

## **Hazing: A Military Study**



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## Hazing: A Military Study

“Hazing is an extraordinary activity that, when it occurs often enough, becomes perversely ordinary as those who engage in it grow desensitized to its inhumanity” (Nuwer, 2012). Hazing in the military has achieved significant negative attention in recent years and remains as a challenge of both human relations and policy. The military has risen to meet this challenge through various efforts to include the creation of a hazing working group, examination of policy, hazing prevention offices, and more. There is a void, however, in military hazing research. Research can provide data that may help in the development of training, policy, and understanding, but it is not certain to what extent hazing has been experienced, how it is understood, or why it occurs within the military. Current understanding of hazing is based on university Greek fraternity or sorority life and sports teams (high school and college, primarily), while many beliefs regarding hazing and its conceptions are anecdotal. Data must be gathered to test assumptions and facilitate the most effective response to hazing. This study sought to examine knowledge, perceptions, and understanding of hazing among military members.

## Background

### Hazing

Hazing is an activity typically steeped in tradition, bound by silence, and ritualistic in nature. Hazing is thought to mark a transition, celebrate an achievement, or bring someone into a social or professional circle; however, hazing has staggering costs. A 2012 hazing incident at a military academy involved 27 cadets and various states of injury (Handy, 2012). This event can be extrapolated to \$14,062.50 worth of lost productivity in a single day. Hazing has also cost lives. In 2012, a service member committed suicide in response to acts of hazing (Lamothe, 2011). Hazing takes away from missions as well. For example, in the Dhi Qar province of Iraq in 2009,

U.S. soldiers shot a local and ancient guard tower. Shooting the tower was an act of inclusion for new members of the team. Unfortunately, the local Iraqis who witnessed this transgression lost respect and goodwill in addition to requiring reparations (L. Rush, personal communication, 2012). No service is immune to hazing, as all have experienced incidents despite declaring zero tolerance. This brings up the questions, why does hazing occur, and what is being done about it? Hazing is a challenging phenomenon that requires further examination.

### **Hazing Conceptually**

*The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines hazing simply as “to harass by way of abusive and humiliating tricks, usually by way of initiation” (Mish, 2004). The key component to this definition is that hazing behaviors are done for *initiation*. Conceptually, hazing involves a desire to bring an outsider into the group. Group members may put themselves in fatal situations for the privilege of initial or, at times such as achievement, continued membership (Robbins, 2005, p. 324). *Hazing* is often used interchangeably with other terms, such as *bullying*. Hazing and bullying have similarities; however, the root cause of their behavior is unique to each term. While it may seem irrelevant to examine terms and concepts, “something as simple as changing terminology can assist in changing a culture of hazing in an organization” (Robbins, 2005, p. 327). Hazing is ultimately about inclusion, while bullying is about exclusion. They may share the same path, however.

### **Hazing vs. Bullying**

*The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines a bully as a person who is “habitually cruel to others who are weaker” (Mish, 2004). Bullying is simply harassment with no endpoint. Bullying originates from a desire to exclude another and involves misuse of power. Bullies exploit an unequivocal power imbalance that renders the victim powerless to prevent or stop the behaviors

(Steinhauser, 2012). Bullying is often thought of as “school playground” behavior; however, it is also found in the adult workplace (Namie, 2012). Bullying behaviors, like hazing, may be psychological or physical in nature, vary in severity, and may be done covertly or overtly. Bullying has been correlated with absenteeism, sickness, stress, employee turnover, team breakdown, and more (Namie, 2012). It is costly in time, lost productivity, and health, and it takes away from the work mission.

Where bullying differs from hazing is in the intent. The intentions of hazing are to bring a member in to the group. Bullying is never meant as a means to bring one into the group; however, for members who are unpopular or deemed unworthy of acceptance, what began as hazing may turn into bullying. One comment anecdotally repeated by those who experienced hazing is that, “it is a way to learn who likes you and who doesn’t, who’s a jerk and who isn’t” (J. Shoemaker, personal communication, October 1, 2012). The overall feeling for these individuals is that hazing provides a nuanced way to obtain intelligence on the personalities of and relationships with others.

Another differentiating factor between bullying and hazing is that when one says the word *bully*, people respond with the desire to correct the issue, and there are clear paths to do so within the equal employment opportunity (EEO) framework, such as complaints about a hostile work environment. Hazing, on the other hand, evokes a mixed response. An informal examination of comments in an anonymous online chat room on the topic of military hazing revealed that the reaction toward hazing was divided. For some individuals, hazing may be viewed positively, as a source of pride and reason for superiority; for others, it is viewed with contempt. As noted earlier, terms can have a significant impact on behavior. Assessing military

members' understanding of these two terms would be beneficial to policy and training development.

### **Hazing vs. Extra Military Instruction**

A common misperception is that extra military instruction (EMI) constitutes hazing. When done correctly, EMI is not hazing; however, it does have the potential to cross the line into hazing or bullying. The purpose of EMI is to teach, practice, or improve a skill, knowledge, or other work-required activity. The exercises directly contribute to people's ability to do their job. In many instances, the EMI may be corrective. When the exercise, training, or instruction no longer meets that purpose, it has become either bullying (if the end point is exclusion) or hazing (if the end point is inclusion). In 2012, recruits were given excessive physical fitness exercises, the end result (sickness) of which would clearly defeat corrective physical fitness (Faram, 2012). In this situation, the line (the number of daily exercises permitted) was defined, yet crossed. In many anecdotal instances, the line is not clear or may differ among people (such as the number of miles one can run before tiring). The military is a unique organization that requires sacrifice, hard work, and pushing the edge of ability. The line and the limit, however, are defined within the constructs of one's work. If safely followed, EMI will properly serve its purpose; however, the question of confusion between hazing and EMI has not been experimentally examined.

### **Hazing and Tradition/Celebration**

Hazing is associated with traditions and celebrations. From crossing the equator to promotions in rank, these activities have a historical pattern of activities. One military heritage and history command, for example, estimates 3% of their archives to be devoted to military customs and traditions dating back centuries (personal conversation with a military historian, 2014). Traditions may invoke a sense of connection and ownership for some individuals

(Burney, 2012). Anecdotally, there exists a sense of pride and possessiveness for some military members in response to having experienced the traditions or celebrations associated with a given act or group. In response to the same event, other military members may cringe at the thought; hazing still gives one particular former military member chills 40 years later, for example (Briscoe, 2012). A recent revision of the Royal British Navy's traditional saying (such as from "to our men" to "to our sailors" and from "to our wives and sweethearts" to "to our families") at formal celebratory events caused an interesting stir (Lilley, 2013). Analysis of the comments toward the article showed that 38% of commentators were against the change, while the remaining 62% were in favor. Some commentators appear to see such activities as unnecessary hazing, while others do not. One editorial noted that its readers stated "if it's considered a 'tradition,' it *can't* be considered hazing. Others think it's OK to exercise a little humiliation, so long as the individual being hazed gives consent" (Editorial, 2013). The question of hazing and whether it is seen as such in the form of traditions or celebrations has not been experimentally tested.

