TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF HAZING AMONG MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

DeLisa A. Joseph

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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2022

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APPROVED BY:

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Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore teacher perceptions of hazing at the middle and high school levels. Additionally, this study explored coaches', school counselors', and school leadership team members' experiences of hazing among middle and high school students. Relevant literature related to hazing within education, the comparison, and contrast of hazing and bullying, policies, group dynamics, imitation, and student perceptions were reviewed. The theory that guided this study was Albert Bandura's 1986 Social Cognitive Theory, as it emphasizes social influence and external and internal social reinforcement. The research questions used were (1) What are teachers' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students? (2) What are coaches' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students? (3) What are school counselors' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students? (4) What are the school leadership teams' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students? (5) To what extent do hazing and bullying overlap among middle and high school students? The sample participants were from middle and high schools including teachers, coaches, and school leadership team members. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, researcher field notes, and document analysis of student and school archival data. As indicated by Moustakas, all data were analyzed through epoché, phenomenological reduction, imagination variation, and meaning synthesis. As data were analyzed, themes associated with power, a culture of silence, unwritten rules, and intentionality were developed, which allowed me as the researcher to make implications and recommendations geared towards prevention for future research.

Keywords: hazing, teacher perceptions, high school, middle school, education, bullying, school counselors, school leadership

Copyright Page (Optional)

Dedication (Optional)

This research manuscript is dedicated to my husband, Dr. Lerone Joseph, who has continuously supported and challenged me to be the best educator I can be. I equally dedicate this research manuscript to our daughter; you joined us in the middle of this journey, and I would not change it for the world. Let me serve as an example that you can reach your wildest dreams even when obstacles attempt to stop you. Thank you both for never losing faith in me and supporting my vision.

Acknowledgments (Optional)

I would like to take a moment to recognize that village of individuals that supported me through my journey.

-Committee Chair, Dr. Stroter

-Committee Member, Dr. Parks

-Parents, Kevin & DeTrae W.

-A host of family members, friends, and colleagues.

Your prayers did not go unanswered. God truly provided and allowed me to share this knowledge with the world.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore teacher perceptions of hazing at the middle and high school levels. An additional purpose of this study was to explore coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students. Hazing acts occur in secondary education (Gershel, Katz-Sidlow, Small & Zandieh, 2003). This study explored the perceptions of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership teams of the hazing of middle and high school students. Social Cognitive Theory was used as a theoretical framework to explore how social influences impacted their perceptions of hazing in their roles as teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership teams. This study revealed how hazing is viewed by school staff who have extensive direct interactions with students. This study sought to find clarity on personal definitions of hazing and if the mechanisms put in place by school leadership are deemed preventative by the participants. The results may encourage school personnel to review their current policies on hazing and create training for staff on identifying and supporting students who may be victimized. For teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership teams, it serves as an opportunity to identify their perspectives and determine if it interferes with their support.

This chapter presents a detailed outline for this study, designed for the understanding of the perceptions of hazing at the middle and high school levels in Virginia from teachers, coaches, school counselors, and leadership teams. This chapter's outline reviews the background of hazing from the historical, social, and theoretical perspective and explains the impact it had on me as the researcher. The chapter presents the problem and purpose statements, the research questions, defined key terms, and summary.

Background

Hazing is not a new phenomenon in education; it has been around for years (Nuwer, 2000). Therefore, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is vital when reassessing current literature. Hazing is an act of interpersonal violence, and the social context must be considered when reviewing the literature. This section summarizes the current literature from historical, social, and theoretical backgrounds.

Historical Context

Hazing has occurred for numerous years, on several levels and in multiple countries (Nuwer, 2000). Customs and traditions were put upon new members/arrivals/students to serve as a rite of passage to gain full access to their newfound status. Different populations, including individuals in educational leadership roles such as college presidents, have varying views of the purpose of hazing. This particular group of leaders explained that the benefit of hazing was to assist new students in transitioning to a college environment (Nuwer, 2000). Educators at the highest forms of leadership who believed that hazing has a place in the educational environment only allowed acts of hazing to continue at their institutions. In the high school setting, rookies or newcomers tend to be the victims of hazing. Nuwer (2000) believed that "hazing does not only exist in education but across the military and work environments as well but is born in secondary schools" (p. 20).

The majority of the current literature focusing on hazing in the field of education is centered in higher education (Allan, Kerchner & Payne, 2018; Allan, Payne, & Kerchner, 2019; Diamond, Callahan, Chain, & Solomon, 2016; Scott-Sheldon, Carey, Kaiser, Knight & Carey, 2016; The Associated Press, 2015; Silveira & Hudson, 2015; Suggs, 1999). At this level, student perceptions have been explored to indicate if students believed they experienced acts of hazing

(Allan, 2009, Allan et al., 2019; Pecjak & Pirc, 2019). The current literature explored the perceptions of collegiate level athletic administrators (Duncan, 2014; McGlone, 2010). The lack of literature that focuses on hazing within middle and high school supports the need for this study. School leadership and administrators must be knowledgeable and ready to manage this in a learning environment.

Many of the studies available, such as those conducted by Suggs (1999), Gershel et al. (2003), Waldron (2015), and Diamond et al. (2016), solely explore hazing in school-sponsored organized sports. This data provided enough information for educators to look at hazing within secondary education. Athletic involvement has been the primary focus of hazing-related research in secondary education, but these studies failed to suggest how school leadership can protect their students. Athletics are an integral part of the school environment at every level and fall under the school's jurisdiction. This research explored the perceptions of hazing from teachers, school counselors, and school leadership teams in middle and high schools.

Social Context

In recent years, hazing has been discovered in not just fraternity/sorority life, but also collegiate marching bands (Silveira & Hudson, 2015). Mainstream media has shared with the community how hazing has resulted in severe injuries for its victims, including death. The media's portrayal creates the belief that hazing only occurs in the collegiate setting; however, this is not entirely true (Mathers & Chavez, 2018). In the K-12 educational sector, educators, students, and parents focused heavily on bullying despite the incidents that do not directly fit the definition. The policies surrounding bullying attempted to lump hazing activities into the bullying definition, despite the two acts being different (Diamond et al., 2016). The misidentification of hazing acts can leave students vulnerable (Parks, Jones, Ray, Hughey &

Cox, 2015). This lack of attention to detail and understanding of the definition leaves educators ignorant of acts of hazing, proper response protocols, and adequate support for students. The lack of attention to detail and understanding also plays a role in the overall educational atmosphere influenced by the school climate (Benbenishty, Astor, Roziner, & Wrabel, 2016). Students are searching for ways to gain acceptance into their environments, and hazing is a vicious act that students endure because they see it as the only way to fit in. Vicious acts such as hazing have been identified as an influencer of school climate, as noted by Benbenishty et al. (2016). Peer-to-peer victimization has a higher impact on academic success and the overall school climate (Shukla & Konold, 2015). The evidence provided by Benbenishty et al. (2016) and Shukla and Konold (2015) suggested that hazing has no place within the field of education. SCT will be the theoretical foundation/framework that I will use for this study. The goal was to understand how social influences affect the perception of teachers, school counselors, and school leadership teams.

Theoretical Context

The current literature on hazing attempts to understand the topic through the vantage points of the individual(s) being hazed and those who administer the hazing. Multiple theories have been utilized in research. Groupthink theory was defined by Janis (1972) as "a mode of thinking that people engage when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group when the members' striving for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action" (p. 9). This theory attempted to explain how the group dynamics thrive on the need for comradery even though some actions may lead to others' harm (Nuwer, 2018). The search for comradery has been referenced in severity-attraction hypotheses (SAH), which is another theory utilized in hazing research. Cimino (2011) believes that Solidarity macro theory can explain how solidarity

is found amongst group members. The theories that have been reviewed focused on the group

member's validation of the group through psychological concepts of cognitive dissonance.

Social Cognitive Theory describes how one's behavior is explained through the focus on

environmental factors, behavior, and personal factors. Behavior is not shaped by inner or

external forces (Bandura, 1986). The response to a situation is different within each person based

on their triad of factors. Bandura (1986) indicates that human capabilities contribute to the

overall perspective developed. This theory was used as the framework for this study and

explored perspectives of hazing through participants' lived experiences.

Problem Statement

The problem is that students are being hazed in middle and high school (Gershel, Katz-

Sidlow, Small, & Zandieh, 2003). Hazing in middle and high school is often miscategorized

because it is misunderstood by school personnel (Allen, Kerschner, Payne, 2019). Hazing is a

form of interpersonal violence that affects those involved physically, mentally, and emotionally

(Allan & Madden, 2013). Hazing is taking place in an environment that is created to foster

learning and growth. Over the years, there has been an increase in preventative training centered

around anti-bullying policies in K-12 academic arenas; however, there has not been an increase

in anti-hazing policies or preventative training despite the growing concern for student safety.

Physical and non-physical violence has contributed to the growing number of school

incidents (Zhang, Wang, Zhang, & Oudekerk, 2019). The current literature surrounding hazing is

centered on identifying acts of hazing, primarily in sports teams (Gershel, Katz-Sidlow, Small &

Zandieh, 2003). However, limited research has been done to describe the experiences of those

who were hazed. Despite a formal definition of hazing being provided, Diamond Callahan,

Chiang, and Solomon (2016) revealed that many policies attempted to lump the hazing definition

with the bullying/anti-bullying definitions despite them being different. Hazing is one aspect of student safety that should not be overlooked or attempted to be lumped under another category. Previous research also indicates that students who were victims of hazing have not considered themselves hazed (Allan, 2009). This is evidence that there is confusion around what is considered hazing. This could potentially affect how students determine if they were hazed or not. The research that focused on secondary education has significant gaps, but the student's voice was the primary area that was not captured. The findings of this study can be utilized by district leadership to create more straightforward policies and provide proper training on the differences between bullying and hazing to be handled appropriately. These initiatives will move the educational field to a preventative stance on hazing.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore teacher experiences of hazing at the middle and high school levels. An additional purpose of this study was to explore coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team member perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students. In this study, hazing is defined as "any action taken, or any situation created intentionally that causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule, and risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team, whether new or not, regardless of the person's willingness to participate" (Smokowski & Evans, 2019). The theory guiding this study is Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) considered the participants' past experiences with hazing and how any internal or external social influences impacted their perceptions.

