

**High School Hazing Prevention and Gender:
Implications for School Counselors**

Elizabeth J. Allan, Leah Hakkola, and David Kerschner
University of Maine

Abstract

This article describes an evaluation of a high school hazing prevention training workshop with an investigation of gender differences in student responses. Data were gathered using pre- and post-surveys and follow-up focus groups with athletic teams in two schools in the northeastern U.S. Statistical analyses reveal the training was effective in shifting responses for male and female students while the staff impact was limited. Gendered perceptions and themes of power and status emerged from the qualitative analysis. Recommendations for research and school counselor practice are provided.

Keywords: hazing, school climate, high school, prevention, training evaluation

High School Hazing Prevention and Gender: Implications for School Counselors

Intimidating, harassing, and violent behavior impedes the mission of schools by threatening the health and safety of students and interfering with a positive learning environment. Hazing is defined as “any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group (such as a student club or team) that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers, regardless of a person’s willingness to participate” (Hoover, 1999). It is a form of interpersonal violence specific to a group context (Srabstein, 2008; Srabstein et al., 2008). With 80% of youth ages 6-17 participating in extracurricular activities, sports, and clubs (Rivara & LeMenestrel, 2015), and 47% of secondary school students experiencing hazing in such organizations (Allan & Madden, 2008, 2012; Hoover & Pollard, 2000), many students may be impacted by hazing.

Emotional and physical harm are documented outcomes of hazing (Finkel, 2002; Hoover, 1999; Nuwer, 1999; 2004; 2018) and consequences of hazing can be deadly (Nuwer, 2019). In addition to its consequences for individual victims, the abusive nature of hazing may contribute to a broader school climate perceived to be unsafe or threatening. For all these reasons, hazing is also a liability concern for educational leaders (Essex, 2014). With their commitment to student success and their knowledge of student mental health and school climate, school counselors can play a vital role in helping to strengthen staff and student awareness about the potential harm of hazing and engaging the school community in hazing prevention.

While knowledge and understanding about the harmful effects of bullying and research about intervention and prevention of school bullying has increased markedly

over the past several decades, this is not yet the case for hazing and its prevention. It is likely that hazing incidents may be underreported or overlooked because the dynamics of hazing do not necessarily conform to the definition of bullying. For instance, hazing can occur in a single event (e.g., rookie night or initiation) and by definition, bullying is repeated behavior over time (Olweus, 1993) and hazing typically occurs as part of an induction process whereas bullying tends to be associated with exclusion.

Given that research about hazing and its prevention is in nascent stages of development, teacher and staff knowledge of policies and procedures relative to hazing response and prevention in schools is likely more limited (Allan & Madden, 2008; Hoover & Pollard, 2000). Federal and state policies related to hazing are evolving slowly. Hazing is a crime in many (44) U.S. states, but statutes vary widely and little is known about formal enforcement. To date, initiatives for federal legislation related to hazing are specific to the postsecondary context. Despite evidence of the widespread occurrence of hazing among both high school and college students (Allan & Madden, 2008; Hoover & Pollard, 2000), the harm it causes; (Essex, 2014; Finkel, 2002; Nuwer, 2018), and efforts to draw from other public health arenas to formulate principles for hazing prevention (Allan, Payne, & Kerschner, 2018; Langford, 2008), an evidence base for effective prevention and response to high school hazing is scant. Given the reported harm hazing has caused students in high school settings, the need for more knowledge in this area is clear.

Each individual comes to an incident of hazing with pre-existing personal experiences and varied capacities for dealing with stress. With reportedly 1 out of 5 young people dealing with some form of mental illness (e.g., depression, anxiety

disorders, PTSD), a significant number of students may have a history of trauma, interpersonal violence, substance use, and other mental health issues (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2018). Whether apparent on the surface, or known by others involved, these prior experiences may influence the impact of hazing as well as the inclination to haze. While physical harm may be observable to others, the emotional and psychological impact of hazing is often hidden or at least not readily observable and may contribute to, or amplify, other mental health concerns.

Hazing is a complex phenomenon and understanding how hazing unfolds, and who is involved, is facilitated by an ecological approach that considers numerous layers of the social environment. That is, hazing behaviors are shaped by individual students involved, the groups or teams in which they are participating, the school environment, as well as norms of the broader culture. Given their expertise in adolescent behavior and development, and training in matters related to school climate, school counselors are uniquely positioned to facilitate a more proactive approach to student hazing and its prevention.