### **The Hazing Process**

The method by which an outsider is brought in involves a rite of passage, initiation, or various tests that the member must pass in order to be considered eligible for group membership. The prospective member is expected to follow the orders of the person or persons giving these required activities without question. Possible activities that prospective in-group members may experience include cognitive, physical, and behavioral demands.

Cognitive demands include tests of intense knowledge or memorization (of the history of the organization, unit, or group they are joining), nicknames, receiving insults or derogatory remarks, engaging in insults or derogatory remarks toward others, deception, assigning demerits,

social isolation, vows of silence, and psychological harassment. Physical demands include physical activities, such as expecting certain items to always be in one's possession, “horsing around,” physical exertion, physical deprivation or exhaustion, receiving physical blows, forced drinking and/or eating, branding, burning, nudity, lack of hygiene, and exposure to extreme conditions and deprivation of privileges granted to other members. Behavioral demands include the requirement to perform various acts that may or may not relate to the purpose of the group. Examples include useless drills; sexual activities; destruction of property or people; duties not assigned to other members; personal service to other members, such as carrying books, errands, cooking, cleaning, etc.; threats or implied threats; embarrassing or humiliating attire; and stunt or skit nights with degrading, crude, or humiliating acts.

Often, all three categories are simultaneously employed in acts of hazing. The degree of hazing varies in severity. On one end of the spectrum are psychological, physical, or behavioral demands that are seen as “no big deal.” This may include nicknames, knowledge tests, useless drills, “horsing around,” performing duties for other members, and other such behaviors. On the other extreme are the behaviors that cause physical or emotional damage or death; “these rituals, originally used to ensure new sailors could handle life at sea, escalated over time and have even led to deaths” (Briscoe, 2012). Illustration 1 gives an example of the spectrum of hazing applied toward a new fire station recruit. It is important to note that hazing, no matter where it is on the spectrum, is a behavior that amplifies superiority among those who are included and exclusion among those who are not. Simply put, hazing does not relate to or support the mission of the unit, command, or community the potential member is attempting to join. Hazing behaviors that seem benign, such as being forced to clean out someone else’s locker, introduce unhealthy dynamics of power and control that do not serve any function to support the needs of the unit or



the skill set of the individual. Over time, these behaviors may evolve into hazardous requirements by either the new person or people who arrive later. As each act of hazing is completed, an environment and attitude of acceptance is created. This was confirmed as the path of the “Mahmudiyah Killings,” which took place in Iraq (Watt and Ussery, 2012). It is important to note that the concept of hazing as a spectrum has not been experimentally tested.

### **Hazing Training**

The military engages in many forms of training and development, from annual computerized lessons that focus on policy to in-person courses that provide skills in dealing with a given area to be trained. Hazing training within the military varies and is challenging to define. While all policies make some mention of hazing-type behaviors or hazing itself, it has been anecdotally noted that blanket policies—such as “dignity and respect,” which cover all these terms and more—may not provide specific enough understanding or counter actions for military members to implement. One commentator in response to anti-hazing policy finds the military’s “anti-hazing messages ... are clear as mud” (Editorial, 2013). To better address hazing, it must be understood.

One potential barrier to better understanding hazing is the secrecy that surrounds it and the belief that people will not talk about it. A quote by a military commander asked about hazing illustrates this challenge:

I will tell you ... we did ask fraternization and hazing questions in our QOL surveys worldwide ... and accumulated about 25,000+ responses to our surveys in my tenure there; and, I would say less than 1% would say "yes" to both questions; and, normally there would be no comments in our open-ended "write about anything" section regarding hazing and some comments regarding fraternization. So, either it is very hush-hush

(requiring carefully-crafted questions) or we had very poorly written questions which did not tease out the hazing issue properly (personal communication, February 8, 2012).

Indeed, there exists a “code of silence” surrounding hazing at many college campuses nationwide (Burney, 2012). It appears that this is present in military settings as well; however, the examination of hazing news articles and chat room comments suggests that military members will talk about it. Careful investigation into the attitudes, perceptions, experiences, and understanding of military members must be engaged in order to develop effective training. A *Navy Times* editorial (2013) comments that “right now there is way too much guesswork by sailors and leaders” and there is a need for clear training that exceeds what is currently given. While progress is being made, there is no clear answer to the question, what is the current training? Is it effective? Tracking of training and incidents remains to be further solidified, as well.

### **Hazing Theory**

One of the greatest challenges with regard to hazing is that positive concepts such as inclusion, accomplishment, recognition, celebration, and status are believed to be provided by the act of hazing. Policies that forbid hazing may not be fully effective as members go underground and engage in unauthorized hazing, as has been evidenced by numerous headlines and YouTube videos. Training that introduces only policy and the negative impact of hazing may not be enough to stop the behavior. Understanding the *why* of hazing is necessary to creating effective policy, training, and procedures for addressing it.

Hazing may be explained from many perspectives: the cracked foundation of socio-psychological influences, a wayward military member, or a destructive command climate. In university fraternities and sororities, “Fictive kinship” facilitates a “vowed allegiance to a

collectivity”; in other words, bonds can be created that rival that of traditional family relationships (Robbins, 2005, p. 323). Within the military, recent research found that new recruits are more loyal to their immediate social group than to the military or the mission (Leskinen and Sinkko, 2013). Hazing at its most basic level, however, is best explained by anthropological theories.

Across time and culture, rituals—or “actions wrapped in a web of symbolism”—facilitated the same standing in society, a shared sense of unique identity, and group cohesion (Rush & Sprowles, 2012). Rites of passage or initiations are a form of ritual that serves a necessary function in both military and broader American societies (Rush & Sprowles, 2012). There are three distinct phases of ritual (initiation): separation phase, removal of identities, and the liminal/transitional phase. The separation phase is often a physical as well as mental separation that involves the removal of identities. Participants are separated from their main society and their everyday roles and expectations. During the liminal/transitional phase, participants are led up to a culminating event. Both the process as well as the culminating event may be brief or extensive, but it is in this phase that the transition (such as in rank, membership, or status) occurs. During the incorporation phase, the member returns to society. These three phases are core to the creation of a common shared identity. As Rush & Sprowles (2012) note, “when taking the regulation into account, it is important not to lose the socio-cultural functions of the rite. The abolition of hazing can not mean the abolition of rites of passage.”

The continuation of hazing despite zero-tolerance policies and training does suggest that such behaviors are significant to many military members. Nuwer (1990) has found that those who have been hazed have a sense of attachment to these experiences and will seek to recreate them, possibly because “an initiate who endures a severe ordeal is likely to find membership in a group

all the more appealing” (p. 115). In the process of inclusion through exclusion, “is inclusion ever the result? And if so, inclusion into what?” (J. Goosby-Smith, personal communication, February 2, 2014).