Significance of the Study

This study is critical because it is an aspect of hazing that has often been overlooked at the middle and high school levels. Despite the limited research on this area, one factor is that students who have experienced hazing do not consider themselves as victims (Allan, 2009). The study's practical significance is that the results can be used to assist educational policy design regarding the training of staff to support students who may experience hazing. In addition, the learning environment in middle and high school can be impacted by school leadership gaining an in-depth understanding of the individual perceptions and experiences regarding hazing.

The available research on hazing in secondary education is limited to the context of student-athletes and fraternity/sorority members for higher education (Diamond, Callahan, Chain & Solomon, 2016; Gershel, Katz-Sidlow, Small & Zandieh, 2003; McCarriston, 2017, Nuwer, 2000; Smokowski & Evans, 2019). Smokowski & Evans (2019) indicated that students are at risk for negative associations to their physical, psychological, and emotional well-being when exposed to hazing. Despite the documented evidence that negative consequences are associated with hazing, the student's need to remain associated with the group has yet to be explored. Current literature has attempted to understand hazing acts through empirical evidence. The perceptions of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and leadership team members can add to the empirical evidence centered around hazing in middle and high schools.

Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) considers multiple levels of interrelationships and external factors. The behavior of both individuals and groups has been explained by utilizing this theory (Bandura, 1999; Hamilton, Scott, LaChapelle, & O'Sullivan, 2016; Van Zundert, Nijhof & Engels, 2009). Bandura (1986) indicates that behavior is determined by the combined interactions of personal factors, behaviors, and environmental

factors. SCT suggested that five basic human capabilities impact the behavior, personal factors, and environmental factors, which are: symbols, forethought, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective (Bandura, 1986). A recent study conducted by Hamilton, Scott, LaChapelle, and O'Sullivan (2016) indicated that SCT could be utilized to predict hazing perpetration. The self-reflective capability was drawn on heavily within this study. Self-reflective capability highlights how participants consider the information they have gained and the experiences they have had, and how they act on or predict occurrences (Bandura, 1986).

The educational stakeholders that will benefit from this study's results are school leaders, teachers, and parents. The results may encourage school personnel to review their current policies on hazing and create training for staff on identifying and supporting students who may be victimized. For teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership teams, it may serve as an opportunity to identify their perspectives and determine if it interferes with their support. The overall results of this study can be used to create a safer school environment for students outside of the classroom, which parents can use to reinforce with their children. The study results can be a springboard for school leadership to ensure that all students understand the definition of hazing, the school policy, and how to report potential violations. When all are involved in student safety and safe learning, a supportive environment can be fostered within and across school buildings. Research participants were not current students in the K-12 academic arena, but their input shined a light on their secondary education experience. The field of education will benefit as it learns of the student perspective and its connections to student safety (McLaren et al., 2017). The themes identified from this study can influence policy design and implementation, support services for victims, awareness of areas of concern, and increased ability to explore current rites of passages/traditions currently supported by schools.

Research Questions

This study focused on hazing perceptions of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership teams from middle and high school levels. Their collective perceptions from the transcendental phenomenological research design allowed for a better understanding of how teachers and other educators view hazing. The problem and purpose statement influence the research questions. The research for this study was built upon the following research questions:

Research Question One

What are teachers' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

The student perception of hazing of secondary education students indicated that hazing is acceptable, no matter the role one plays in it, within limits (Pecjak & Pirc, 2019). Middle school administrators and teachers, unlike collegiate administrators, have a limited understanding of hazing. 59.4% of collegiate administrators indicated suspicions of hazing existed within collegiate athletics (McGlone, 2010, p. 125). The literature associated with hazing is missing teachers' perspectives on the middle and high school levels. It is imperative to collect this perspective since hazing has been documented to exist on these levels (Allen, 2009). By exploring the perceptions of teachers, the teachers' level of understanding of hazing and their ability to support students who are being hazed could be analyzed. This question will provide insight into hazing perceptions of teachers in middle and high school. SCT will use an agentic framework to examine how internal and external influences, such as mass media, influence teachers' perceptions (Bandura, 1968).

Research Question Two

What are coaches' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

The current literature provided evidence that hazing exists in collegiate-level athletics. McGlone (2010) explained that hazing exists in a higher education setting, but there is limited research about hazing in middle and high schools (p. 28). The National Collegiate Athletic Association defines teambuilding in its governing documents to reduce hazing being used as team building activities. Jeckell, Copenhaver, and Diamond (2018) reviewed incidents and lawsuits where coachers were named in the complaint. Collegiate level coaches discussed with Chin, Johnson, Signer-Kroeker, and Holman (2020) their current stances on hazing and alcohol within sports. It indicated that coaches are aware of potentially dangerous situations and attempt to role model good behavior in an attempt to curve the behavior. Coaches interviewed by Johnson and Chin (2016) shared a need to create shifts in their sport's orientation program to disseminate hierarchies and shift power in team relationships. This aspect of the literature indicates that some coaches may perceive hazing to be a concern.

The research gathered by Johnson and Chin (2016) indicates a need for coaches to alter their approach to their orientation programs. This indicates that perception amongst middle and high school coaches needs to be analyzed. This question provides insight into hazing perceptions of coaches in middle and high school. SCT will use an agentic framework to examine how internal and external influences, such as mass media, influence teachers' perceptions (Bandura, 1968).

Research Question Three

What are school counselors' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

Aforementioned, the perception of secondary education students, college students, and collegiate administrators has been explored in current literature (Allen et al., 2019; McGlone, 2010; Pecjak & Pirc, 2019). School counselor perception has yet to be gathered in relation to

hazing and hazing-related acts. School counselors are embedded in the schools as advocates for students to support their academic, personal, social-emotional, and post-secondary experiences. This position requires the school counselors to stay aware of current trends that affect students and advocate for all students' best interest levels (Cigrand, Havilk, Malott & Jones, 2015). The answer to this question provides an understanding of the perception of school counselors about hazing. School personnel has mandated reporters to report any suspicion of harm to the appropriate agencies.

Research Question Four

What are school leadership teams' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

The perceptions of collegiate-level leadership have been gathered through research (Allen et al., 2019; McGlone, 2010; Pecjak & Pirc, 2019). The positions represented on the school leadership teams include the Principal, Assistant Principal, Associate Principal, Dean of Students, and Counseling Coordinators, which work directly with multiple student groups daily. The perceptions of these individuals must be captured. The perceptions from school leadership teams lack in supporting literature, which warrants the creation of this question. The data collected provides insight into how those who are considered school leadership perceive hazing.

Research Question Five

To what extent does hazing and bullying overlap among middle and high school students?

McCarthy (2015) explained, "one of the most important things to understand about hazing is that it is against the law, educators must start there" (p. 1). Hazing violates some state laws, but no federal ones. There have not been any documented laws to combat hazing and hazing-related acts on the federal level. On the state level, there are 44 states that have a law

against hazing (Hazingprevention.org, 2018). Despite laws in place in some states, they differ in terms of definitions and courses of action. These differences may impact how educators perceive and respond to acts of hazing. There are limited proactive measures implemented compared to other preventative measures, such as bullying and suicide prevention.

School personnel must participate in training and initiatives implemented by their state board of education to ensure all students' well-being. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, educators must complete a child abuse and neglect intervention training as a requirement to obtain an educator's license. Comprehensive state-level training and initiatives provide educators with guidance and development to have equal competency (Williford, Fite, DePaolis, Cooley, Hawley, & Isen, 2019). The training and initiatives are often prevalent for bullying, child abuse, neglect, and suicide prevention; however, hazing is typically not included in training and interventions. The exclusion of hazing may be due to the misperception that hazing and bullying are the same (Kowalski, Foster, Scarborough, Bourque, Wells, Graham, & Crawford, 2020). Although there are similarities between hazing and bullying, there are ways where they differ (Kowalski et al., 2020). The outcomes of these acts often have varying impacts on students. Diamond et al. (2016) revealed that many policies attempted to lump bullying and hazing into one policy. The creation of an anti-hazing or hazing policy must include detailed steps to ensure its effectiveness (Taylor, 2001).

Definitions

1. *Academic achievement* – Academic achievement can be defined as learned proficiency in basic skills and content knowledge (McCoy, Twyman, Ketterlin-Geller, & Tindal, 2005).
2. *Bullying* – Bullying is often defined as repetitive and intentional aggressive behavior by one individual or group against another in situations where there exists some sort of

power differential between the bully and the victim in terms of physical size, social

status, or other features (OLWEUS, 1993; Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016).

3. *Hazing* – Hazing is defined as any action taken, or any situation created intentionally that

causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule and risks emotional and/or physical harm

to members of a group or team, whether new or not, regardless of the person's

willingness to participate (Smokowski & Evans, 2019).

4. *Initiation*- Refers to the admission of a person into a community, group or society which

has a common origin, interest or purpose (Dias & Sa, 2014, p. 449).

5. *Secondary Education* – The average public secondary school enrolls ages 7-18 students.

Secondary education is usually broken into two parts: middle school (or junior high

school) and high school. Middle school usually encompasses grades 6-8 or 7-8,

depending on the district. High school typically includes grades 9-12 (U.S. Department of

Education, 2007).

Summary

This chapter outlined the importance, overview, and scope of the study. The perception of

hazing is an aspect of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members

that have yet to be explored in secondary education. Current literature provides evidence that

hazing experiences exist as early as sixth grade. However, the school personnel's perceptions of

who has a direct association with students have not been shared. This study's results can provide

school leadership with a glimpse into the understanding of hazing from the perception of

teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership teams. The study's results also

identify mechanisms within the school system to detect hazing acts. Definitions were provided to

have consistency throughout the research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter provided an examination of the relevant literature related to hazing and its impact on students. The literature reviewed investigated the problem that students are being hazed in middle and high school (Gershel, Katz-Sidlow, Small, & Zandieh, 2003). Hazing in middle and high school is often miscategorized because it is misunderstood by school personnel (Allen, Kershner, Payne, 2019). This chapter shares that information regarding the literature associated with hazing in secondary education as a whole or in particular organized groups. Hazing is acts of interpersonal violence whether or not the person is willing to participate in those acts. Section one discusses the theory associated with social influences and social reinforcements, both internally and externally. The final section discusses why hazing takes place, the perceptions of hazing from students, and the policies created around it to prevent it. This literature review provides details about the literature regarding hazing and also reveals that there ia a gap in the current literature, which supported the need for this study.

