine Nine, have survived and endured

lynching, the Segregation Era, the Civil Rights Movement, and the continued racial disparities in our current society. Each has made it a mission to serve their communities in distinct ways which have helped transform our world. Below is a brief account regarding each of the nine international organizations and a few of their major initiatives or accomplishments.

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity's "Go-To-High-School, Go-To-College" program, a campaign to encourage African American community members achieve academically, dates back to 1919 (Harris, 2006). The fraternity also holds the esteemed honor of inducting Martin Luther King, Jr. as a member in 1952 and was also a catalyst of political activism, creating the Alpha Phi Alpha Voting Rights Program at a time where African American were not guaranteed the right. (Ross, 2000, p. 8). Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority pushed anti-lynching legislation in 1921 and established the nation's first mobile health clinic in 1935, providing relief to 15,000 African Americans in the Mississippi Delta ("Our History of Sisterhood", 2014).

Throughout the early 20th century we also saw the creation of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity founded in 1911. The fraternity created the Guide Right program to mentor and tutor youth, provide college preparatory programs, and sponsor trips for less fortunate youths to provide time away from negative environments (Ross, 2000, p. 61). In 1911, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity was founded and is credited with the creation of Black History Month. Black History Month takes its roots from the fraternity's "Negro History and Literature Week" which was created to promote and highlight African American progress (Baldwin, 2005). With the help of one of their esteemed member, Carter G. Woodson, the week flourished across the nation, providing schools with literature to teach young students and making copies readily available to the African American population (Ross, 2000, p. 75; Scott, 2014).

In 1913, the second BGLO sorority was founded, Delta Sigma Theta, which made a pivotal impact on the Woman Suffrage March in 1913 as the only black group to participate (Bernard, 2013). A year later in 1914, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity was founded. At the time of the Great Depression in the late 1920's, members created a program, still currently a national initiative, called "Bigger and Better Business". This program promotes and empowers minority owned businesses by providing additional resources to help entrepreneurs create new ideas to help the economy (Ross, 2000, p. 104). With the help of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, their sister sorority, Zeta Phi Beta, was founded in 1920. The sorority worked closely with the National Housing Association to create a program which assisted WWII defense employees locate affordable housing called the National Housing Project (McClure, 2015). This is just one example of the multiple collaborations with political organizations which helped with the war effort.

The last BGLO sorority founded was Sigma Gamma Rho in 1922. With a history and commitment to education their program, OPERATION BigBookBag, provides homeless children or those in extended-hospital-stays educational books and materials. ("Operation Big Bookbag", 2015). The last Black Greek Letter Organization of the Divine Nine is Iota Phi Theta Fraternity founded in 1963. Founded in later proximity than the other eight organizations, the timing was significant to their creation. 1963 was not only the year of the iconic March on Washington but was the change of an era in activism as W.E.B. DuBois passed away in Ghana. (Ross, 2000). Iota Phi Theta's central mission was and still is to be committed to social action and change (Ross, 2000).

Amidst the risky behaviors associated with these fraternal organizations, student affairs professionals would prefer to focus on the positive attributes Black Greek Letter Organizations provide students. Each organization described above continues to serve their community in a variety of ways, from small community services, to large national outreach programs. They each care intensely about bonding and creating a family element within their organization, an important quality many minority students search for when pursuing a sense of belonging on campus, especially when attending a Predominantly White Institution. BGLOs can provide students a place to develop their identity and connects them to the university from which they learn and the community they serve. Every BGLO also has a GPA requirement of 2.5 or above to join. And many organizations, at an international level, are changing by-laws to require students to maintain a 2.5 GPA in order to hold an officer position or have the privilege to be active within their chapters.

Focusing on these particular positive qualities makes it difficult to understand a disappointing characteristic of these distinguished organizations. We ask ourselves, why would a member of an organization, which serves their community with passion, paddle prospective member until their kidney fails? Why would a member, who understands the consequences of going to jail, being dismissed from the university, or having their membership revoked, choose to participate in deadly activities such as malnutrition? Why is hazing, a dangerous tradition, continued when one more incident could destroy an organization with no hope in returning?