It is not known how many engage in such behaviors; however, there were 159 news headlines on hazing between 2011 and 2013. Many of these instances followed the pattern of initiation described by Rush & Sprowles. “Although the military does provide official advancement ceremonies, individual units continue to conduct rites of passage in an unofficial capacity. These unofficial rites suggest that the three social functions (using the three phases) are not being met by the official ceremonies” (Rush & Sprowles, 2012). Rites of passage need not involve “humility-inducing experiences,” the type of hazing featured in the news headlines. Humility-inducing experiences are physically or mentally damaging and destructive (J. Goosby-Smith, personal communication, August 6, 2013). It is entirely possible to engage in rites and rituals without death, destruction, or the threat of violence. However, there are military members who reportedly believe that “hazing has to be negative, dangerous, and risky” (J. Shoemaker, personal conversation, October 1, 2012). Though less studied, there are several examples of military units that have engaged in rites of passage safely and with supervision and success (Rush & Sprowles, 2012). Lunenburg (2011) supports this as well, noting that a “key aspect in creating organizational cultures is the everyday activities and celebrations that characterize the organization” to include the management of rituals and symbolic actions. The creation of symbols or rituals has power to break down barriers and enable formerly warring parties to work together; this should not be overlooked as a potential tool for group cohesion.

**Hazing Summary**

“Hazing is an equal opportunity disgrace,” yet it does not allow for equal opportunity (Newur, 2012). While participants of hazing are selected for inclusion, others are excluded. The course of action toward hazing is less clear, but bullying “costs the government \$300,000” per instance on average in the form of hostile work environment (“bully themed”) EEO complaints (J. Miller, personal conversation, October 19, 2012). Those who experience hazing are compromised mentally, physically, or emotionally. Some military members may justify and take pride in the experience, while others may remember with pain, years later, the experiences they went through. As found in one 2011 news article, “what was seen as criminal in the eyes of some commanders was dismissed as a tasteless, inappropriate attempt at humor in the eyes of others” (Vandiver, 2012). There are currently more questions than answers when it comes to hazing. For example, do military members have a proper conceptual definition or understanding of hazing? Does it influence their behavior? Will they talk about it? What is the current training, and is it effective? Testing theoretical assumptions and exploring these questions would be beneficial to policy and training development. This study sought to obtain objective data with regard to hazing.

**The Present Study****Participants**

Students in attendance of the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Equal Opportunity Advisor (EOA) course conducted at DEOMI participated in this study. Students were military members with a diverse range in age, career field, gender, and race; however, they were all present to learn how to become EOAs.

## Methods

A mixed method cross-sectional survey was utilized to gauge various hazing constructs to include knowledge about and experience with hazing. Participants' self-report response to hazing knowledge and experience questions were either "yes" or "no." Participants were asked to fill in the definition of hazing and bullying. Responses were analyzed and categorized by content. Hazing assessment questions were forced-choice scenario assessments. Excel software was used to enter the data and obtain descriptive statistics.

Scenario questions consisted of physical or mental activities done for the purpose of hazing that were clarified as being for acceptance, celebration, or bullying. These scenarios were further clarified as minor or severe. Participants were asked to choose one of the following options in response to the scenario: "just having fun," "hazing," "bullying," or "not sure." Questions were only either "hazing" or "bullying" by definition, however, enabling both an objective measurement of knowledge as well as an exploratory examination of perceptions as influenced by different factors (Table 1).

Physical scenarios included items such as drinking alcohol, sleep deprivation, and punches. Psychological scenarios included items such as teasing, belittling, and name calling. Objects scenarios included items such as actions toward property that belonged to others. An example of a question set is listed below; however, in the instrument, these scenarios were randomly mixed.

### Minor

1. A military member is regularly called silly names. (Bully).
  2. A military member is regularly called silly names in order to be accepted into the unit.
- (Hazing Accept).

3. A military member is regularly called silly names in order to celebrate an achievement within the unit. (Hazing Celebrate).

Severe

4. A military member is regularly called derogatory names. (Bully).
5. A military member is regularly called derogatory names in order to be accepted into the unit. (Hazing Accept).
6. A military member is regularly called derogatory names in order to celebrate an achievement within the unit. (Hazing Celebrate).

## **Results**

### **Demographics**

A total of 106 participants completed the survey. The majority of participants were Army (58%), male (57%), in the 30–40 years old age range (60%), Black (50%), and had been deployed (74%). Complete demographic figures are listed in Appendix A.

### **Hazing Knowledge and Training**

The majority of participants marked “yes” to all hazing knowledge questions (Table 2). Participants’ self ratings of understanding how hazing relates to equal opportunity were highest at 90% and lowest with regard to military law at 84%.

The majority of participants (58%) marked “yes” in response to whether they had received hazing training with the training described as a brief or presentation at the unit followed by computer-based training (Figure 1).

### **Hazing and Bullying Definitions**

Participants were asked to write out the definition of hazing and bullying; 82% of participants wrote a definition for hazing, while 87% wrote definitions for bullying. Definitions

were analyzed for frequency of specific terms (Figure 2). Harm and danger were most frequently cited in the definitions of hazing, while abuse, power, and harassment were most frequently cited in the definitions of bullying. Both hazing and bullying frequently had concepts of force as part of their definitions.

Definitions were also examined for the frequency of words such as physical, mental, and emotional (Figure 3). Both hazing and bullying definitions were most associated with physical elements. Bullying was also highly associated with mental aspects.

### **Hazing Experience and Perception**

The majority of participants (80%) marked “no” in response to witnessing, experiencing, or encouraging hazing experiences, while 20% average marked “yes.” Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the descriptive analysis of the “no” and “yes” responses.

Hazing perceptions were examined (Figure 6). The majority (90%) of participants marked “no” to the statement “if someone desires hazing, then it is not hazing.” The majority (43% and 39%, respectively) marked “no” to the statements that hazing is more frequent or more severe in combat zones. The majority (71% for both questions) marked “no” to the statements that “hazing has interfered with my mission” and “hazing has aided my mission.” The majority (45% and 50%, respectively) marked N/A with to the statements “hazing has interfered with team cohesion” and “hazing has aided team cohesion.”

### **Hazing Scenario Assessment**

Participants were asked to assess different scenarios and place them into one of four categories (just having fun, hazing, bullying, or not sure). Scenarios fell into categories of either hazing or bullying. An average of 50% of participants correctly selected bullying for bullying scenarios and hazing for hazing scenarios (Figure 7). Participants who selected “just having fun”



were three times more likely to do so when the scenarios were hazing versus bullying. An average of 17% each did not know how to classify either hazing or bullying scenarios.

Within the hazing category, scenarios were further divided by either hazing for acceptance or hazing for celebration. Hazing for celebration was nearly three times more likely to be viewed as “fun” than hazing for acceptance (Figure 8).