Theoretical Framework

In order to ensure that the research process is built upon a foundation, the theoretical framework must be established (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The theory guiding this study is Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. This theory has been identified as the framework for this research study to explain how those who experienced hazing remained with the associated group. Hazing typically occurs when a person is attempting to join a group, which may impact their perception and cause these acts to be overlooked. The associated theory provided a foundational level for exploring the perceptions of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership teams.

The triadic of personal factors, behavior, and environment are the combined factors of human behavior defined by Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986). "In the social cognitive view, people are neither driven by inner forces nor automatically shaped and controlled by external stimuli" (Bandura, 1986, p. 18). The interactions between these factors, although not equal, do influence a person's behavior. SCT has been utilized in research in an attempt to explain the behavior of groups and individuals (McDonald & Asher 2018; Oyibo, Adaji & Vassileva, 2018; Prussia & Kinicki, 1996; Schunk, 2012).

The triadic factors interact through five human capabilities. Bandura (1986) identified the five human capabilities to be symbolic capabilities, vicarious capability, forethought, self-regulation and self-refection. The first capability is symbolic. Individuals are able to take symbols, such as images or words, and add meaning to them in association with their experience. The stored experiences with their selected symbols can later be used as a guide for future behavior. Through the information gathered via interviews and focus groups, I as the researcher revealed how symbols are connected to the participants who experience hazing.

Vicarious capability is the second capability which believes that individuals learn from observing the experiences of others (Bandura, 1986). An example of this capability is of a middle school student watching a peer yell at their teacher and being sent to the principal's office. The student observing was able to watch the behavior of another peer and the associated outcome without having to attempt the experience on their own. Modeling is an aspect of learning that is highlighted within this capability. Modeling has been identified as a means of communicating values, attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors, according to Bandura (1986). Modeling taps into the usage of the symbolic and vicarious capabilities that inform individuals of the space's rules and accepted behavior patterns. Hamilton, Scott, LaChapelle, and O'Sullivan

(2016) believed that these two capabilities could contribute to understanding of the overall hazing perception.

Forethought capability focuses on an individual's ability to take the symbols gained through modeling and create a guide for themselves in future occurrences (Bandura, 1986). This capability allows for individuals to pre-determine how they will act or respond in particular situations based off of previous knowledge. This capability can be used to determine how individuals exposed to hazing information through the news or personal experience will plan on how they will respond if they are confronted with the experience or news again. This capability may provide insight on how research participants responded within their school systems.

The fourth capability is self-regulation. Internal standards are a component of one's behavior (Bandura, 1986). Self-regulatory practices are activated when there is an inconsistency in the person's standards and performance. This capability weighs heavily on one's ability to conduct self-monitoring with consistency, fidelity and temporal proximity with respect to external influences in the environment (Bandura, 1986).

Self-reflective capability emphasizes how people use their thoughts to justify their actions and later analyze how their thoughts assisted them in the situation (Bandura, 1986). I believe that this capability will provide great insight into how hazing is or is not recognized in middle and high schools from the lens of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members. The focus group participants were able to have more experience with the self-reflective capability in the midst of the group. Being able to dialogue with others instead of a one-to-one interview allowed the participants time to reflect on others' statements and respond. The self-reflective capability explores self-evaluations conducted within oneself. The standards by which things are measured in combination with a person's evaluation of themselves

could leave one person satisfied and another unsatisfied (Bandura, 1986). Euphemistic language masks the true power of words and phrases (Bandura, 1986). When data was analyzed, I was able to determine if euphemistic language was used when the participants discussed hazing acts.

Social Cognitive Theory was reviewed due to its ability to identify which component of human behavior influenced the research participants' perception on the topic of hazing in middle and high schools. Social Cognitive Theory allowed for the environmental influences combined with internal and external reinforcements to be considered when determining how a person will respond or act due to previous experiences. This theory may be able to reveal unique connections that will develop the working definition of hazing from teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members. The exploration of the connections may uncover how hazing is defined based on environmental factors, personal factors, and behaviors developed by teachers, school counselors, coaches, and school leadership team members. Their input will provide their unique perspectives on hazing in middle and high schools and if the preventative steps currently in place are perceived as supporting students' safety.

SCT was founded in the field of psychology (Bandura, 1986). This theory has been adapted to other fields such as education, business, and health. Branscum, Sharma, Wang, Wilson & Rojas-Guyler (2013) utilized theory-based intervention programs to assist change eating behaviors. The constructs of self-efficacy, self-control, and expectations are the human capabilities that were targeted in the childhood obesity prevention study (Branscum et al., 2013). Although positive indicators were identified within this study, the researchers identified several potential sources of contamination that could affect the study's overall results. In business, Lin, Liu, and Liao (2018) sought to predict team performance by using SCT. Hypercompetition and dysfunctional conflict are the two components that influence an individual's behavior (Lin, Liu

& Liao, 2018). The utilization of SCT in multiple fields of the study indicates the versatility of the study and its ability to be applied in the field of education.

Social Cognitive Theory has been utilized in an attempt to explain how social models are taught and learned. Social models rely heavily on modeling. Schunk (2012) highlighted that students who self-identify as similar to their peers are able to learn attributes that may assist them. It is believed that when hazing practices are a part of the culture of a group, the new members or those seeking membership observe the current members as models on how to proceed in particular situations.

Related Literature

Hazing is a complex phenomenon that impacts not only students, but everyone involved in the education system. This phenomenon has been a concern for several years and has impacted students at every level of education. For the individuals who are on the receiving end of the hazing acts, they can be met with profoundly unpleasant and residual effects. Defining hazing is complicated, and based on the current research, there is no consistent definition within the field of education. Researchers, educators, and policymakers have begun giving more significant attention to the phenomenon which has led to multiple definitions being created, which has led to inconsistencies (Véliz-Calderón & Allan, 2017). There are several concerns around hazing, including how it is viewed, responses to hazing acts, and overall understanding by educators. There is a distinct difference between hazing perceptions in the K-12 educational setting versus the post-secondary educational setting. The current literature focuses on hazing in a college or university setting in groups such as fraternizes, sororities and athletics. Jeckell, Copenhaver and Diamond (2020) explained that "hazing is rapidly evolving, it is dangerous and has negative health consequences at every level" (p. 165).

The need to understand the purpose of hazing, the perception of students, and the people involved in it is explained within this section. Hazing broken down by educational levels indicated how it affects those students and their perceptions of hazing and hazing related acts. Literature from Lacey and Cornell (2016), McGlone and Schaefer (2008), Rettew and Pawlowski (2016), and Smokowski and Evans (2019) compared and contrasted the definition of hazing to bullying. The perception of hazing from athletic personnel was presented. Group dynamics and initiation rituals are also key factors in understanding hazing culture. These areas were examined to demonstrate their impact on hazing perception.

Hazing in Education

Hazing is not a new phenomenon. Organizations, cultures, and families have dealt with it for numerous years (Nuwer, 2000). The shift that has been made is the impact that this widespread problem is having is throughout the education system at every level. Acts of hazing are often only addressed or sensationalized when they occur within a post-secondary education setting. However, 80% of youth participate in activities outside the classroom, such as sports and clubs which are some of the most common areas for acts of hazing to occur (Srabstien, Joshi, Due, Wright, Leventhal, Merrick & Riibner, 2008). The consequences of hazing can be deadly or can dramatically impact a positive learning environment. The concern within education, specifically the K-12 setting, has been given to understanding the harmful effects of bullying, not hazing. The dynamics of hazing do not necessarily conform to the definition of bullying, which may lead to underreporting (Allan, Hakkola & Kerschner, 2020).

Hazing can be viewed differently depending on positions of power. At one point in the history of the field of education, collegiate level presidents believed that hazing had a place in the collegiate sector as a way to prove that you deserved this level of elitism (Nuwer, 2000).

There is a large amount of research that focuses on the impact of hazing in a higher education setting and the impact on a college or university environment (Allan, Kerchner & Payne, 2018; Allan, Payne, Kerchner, 2019; Diamond, Callahan, Chain, & Solomon, 2016; Scott-Sheldon, Carey, Kaiser, Knight & Carey, 2016; Silveira & Hudson, 2015; The Associated Press, 2015; Suggs, 1999). Wessel (2018) describes it as "a long-standing tradition across college campuses" (p. 422). Reviewing the studies of Allan et al. (2019), Diamond et al. (2016), Scott-Sheldon et al. (2016), Silveira and Hudson (2015), The Associated Press (2015), and Suggs (1999), it is implied that hazing not only impacts school climate, but impacts families and communities since in many cases someone is violently injured. The death count as a result of hazing is at 60 students since 2005 (Wessel, 2018). These studies confirm that acts of hazing are occurring and document the emotional and physical harm that the phenomenon has on education systems and society at large.

The research around hazing in a K-12 setting is completely the opposite. There is limited research around hazing in a K-12 setting. This central problem across campuses seems to have either been ignored or miscategorized as something else due to the vastness of activities that it encompasses (Parks, Jones, Ray, Hughey & Cox, 2015). Allan and Madden's (2009) study on high school students at risk found that hazing and prevention measures are in their emerging phase of development. School personnel's knowledge of policies and procedures relative to hazing response and prevention is limited. The National Federation of State High School Association reported in 2014 that 48 percent of students who belonged to a group in high school reported being subject to hazing and being subject to these acts as early as age 13. The harm hazing causes to students in the K-12 setting is concerning, which is why there is a need for more knowledge around prevention and response.