Hazing

While reported in high school settings, research about hazing has focused primarily on college students. In the first national survey of hazing behavior among intercollegiate varsity athletes, Hoover (1999) found that 79% experienced some form of hazing. In recent decades, published studies have included examinations of attitudes toward hazing (Campo, Poulos, & Sipple, 2005; Crow & MacIntosh, 2009; Drout & Corsoro, 2003), theories about why hazing persists (Cimino, 2011; Keating et al., 2005; Meier, Hinsz, & Heimerdinger, 2008; Van Raalte, Cornelius, Linder, & Brewer, 2007),

and studies examining the nature and extent of hazing (Allan & Madden, 2012; Allan et al., 2018; Campo et al., 2005; Gershel, Katz-Sidlow, Small, & Zandieh, 2003; Kirby & Wintrup, 2002). Traumatic injuries associated with hazing were described by Finkel (2002) in the *American Journal of Emergency Medicine*. Nuwer (2019) updates a chronology of hazing deaths, and student experiences of physical and psychological harm from hazing are described in multiple books (e.g., Nuwer, 1999; 2004; 2018; Jones, 2004), news accounts, and other reports (e.g., Caspian Kang, 2017; Flanagan, 2017; Maslin Nir, 2017; Simpson, 2013).

Some studies suggest a pipeline for college hazing begins in high school or before. In a survey by Hoover and Pollard (2000), 48% of students belonging to U.S. high school clubs, teams, and organizations experienced hazing. Based on a national sample of college students reporting about their high school experiences, Allan and Madden (2008; 2012) found 47% of respondents had experienced hazing in a secondary school context while Gershel and colleagues (2003) found 17.4% of 1,105 6-12th grade student-athletes in New York were subjected to hazing with no difference in frequency between girls and boys. According to Gershel et al., hazing was found to occur in every sport and all grade levels including 13.3% of sixth graders. Allan et al. (2018) found that when asked directly, male college students were more likely than female counterparts to indicate they had experienced hazing in high school.

Survey-based studies across educational levels have documented a gap between students' experiences of hazing and their willingness to label it as such. Aligned with findings from Hoover's (1999) study with varsity college athletes, Campo and colleagues found "a clear discrepancy between self-identification as participating in

hazing and participating in hazing as defined by university policy” (2005, p. 146). In one school district, 22% of 6th-12th graders had experienced hazing with the potential for serious harm, yet only 3% of this group described the activities as “dangerous” (Gershel et al., 2003). Similarly, only 20% of students who report high school experiences meeting the definition of hazing were willing to label it as such (Allan & Madden, 2008).

The reported gap between hazing experiences and self-reports may suggest that students ascribe to a narrow view of hazing that emphasizes its most extreme forms (e.g., being tied up, beaten, or raped) (Campo et al., 2005). Research findings about coach and advisor awareness of hazing activities suggest that adults may also be modeling acceptance, or at least limited recognition, of hazing as a violation of school policy (Allan & Madden, 2008). Confusion, or lack of understanding, about the differences between bullying and hazing may contribute to the lack of recognition on the part of school personnel (Allan, 2014).

Gender and Hazing

Gender differences relative to hazing and gendered perceptions of hazing have been explored by several scholars with some studies suggesting men are more often associated with hazing practices that demonstrate strength and dominance, sexually objectify women, and humiliate via sexual harassment and assault (e.g., Allan & DeAngelis, 2004; Allan & Kinney, 2018; Anderson, McCormack, & Lee, 2012; Johnson & Holman, 2004; Kirby & Wintrup, 2002; Stuart, 2013). Based on findings from a national survey of college students representing different clubs, organizations, and athletic teams, Allan and Madden (2008) found 61% of men and 52% of women had experienced hazing at the college level. At the high school level, the mean number of

hazing behaviors experienced by male students (2.4) was higher than for females (1.5) (Allan & Madden, 2009).

Considering athletes specifically, several survey-based inquiries (Hoover, 1999; Allan & Madden, 2008; Kerschner & Allan, 2016) have found that male athletes were more likely to experience hazing than female athletes at the college level. In an earlier study, Johnson and Holman (2004) found that female athletes tended to engage in less violent forms of hazing than male counterparts and were more likely to accept peers who chose to avoid hazing. Hamilton, Scott, O'Sullivan, and LaChappelle (2013) and McGlone (2010), however, found there was no difference related to hazing and gender and Waldron (2015) concluded that gender was not a statistically significant predictor of high school and college athlete participation in mild or severe hazing behaviors. Johnson, Guerrero, Holman, Chin, and Signer-Kroeker (2018) found that female college athletes were more likely to experience hazing.

Other studies have considered how societal expectations relative to gender may shape hazing behavior. Veliz and Allan (2017), in a qualitative study of college students' perceptions of hazing, found that student definitions of hazing reflected gender norms and expectations around predominant notions of masculinity and femininity. Noting increasing flexibility of norms relative to gender and sexual orientation in some contexts, Anderson et al., (2012) concluded that as homophobic attitudes decreased, so did same-gender hazing behaviors for intercollegiate male athletes. These studies seem to suggest that power abuses of hazing reflect larger social systems and the context in which hazing occurs.