Scenarios were further divided into one of two levels (benign or extreme; Figure 9.). Benign scenarios were more likely to be judged as “fun” for both hazing and bullying. Bullying scenarios were less likely than hazing scenarios to be judged as fun with one exception, which was modifying property belonging to others. Scenarios that were less severe were also more likely to be judged as fun.

Within the hazing category, scenarios were divided into hazing behaviors for either acceptance or celebration (Figure 10). Hazing behaviors that were celebratory were more likely to be judged as fun than the same hazing behaviors for acceptance for all categories.

## **Discussion**

### **Demographics**

Participant demographics were not equal in category representation, with a majority of participants being Black, Army, male, human resources (HR), deployed, enlisted persons in the 30–40 age range. While data comparisons on the bases of job type or branch of service would be of interest, the unequal sample size for most demographics was prohibitive. Demographics such as gender and training received were able to be broken down and analyzed by those factors.

### **Hazing Knowledge and Training**

Participants self ratings indicated that the majority of them knew the definition of hazing and understood how it relates to equal opportunity. A smaller majority of participants had received

training, revealing a sizable percentage that claimed not to have received any training. Due to variations within the services, this may not be surprising; however, hazing policies exist for all services, and it remains to be explored whether military members' lack of knowledge and training concerning these policies has an impact on hazing behaviors.

Those who had received training filled in the blank for what type of training they received. Responses varied from "annual" to "1-hour lecture," which could possibly be the same category. Future studies should employ forced choice response to prevent this error. A small percent of participants noted that their training came from outside the military; the uniformity and effectiveness of training received among members is unknown. However, the question of training effectiveness can be examined further. On average, participants did not greatly differ, though scores were higher (meaning they were closer to marking "no" on knowledge questions) for the group that marked they did not receive training (Figure 11). Future studies should explore the possibility that command climate, and not training, could have more to do with hazing knowledge.

### **Hazing and Bullying Definitions**

Participants' written definitions indicated that they had elements of the definition but were not entirely clear or accurate, and in some cases, they were confused. Within the hazing definitions, for example, only 50% of the participants' definitions could technically be considered hazing. Within the bullying definitions, 6% of participants listed definitions that stated bullying was the same as hazing.

Hazing clarifiers included initiation, rite of passage, acceptance, celebration, and being brought into a group. Within the explicit hazing definitions, participants solely cited inclusion into a group in 55% of the definitions, with the remaining definitions specifically using the terms

initiation (25%), rite of passage (10%), or ritual (10%). Bullying clarifiers included unwarranted, unwanted physical or emotional harm with no reason listed. Participants have a clear association of hazing with group acceptance and bullying with being harassed; however, they do confuse these concepts.

Additionally, both concepts were most associated with a physical act, highlighting the need to ensure participants understand that they can be mental and emotional as well. A few instructive definitions for hazing are shown below:

“Hitting an individual in order for them to belong to a particular organization”

“Tacking on the crew”

“Physical abuse for acceptance”

Bullying definitions, while more inclusive of mental matters on average (such as being picked on) were also conceptually limited to physical elements for some participants, as seen in these definition examples:

“Physically harming a person that is smaller then you just to make yourself feel better about self”

“Bullying based on advantage of size etc.”

Hazing was most associated with terms of a physical, harmful, or dangerous nature, while bullying was most associated with terms of harassment and abuse. One finding was the differences seen in these activities as unwanted or forced. Several definitions marked “unwanted abuse” or “unwanted harm.” That participants believe abuse or harm could be wanted is concerning, yet it is supportive of some theories.

In no instance did a person write out the entire definition of hazing or bullying. While this aspect of the survey was informative, it may be useful in future studies to provide a multiple-choice answer from which to choose the definition.

### **Hazing Experience and Perception**

An average of 20 percent of the population surveyed has experienced hazing in some form. This is in contrast with a zero-tolerance policy, yet it is positive that 80% of participants had not seen, witnessed, nor encouraged hazing. Though the possibility that participants could be untruthful is always present, the fact that they were willing to engage in the surveys is encouraging, as hazing experts have noted that there is often a reluctance to speak about hazing.

The analysis of type of hazing experience illustrates that participants who experienced hazing were most likely to have witnessed hazing and least likely to have encouraged it. A possible consideration for hazing training may lie with bystander intervention skills.

Hazing questions consisted of dangerous, harmful, or humiliating activities either for the purpose of acceptance or for the purpose of celebration. Participants were more likely to have dangerous or harmful hazing experiences (witnessed, participated in, or encouraged) if hazing was for celebration than if it was for acceptance; however, they were more likely to be humiliated for acceptance over celebration. Participants had the highest response to witnessing, participating in, or encouraging when asked directly about hazing experiences versus situations that consisted of hazing behaviors. This could reflect that participants' concept of hazing is separate from the concept of behaviors that constitute hazing. While the majority of participants had received training, a percentage of participants had not, and this was explored further.

Participants were divided into having received training or not, and their experiences were compared. While both groups had not experienced hazing on average, those who had received

training showed a slightly higher likelihood of having witnessed, experienced, or encouraged hazing than those who did not have training (Table 3).

When examined as a histogram, twice as many participants who received training experienced hazing compared to those who did not have hazing training. This could be due to several reasons, one of which includes the possibility that participants became more aware and educated after training, increasing their cognizance of having experienced hazing in some form. Often, training programs will coincide with an increase in reporting of a given behavior, such as sexual harassment, not necessarily because the behavior increases but because reporting of the behavior increased. This is important to keep in mind as training is shaped and administered military-wide. This is also positive in that it could support the success of current training and development of future training.

That the majority (90%) of participants marked “no” to the statement “if someone desires hazing, then it is not hazing” is positive. The cause for 10 percent of participants believing that desired hazing is not hazing is uncertain. Future studies would benefit from pre-/post-intervention analysis to determine if this belief stems from a lack of knowledge and awareness or an attitude that persists despite knowledge.

While the majority of participants marked “no” or did not have the basis with which to respond, 8% and 12% marked “yes” to the statements that hazing is more frequent and more severe (respectively) in combat zones. When examined in light of having deployed or not, the percent of participants who marked “yes” is higher at 15% and 28% respectively. Future studies may wish to examine this further. Regardless of environment, outlets for constructive team building and celebration are necessary.

While the majority marked that hazing did not aid the military mission, 8% felt that hazing had aided their mission, while 13% felt it had interfered. The majority of participants selected “N/A” for the impact of hazing on team cohesion. However, of those who could mark either “yes” or “no,” 36% felt that hazing aided team cohesion, while 39% felt hazing had interfered with team cohesion. Training participants who have had the experience that hazing has been helpful to their mission or team will be challenging. Quantifying interference with mission or team cohesion may be helpful to those who have not had that experience or do not believe that hazing is negative.

### **Hazing Scenario Assessment**

Participants’ average scores illustrated that a significant percentage can correctly identify hazing and bullying scenarios; however, an equally significant percentage cannot correctly identify hazing and bullying scenarios. In no instance did any participant correctly identify all scenarios, while 25% of the participants circled more than one response, for example viewing a scenario as both hazing and fun, both hazing and bullying, or all three (hazing, bullying, and fun). These responses were converted to “don’t know” answer choices when examining all data.