Hazing is as an act of violence that impacts individuals and positive learning environments as a whole. Acts of violence such as hazing and school climate are related to each other (Benbenishty, Astor, Roziner, & Wrabel, 2016). The increase in acts of violence such as hazing has prompted legislators to create policies that can address this problem (Essex, 2014; Killian, 2005). McGlone and Schafer (2008) found that laws vary from state to state and are imperfect since they tend to be responsive versus proactive. The inconsistences of laws increase misperception and, consequentially, the response to acts of hazing. There is limited guidance around hazing in a K-12 setting which leaves the responsibility of managing this issue on the school administrators. Schools tend to list policies in handbooks, but this may not be enough; school leadership must create additional strategies for shifting hazing perceptions.

Cornell, Shukla and Konold (2015) consider hazing a peer-to-peer victimization. In their research, they considered peer to peer victimization a pervasive problem that impacts school climate and academic success (Cornell et al., 2015). When interventions are developed, they tend to be branded as a way to address bullying, not acts of hazing. Bullying interventions are connected to the thought that hazing is miscategorized in the K-12 setting. The impacts of anti-bullying intervention programs based on research reviews have shown to have limited impact, and, in some cases, even negative effects (Cornell et al., 2015). The current research discussed above indicates that hazing is a widespread problem impacting education in general. The primary focus of research has been examining hazing in a higher education setting. However, it is clear that this is not the only level which hazing occurs.

Hazing In Elementary Schools

The well-being of students as they begin their educational journeys is of extreme importance. There is no research with regards to hazing in elementary schools. The research that

is available tends to focus on bullying and interventions to address this concern (Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Voeten, 2005). The attention given to bullying does not mean hazing does not exist. The lack of proper understanding of what hazing actually is may be another reason why there is limited data that provides evidence that this behavior is occurring. Behaviors associated with hazing have yet to be taught, and children at a younger age are more willing to accept change or difference (Clift & Thelenwood, 2018). Since it is believed that these behaviors have not been taught yet, there has not been research conducted on its impact on individual influences on academics, or at the emotional, physical or psychological level. School leaders have a responsibility of creating proper training for staff and students as it is necessary in order to ensure that acts of hazing are not going undocumented. Steps such as prohibition statements, purpose statements, public definitions, and avenues to report are some of the suggestions to address the concerns outlined by Williford, Fite, DePaolis, Cooley, Hawley, and Isen (2019).

Hazing In Secondary Education

Hazing is a concern that has been overlooked on numerous educational levels for many years (Allan, 2009). There is consensus throughout academia that hazing is a concern, however; there is limited research to address hazing outside of higher education. Allan (2009) explained that "one of the most complete evaluations of hazing was completed by Alfred University that focused on NCAA Athletes" (p.5). This study does not include any reference to secondary schools. Pecjak and Pirc (2019) explained that "hazing in secondary education is categorized as voluntary or involuntary because of the limited understanding about hazing that exists" (p. 195). With regards to hazing in secondary education, there is no specific activity that it is directly connected to, unlike higher education, where there is a prevalence of hazing in Greek letter organizations (Allan, 2009). Dewitt and Dewitt (2012) revealed from their study into hazing at a

midwestern high school, that the tradition of hazing lasted for generations without administrational investigation. In secondary education, there is less focus on the activity; instead, hazing is viewed in three types: subtle, harassment, and violent (Pecjak & Pirc, 2019).

Student perception about hazing in secondary education is also very different than the perception of college students. It does not matter what role the student may play in the act of hazing; they believe that it is acceptable within limits (Pecjak & Pirc, 2019). This perception provides a challenge for administrators to address hazing and create policies to potentially prevent these acts from occurring. Parents and adults shared that they believed being involved in a hazing act was considered honorable, and some were even upset that their students were not chosen (DeWitt & DeWitt, 2012). "Many parents and students were incensed and incredulous that the school would interfere with such a long-standing tradition that was a compliment to the students who were selected for hazing and one to which they submitted willingly" (DeWitt & DeWitt, 2012, p. 234). The parent's perception cannot be overlooked as well, since many saw hazing as a positive experience. It could be implied that by residing in a community that supports hazing acts and views them as a positive reward, that two components from SCT could influence the perceptions of students. The adults from the study conducted by DeWitt and DeWitt (2012) could easily be in roles where their past experiences could impact how they would address hazing today. It is also the student's perception that if hazing was occurring, they would not report it to an adult because they would not know how to handle the information or an adult was not around (Hoover & Pollard, 2000).

Although it is challenging to pinpoint one activity where hazing is prevalent in secondary education settings, the majority of the current research has been done in the arena of sports. The type of sport did not determine the prevalence or severity of hazing (Gershel, Katz-Sidlow,

Small, & Zandieh, 2003). According to Gershel et al., (2003) secondary education students reported that they experienced hazing as early as the sixth grade. Another important area that the research addresses regarding hazing in secondary education is the role of the initiator. Those who initiate the acts of hazing are believed to be in a level of seniority (McCarriston, 2017). 11th graders initiated the hazing activities on the incoming 9th graders (DeWitt & DeWitt, 2012). This is linked to the idea that hazing is connected to the power of individuals in those roles. In order for hazing to be initiated by a person in seniority status, it implies that they remained associated with the group despite the level of severity associated with their initiation.

The traditional culture implied within these groups is how hazing can continue on for generations (DeWitt & DeWitt, 2012). Huysamer and Lemmer (2013) identified hazing as viewed as tradition amongst the participants' culture that translated to practices within the school environment. The environmental factors that contribute to the acceptance of hazing can attempt to be justified using SCT as the theoretical framework when researching this topic. The research conducted by Allan (2009), Gershel et al. (2003), Pecjak & Pirc (2019) failed to discuss any connection to hazing and the student's physical, emotional, psychological or academic well-being for either the victim or initiator, whereas those who conducted research on the collegiate level provided indication on physical outcomes. Huysamer and Lemmer (2013) gathered statements such as, "Pain is our friend" to imply that some level of "risky" behavior is taking place despite it being viewed as a rite of passage (p. 18). The research conducted on the secondary education level did not include the perceptions of hazing of any adults in the lives of the students.

Hazing education is beginning to be explored amongst secondary education. Hakkola, Allen and Kerschner (2019) conducted an intervention program amongst two Northeastern high

schools. The study included both students and staff in the intervention program, which was an attempt to educate students and school personnel.

Hazing In College/University

Prior to the 1960's, colleges and universities were viewed as institutions of higher learning with that doctrine of *in loco parentis* (Bickel & Lake, 1999)*. In loco parentis* is a Latin term which refers to "in place of a parent." These institutions of higher learning were more swift in handling situations internally during this time. After Dixon v. Alabama, 1961, institutions changed that way they began to interact with students that entered their institutions (Bickel & Lake, 1999). The constitutional right for due process required institutions to create judicial processes that allowed students to justify their decisions.

The college and university setting represent where significant amounts of research have been conducted, primarily centered in the United States. Hazing occurs in several areas in a college and university setting. This is an issue that is extremely important to educational institutions and threatens the safety and security of campuses (Allan et al., 2019). However, hazing is most prevalent in student athletes and fraternity or sororities (Diamond et al., 2016). It must be noted that fraternities and sororities are less prevalent in Canadian universities due to institutional polices that ban the organizations (Massey & Massey, 2017). Several reasons are discussed throughout the research as to why these groups have higher rates of hazing. Diamond et. al. (2016) explained "deep routed culture, socialization, and relationships may contribute to the high rates of acts of hazing" (p.159). The need to test group loyalty and build group cohesion, and the "re-building" of a perfect group member are the reasons that Smokowski and Evans (2019) believe that hazing takes place. Massey and Massey (2017) identified three central themes that encompass collegiate student perspective: 1) the acts do not count as hazing; 2) it's hazing,

but within acceptable limits; and 3) it is happening, but not to me. The beliefs around hazing combined with student perspective is another component of hazing culture that needs to be addressed. The responsibility to fix the hazing concern in this arena is often placed on the athletic staff or the fraternity/sorority life administration; however, often the culture of hazing is passed down and becomes part of tradition. When a group member places tradition over individual self, they become immersed in the group's norms and lose their identity and personal responsibility (Smokowski & Evans, 2019). 19.6 percent of the times an act of hazing occurred in an athletic setting, a coach or team leadership was present, but not involved (Allan et al., 2019). There is a difference in the gender of athletes who have been involved in acts of hazing. Female athletes were almost as likely to participate in hazing as males. Football, hockey, lacrosse, soccer, and water-polo players, as well as swimmers, were more likely to have been hazed than athletes in other sports (Suggs, 1999).

The use of alcohol is also directly connected to hazing in a college and university setting (Scott-Sheldon et al., 2016). The consumption of alcohol may provide insight to the physical connection of hazing. Fraternities and sororities rise to the priority list of most responsible for acts of hazing that involve the use of alcohol (Scott-Sheldon et. al., 2016). There are a number of initiatives around hazing, reporting practices, and policies in a higher education setting. Unlike K-12 students, there is an effort to raise the awareness about hazing. Although students may be aware of hazing, Allan et al. (2019) found in their research "that the desire to be accepted, commitment to social group, and group dynamics are all reasons students accept hazing behaviors" (p. 33). The social gains indicated by Allen et al. (2019) provide a positive reinforcement if the study used SCT as its framework.

The location where acts of hazing occur in colleges or universities is also different when compared to the K-12 setting. Acts of hazing are more likely to occur off campus than on campus, in properties that were unaffiliated to the institution as compared to the school facilities for those in the K-12 setting (Allan et al., 2019). The liability around hazing is always a concern for institutional leadership. When these acts occur away from campus, some of the liability may decrease. In the K-12 sector, hazing is typically involving a school-sanctioned event such as a practice, tryout, etc. (Allan, 2009; Gershel et al., 2003; Pecjak & Pirc, 2019).