Prevention Science

Hazing, like bullying, sexual violence, and child maltreatment, can be considered a form of interpersonal violence (Allan & Madden, 2012; Diamond, Callahan, Chain, & Solomon, 2016) that occurs within the social ecology of a school and community.

Contributing and protective factors for hazing occur at the individual, group, school, and community levels and therefore require effective, research-based hazing prevention strategies targeted to multiple levels of the social ecology (Casey & Lindhorst, 2009).

Researchers suggest established prevention strategies, adapted from rigorously examined areas, may be utilized in nascent areas of prevention (Casey & Lindhorst, 2009; Mercy, Rosenberg, Powell, Broome, & Roper, 1993; Nation et al., 2003; Wilkins, Tsao, Hertz, Davis, & Klevens, 2014). Reviewing successful multi-level prevention programs across a variety of areas such as HIV, bullying, and substance abuse prevention, Casey and Lindhorst (2009) found six common elements: (a) comprehensiveness, (b) community engagement, (c) contextualized programming, (d) a focus on structural contributors to the problem, (e) theory-driven content, and (f) an emphasis on positive development. Media campaigns, bystander intervention programs, and social norms messaging were identified as promising strategies for impacting multiple levels of social ecology.

Hazing Prevention

Extant studies have expanded knowledge of hazing as a widespread phenomenon but have not addressed the question of how to prevent hazing. In response to this gap, researchers led a collaborative research-to-practice initiative, the Hazing Prevention Consortium (HPC), beginning with eight U.S. universities in 2013.

The goal of the HPC was to develop and evaluate promising strategies for hazing prevention that draw from key principles gleaned from prevention science and the evidence base established for prevention of bullying and other types of interpersonal violence (Allan, Payne, & Kerschner, 2015; 2018).

Preventing hazing can be especially difficult because of strong evidence that a gap exists between students' experiences of hazing and their willingness to label it as such. Fifty-five percent of college students who belong to clubs, organizations, and teams experience hazing, yet only 5% say they were hazed (Allan & Madden, 2008; 2012). For high school students, of the 48% who experienced behavior meeting the definition of hazing, only 14% recognized it as such (Hoover & Pollard, 2000). This gap or disconnect creates significant challenges for hazing prevention. If students and school personnel fail to identify behavior as hazing, they will be less likely to intervene and report the behavior as participants or bystanders.

Since the field of hazing prevention is emergent (Allan et al., 2018; Johnson & Chin, 2016; Waldron, 2012), researchers and practitioners are borrowing from what has been learned in similar arenas including the prevention of bullying, sexual assault, and substance abuse. The public health approach to prevention of these problems draws from a "science of prevention" in which strategies to intervene and prevent hazing behaviors are grounded in theory and research, including rigorous assessment and evaluation. A public health approach also emphasizes activities that prevent the problematic behavior before it begins (primary prevention). Other forms of prevention are also important, including intervention (secondary prevention) and effective response to hazing after it has occurred (tertiary prevention).

School Climate and Hazing

School climate is viewed as playing a critical role in students' academic achievement, behavioral functioning, and psychological adjustment. According to a recent review of the literature, Wang and Degol (2016) assert that school climate is most accurately viewed as a multidimensional construct that can be defined as comprising four dimensions. These include (a) the academic climate (i.e., the overall quality of the academic atmosphere), (b) the community, (i.e., quality of interpersonal relationships within the school, respect for diversity), (c) safety (i.e., level of physical and emotional security and the degree to which there are effective, consistent, and fair approaches to discipline), and (d) institutional environment (i.e., the structural and organizational features of the school).

Extensive research has demonstrated associations between school climate and students' academic, behavioral, and psychological outcomes. Schools that create an environment in which commitment to high academic standards is emphasized, mastery goals are promoted, and teacher perceptions of efficacy are supported have students who earn higher grades and standardized test scores (Lee & Shute, 2010; McEvoy & Welker, 2000; Wang & Eccles, 2013). Additionally, students who experience a higher quality community climate, characterized by positive student-teacher relationships, supportive peer relationships, feelings of belongingness, and appreciation of diversity demonstrate higher motivation to learn, greater levels of academic achievement, and lower risk for school dropout (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009; Wang & Holcombe, 2010; Worrell & Hale, 2001).

A positive school environment plays a key role in preventing students from engaging in problematic behaviors. Students who perceive their schools to be friendly, respectful, and fair are more apt to follow the rules and expect that others will do the same (Wang, Selman, Dishion, & Stormshak, 2010). When the school community is characterized by positive relationships among students, teachers, and school administrators, there are lower levels of behavioral problems, including disciplinary violations, aggression, and bullying (Wang et al., 2010; Zaykowski & Gunter, 2012). In contrast, when students believe that school is unsafe, discipline is inconsistent, and bullying is frequent and tolerated at their school, they are more likely to engage in bullying (Guerra, Williams, & Sadek, 2011; Waasdorp, Pas, O'Brennan, & Bradshaw, 2011).