The participants’ data showed clear patterns reflected in the type of scenario, such as being more likely to mark “fun” for items that were minor as compared to severe (within both hazing and bullying scenarios) and more likely to mark “fun” for scenarios of hazing celebration than for scenarios that were for hazing acceptance. Physical hazing and bullying scenarios were more likely to be marked as fun than psychological hazing or bullying scenarios.

This pattern provides objective support for the notion that military members do not see “minor” acts of hazing as problematic, instead seeing them as fun. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that hazing exists on a spectrum. Most acts may start out as “minor,” but over time the

envelope is pushed until they eventually become “severe.” This lends support for clear guidance, education, and prevention toward “minor” acts of hazing. Given that a number of participants do believe such acts of hazing to be acceptable, providing alternative events that are not hazing must occur.

Within the hazing categories, celebration scenarios were viewed as fun more frequently than hazing acceptance scenarios; this pattern is instructive as well. Participants appear to have a clear construct of hazing as a form of inclusion but less so as a form of celebration (staying included). Training on this concept to provide awareness and preparation for celebrations of promotions or achievements within a unit would be beneficial. That few participants marked psychological hazing or bullying as fun may reflect that mental pain is significant or that the military culture is more physical.

Participants were divided into having received training or not received training, and their scenario ratings were compared. Trained participants were more likely (by 7%) to accurately categorize hazing and bullying; however, they were also slightly (2%) more likely to list “don’t know” in hazing for acceptance and bullying scenarios and slightly (3%) more likely to list hazing and bullying scenarios as “fun” than participants who had not received training.

### **Summary**

Examining the data as a whole (Table 4), it appears that participants’ self-rated understanding of hazing may not accurately reflect technical conceptions of hazing, regardless of current training. Also reflected is that hazing is open to interpretation and conditions, such as severity or purpose (such as physical celebration).

While most participants did not have hazing experience, those who did were more likely to report having witnessed than encouraged it; however, 13% did report that they encouraged

hazing. It is not known whether those who have encouraged hazing differ greatly from those who have not. Future studies may need to examine this to determine whether training should be altered for that population. The current study supports the development of hazing training that focuses on conceptual matters (such as severity and celebration) and bystander intervention. Also important is the uncertainty regarding others' property. As the military moves into new theatres and areas of operation, it will be crucial for success to ensure that the military does not destroy or damage the property of others.

### **Conclusion**

This study utilized current hazing theory, anecdotal evidence, and current concerns to investigate hazing in the military. The goal was to explore and establish the baseline of hazing training, knowledge, and experience from which training and policy could be refined. It is important to keep in mind the need for more data from more diverse sources; however, this data does provide a useful snapshot of information.

Many military members do receiving hazing training and believe that they understand it but demonstrate in definition and scenario assessment accuracy scores that they are not 100% clear on the proper conceptual definition or understanding of it. The majority have not experienced it, while those 20% who have are more likely to have witnessed than received or encouraged hazing. A sizable percentage did report that they encouraged hazing or found the destruction of others' property as fun, which is concerning; however, it does answer the question of whether or not military members will talk about hazing. It is likely that different conditions would yield different qualities of sharing hazing experiences. It was found that situational clarifiers can influence perceptions of behavior. Hazing in the form of celebration, for example, was more likely to be seen as fun than hazing for acceptance or bullying. Whether hazing or bullying,



situations that are clarified as “light” were more likely to be viewed as fun than those that were not. Physical situations were more likely than psychological situations to be viewed as fun, as well. This would lead one to believe that when the situation is “light” hazing as a form of celebration involving physical elements such as alcohol, participants will not see the danger that may result or the hazing that occurs.

Participants reported both that hazing has hurt their team or mission as well as helped it. As J. Goosby-Smith notes, “exclusion and inclusion are true inverses, hazing (a form of sanctioned exclusion) is often done to make people ‘worthy’ of inclusion...and tolerated because one wants inclusion” (personal communication, February 2, 2014). It is important to ensure that military members are provided with a sense of belonging, inclusion, and leadership while still retaining order, discipline, and the ability to follow. Participants may know what hazing generally is, but not how to create a safe rite of passage that meets human needs. It appears that there may not be a one-size-fits-all solution to an issue that is as varied as the people one hopes to reach. It is possible that training must be tailored; however, future studies are needed. While many new questions have been inspired in the pursuit of this data, there is one conclusion that can be made with certainty: hazing must be taken seriously because lives and missions depend on an environment free from hazing.

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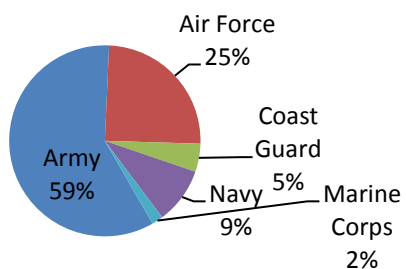
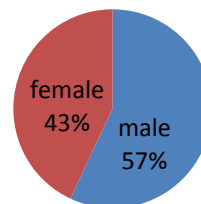
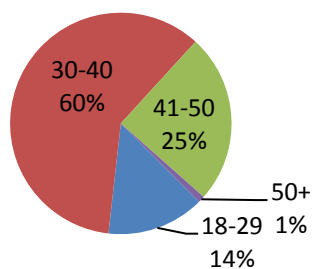
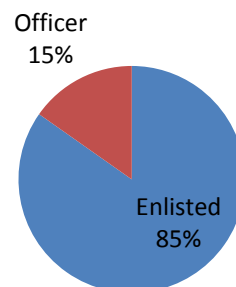
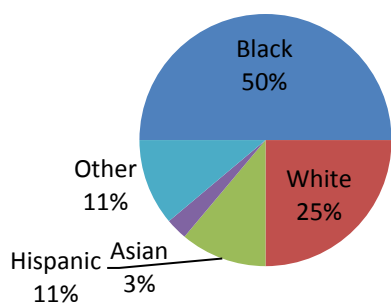
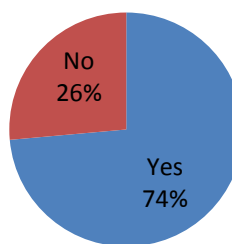
**Appendix A: Demographics****Service****Sex****Age Range****Rank****Race****Deployed**