Hazing versus Bullying and Impacts-Type of Violence

There is a small difference between hazing and bullying in relation to definitions, but the outcome of each act is quite different (Smokowski & Evans, 2019). The definition of these terms may vary from one individual to another. This minute difference may be one of the reasons why the terms are often used interchangeably by many educators. The definition for hazing and bullying can vary, but the imbalance of power is one similarity between the two acts. According to Lacey and Cornell (2016) "bullying includes repeated acts of verbal or physical aggression that are intended to inflict harm on the victim" (p.190). Rettew and Pawlowski (2016) defined bullying as "repetitive and intentional peer aggression where there exists a power imbalance" (p. 235). Hazing, on the other hand, is defined by McGlone and Schaefer (2008) as "situations and actions that an individual must tolerate in order to become part of the group or team" (p. 4). Meanwhile, Smokowski and Evans (2019) along with HazingPrevention.org define hazing as "any action taken, or any situation created intentionally that causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule and risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team, whether new or not, regardless of the person's willingness to participate" (p.154). With the similarities and differences of the definition of hazing and bullying, Smokowski and Evans (2019) believe

that hazing is a form of bullying through power imbalance. The variation in definitions of both hazing and bullying can cause confusion amongst students, staff and administrators.

Despite what definition is used, the impact of hazing and bullying on students can be significant with lower academic performance for individual students (Lacey & Cornell, 2016). Lacey and Cornell's research agreed with the premise that bullying impacts the individual; however, they identified that there was a gap in the literature with regards to how bullying impacted the overall school's performance and climate. Bullying has to be examined on this level because school grounds are the most prevalent places for bullying to occur (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016).

Bullying is a factor that students consider when determining their safety and access to activity engagement (Lacey & Cornell, 2016). Student and teacher perception have been identified as an impact factor of school climate (Lacey & Coornell, 2016). Professional judgement was applied to incident reports to determine how the incident was categorized (Lacey & Cornell, 2016). The individual professional interpretation may lead to varying school climates within a school district. The expectations outlined for schools on how to implement policies surrounding interpersonal violence will affect a school's climate (Lacey & Cornell, 2016).

Bullying has historically been viewed as a harmless rite of passage until recent years (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). DeWitt and DeWitt (2012) provided evidence that hazing was believed to be a harmless rite of passage as well. Nuwer (2000) documented that elitism was previously correlated to hazing by higher education presidents. Current literature presented by Rettew and Pawlowski (2016) indicates that long-term psychological and physical ramifications are now associated with bullying. One of the major impacts of bullying is mental health, and it has been linked to increased anxiety, depression, suicidality, psychosis and self-harm behaviors

(Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). Social and school climate are the growing focal points of school intervention and policy development (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). Psychological consequences such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), lowered self-esteem, and depression have been linked to hazing (Smokowski & Evans, 2019). Physical consequences due to violent acts of hazing have also been linked to hazing occurrences that unfortunately have led to death in some victims (Smokowski & Evans, 2019).

Hazing in the K-12 system is often overlooked, or the acts are perceived as tradition (McGlone, & Schaefer, 2008). Unlike bullying, which is often done on an individual basis, hazing usually involves an organized group. Socialization is often used as a mask for hazing; students who are involved in hazing activities also tend to have a connection socially (Allan et al., 2019). Schools cannot simply eliminate socialization as a means to address hazing because it can also occur outside of the traditional school environment. It is important that both educators and students understand what acts of hazing are. Allan et al. (2019) found that "seventy nine percent of participants that they surveyed participated in acts of hazing based on the definition of hazing" (p. 33). These results demonstrate that hazing is occurring; however, there is a lack of understanding around this subject by students and administrators which may be associated with varying definitions of hazing.

Understanding the differences amongst hazing and bullying between male and female student groups is essential for educators to be able to provide appropriate support. Both male and female students have participated in hazing behaviors such as chanting and binge drinking while some other acts are more likely to occur in one gender over the other (Allan et al., 2019). The type of acts that are taking place does not place one gender over the other in potential attempts. Fraternities and sororities have been documented to participate in hazing acts at nearly an equal

rate (Allan et al., 2019). Psychological and physical acts are how some studies attempt to break down hazing. Males have been documented in participating in more physical acts, while females participate in more psychological acts of hazing (Allan et al., 2019). The gender difference gap increases when it comes to beliefs about hazing. There is a significant difference with regards to the belief of hazing practices, where males tend to have stronger beliefs in hazing (Caldeira, Silva, Mendes, Botelho, & Martins, 2016).

Racial and ethnic identities are an essential component of a person's identity, and the various backgrounds should be considered when attempting to associate violent acts amongst people groups. Hazing is deemed to be more violent in Black Greek Lettered Organizations (BGLOs) according to Allen et al. (2019). The belief behind hazing and its place in racial-based groups may be associated with that particular race motivation. Physical hardship in the initiation process provides a level of elitism to the incoming member (Allen et al., 2019). Ethnic groups tend to have a deeper connection to the organizations they are connected with, even past their groups' formation. Based on the information from Allan et al. (2019), individuals would not attempt to join BGLOs if they were not believed to have to endure a severe process; it is believed to be an expectation of incoming members.

Educational Policies Around Hazing and Bullying

Bullying and hazing are utilized as synonyms in current research despite being different forms of interpersonal violence (Diamond et al., 2016). Despite this fact, educational arenas have created policies in an attempt to reduce these forms of interpersonal violence. An examination of the types of educational policies around bullying and hazing indicated that they are reactive based in nature (McGlone, & Schaefer, 2008). No matter how well written a policy is, it does not provide an extra layer of protection for its victims (Gower, Cousin, and Borowsky,

2017). Hakkola, Allen and Kerschner (2019) indicated that schools with anti-hazing policies are still under-reporting hazing incidents due to the limited awareness of hazing knowledge, warning signs, and procedures that would traditionally be covered in formalized training.

On a federal level, there is no policy that protects a student from hazing or bullying. States have the right to create laws and policies against both hazing and bullying. According to hazingprevention.org (2018), there are currently 44 states that have a hazing law. The definition of hazing, prohibited actions, sanctions, and charges vary by state. There are discrepancies in how hazing is defined and dealt with across the United States. Hazingprevention.org states how North Carolina's law protects students only. This does not allow one to potentially file for job or professional organization related hazing. The United States Department of Health and Human Services (2019) provides insight into which states have laws and policy, just policy, just law, or no data for anti-bullying. Policies seem to be more reactive for situations after they occur. The current research does not necessarily focus on examining policies; instead, it focuses on how these policies are implemented based on hazing cases.

Group Dynamics and Hazing

The act of hazing is a group's attempt to build cohesion (Smokowski & Evans, 2019; Waldron, 2015). Hazing is always discussed as occurring in groups or social settings. To gain a detailed understanding of how hazing impacts individuals, it is important to understand the group dynamics. Cohesion is defined as a "dynamic process that reflects unity surrounding tasks and social needs of the group" (McLaren, Newland, Eys, & Newton, 2017, p. 89). The structure of a group influences how its group members operate within it. A group that has a history of hazing within it has a strong indicator of the hazing being continued (Waldron, 2015). The current modeling within the group is a display to potential members of the social requirements to gain

acceptance. When hazing is involved, a group typically has new members who are seeking full acceptance into the group and who are awaiting initiation. The interest of the group continues to rise when there is perceived elitism associated with it (Allan et al., 2019).

The power imbalance that is created amongst the group is essential to the hazing dynamic (Smokowski & Evans, 2019). Socio-economic status may add additional levels of power that can be evoked. Typically, research associates hazing practices with power of veteran members being held over new members or those seeking membership. Smokowski and Evans (2019) emphasized that once membership is granted, the power imbalance is may or may not be diminished. Senior group members can still initiate hazing practices to junior level group members on a lighter level than compared to new members (Smokowski & Evans, 2019). This continued power imbalance is documented as a factor that leads to the continuous cycle of hazing.

Initiation

"Initiation refers to the admission of a person into a community, group or society which has a common origin, interest or purpose" (Dias & Sa, 2014, p. 449). This is a common definition amongst research with regards to hazing. It is important for educators to understand the act of initiation and the preceding events, since this is where hazing is believed to take place. The initiation rituals are the steps or events that lead up to the formal acceptance into the group (Dias & Sa, 2014). The preceding events or the initiation ritual are kept on a need-to-know basis in an effort to exude power over potential new members (Waldron, 2014). The secretive nature makes it challenging for acts of hazing to be identified, no matter the level to which it is occurring. Those who are victims and/or bystanders of the acts of hazing fail to report incidents due to gain or to maintain social approval within the group (Waldron, 2015).

The development of team cohesion and bonding are key factors that connect hazing to initiation (Waldron, 2015). Negative characteristics have been exposed in studies conducted, and those characteristics influence policy creation (Allen et al., 2018; Cimino, 2011; Diamond et al., 2016; Gershel et al., 2003; Nuwer, 2000; Scott-Sheldon et al., 2016; Smokowski & Evans, 2019; Waldron, 2015). Campo, Poulos and Sipple (2005) and Waldron (2015) have attempted to associate positive characteristics with hazing. Positive initiation related activities are perceived to increase the student experience (Campo et al., 2005). When hazing is associated with positive initiation characteristics, students are less likely to view hazing as an area of concern (Campo et al., 2005).

Initiation practices do not only take place with students in organized groups, but also within work organizations. The United States Armed Forces have had their initiation practices and associated hazing practices scrutinized in the public eye. Keller, Matthews, Hall, Marcellino, Mauro and Lim (2015) classified hazing in the United States Armed forces into three categories, with one of them being initiation ritual. The US Marines conduct a three-day ritual coined "Crucible" that serves as a transition from the recruit to Marine status (Keller, Matthews, Hall, Marcellino, Mauro and Lim, 2015). This sanctioned initiation ritual does not constitute as hazing. Although there are sanctioned initial rituals, subcultures within the armed forces have created unsanctioned initiation practices that can be constituted as hazing. Blood wings, also known as blood pinning, is an example of hazing within an initiation ritual. Service members received a pin, without the protective backing pressed into their flesh by members of their unit (Keller et. al, 2015).