History of Hazing in American Fraternal System

Dr. Gregory Park, an Assistant Professor of Law and an expert witness in multiple hazing cases explains in the book, *Invictus* (2015), three theories on how hazing became "interwoven" in

the fraternal system. First, it was entered through fraternities at Ivy League institutions through class and society routine hazing practices. The second theory is dropouts from the military academy, West Point, brought military hazing into their attending colleges and fraternal organizations. The third and final theory is hazing happened gradually and spontaneously in exclusive clubs which expected a certain standard of admittance. This would explain the practices in not only the fraternal system but on many athletic teams and in other organizations. Parks theorizes a combination of these three theories and a gradual ingress of practices is a more accurate answer (Parks, 2015, p. 11).

According to Nuwer's (1999) *Wrongs of Passage: Fraternities, Sororities, Hazing, and Binge Drinking*, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, social fraternities grew through the higher education institutes. Many young men wanted a close camaraderie that would replace their close knit communities at home. Hazing progressively intertwined with acceptance and forced "respect", like the period of the middle ages. While many of the hazing cases found in the media coverage were between freshmen and upperclassmen, the first fraternity related hazing death that was extensively covered occurred in 1873 (Nuwer, 1999, p. 123). Kappa Alpha Society at Cornell University blindfolded a pledge and left him; he became disoriented and fell into a gorge (Nuwer, 1999, p. 238). The members were never punished and allowed to continue their presence at the University. Deaths continued throughout the decade, but it was not until the early 1900's when college administrators started to see the damage hazing caused on their college campuses and at universities across the country. While many colleges urged for the eradication of hazing throughout the 1920s and 1930s, many alumni pushed for the support to continue the dangerous practices. Hazing continued to evolve after World War II with many veterans

obtaining the benefits of the G.I. Bill. This glorified hazing practices even more with excessive physical exercises, psychological practices, and alcohol (Nuwer, 1999, pp. 128-129).

History of hazing in Black Greek Letter Organizations

Black Greek Lettered Organization were created in times of adversity, and it has been theorized by Paul Ruffins, a writer and former editor of the Crisis Magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the practices of pledging in the early 1900's reflected that frightening time (Ruffins, 1998). Ruffin's also stated in *The Persistent Madness of Greek Hazing* (Ruffins, 1998), pledges were grouped together to not only create a bond, but to see if they could protect the others in times of need. He also theorizes practices of branding and paddling could be a direct link to slavery. Dr. Sandra Lewis, an African American clinical psychologist, states in Ruffin's article, "the saddest part is that instead of identifying with the slaves, these young men are identifying with the slave masters" (Ruffins, 1998).

As told in the book *Invictus*, Parks writes that as early as 1925, Howard University started to report on "hell week" in their newspapers (Parks, 2015, p. 12). Some hazing rituals were done openly on campus, including marching on campus, singing, and wearing the same attire. The newspaper reported on the fatigue of the students, "due to sheer exhaustion, [pledges] often feel asleep in class [,]"(Parks, 2015, p.12). While universities such as Howard and Lincoln started to see the negative effects on students, instead of eliminating hazing, they created rules such as Lincoln's 1942 "no hitting law", to regulate it (Parks, 2015, p. 20). Many organizations such as Alpha Phi Alpha, Omega Psi Phi, and Kappa Alpha Psi forbade "brutality" toward any pledge, but as we find out, that was not enough to stop the ongoing evolution of hazing (Parks, 2015, p. 13).

In the 1960's and 1970's, many organizations such as Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity had several pledges reported being physically abused by members. This led to Florida passing a law prohibiting hazing that "intentionally endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student" which includes "extreme embarrassment" (Parks, 2015, p. 21). Cases of hazing became more public, and the information surrounding hazing practices became public knowledge, such as a 1987 incident where an Omega Psi Phi member faced ten charges including two felony counts of assault with a deadly weapon (Parks, 2015, p. 22). Pledges were struck on their head, arms, and shoulders with a 2X4, one pledge's beard lit on fire, and one was injured so intensely, the wound would not close with stitches (Parks, 2015, p. 22). In 1989, pledges of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity were beaten with canes until they broke, and hit with paddles and punched by the members at SUNY and at Fort Valley College, pledges were beaten in their chest, kidney, over a five-hour period (Parks, 2015, p. 24). One pledge received medical attention and required treatment for internal bleeding, while another was hospitalized for a sprained back, sore kidneys, and bruised buttocks (Parks, 2015, p. 25). A "game changer" hazing incident, as Parks calls it, resulted in the death of an 18-year-old, after being beaten in the chest and slapped in the face.