Illustration 1. Spectrum of Hazing

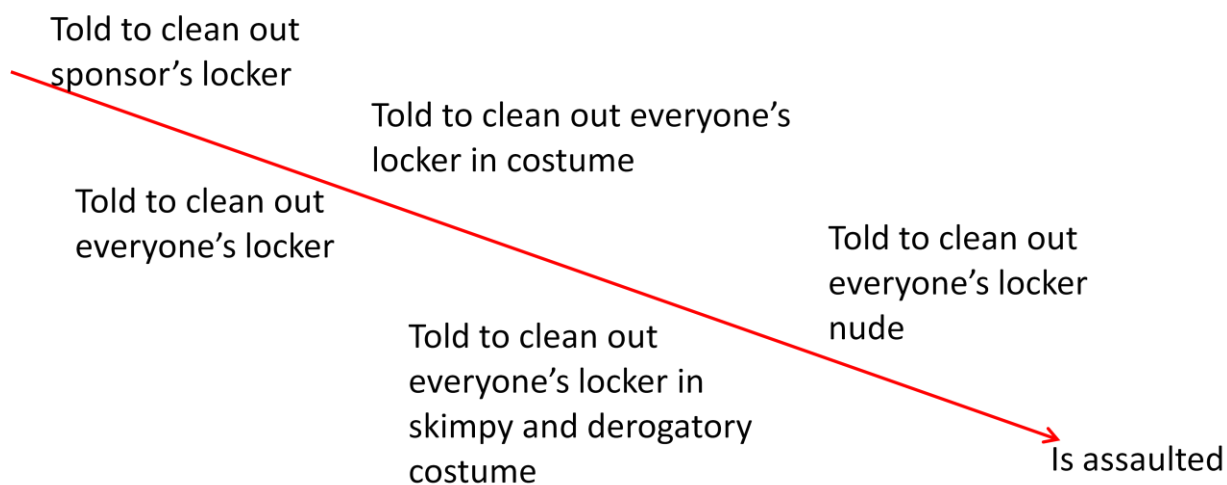


Table 1

	<b>Haze-Accept</b>	<b>Haze- Celebrate</b>	<b>Bully</b>
<b>Physical</b>	Minor/Severe	Minor /Severe	Minor /Severe
<b>Psychological</b>	Minor /Severe	Minor /Severe	Minor /Severe
<b>Objects</b>	Minor /Severe	Minor /Severe	Minor /Severe

Table 2 Percent Hazing Knowledge

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Know the Definition</b>	87%	13%
<b>Know How Hazing Relates to EO</b>	90%	10%
<b>Know Military Law and Hazing</b>	84%	16%

Table 3

	<b>Trained</b>	<b>No Train</b>
<b>Witness</b>	1.58	1.78
<b>Participate</b>	1.76	1.9
<b>Encourage</b>	1.86	1.98

Table 4

	<b>Average</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>Hazing Training</b>	Mostly Yes (58%)	Many untrained but there was little difference between trained/untrained participants.
<b>Hazing Knowledge</b>	Yes (84-90%)	Participants believe they know hazing.
<b>Hazing Experience</b>	Mostly No (80%)	Participants generally have not experienced it.
<b>Hazing Scenario Assessment</b>	Accuracy Split (50% correct)	Participants answers depended on the situation, light celebration scenarios were most likely to be viewed as fun.

Training Category Response

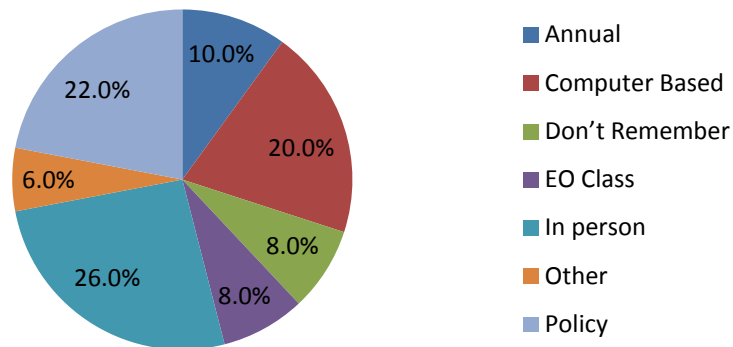


Figure 1. Training category response.

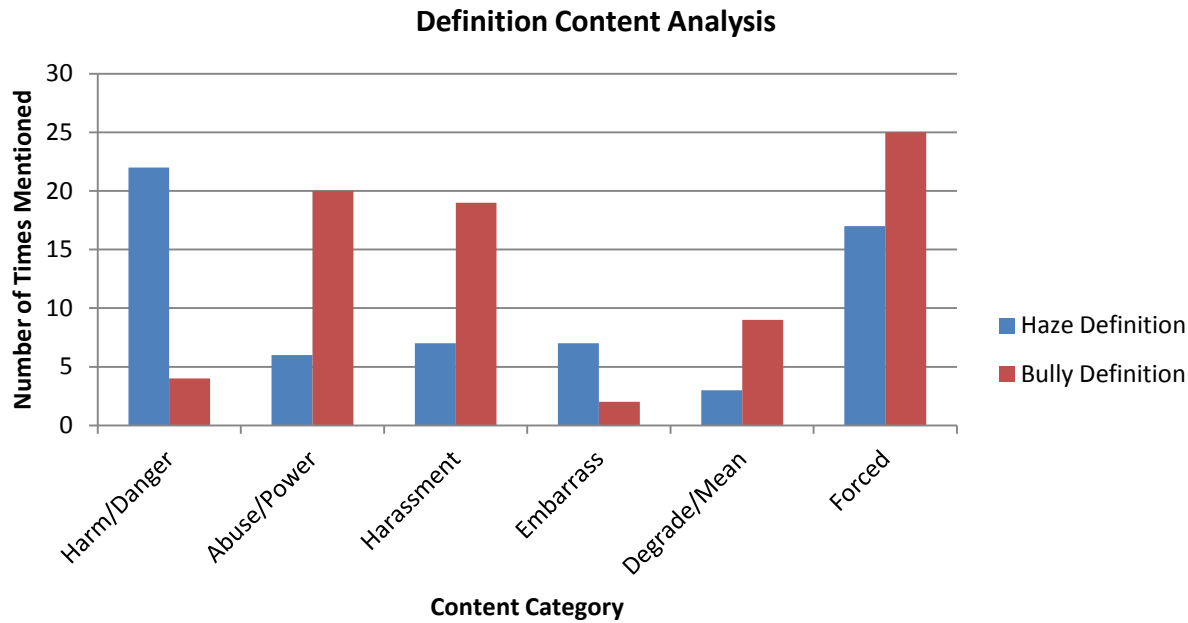


Figure 2. Definition content analysis.

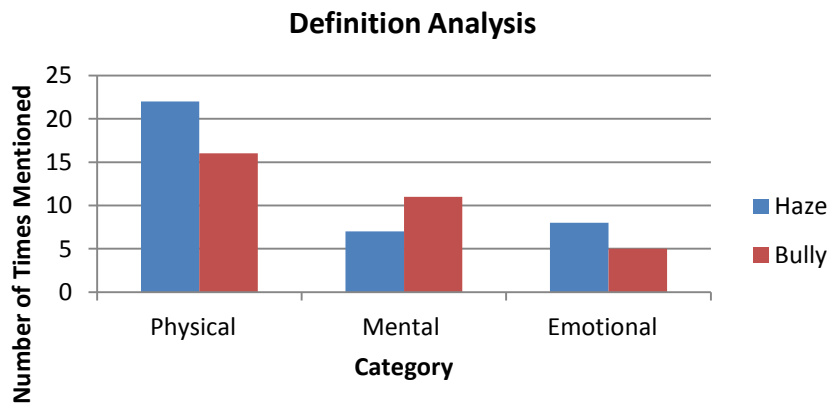


Figure 3. Definition analysis.