When students have a strong sense of belonging to their school, feel the school community respects students, and perceive supportive relationships within the school community, they experience more positive emotional health (Freeman et al., 2009) and greater life satisfaction (Suldo, Thalji-Raitano, Hasemeyer, Gelley, & Hoy, 2013). In contrast, when students believe that school rules and disciplinary practices are unfair, social relationships are highly conflictual, and the school is unsafe, they are at greater risk for psychological distress, including loneliness, anxiety, and depression (Graham, Bellmore, & Mize, 2006; Loukas & Murphy, 2007).

A significant element to improving school climate is the implementation of anti-bullying programs. A comprehensive meta-analysis of 44 evaluation studies (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009) concluded that these programs are effective, with average reductions of 20-23% in bullying and 17-20% in victimization. Given the close association between

hazing and bullying, and established connections between bullying and negative school climate, it is reasonable to hypothesize that hazing may also contribute to student perceptions of an unsafe or threatening learning environment. This hypothesis is supported by other research (e.g., Allan & Madden, 2012), where hazing was found to be perceived by students as humiliating, degrading, abusive, and relatively widespread.

Conceptual Framework

For this investigation, an understanding of school culture shaped our thinking about institutional factors that may contribute to the presence of hazing (e.g., prestige of organizations, deeply held school traditions) as well as factors that might mitigate the likelihood of hazing. The concept of school climate framed the design of data gathering related to the attitudes and perceptions of school staff and students. Taken together, the concepts of culture and climate supported a more complex and nuanced analysis. Power dynamics are embedded in the concept of climate (individual perceptions of the school environment). Relative to hazing, power can be considered relative to the individual students, their self-perceptions and their relationships with teammates or other group members. Power can also be considered in terms of social capital or status of individuals and groups within a school. For instance, students may be more willing to endure humiliating or potentially abusive activities if the pay-off is gaining membership in a high-status group.

Additionally, established gender frameworks informed this investigation. More specifically, our data gathering and analysis were grounded in understandings that gender identity is linked with the perception of social cues and behaviors associated with what it means to be a boy, girl, woman, or man in a given society (Valian, 1999;

2005). Gender involves a number of components including gender assignment (the designation provided at birth), gender role (cultural expectations accorded to each gender), gender identity (an individual's personal feelings about their gender which may be different from their gender assignment), and gender attribution (others' perceptions of an individual's gender). While we understand gender to be fluid and more aptly described along a continuum, it is most common for schools to group students according to the boy/girl or male/female binaries, especially when related to athletics.

For this investigation, we considered gender assignment and identity in terms of students' membership on boys' or girls' athletic teams. We also considered gender roles as we analyzed the data. For example, the predominant schema of masculinity normalizes physical strength, power, autonomy, rationality, logic, and even aggression for boys and men. In contrast, the predominant gender role (cultural expectations) for girls and women highlights the acceptability of different traits. For example, some girls learn at an early age that being too strong may be interpreted as non-feminine, and therefore unattractive. Not always operating at a conscious level, gender roles shape expectations that women will be naturally nurturing, communal, emotional, and more submissive than men. According to Valian (2005), gender schemas are powerful because they help individuals bring order to the complexity of human behavior. Considering predominant perceptions of gender roles, it follows that notions of gender may play a role in how hazing is perceived by students and school personnel. This study sought to fill a gap in the literature by exploring gendered perceptions of hazing and analyzing evaluation data to determine if differences exist based on gender identity in response to a hazing prevention workshop.

Research Design

Given the early stage of research related to hazing prevention, the overall investigation was designed as a utilization-focused evaluation and exploratory mixed-methods study to gather data and test a hazing prevention training at two high schools (Site A and B) representing a rural and an urban area of a northeastern state. Findings relative to the evaluation component of the study (Hakkola, Allan, & Kerschner, 2019) revealed the training increased student knowledge and positively shifted attitudes and perceptions to support hazing prevention at each school.

Method

Building on the findings from our original study, and drawing from the literature and conceptual frameworks, we report here on a second phase of the study, which included pre- and post-surveys administered to student and staff participants and one focus group conducted with student participants from each site. The following research questions guided this phase of analysis: In what direction, if any, will participation in a hazing prevention training shift high school student attitudes and perceptions about hazing? In what direction, if any, will participation in a hazing prevention training shift high school staff attitudes and perceptions about hazing? Are there gender differences in outcomes of the student training? In what ways do students perceive gender and power to shape hazing behavior?

