

These hands don't haze, but I sure have witnessed it. Today, hazing is a major topic in our society, especially in the context of Greek life and sports teams. Hazing has been a strategy across many centuries for groups or organizations to allow new members to prove themselves worthy of acceptance into the group. Recently, however, hazing has been condemned by society due to the very dangerous and potentially lethal repercussions of physical and mental abuse new members may be faced with. Although, when done correctly and controlled, hazing may provide benefits to a group that could not be achieved without it.

My Junior and Senior years of highschool I transferred to a private, prestigious, K-12 school. This school contained predominantly academically inclined students, many in my graduating class to go on to ivy league schools with beyond impressive resumes. With the large percentage of students solely enrolled for the accelerated learning there was one group that stood out from the rest: The Men's Lacrosse team. This team consisted of high class athletes, who had a legacy of being one of the best teams in the state with many State Championships as well as Division 1 alumni, and current players. I tried out for the team at the beginning of my Junior year, even though lacrosse season is in the spring; they practiced year round and participated in a winter league.

After successfully joining the team, the first thing I noticed was what they called themselves, "The Brotherhood". The main idea of this was to form themselves into something more meaningful than just a sports team. The brotherhood was like a family, every brother does their part to support the family and hold their brothers accountable. This meant pushing past physical limits in practice, showing up early to practice, and putting your body on the line for your brothers in game. This ideology was nothing new to most of the players, since it had been

team, which fed into the Varsity team.

With a family-like ideology in place, meant that there was a family-like hierarchy. First came the captains of each section of the team: the offensive captain, the defensive captain (me) and the goalie captain, who was seen as the main figure, calling the shots. Each position acted as a father figure for those learning how to play their position; often players would turn to their captain for advice about the game and how to improve. Past captain positions, the implied “rank” of a player was based on seniority. So, with an extremely complicated set of relationships amongst the team, came with a strong passion for the brotherhood amongst most players. This made this hazing acceptable for the family, as being a part of the team meant lots of hard work, responsibility, and time commitment.

During the middle of my Junior season, right before playoffs, I witnessed the first hazing event since being a part of the team. A sophomore player who was a large factor in the team missed practice without an excuse, and it was very clear to the other captains, mainly our goalie, that the player needed a punishment. The senior goalie recommended a “firing squad” for the player, which meant the offender would put on their helmet, line up against the back wall of the locker room, and every brother on the team would whip a tennis ball as hard as they could at the offender. This event took place the next practice, in which the player gladly accepted their punishment, knowing he had let down his brothers. Obviously, with no way a ball could hit the players head, he was not injured at all, but was left with some nasty bruises from being hit with the balls. Although, lacrosse players having bruising on their body’s was common, being that the way a defenseman would steal the ball from someone was slashing at their stick with their own, almost every time connecting with a players body and arms. This meant that the bruising on the

unless someone spoke up about it: which never happened. From this moment on, I realized just how effective this punishment was. Not a single player the rest of the year missed practice, despite them being two hours long every day.

The hazing and ideology of brotherhood amongst the team proved to be a prime example of culturally created hegemonic masculinity. The foundation of the idea of hegemonic masculinity is the notion that men are expected to be powerful and emotionless. When a guy exhibits stereotypically masculine behaviors that conform to cultural norms, that behavior is known as hegemonic masculinity. The brotherhood offered just that, a chance to be bothered about emotion, and an opportunity to represent yourself as a strong and fierce athlete. With our school consisting of largely unathletic branaics, it was seen as something special to be a part of the manly, tough, and decorated brotherhood. Brett Stoudt in “You’re Either In or You’re Out” comments on standing out in a private school, “With everyone at Rockport trying to be different, they all blend together.” (Stoudt 282) Everyone at my school tried to be different through their school work, resumes, and potential school options, inevitably forming one big group of academically driven students. The lacrosse team offered players an identity that was separate from the rest, and one that proved very desirable from outsiders. Also, without a football team, a large percentage of the student body would attend games, especially the two state championships we went to in 2021 as well as 2022. This separated the brotherhood from the school's main population, in the sense that we were known as masculine and strong athletes. Also, this carried over into aspects of school that did not involve lacrosse, such as clothing choices and behavior. Most male students were commonly dressed in collared shirts and khaki pants, while members of the brotherhood could be easily recognized by varsity jackets and athletic clothing. It was

extremely proud of holding a position on the team.

While some may argue that hazing and reinforcement of masculine traits are dangerous and potentially damaging to an impressionable young man's identity, the brotherhood proved otherwise. However, do I really think this masculine influence had no downsides? Obviously not; I could tell many players represented themselves as someone they were not, limiting emotions, as well as being aggressive and condescending towards non-athletes. Yet, this family structure provided benefits unimaginable from the outside. Every player knew they could count on each and every brother to stick by their side no matter what. In some cases, this even prevented other potential bullying incidents from occurring. Also, many players who had weak home lives or had no one to express their emotions to, found themselves opening up to their new found family, willing to speak on very private struggles and complications in their lives. I experienced this personally, when a young freshman approached me and cried on my shoulder about the death of a family member.

In conclusion, hazing and violence stemming from hegemonic masculinity should never be encouraged or glorified. The potential dangers of physical harm and mental abuse make the concept illogical and damaging. However, this is not to say that hazing is incapable of providing benefits to those who choose to endure it. As a member of the Brotherhood, it provided many benefits such as: an outlet to express emotions and feelings, counteracting the masculine identity players represented in public. A sense of belonging and purpose for those who did not belong to a group they could count on. As well as learning discipline and work ethic through a strict practice schedule, and taught players to respect those who had earned it. Despite the fact that hazing in this instance helped members develop comradery and commitment, its negative effects

comprehend hazing's historical and ongoing repercussions as well as how it affects people's lives and society as a whole.