This, along with the other hazing incidents, prompted the umbrella organization, the National Pan-Hellenic Council, to ban hazing and pledging across all BGLO's in 1990 (Parks, 2015, pp. 25-26). The new protocol was named "Membership Intake Process" or MIP, and was designed to have three phases: (1) An interest/pre-induction phase; (2) Rituals or induction ceremony; and (3) Educational program (Parks, 2015, p. 26). This was thought to change the attitude and approach to hazing, but it forced organizations which continued the practice to conceal the dangerous rituals, potentially creating more hazardous hazing. In 1994, Kappa Alpha

Psi Fraternity had yet another death of another 18-year-old pledge from bleeding of the brain. MIP was described as a failure, and the hazing continued across the country.

As cases became more prevalent, we started to see riskier practices of fraternity and sororities. For example, take Alpha Phi Alpha's ritual "water night". Pledges were "forced to consume hot sauce and salsa" for missing questions about the organization's history (Parks, 2015, p. 48). Members also forced the pledges to drink water and were threaten to be beaten. One student became incoherent and after many hours the members of Alpha finally called the ambulance, where doctors explained that he had 3 to 4 gallons of water in his system, "lowering his sodium levels to the point his cells cannot function" (Parks, 2015 p. 49). The "ringleader" to the hazing practice was sentence to only 180 days in jail.

Sororities, while sometimes less violent, also had hazing incidents resulting in death. For example, Parks describes a 2010 hazing incident of Delta Sigma Theta. Pledges were forced to do walk sits, wear "Delta Lipstick" which was hot sauce, made to eat raw onions called "Delta Apples", and hold bricks over their heads for long periods of time during their last few days called "Hell Week". The night before their coming out show or "probate", the already sleep deprived pledges were made to stay up the entire night practicing until they perfected their show. The pledge's hair appointments were at 6:30 a.m. the next morning, where one pledge was forced to drive others. She fell asleep at the wheel, crashed, killing the two other pledges in the car.

Why hazing occurs – Systems/people and psychological/social context

Why does hazing socially occur? To better understand why hazing occurs, one must acknowledge and understand the aspects associated with each role, that of the hazer (perpetrator) and that of the hazed? (victim).

For starters, to “**haze**² (hāz) *tr.v.* **hazed, haz•ing, haz•es**” as defined by the American Heritage College Dictionary is “**1.** To persecute or harass with meaningless, difficult, or humiliating tasks.” and “**2.** To initiate, as into a college fraternity, by exacting humiliating performances from or playing rough practical jokes upon” (*The American Heritage College dictionary*, 2004, p. 636). Simply put, hazing is an act of power exerted by one entity over another for the means of affiliation into an organization. And while we may understand what hazing is and the forms it takes, it is the why which leaves us with a curiosity for wanting to learn more.

As professionals vested in the growth and education of college students through co-curricular experiences, we must acknowledge how activities which involve hazing only add to the complexity of the modern college student. While it is clear hazing activities are demoralizing, damaging and even deadly, hazing remains one of the few prominent topics under-researched. In an effort to bring about a better understanding on this particular psychological phenomenon, one must examine the “why” associated with such acts of oppression.

Hazing is grounded in the intersection of systems and people. In essence, would we say there are “bad apples” or a “bad barrels?” (Marchell, 2012, p. 5). Understanding typical college students do not wake up in the morning declaring, “I think I’m going to beat the (insert explicative here) out of the pledges/new member today,” one must critically examine the nuances associated with the environment in which our students belong to understand why they choose to make bad choices. A great way to illustrate the intersectionality of systems and people is by examining the Behavior Function. As explained by Kurt Lewin, ‘behavior’ is a function of ‘person’ and ‘environment.’ (Sansone, Morf, & Panter, 2004) This psychological equation demonstrates the correlation between the environment (system) and the individual (person).

While one can easily discern the correlation between people and their environment and how it produces particular behaviors, what is still uncertain is the why hazing still occurs. In a discussion presented in 2012 by Timothy C. Marchell, a clinical psychologist and Director of Mental Health Initiatives at Cornell University, Dr. Marchell explains the following concepts from a systems perspective. “Hazing results from a combination of multiple factors interacting over time – Motivation + “opportunity” = hazing.” (Marchell, 2012, p. 5). Moreover, Marchell iterates the point in which a focus on why people haze should include gathering information on series of binary areas: “‘individual *and* environment,’ ‘moment *and* history,’ and ‘rational thought *and* unconscious forces’” (Marchell, 2012, p. 5).

In discussing the why, Dr. Marchell also describes five phases of hazing and how individual, group and societal factors play into hazing through a social-ecological context.