Sample and Data Collection

In consultation with the school principal at each site, at least two student groups (one boys' athletic team and one girls' athletic team) were identified to participate in a hazing prevention training. These teams, with numbers of participants per team ranging

from 12-22 athletes, were selected based on the number of students involved, access to the groups, gender balance, and a review of the literature. A purposive sample included school counselors, athletic directors, principals, teachers, and other key staff members (e.g., coaches). This sample was recruited from diverse roles at each research site to also participate in the hazing prevention training ($n = 16$). Tables related to this study can be found in the Appendix. Table A1 outlines the participant demographics across the two research sites (Hakkola et al., 2019).

The hazing prevention training was approximately 75 minutes in length and featured the 17-minute documentary *We Don't Haze* followed by a guided discussion led by trained graduate student facilitators. Sessions with the boys' teams were led by a man-identified facilitator and a woman-identified facilitator for the girls' teams. The facilitated session included discussions regarding the definition of hazing, examples of hazing featured in *We Don't Haze*, and activities that may include hazing behavior, amongst other topics. At the beginning and end of the trainings, participants were asked to complete pre- and post-assessments developed by the researchers, in consultation with subject matter experts, for the purpose of this investigation. The instruments were based on a review of extant literature and were pilot tested and revised with post-secondary students belonging to a Greek letter organization (GLO).

Focus groups were an important component to our study as we wanted to gain a better understanding of the knowledge and skills that students learned from participating in this pilot initiative. We also aimed to examine students' perceptions of how power and gender may have influenced hazing behavior and to identify elements of the program that were perceived to be most impactful. Accordingly, we returned to each research

site one to two months after participation in the pilot to conduct a focus group with a subset of students who participated in the training. In consultation with school leaders, purposive sampling was used to identify participants who represented different grade levels and genders for the focus group. The focus groups were approximately 90 minutes and used a semi-structured protocol guided by the following questions:

1. In what ways did the hazing prevention training improve student knowledge, awareness, and skills for hazing prevention, with a focus on ethical leadership, non-hazing team building strategies, and bystander intervention?
2. What components of the training were valuable to the students?
3. In what ways could the content and delivery of the training be improved for future use?

Given the analysis of gender and power for this investigation, foregrounding researcher identities is important. The core research team for this investigation included two women and one man, all of whom identify as white and possess advanced degrees. All research team members have participated in athletics at various levels, including high school and college.

Analysis

Participants in each session (i.e., male students, female students, and staff) at both schools completed a 24-item pre-assessment featuring a 5-point response format (i.e., *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neutral*, *agree*, *strongly agree*), participated in the 75-minute hazing prevention training, and completed a 24-item post-assessment. These pre- and post-assessments were matched for the purposes of conducting paired *t*-tests to determine whether or not the hazing prevention training, featuring the film *We Don't Haze* followed by a discussion with trained facilitators, significantly shifted participant

responses across three 8-item Likert scales derived from the 24-items in the assessments: Hazing Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions, and Hazing Prevention. Paired *t*-tests were conducted across these three Likert scales for all male student, female student, and staff responses. These Likert scales were derived from a review of the literature and are outlined in Table A2. Italicized statements in each scale were reverse scored.

Site A's focus group included six male and four female students, consisting of five juniors, four sophomores, and one first-year student. Site B's focus group included eight female students who were members of the high school soccer team. This group consisted of two seniors, two juniors, one sophomore, and three freshmen. The discussions were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using Krueger and Casey's (2000) focus group transcription method, which included open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After this initial process, a second round of deductive coding was conducted, which focused on themes related to power dynamics and gender differences.

Results

As described previously, the 24-item pre- and post-assessments were scored and compiled into three 8-point Likert scales assessing participant hazing knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of hazing, and knowledge of hazing prevention strategies. These assessments were matched for the purposes of conducting paired *t*-tests, the results of which are presented in Table A3.

Results show that the hazing prevention training had a statistically significant impact for both male and female students across the three Likert scales previously

outlined. Male students scored higher across the Hazing Knowledge Likert scale post-intervention (mean = 31.27, $SD = 4.43$) than pre-intervention (mean = 25.50, $SD = 3.84$) and this difference is statistically significant ($t(29) = -6.91, p < 0.001$). Furthermore, after the hazing prevention training, male students scored statistically significantly higher across the Attitudes and Perceptions ($t(29) = -5.04, p < 0.001$; Pre-mean = 28.57, $SD = 4.34$; Post-mean = 32.10, $SD = 5.19$) and Hazing Prevention ($t(29) = -2.47, p = 0.019$; Pre-mean = 27.80, $SD = 3.74$; Post-mean = 30.27, $SD = 5.65$) Likert scales. Similarly, female students had statistically significant gains across the Hazing Knowledge ($t(37) = -7.31, p < 0.001$; Pre-mean = 28.29, $SD = 3.77$; Post-mean = 31.87, $SD = 3.35$), Attitudes and Perceptions ($t(37) = -5.48, p < 0.001$; Pre-mean = 32.08, $SD = 2.77$; Post-mean = 34.37, $SD = 3.88$), and Hazing Prevention ($t(37) = -7.07, p < 0.001$; Pre-mean = 29.05, $SD = 3.30$; Post-mean = 33.00, $SD = 3.86$) Likert scales. Effect size analysis for the paired t -tests conducted with male and female students indicates that these tests have adequate sample sizes and statistical power (see Table A4).