Initiation is essential to this study due to it being the culminating event to most hazing practices. In secondary education, there are multiple times throughout the school year where

students can join a new group, club or team. Tryouts for athletic events may be one time where educators and coaches look for hazing indicators. Since these windows for receiving new group members are typically dictated by the school, it is essential that students and educators are informed of hazing and ways to prevent it.

Hazing and Student Mental Health

The well-being of all students is the responsibility of school leadership, teachers, and administrators. Well-being extends beyond simply having services available, but ensuring that students are comfortable and that services are meeting their needs (Antaramian, 2015). Antaramian's (2015) study focuses on some of the areas that impact student well-being and how the school system can be supportive. Well-being is defined as an individual's current experience of their quality of life (Antaramian, 2015). The idea that positive well-being is associated with lower mental health concerns is an important piece of addressing mental health. When examining hazing, it seems that most connect the impact to physical abuse. However, a large part of hazing is degrading and devastating the individuals involved. Students involved or who observe acts of hazing at any age are at risk for psychological trauma and emotional difficulties as a result of their behavior (La Rosa, 2014). Mental development of students at middle and high school age may also impact processing acts of hazing, the abuse, and potential dangers involved (Gershel et al., 2003). According to Gershel et. al (2003), "only three percent of middle school students in their study viewed hazing activities as dangerous" (p. 335). If students cannot understand the danger centered around hazing, then the responsibility of educating, reporting, addressing and supporting individuals is left in the hands of school personnel.

Understanding the mental state of individuals who commit acts of hazing is important to gaining understanding of the perception of hazing by teachers, coaches, school counselors and

school leadership team members. Ermer, Cosmides and Tooby (2008) describe "individuals who commit acts of hazing as having differential access to valued resources by virtue of their ability to inflict physical or social pain on less dominant individuals" (p. 109). Research indicates that those who were hazed could suffer from a multitude of psychological effects that include but are not limited to: sexual difficulties, low self-esteem, impaired moral reasoning, aggression, anxiety, interpersonal problems, physical self-harm, and debilitating developmental effects (Stirling, Bridges, Cruz, Mountjoy & Canadian Academy of Sports and Exercise Medicine, 2011; Diamond et. al, 2016).

Individuals who were hazed and did not seek mental health supports have a strong indicator of suffering psychological trauma from the hazing, according to the study conducted by Lima, Ramos-Cerqueira, Dantas, Lamardo, Reis, & Torres (2018). The psychological impacts that have been documented in research on victims of hazing are increased depressive symptoms, increased anxiety, and stress (Sawant, Karki, & Bhandari, 2019). Untreated psychological distress is believed to lead to significant impacts on an individual's mental health and well-being (Sawant et. al, 2019). The untreated psychological distress has also been documented in military personnel. Nuwer (2018) shared multiple counts of service individuals taking their own lives or "acting out of character" due to undergoing torment from senior leadership. Diamond et. al (2016) believed that "hazing should be broadly viewed as 'maltreatment' and/or 'violence' and as such, principles and practices that safeguard the health and wellness of the college and school-age athlete should be instituted across disciplines and populations" (p. 153).

Gender and Hazing

Hazing takes place against both males and females. The definition of hazing, type of hazing and levels of severity have been documented to differ (Allan, Hakkola, & Kerschner,

2020; Sawant et. al, 2019; Véliz-Calderón & Allan, 2017). The student perception of the role of gender in regard to hazing was captured in the study conducted by Allen, Hakkola and Kerschner (2020). The need to seek power or have an elevated status was identified in both genders to have a role in hazing (Allan et. al, 2020). In the study conducted by Véliz-Calderón & Allan (2017), there were differences documented in the definition of hazing provided by male and female students when referencing physical strength and physical harm. "Male students in the study more frequently defined hazing experiences and activities as displays of physical strength and physical effects of alcohol abuse, while female students tended to focus more on physical effects of sleep deprivation or food-related hazing" (Véliz-Calderón & Allan, 2019, p. 6). Hazing for males have been documented to be more physical in nature in comparison to females whose hazing experiences are more emotional in nature (Allan & Kinney, 2018; Allan et. al, 2020; Véliz-Calderón & Allan,2019). Allan and Kinney (2018) believe that hazing can reinforce gender stereotypes.

Hazing has been utilized as a structure to test one's allegiance to the group before receiving full access. For males, masculinity has been linked to strength, courage, and determination (Allan & Kinney, 2018). Allan and Kinney (2018) believe that if a gender lens is applied, it could explain why it is difficult for hazing to be eliminated from the community. If hazing was to be eradicated, men would not have opportunities to prove themselves as not being weak or a freeloader (Allan & Kinney, 2018). The removal of man's ability to prove himself through potentially harmful actions may destroy the very box in which masculinity has been placed.

The female experience with hazing been explored, and revealed that objectification to harassment, and in some cases, assault, have been documented (Allan & Kinney, 2018). Hazing

acts that have been done towards female students by both males and females reinforce negative gender stereotypes such as limited power. Females have participated in hazing practices that mirror those that males undergo, such as excessive alcohol consumption, sleep deprivation, paddling, etc. (Allan & Kinney, 2018). On the contrary, males do not mimic hazing practices done by females (Allan & Kinney, 2018). Despite the gender, hazing seeks to degrade, disempower, and humiliate the potential new members/newcomers in order to determine allegiance to the organization.

Hazing in the Workplace

The previous sections discussed how hazing and hazing related acts are documented in the K-12 educational sector. Hazing is not limited to those within the field of education. There is literature that indicates that hazing is associated in the workplace as well. "Available empirical evidence indicates 25–75% of American employees encounter workplace hazing, but very little empirical research exists on this phenomenon" (Thomas, Cimino, & Meglich, 2021). The National Football Association (NFL), the medical field, and military services are some of the documented fields of work that have been associated with hazing. In the NFL, senior team members are given instructions to toughen up the rookies in an effort to assimilate them to team standard (Tofler, 2016). Former offensive lineman for the Miami Dolphins, Jonathan Martin, left the organization after two years of non-stop hazing and harassment by senior team members (Tolfer, 206). Horizontal violence is a term used in the medical field by nurses that is comparable to hazing. Horizontal violence or hostility is defined as a "consistent pattern of behavior designed to control, diminish, or devalue a peer (or group) that creates a risk to health and/or safety" (Bartholomew, 2006, p.4). Brown and Middaugh (2009) indicated that hazing done towards nurses could lead to overall patient safety due to workplace dissatisfaction, slower

productivity and effectiveness in clinic. The decreasing levels of patient safety is an example of how the effects of hazing stem beyond the initiator and victim to the community. When patient safety is compromised in the medical field, it could lead to further injury or death, which could have been avoided by the removal of hazing practices from the workplace. Military personnel believe that hazing activity is a component needed to realign the social values, norms, and beliefs of those in the group (Hernandez, 2015). The negative implications associated with hazing in the military has been linked to increased suicidal ideation (Kim, Kim & Park, 2019). During Private Chen's 43 days in his military unit, he experienced hazing, often referred to as smoke sessions, by multiple senior personnel that resulted in him afflicting harm to himself, and ultimately ending his life (Hernandez, 2015).

Group membership has a high value associated within it in the workplace, not just in the K-12 or higher education setting. The hazing practices conducted in the workplace provide newcomers with the norms of the organization, the seniority rankings, and a test of loyalty (Josefowitz, 1989). Josefowitz (1989) indicated that when a newcomer is not included in the group after undergoing hazing practices in the workplace, it then turns into harassment. The study conducted by Josefowitz (1989) showcased that women, minorities, and newcomers to the workplace experience hazing more harshly. The consequences within the workplace for harsher forms of hazing impeded on workplace performance in the nature of tardiness, absenteeism and employee turnover (Josefowitz, 1989). It is believed that when harsher forms of hazing are occurring in the workplace, a supervisor should interfere; however, if the hazing is mild, then the newcomers should go along with the acts (Josefowitz, 1989).

The effects of hazing have been known by the federal government for years. In 1874, Forty-third Congress created a Hazing Law to ban hazing activities from the Naval Academy in

an effort to eradicate the dangerous practices (Forty-Third Congress, 1874). To no avail, hazing continued at Naval Academies which included over 100 cases and the investigation of the death of a West Point Cadet (Hernandez, 2015). Many years of policy reform followed in hopes to address hazing in the military (to include the academies). The current policies of the US Armed Forces indicate that anti-hazing policies exist, but they "reveal vague adjectival requirements, over breadth, exceptions to the rule, intent requirements, dissimilar policies, and include other words that do not meet the academically accepted definition of hazing" (Hernandez, 2015, p. 428). Hernandez (2015) documented that the Army was the only service branch to have an anti-bullying policy at the time of research. Despite the anti-hazing policies that are documented under the Department of Defense, hazing practices and incidents are still occurring. Nuwer (2018) was able to identify six service individuals who took their own lives due to hazing in their military units. The culture within the military continues to support hazing practices through smokehouses and smokescreens (Nuwer, 2018). Victim blaming and vows of silence are practices that support the hazing.

Current Recommendations

The current literature around hazing attempts to explain the reasoning behind hazing, who the victims are and those who initiate it. Over the years, hazing research has made recommendations, mostly geared to towards colleges and universities, on practical steps that can be taken to reduce hazing incidents amongst the students. Hazing has been documented to be found in the workplace. Some of the recommendations that have been presented are similar to those recommended for colleges and universities.

The recommendation that has been listed the most across research is in reference to the definition of hazing. The definition of hazing varies between institutions, states, and agencies,

with many of them focusing primarily on physical harm (Allan et. al, 2019; Diamond et. al, 2016; Keller et. al, 2015). Crow and McGlone (2018) identified that even anti-hazing statues do not include mental or emotional harm within the definition. Keller et. al (2015) referenced that the Department of Defense should include how lack of consent to the hazing acts still constitutes the acts as hazing. The utilization of a universal definition would remove confusion and allow for educational training to be consistent across disciplines and educational settings.