Precursor Phase of Hazing

The first stage is the Precursor Phase. As individuals, human beings desire the need to belong and the need for affiliation and acceptance (Marchell, 2012, p. 12). Articulated by Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, the need for love and belonging, third to the physiological and safety needs, is essential in the construct of personal motivation. (Maslow, 1943, p. 380) “In our society the thwarting of these needs is the most commonly found core in cases of maladjustment and more severe psychopathology” (Maslow, 1943, p. 381). The maladjustment and psychopathology associated with hazing provides only a brief explanation into why the psychological phenomenon exists. In groups, hierarchies naturally exist with a typical obedience toward authority (Marchell, 2012, p. 13). From a societal perspective, rites of passage or initiation into a group provides an elevated status which in turn satisfies the need to

belong thus providing a level of motivation in which people begin to expose themselves to engagement in hazing (Marchell, 2012, p. 16).

Formation Phase of Hazing

The second phase is Formation. This is the stage where people gain motivation to haze and gain beliefs about the ability to consent to such behaviors (Marchell, 2012, p. 18).

Motivation can be categorized into one of six typologies as examined below:

Reluctant conformity motives

Reluctant Conformity Motives are where one's values may be in conflict with the behavior in which one engages. For example, a thought associated with such a motive might be "I hate these traditions, but I don't know what else we can do. I need something I can sell to other members of the group as an alternative" (Marchell, 2012, p. 20).

Sadistic/sociopathic motives

These motives demonstrate one's desire and joy to see pain inflicted upon another. Simply put, it is the satisfaction felt when an individual exerts power over another by means of psychological or physical harm.

Anger/revenge motives

This emotional motive provides an individual who was once a victim to justify the behavior reciprocated upon another individual. Typical processing of this motive is linked to the rationale of "I had to go through it, so they have to go through it," or "I can't wait to do this to the pledges next year" (Marchell, 2012, p. 22).

Dominance/power motives

Natural organizational power structures allow for hazers to demonstrate their supremacy over others within a group. For example, within the NFL or MLB, one only need to turn the

television on to view this type of motive in play as demonstrated by rookie hazing typically highlighted at the start of each season or during pre-season practices/activities. Specific to student organizations, inherent structures developed to maintain order are often misused and abused to benefit the hazer.

Commitment motives

“We do it to weed out the weak ones” (Marchell, 2012, p. 24) is a common phrase implying a particular level of commitment needed to affiliate with the membership of an organization. This motive often lends itself to the usage of lessons and tests to truly see if an individual can pledge themselves to the organization.

Solidarity motives

Cohesion as a form of solidarity by means of “lived experiences” and “traditions” is utilized as a link between “generations and creates a unique bond” (Marchell, 2012, p. 25). However, this bond provides a false sense of comradery in an attempt to create cohesion when truly non-existent.

Group factors associated with the formation phase of hazing is attributed to misperceived norms mainly due to the secrecy of such organizational intake. (Marchell, 2012, p. 54).

Moreover, the societal factor of formation is evident by means of the “implicit/explicit support for hazing” (Marchell, 2012, p. 59). Once again, take the example of professional sports and the childish antics rookies must experience in order to gain admittance to the team. (Marchell, 2012, p. 60).

Preparation Phase of Hazing

Individual and group factors are linked by means of “Groupthink: quash dissent” (Marchell, 2012, p. 62). This thought process perpetuates the “cultivation of consent” (Marchell,

2012, p. 62) with a rationale of having one's "foot in the door" (Marchell, 2012, p. 25) regarding affiliation. Interestingly enough, a societal factor for this phase is non-existent.

Episode Phase of Hazing

Within the episode phase or stage in which the hazing occurs, one begins to see the definition of roles such as the perpetrator (hazer) and victim (hazee). By this phase, consent of the victim is equivalent to coerced compliance. The harmful behavior inherent to hazing is amplified by a perpetrator's "disinhibition: intoxication" and "role enactment" (Marchell, 2012, p. 64). Group factors are activated with the desire of "making it [the actions] special" (Marchell, 2012, p. 65). Societal or institutional factors involve the "complicity – direct involvement or awareness of advisors, coaches, alumni" (Marchell, 2012, p. 66), which introduces additional liability to entities such as institutions of higher education and inter/national organizations.