The training workshop did not result in statistically significant shifts for staff member responses across all three Likert scales. Post-intervention (mean = 34.13, $SD = 3.36$) staff members scored higher across the Hazing Knowledge Likert scales than pre-intervention (mean = 30.31, $SD = 3.11$) and this difference was statistically significant ($t(15) = -7.25, p < 0.001$). While staff member responses, on average, increased across the Hazing Prevention and Attitudes and Perceptions Likert scales post-intervention, these shifts were not shown to be statistically significant.

Power Dynamics

Students at both schools discussed the existence of power as an element of hazing behavior, citing examples of physical strength or seniority as ways that power was used to either engage in hazing behavior or prevent hazing from occurring. For example, when asked why participants believed individuals hazed, one Site A student expressed, “I mean, I think in the real end of it, it all comes down to a power craze... Like you just want to feel like you’re above everyone else.” When questioned by the moderator, several other Site A participants from the focus group agreed with this participant’s statements.

Power in relation to hazing behavior was also associated with status, position, and leadership. While participants at both schools reported examples of power being exerted because of one’s status as an upper-class student, only students at Site A discussed a lack of agency for individuals if their status was as a freshman in high school. For instance, one student from Site A reported, “I think for some people [their status as an upperclassman] affects if they think they can haze other people. I don’t see very many freshmen or sophomores back talking to many upperclassmen, but I do see many seniors telling freshman what to do. Calling them names....” Participants from Site A consistently asserted that power differentials related to seniority played a central part in the hazing they observed.

While power was mentioned in relation to hazing behavior at both schools, interestingly, most participants from Site B expressed that seniors exercised their power to prevent hazing. For example, one participant expressed, “I know at least for the older players who have been around the program for a couple years have been comfortable

with speaking up. So, I think that if [hazing is] ever an issue that comes to the attention of the upperclassmen it's going to get handled." Moreover, these students argued that because their soccer team did not have captains, it was the responsibility of everyone to create a positive environment and mitigate hazing. They believed that without captains, each player had an opportunity to serve as a leader and this practice allowed the equal distribution of power and leadership. One Site B participant noted, "It gives everybody a chance to lead." Participants from Site B felt that this option contributed to a positive, inclusive, and supportive team environment that did not cultivate or promote hazing behavior.

Gender Differences

One component of this study focused on exploring the ways in which hazing was conceptualized through the lens of male and female participants. Accordingly, participants from both schools were asked to consider whether and to what extent gender differences played a role in hazing behavior. Site B students did not perceive any distinctions in hazing behavior between genders. However, the majority of participants at Site A stated that they believed hazing occurred more with boys than girls. One student expressed that girls "bully more than they haze", while another argued, "girls are more caring over other girls' feelings." Furthermore, most Site A participants emphasized that the severity of hazing was stronger for males. For example, one participant maintained, "I don't think it's as big of a problem as it is for boys. I mean of course girls have their moments where there's like tension between like two people and they kind of get their own little group, then it's kind of like group on group, but it doesn't last for more than a month." Ultimately, participants from Site B

believed that there were important distinctions between the hazing behavior of females and males due to differences in identity and personality.

Discussion

This study was designed in response to empirical data and anecdotal reports indicating that hazing is relatively widespread among high school students involved in clubs, teams, and organizations; that it occurs across a range of groups; and that it can result in significant harm to individuals and communities. Considering the lack of published studies about hazing prevention in a school context, this investigation makes an early contribution to the literature and provides a platform for further investigation. Building on public health approaches that draw attention to the social ecology of a school, this investigation was designed to examine hazing in the context of school climate and included school staff in addition to student participants. Concepts related to gender and power were explored in the analysis of student focus group data.

Overall, findings from this study indicated that students, regardless of gender, benefited from the training with statistically significant increases in perceived and measured knowledge about hazing and hazing prevention strategies, as well as enhanced understanding of bystander intervention. While there are currently no published comparisons for hazing prevention trainings, these findings mirrored those of similar studies in other prevention fields (e.g., sexual assault prevention, high-risk drinking, suicide prevention). The training also resulted in significant increases in knowledge about hazing for staff. Attitudes and perceptions about hazing and knowledge about prevention also moved in a positive direction but did not reach levels of significance, suggesting that staff members, given their roles, were likely to possess

knowledge about school policies prohibiting hazing, and be inclined to report it, but were not well-informed about hazing prior to the training. While the literature reveals gender differences in hazing behavior and perceptions of hazing among college students (Allan & Kinney, 2018; Anderson et al., 2012; Johnson & Holman, 2004; Kirby & Wintrup, 2002; Veliz & Allan, 2017), the qualitative findings from this investigation revealed that high school students often incorporate concepts relative to power and gender differences in their sense-making about hazing behavior. We recommend continued exploration of these concepts in future studies and that gender be considered when developing trainings and interventions for schools.