Educational training was also noted as a recommendation to combat hazing. When individuals are informed on hazing, they are able to shift their perception to recognize the full impact of hazing (Reid, Holt, Felix, Grief Green, 2019). Training provides an avenue for individuals to receive information and skills that will allow them to have proper implementation of a policy (Truitt, 2019). Allan et. al (2019) and Waldron (2015) indicated that the educational workshops should not be limited only to students or students in specific organizations, but campus wide. Training should be offered to students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents/guardians. This training approach will allow all stakeholders to be informed on hazing practices, how they negatively impact the community, and how to report and seek assistance (Allan, Kershner, & Payne, 2019). Anti-hazing workshops should be created utilizing university or college resources to create informational sessions based on the participants' identities (Allan & Kinney, 2018). Educational workshops should be an ongoing facilitation. In order to create a cultural shift within a community towards anti-hazing practices, the educational training should be supported by additional changes within policies and philosophies of the institution (Swick-Duttine, 2018). Educational workshops should be multi-pronged to cover multiple important topics based on the participants' identity (Allan, Kershner, & Payne, 2019). A suggestion of

topics is to include clarity of the definition of hazing, role of power and coercion, bystander intervention and ethical leadership (Allan, Kershner, & Payne, 2019).

In the college and university setting, it is believed that there needs to be a shift in the conduct philosophy and process. A shift in the conduct philosophy and process will allow students the opportunity to learn from their experiences and shift their way of thinking, instead of being punitive in nature (Swick-Duttine, 2018). Although hazing is a serious act which causes mental, physical, and emotional harm to many, the idea of having groups or students reaping developmental consequences for their actions may actually lead to a cultural shift. Swick-Duttine (2018) also recommended that an amnesty period be offered for student groups who would like to change their practices but need assistance in doing so. This recommendation is geared primarily to higher education, but the utilization of the educational workshops and developmental consequences may also be implemented in the secondary education level.

Increased involvement of faculty and staff has been another recommendation presented by the current literature. Faculty and staff interact with students throughout their day. If a student is on an organized sports team, they would only interact with their coaches and teammates at indicated times. Faculty and staff are individuals who could recognize the signs of hazing in students in their classes (Allan, Kershner, & Payne, 2019). Keenan (2018) pointed out that a small percentage of faculty actually conduct research on hazing, an aspect of student life that directly affects students. Students seek guidance from faculty and staff members when selecting courses, attempting research and making other educational journey-based decisions. Faculty and staff in this advising role should be trained to recognize and discuss potential harms, such as hazing, in their collegiate experiences. Research states that students who have experienced victimization prior to college are more likely to experience it within college (Reid et. al, 2015).

Keenan (2018) challenges faculty and staff to conduct more research and hold ethical discussions on hazing and the experiences that their students are having.

There is a need for clearly defined standard operating procedures (SOPs) which will include reporting, documenting, investigation procedures, sanctions, and educational efforts (Allan, Kershner, & Payne, 2019; Keller et. al, 2015). SOPs will not only benefit educational settings, but also workplaces. SOPs may be written in formats to be conveyed as general and broad-based to very specific (Sajdak, Trembath & Thomas, 2013). The importance of SOPs is to have a document that clearly outlines the responsibilities of all involved and the process that should be followed (Manghani, 2011). In the educational setting, SOPs will be able to provide clarification on the hazing investigation process, the roles and responsibilities of students, teachers, coaches, school counselors, and other educational staff. SOPs are implemented to achieve uniformity of a process (Manghani, 2011). In order for a cultural shift to take place, the practices that will support the shift need to be clearly defined. Manghani (2011) informs us that poorly written SOPs can lead to misinformation. Misinformation can lead to mistreatment and inconsistent sanctions. Inclusive practices, which can be outlined in SOPs, promote a positive environment that allows individuals to strive no matter the setting. Keller et. al (2015) called for an increased systematic response towards hazing prevention. The US Armed Forces utilize SOPs to uphold the safety of the American people. The creation of SOPs centered on hazing prevention will allow the Department of Defense to uphold the safety of its service men and women and properly track incidents (Keller et. al, 2015).

The last recommendation is the need for federal litigation. There are multiple states that have laws centered around hazing (Crow & McGlone, 2018). According to Crow and McGlone (2018), there are forty-four states that have criminalized hazing, but in others, hazing is only

classified as a misdemeanor. The lack of consistency on hazing litigation continues to leave hazing up to individual interpretation. The lack of a consistent definition that will be adopted by all states will continue to allow the culture of hazing to exist. Crow and McGlone (2018) highlighted the 2017 Report and Educate Campus Hazing (REACH) antihazing legislation. REACH was proposed to become law and mandate antihazing education to be implemented in higher education settings through the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Crow & McGlone, 2018).

Summary

The literature reviewed established that hazing is a serious issue and could have a lasting impression on multiple aspects of a student from an individual standpoint and from an institutional perspective. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory is the theoretical framework for this study. It was utilized to gain a deeper understanding of the research participants' perspectives of hazing based on their previous environmental influences and reinforcements. The information gathered collectively may lead to understanding in how teachers, coaches, school counselors and school leadership team members perceive hazing within middle and high schools. The current literature is not evenly distributed across the educational levels with regards to hazing. There is significantly more research that addressed the hazing in a higher education setting versus in a K-12 environment. This does not necessarily mean it does not exist in the K-12 setting, but it maybe miscategorized. There appears to be a lack of understanding around the subject of hazing for both students and administrators. In a K-12 setting, the concerns about hazing are less focused on liability as in a higher education setting and more focused on the impact on school climate. The primary focus of K-12 appears to be on bullying intervention and policy development associated with anti-bullying. The heightened focus on bullying in the recent years has dominated the research in the K-12 setting in regard to peer-to-peer violence.

The literature also pointed out that there are inconsistencies at every educational level in how hazing is defined. This inconsistency is also mimicked in state laws or policies. This impacts the policies and other interventions that are put in place to address the concerns about hazing. The lack of consistency within the definition of hazing has led to inaccurate research for those who have utilized the terms *hazing* and *bullying* as synonyms. Gender and race are two factors that must be considered when examining the impact of hazing on a student's academics, psychological well-being, emotional state, and physical state. With regards to gender, the approach to hazing differs, but the responsibility among gender is almost the same. However, the gap between genders increases with regards to belief in hazing. Males tend to have a stronger belief in comparison to females. With regards to race, Black Greek Letter Organizations tend to have a stronger belief in hazing. It appears to be embedded in the groups' believed traditions and their overall perception of themselves with a level of elitism.

Hazing, unlike bullying, often takes place in a group setting. One aspect of group dynamics that the research explores is cohesion. The initiation or rite of passage "traditions" that students partake involve a level of students' lack of knowledge of hazing. The dynamics of the groups the students were a part of provided insight to how and why they continued to support the sought-after group. Numerous policies have been created on the collegiate level in an effort to keep students safe, but as indicated in the above literature, those policy creations have not assisted in the decrease of violent acts. With the definition of hazing defined in comparison to bullying, there is evidence that there may have been misidentification of acts in previous research. The gap in the literature is pertaining to the impressions that hazing has on students' overall experiences.

Hazing has been documented to take place outside of the educational settings of K-12 and higher education. Research has provided evidence that hazing is taking place across fields. The safety of the individuals and those they serve is also negatively impacted through hazing. Hazing in the medical field, specifically nurses, has been studied, and the lack of sleep was shown to impact their ability to properly care for their patients and decreased their overall job satisfaction. Hazing in the US Armed Forces has led to service men and women suffering from severe mental health concerns or even taking their own lives. The growing concern around hazing continues to exist.

Despite all the current literature that has been done on hazing, it lacks to gain the perceptions of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members in middle and high schools. This gap in literature is where this research seeks to fit in and provide insight on those experiences. The results of this study add to the research on hazing in middle and high schools. It can aid in the revision of standard operating procedures on reporting, documenting, investigating and sanctioning hazing. The uniformity of a process will provide clarity to students, teachers, coaches, school counselors, and all other educators.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to explore the perspectives of teachers regarding hazing in middle and high schools. Additional perspectives of coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members will be explored as well. This chapter provides a detailed overview of the procedures used to collect data for this study. The transcendental phenomenological research design will be described with an explanation of its selection in relation to this study. An explanation of the site and participants, data collected, and analysis will be reviewed. In addition, this chapter will reveal my role as the researcher in this study along with ethical considerations. The chapter concludes by explaining the procedures, research design, data analysis, and trustworthiness.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was used for this study. A transcendental phenomenological approach was applied to explore the perspective of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and leadership team members on hazing in middle and high schools. The qualitative research method allowed for multiple forms of data collection so that the perspectives from the participants could be done in their natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative designs focus on the entirety of an occurrence and seek to reveal meanings associated with those occurrences (Moustakas, 1994). In order to make sense of and interpret a phenomenon, a naturalist approach to viewing the world is needed. Exploring behaviors, life events, and perspectives can be conducted through qualitative research (Khan, 2014). This type of research design does not seek to provide an answer to a single question or hypothesis. The lived experiences of individuals are the key aspect of this approach so that those experiences can be used to find meaning. Therefore, the qualitative

approach is the most appropriate method for this research as it explored the lived experiences of the participants in order to make sense of their experiences on how it impacted their perspective of hazing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Phenomenology is the study of describing the perspectives of multiple individuals in search of a common meaning of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The human experience that is connected to the phenomenon is consistent amongst research participants (Moustakas, 1994). This qualitative design sought to utilize the experiences shared amongst the participants to develop a description that comprised of "what" was experienced and "how" it was experienced (Moustakas, 1994). In order to obtain comprehensive descriptions, the participants must be reflective of the experience, which can be prompted through interview questions (Moustakas, 1994). This approach permitted an identifying of themes associated with this population.