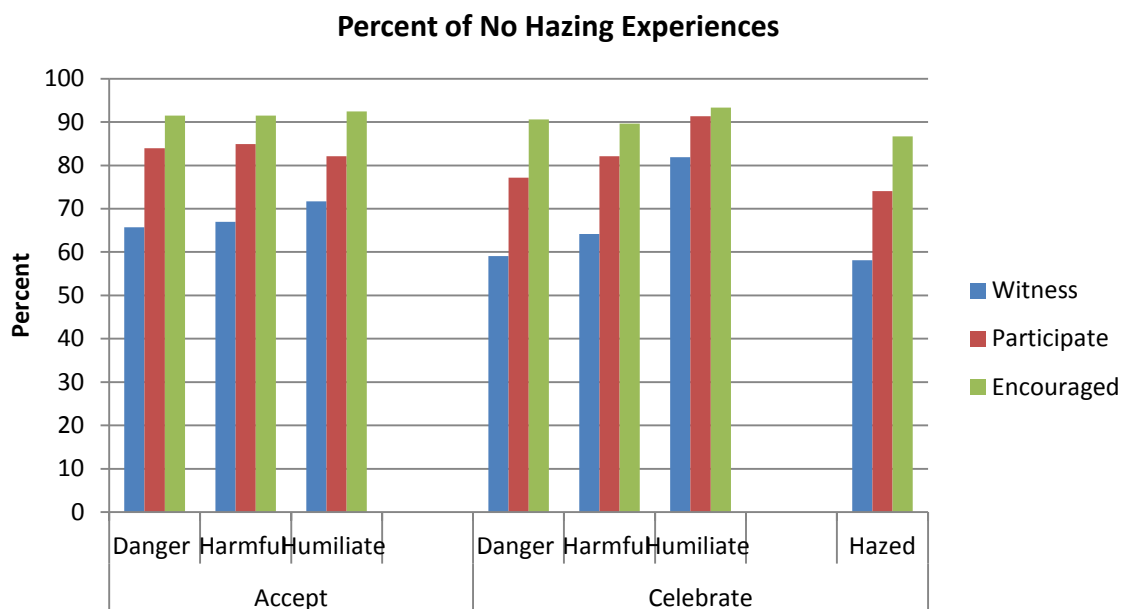


Figure 4. Percent of no hazing experiences.

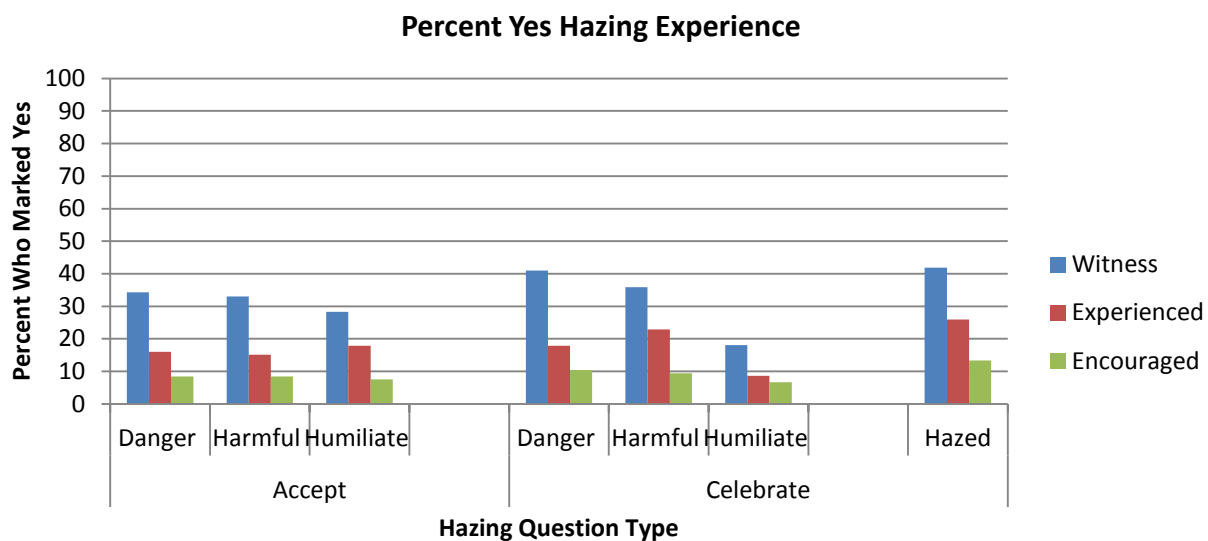


Figure 5. Percent yes hazing experience.



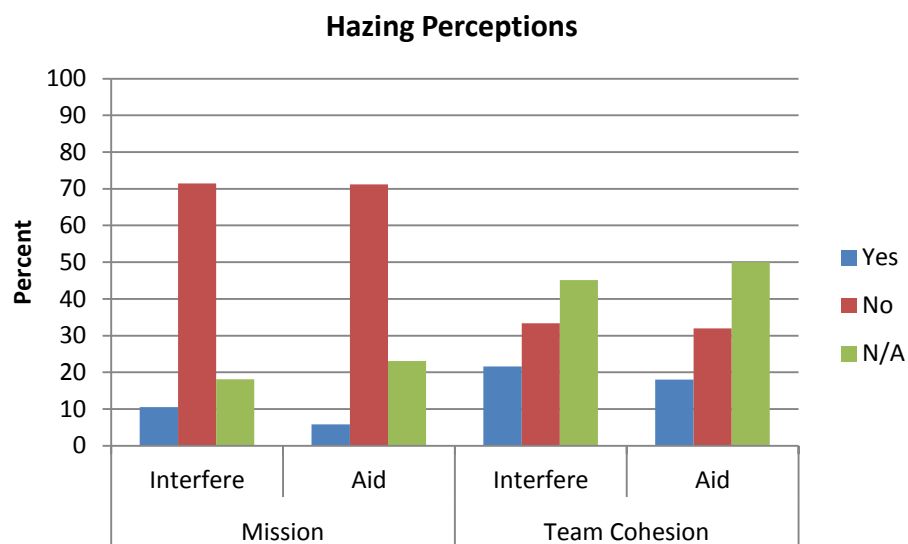


Figure 6. Hazing perceptions.