Perpetuation Phase of Hazing

The cyclical nature of hazing hinges on its perpetuation. On an individual level, cognitive dissonance justifies one's "own suffering by increasing the liking of the group" (Marchell, 2012, p. 68), or the ambivalence of the experiences brings about a rationale of "I hated going through it, but I guess it made me better prepared for life" (Marchell, 2012, p. 68).

This cycle of abuse, through student conduct experiences, explains why hazing investigations prior to initiation into a group yield more authentic responses from victims rather than attempting to fact find post-initiation. The golden ticket has been received thus allowing victims to provide even more justification for their engagement in the act of hazing. Group perpetuation is seen through "shared coping among victims" (Marchell, 2012, p. 69) often times "rewarded by perpetrators" (Marchell, 2012, p. 69) with either alcohol or praise. (Marchell, 2012, p. 69).

Societal factors of perpetuation are related to institutional/community factors such as the “Failure to: Detect” or “Interpret evidence as [the] problem” (Marchell, 2012, p. 70).

The power of systems or environment is illustrated in the classic Stanford Prison Experiment performed by Philip Zimbardo, a Professor of Psychology at Stanford University in 1971. The experiment demonstrated the impact an environment had on the individuals who role played characters in a fictional prison. Beyond a simply role play, the individuals in essence forgot the fictional aspect of the experiment and began to act as if they were truly in positions of power solely based on the environment in which they had been placed. (Zimbardo, 2015). Therein lies a strong correlation between systems and people. If one were to assume there are “Good Apples in Bad Barrels,” perhaps one should examine more closely the barrels or situations and systems which exist on college campuses. “We must also be aware that veiled behind the *power of the situation* is the *power of the system*, which creates and maintains complicity at the highest levels” Philip Zimbardo (Marchell, 2012, p. 70).

Therefore, one must consider people and systems as binary combinations in order to define and closely examine “why” people haze.

Conclusion

Contributions of Literature to the Field

The literature reviewed provides interesting perspectives on not only hazing in general but also hazing within Black Greek Letter Organizations. The rationale for the perpetuation in BGLOs is well articulated and helps individuals interested in diminishing hazing focus on the why as explained in the social-ecological context. The social-ecological context also provides great insight to the psychological complexities associated with hazing. To merely believe hazing is happenstance would simply ignore the complex relationship between person and environment.

Overall, while focus has primarily been placed on changing the person in order to impact behavior, the literature suggests a redefined focus on implementing changes which impact environment. An alteration on environment should lead to more distinguishable and positive results.

Overall Strengths of Literature

Literature covering the positive aspects and contributions of Black Greek Letter Organizations is abundant. This particular literature also provides accounts in which minority students have found BGLOs to be beneficial in serving as anchors for success by providing support systems and family like environments. In addition, the literature and research provided by people such as Dr. Gregory Parks is a great introduction to hazing within BGLOs.

Overall Weaknesses of Literature

Overall, the weaknesses of the literature seems to be the minimal amount of substantial and well researched literature as related to hazing within BGLOs. Compared to other prominent psychological phenomenon impacting members of our society, hazing in particular to Black fraternities and sororities lacks substantial research. While books such as *Invictus* by Dr. Gregory Parks provide great accounts of the evolution of hazing within BGLOs, these are the only resources available at the moment. Moreover, literature on practices which have decreased hazing is minimal as well. In an effort to diminish hazing, one must be aware of what and which initiatives have been taken

What Might Be Missing

Missing research would include items on how we can move the needle forward on hazing prevention within BGLOs. While literature exists describing the what and why, we are often left with a “what’s next,” question. We would like to see more literature on effective hazing prevention for BGLOs.

Next Steps for Research

Next steps for research might include a focus on the intersection of human development and the stages of hazing as described in the social-ecological context. While attending a lecture on general risk management practices offered at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign by Peter Lake, a professor of law at Stetson University College of Law, Peter made an anecdotal statement. He stated that he believes the end or a decrease in hazing may be correlated with the completed development of pre-frontal cortex which occurs around the age of 30. His statements in this regard were fascinating to which he later stated, “wouldn’t that make a great dissertation topic?”

Moreover, further research in the area of effective hazing prevention initiatives or mechanics would also yield fascinating information regarding what steps would be most effective to begin the process of mitigating this degrading and often dangerous risk.

In conclusion, the critical role Black Greek Letter Organizations play in the success of college students and society has made a profound impact on the development of our country. However, hazing behaviors will lead to the demise of these historic organizations. It is not a matter of “if” these organizations will survive; it will simply be a matter of “when” they will expire thus creating a void in our American colleges.

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