Several limitations warrant consideration when interpreting the findings from this investigation. First, data were gathered from two high schools in one northeastern state. Likert scales may be susceptible to response bias, subjective interpretation, and restricted choice. While the sites were representative of a rural and urban school with socioeconomic diversity, the participants were predominantly White. Also, student participants were all members of boys' and girls' athletic teams and therefore, may not be representative of the general student body. A larger sample of staff participants would strengthen the reliability of the findings for that sample.

Applications

While this study focused primarily on secondary students' awareness and behavior change, the importance of adults cannot be underestimated. The role of school personnel has been highlighted as both essential and often inadequate in hazing prevention (Edelman, 2005; Hermann & Finn, 2002; Hoover & Pollard, 2000). Therefore, incorporating hazing prevention training and intervention strategies into the

ongoing work of educators is a necessary consideration. Having a policy in handbooks is not enough; educators must consider additional strategies for shifting hazing attitudes and behaviors. Given their knowledge of the school climate and relationships with individual students and colleagues associated with co-curricular activities, school counselors are well positioned to advocate for more comprehensive and research-informed prevention at the school level. As such, we recommend counselors partner with other staff, including school athletic directors (ADs), for school-wide professional development (PD) about hazing and its prevention with supplemental training for school coaches and co-curricular advisors, many of whom may be part-time employees and absent from typical school PD functions. We also recommend the implementation of research-based and evaluated training for students to learn more about the potential harm of hazing, how to intervene as bystanders, and how to develop non-hazing traditions.

Despite the challenge of time and resources, both of which are rarely abundant in public schools, school counselors and colleagues can be vital facilitators of hazing prevention. Hazing prevention can be included in established bystander intervention efforts by naming it and being more transparent about ways in which hazing may be linked to school events, traditions, and norms. Strategies for school counselors can be embedded in daily interactions with students and colleagues. Some considerations include: helping students recognize when school or group traditions have the potential to cross the line into hazing; using consistent language to identify and name hazing practices; expanding conversations about hazing to include perceptions of status and power hierarchies; articulating how hazing prevention is a school community issue,

similar to the emergence of bullying prevention within the last decade; facilitating norms of healthy belonging and leadership development for students; making space for conversations to name and discuss hazing as a distinct issue while also linking it to bullying and other violence prevention efforts.

Summary

Given the lack of empirical studies exploring the efficacy of high school hazing prevention, this study fills a gap in the literature with results suggesting that this particular training can help strengthen knowledge about hazing, provide an empirical foundation for its prevention, and likely contribute to enhancing positive school climate. Like other forms of interpersonal violence, hazing may contribute to an abusive school climate and interfere with a positive learning environment for students. The research and evidence base for hazing prevention is in early stages of development. Building on these findings, future studies can broaden the implementation of the training and data collection to include different types of student groups and schools. Additionally, the research design can be strengthened with a control group and an additional post-test at least four weeks after the training to evaluate the extent to which attitude and knowledge shifts endure.

While small in scope, this study is one of the first to report outcomes of a high school hazing prevention training workshop and to explore student perceptions of gender and power in relation to hazing. Students' increased knowledge and positive shifts in attitudes and perceptions about hazing suggests the potential for disrupting hazing behavior in a high school context.

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Appendix Tables

Table 1

School and Participant Group Breakdown

Participant Group	Total N	Site A (Urban)	Site B (Rural)
Male Students	30	18	12
Female Students	38	22	16
Staff Members	16	12	4

Table 2

Likert Scale Items

Hazing Knowledge

- 1) Hazing occurs as part of the process of initiating new members into a group.
- 2) Nearly half of students in high school experience hazing.
- 3) Students experience hazing regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, or ethnicity.
- 4) *A behavior is only considered hazing if it involves physical harm.*
- 5) Practical jokes that cause embarrassment can be considered hazing.
- 6) Being hazed can cause lasting emotional harm.
- 7) Hazing is a form of interpersonal violence.
- 8) Often coaches, advisors, and other supervising adults are aware that hazing is taking place.