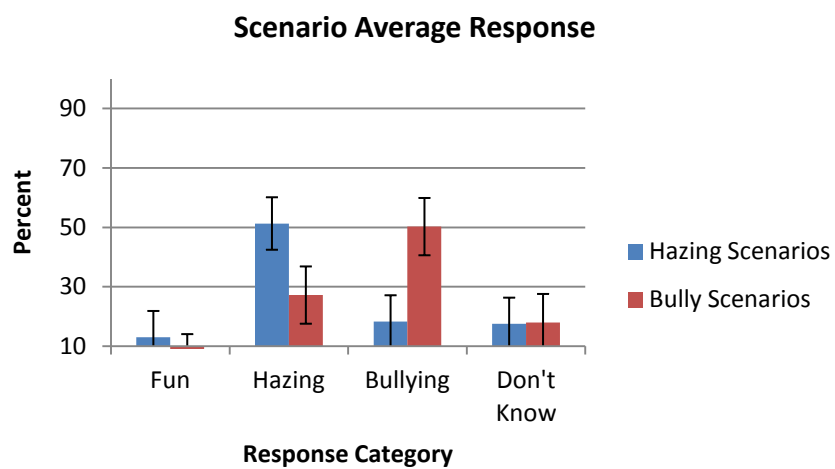


Figure 7. Scenario average response.

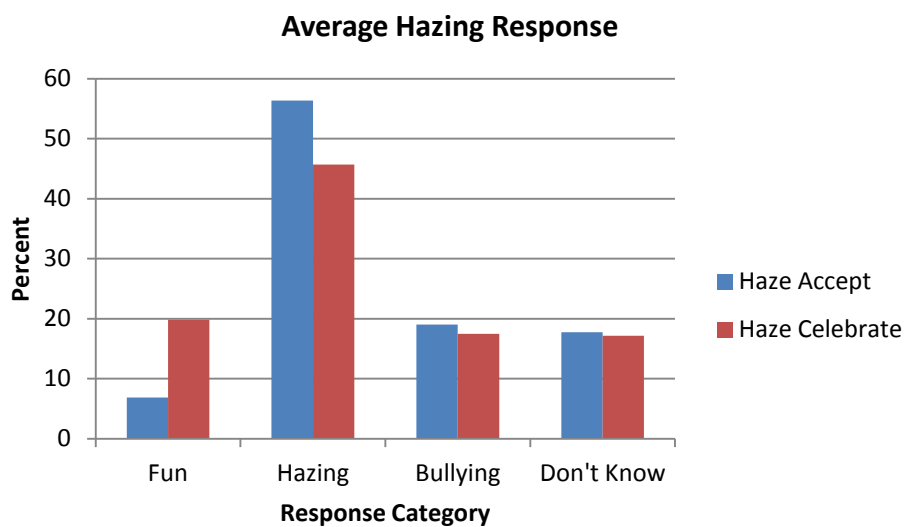


Figure 8. Average hazing response.

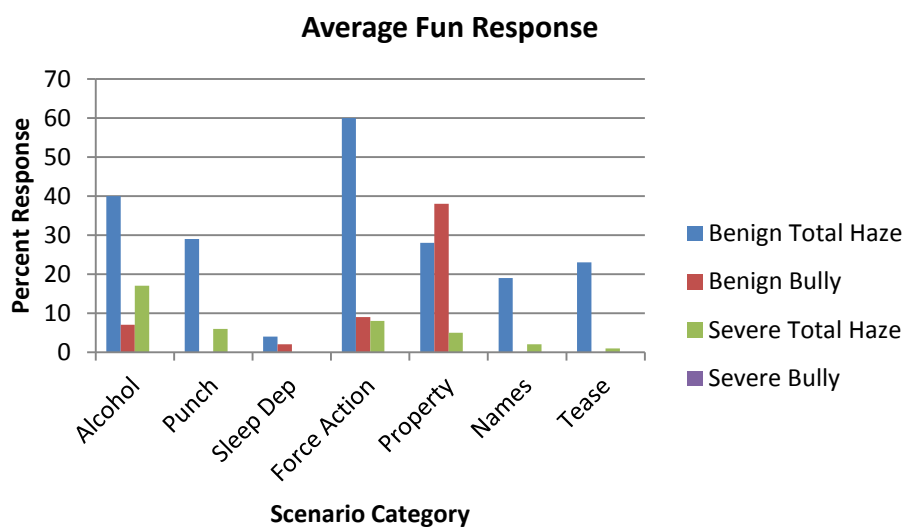


Figure 9. Average fun response.

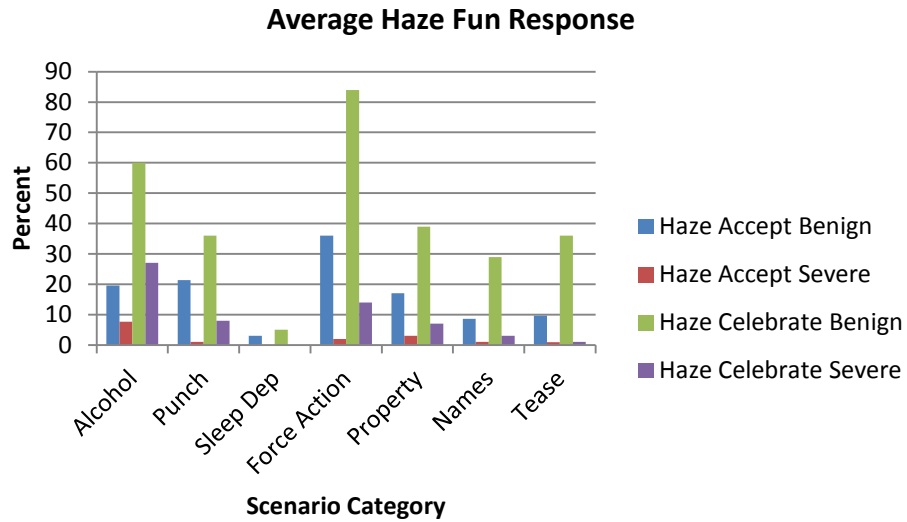


Figure 10. Average haze fun response.

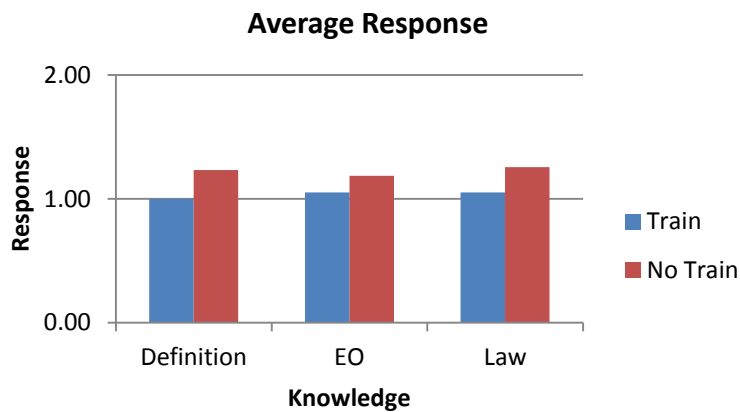


Figure 11. Average response.