Attitudes and Perceptions

- 1) *Hazing is an effective way to build group traditions and unity.*
- 2) *If someone agrees to participate in a hazing activity that makes it okay.*
- 3) Pressure to participate in an activity interferes with a person's ability to give legitimate consent.
- 4) I am confident I can recognize hazing when I see it.
- 5) I am confident I can recognize warning signs that someone I know is dealing with hazing.
- 6) I feel comfortable talking about why hazing is a problem.
- 7) I am aware of ways to build group unity without hazing.
- 8) *I believe that humiliating or intimidating new club, organization, or team members is okay.*

Hazing Prevention

- 1) I am familiar with bystander intervention for hazing.
- 2) I know how to intervene safely to put a stop to hazing activities when I encounter them.
- 3) I am familiar with my school's hazing policy.
- 4) I know where and how to report hazing.
- 5) I am confident that I could offer support to a person who has experienced hazing.
- 6) *Most students at my school believe that humiliating or intimidating new club, organization, or team members is okay.*
- 7) *Most staff, coaches, and advisors at my school believe that humiliating or intimidating new club, organization, or team members is okay.*
- 8) *Most teachers at my school believe that humiliating or intimidating new club, organization or team members is okay.*

Note. Italicized statements in each scale were reverse scored.

Table 3*Male Students Paired T-Test Results*

Scale	Pre-Mean (SD)	Post-Mean (SD)	df	t	p
Hazing Knowledge	25.20 (3.84)	31.27 (4.43)	29	-6.91	<0.001
Attitudes and Perceptions	28.57 (4.34)	32.10 (5.19)	29	-5.04	<0.001
Hazing Prevention	27.80 (3.74)	30.27 (5.65)	29	-2.47	0.019

Female Students Paired T-Test Results

Scale	Pre-Mean (SD)	Post-Mean (SD)	df	t	p
Hazing Knowledge	28.29 (3.77)	31.87 (3.35)	37	-7.31	<0.001
Attitudes and Perceptions	32.08 (2.77)	34.37 (3.88)	37	-5.48	<0.001
Hazing Prevention	29.05 (3.30)	33.00 (3.86)	37	-7.07	<0.001

Staff Member Paired T-Test Results

Scale	Pre-Mean (SD)	Post-Mean (SD)	df	t	p
Hazing Knowledge	30.31 (3.11)	34.13 (3.36)	15	-7.25	<0.001
Attitudes and Perceptions	34.13 (3.20)	35.13 (2.63)	15	-1.52	0.150
Hazing Prevention	32.38 (4.56)	34.00 (3.52)	15	-1.92	0.074

Table 4*Male Students Paired T-Test Power Analysis and Effect Size*

Scale	Correlation	Power	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Hazing Knowledge	0.308	0.999	1.242
Attitudes and Perceptions	0.689	0.998	0.920
Hazing Prevention	0.380	0.668	0.452

Female Students Paired T-Test Power Analysis and Effect Size

Scale	Correlation	Power	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Hazing Knowledge	0.646	0.999	1.186
Attitudes and Perceptions	0.748	0.999	0.888
Hazing Prevention	0.547	0.999	1.147

Staff Member Paired T-Test Power Analysis and Effect Size

Scale	Correlation	Power	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Hazing Knowledge	0.792	0.999	1.819
Attitudes and Perceptions	0.608	0.296	0.380
Hazing Prevention	0.677	0.433	0.479

Biographical Statements

Elizabeth J. Allan is a professor of higher education in the School of Educational Leadership, Higher Education, and Human Development at the University of Maine, the state's flagship university. Allan's scholarship focuses on organizational culture and climate including studies about diversity, equity, student engagement, leadership, and hazing in the context of educational institutions. She is the author of two books, co-editor of a third, and has authored or co-authored more than 40 research-based articles. Her award-winning scholarship has been published in premiere education journals including the *Harvard Educational Review*, *The Journal of Higher Education*, *The Review of Higher Education*, *Innovative Higher Education*, and *The International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*, and the *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*.

Leah Hakkola is an assistant professor at the University of Maine. Her research examines how local, national, and global discourses about diversity and equity are informed by educational policies and practices, and how these discourses affect student and faculty success and higher education efficacy. Hakkola's general areas of expertise include the examination of educational policies and practices through the lens of evaluation, critical theories, and transformative paradigms. Her pedagogical and scholarly expertise focuses on inclusive excellence and social justice frameworks.

Dave Kerschner is currently a doctoral candidate and a Janet Waldron Doctoral Research Fellow at the University of Maine, pursuing a Ph.D. in education with a concentration in higher education. Since 2013 he has served as a research associate with StopHazing and the Hazing Prevention Consortium. His dissertation will examine

factors predictive of athlete hazing experiences in NCAA Division III athletes and, building off of his experience as a Division III athlete and administrator, he aspires to conduct research that will inform practice and change in college athletics. A 2009 *Summa Cum Laude* graduate of the University of Maine at Farmington, Dave received an M.S. in sport management from the University of Massachusetts in 2010 and M.B.A. from the University of Southern Maine in 2012.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Elizabeth J. Allan, Professor of Higher Education, University of Maine, Orono, ME 04469.

Contact: elizabeth.allan@maine.edu