Transcendental phenomenology is a design type developed by Moustakas (1994) that seeks to assist researchers in conducting studies that seek to describe human experiences. Moustakas (1994) built a transcendental approach on the framework of Edmond Husserl. Husserl, who was deemed the pioneer of this approach, believed that this framework would allow knowledge to be revealed in a transcendental state where information could be seen for precisely what it was (Moustakas, 1994). The transcendental approach within phenomenology allows the researcher to set aside preconceptions associated with the phenomenon and use instinct, imagination, and structure to acquire the meaning of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Within the study of human science, phenomena are seen as the cornerstones of information (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenology is the appropriate design for this study since it focuses more on the description of the lived experiences

of the participants than of the interpretations of the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The primary step within the transcendental phenomenological approach is to identify the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenon being studied in this research was hazing experienced while in secondary education. The perception of hazing by those who worked with the middle and high school levels required the transcendental phenomenological approach. The selection of hazing as the phenomenon being studied is due to the limited body of literature that explores the perspectives of middle and high school personnel. In this study, I completed the same interview questions as those of the participants in order for personal experiences to be expressed. Field notes were written throughout the process of the study. The data collected from participants allowed for significant statements to be identified and clustered into statements so that multiple associations could be viewed (Moustakas, 1994). The reduction of individual experiences in relation to the phenomenon is the goal of phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From the clustering of structural and textural descriptions, the experiences of secondary education students who were hazed and what they experienced were best described (Moustakas, 1994).

The research study aimed to provide clarity around the perspectives of teachers, school counselors, coaches and school leadership team members regarding hazing in middle and high school. The examination of a specific population and the topic selected required attention to detail, a focus on perceptions, participants' understanding of hazing, and most importantly, gaining an understanding of the participants' lived experiences through descriptions that expressed their overall perspective. For those reasons, a transcendental phenomenological study was selected for this research. This approach relies heavily on the individual experiences, which allow for the information to be gained from the story (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

This study uses five research questions based on the theoretical framework and body of current

literature. The questions which guided the study were the following:

Research Question One

      What are teachers' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

Research Question Two

      What are coaches' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

Research Question Three

      What are school counselors' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school

students?

Research Question Four

      What are school leadership teams' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school

students?

Research Question Five

      To what extent does hazing and bullying overlap among middle and high school

students?

Setting and Participants

Site

      The study site was two schools in the Cheering Citizens Public Schools District (CC), a

pseudonym provided for the confidentiality of the participants and the school district. Mountain

Middle School (MMS) and Treetop High School (THS) are the two sites selected for this

research study.. CC was a suburban school district servicing students Pre-kindergarten through

12th grade, located in the southeastern region of the United States. CC had over 4,080 full-time

teachers encompassing full-time employees being over 7,160. Based on the Virginia Department

of Education, at least 60% of teachers in CC held master's or doctoral level degrees at the time

of this study. The minimum qualification for school counselors was a master's level degree.

MMS comprised of grades sixth through eighth and had a student population of 1,127 students,

as reported for the 2018-2019 academic year (National Center for Education, 2020). Three

hundred sixty-five students who attended MMS were eligible for the free or reduced lunch

program (National Center for Education, 2020) during the 2018-2019 academic year. THS held

grades nine through 12 with a student population of 1,917 as reflected in the 2018-2019

academic year (National Center for Education, 2020). Over 65% of the student population was

eligible for the free and reduced lunch program that academic year.

The leadership of CC flowed through the superintendent, Dr. Kendra Daniels,

pseudonym. The local school board served as a form of checks and balances to keep the CC on

track to meet students' needs within the district. Superintendents were responsible for the

coordination of district resources and overseeing district management and operations (Decman,

Badgett, Shaughness, Randall Nixon, & Lemley, 2018). The flow of leadership at CC school

district began with the superintendent and school board and trickled down to chief officers in the

area of leadership, academics, teaching and learning, business/finances, and technology. The

organizational flow continued its movement to an instructional specialist who supervised

principals while principals supervised teachers. As the superintendent continued to focus on the

oversight of the school district with the support of the local school board, positive reflections

could be seen among stakeholders (Decman et al., 2018).

Participants

Purposeful criterion sampling was utilized to gather research participants. The utilization

of criterion sampling solicited participants who met the identified criteria that aligned with the purpose of this study. Participants were required to be employed by CC as a teacher, school counselor, coach, school principal, assistant principal, or associate principal; hold a valid professional educator license in the state of Virginia, except for coaches; and have been assigned to one of the sites for at least one academic year. In addition, participants completed a screening questionnaire (Appendix C) to disclose their title and level of employment prior to being selected as a participant to ensure that the participants met the study qualifications.

Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended that a heterogeneous group be utilized for phenomenological studies where participation can range from three to 15 individuals. To have a diverse group that represents both sites, 12 participants were utilized for this study. Demographic information was obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCSE); based on the 2018-2019 academic year, there were 1,1652 secondary education teachers and 93 secondary school counselors employed within CC.

Researcher Positionality

I have worked with students from pre-school to the collegiate level for nine years. As a previous higher education employee, I have worked in student housing, student activities, and the fraternity/sorority community. While working with fraternity and sorority students, I solidified my passion for ending hazing on all education levels. I have attended nationally recognized hazing prevention institutes geared towards combatting hazing practices, not only in sororities and fraternities, but in all organized groups. I am affiliated with a sorority and have experienced hazing in my undergraduate career, which could be considered biased. To combat bias, I did not focus the research on collegiate level groups/organizations and I bracketed my experiences through epoché. Through my lived experiences, I can see how these actions harmed my life and

the victims. The national institute that I attended opened my eyes to hazing practices on the secondary education level.

I am a school counselor at the elementary level. As a school counselor, it is my role to advocate and support every student in personal, academic, emotional, and social matters. I have the privilege of interacting with every student within my school building and providing support for them, their teachers, and their families. My personal experiences have influenced my belief that hazing acts are being miscategorized or overlooked. To avoid bias, I needed to use bracketing to remove my personal experiences from the study. I allowed the participants' perceptions to indicate how and if hazing was viewed within their educational buildings. By seeking participants who were not direct colleagues of mine, I hoped to avoid ethical considerations associated with being an active school counselor.

Before hazing acts or hazing-related events could be identified, perceptions of hazing first had to be explored. I wanted to hear from those who worked directly with students, which revealed how they perceived hazing. As a school counselor, my perception of hazing has been shaped in combination with my personal experience. This research allowed me to go beyond my personal experiences to explore the perceptions of others. The ability to explore individual perceptions allowed each participant's past experiences to shape their perspective and view on hazing (Bandura, 1986).

My background associated with hazing, combined with my hopes to understand why hazing exists on the middle and high school levels, allowed me to approach this research from a social constructivism framework and an ontological philosophical assumption. The philosophical assumption described by Creswell and Poth (2018) is that reality is built based on lived experiences in our environments. Ontological assumptions embraced the multiple perspectives of

the research participants that allowed themes to be developed based on the information gathered (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Teachers, coaches, school counselors, and leadership team members may have experienced past and current events shaping their viewpoints. These points of view were used in their positions, so I selected the social constructivism framework. Social constructivism seeks to understand the experiences of others through their vantage point (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The transcendental phenomenology approach focused on the perceptions of those who work directly with students in middle and high schools. Transcendental phenomenology utilized multiple vantage points of interactions to contribute to the understanding of why hazing took place. The data collected would not solely reflect the participants, but it could also influence future educators' training to remove harmful experiences for others. The findings of this study increase the understanding of the perception of hazing in middle and high schools from teachers, coaches, school counselors, and leadership teams.

Researcher's Role

I have worked with students from pre-school to the collegiate level for eight years. As a previous higher education employee, I have worked in student housing, student activities, and the fraternity/sorority community. While working with fraternity and sorority students, my passion for ending hazing on all education levels solidified. I am currently an elementary school counselor in an urban school district in Virginia. Working with students is my passion, and providing them support in academic, postsecondary, and personal/social avenues directly connect all of my experience working in education.

In my previous roles, I had the opportunity to influence policy and procedures on the collegiate level concerning hazing, investigation procedures, and restorative support. I have attended nationally recognized hazing prevention institutes geared towards combatting hazing

practices, not only in sororities and fraternities, but in all organized groups. I am affiliated with a sorority and have experienced hazing in my undergraduate career. My personal experience was associated with the collegiate level, so I am focusing on secondary education. Through my lived experiences, I can see how these actions could harm one's life. My personal experience with hazing has shifted my perspective of hazing in secondary education. The national institute that I attended opened my eyes to hazing practices that were taking place on the secondary education level.

I am an employee of a neighboring school district, which is not being utilized as the study site. Therefore, I have no direct relationship with the research participants, while I may be in the same state-level counseling association with the participants who identify as school counselors. By working with participants who are not currently in my school district and not currently enrolled, I believe I removed a power dynamic that may have existed. To remove my personal experiences, although primarily associated with hazing on the collegiate level, I needed to bracket my experiences by recording my responses to the interview questions related to my perspective of hazing in middle and high schools. Having my perspective documented allowed me to be open to hearing the participants' perspectives with an open mind.

My primary goal was to safeguard participants and data (Sutton & Austin, 2015). While conducting the interviews, I attempted to access the participants' thoughts and feelings to understand the phenomenon being studied. The phenomenon being studied could have evoked feelings or memories that the participants may have forgotten, so my role was to create an atmosphere where the participants felt safe and supported while sharing their experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Procedures

This section describes the relevant procedures necessary to complete the study. Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) through Liberty University. Permission was given from the site IRB for site participation, obtaining participants, and collecting data. IRB approval letters are provided in Appendix A. In addition, this study required permission from CC Public Schools to include the request for current staff member participants to be emailed out. The email communication was facilitated through CC Public Schools.

Permissions

The IRB at Liberty University allowed for application submission after a successful research proposal defense. IRB approval is needed to ensure that human rights are protected throughout research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, the IRB is looking to ensure that no ethical principles surrounding respect of persons, the concern of welfare, and justice are violated (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study utilized current employees (teachers, school counselors, coaches, and members of the leadership team) from MMS and THS under CC Public Schools, so permission from the school district was needed in order to have the request sent to its employees.

In this section, all necessary permissions are explained and documented as appropriate. For example, this section references the appendix in which your IRB approval letter resides and site permissions for your study, as applicable. During the proposal process, it is important to begin informal conversations with the gatekeepers of possible research sites to rule out unwelcoming sites and to identify feasible sites. You will need your proposed site's permission in order to submit your IRB application. However, some sites have their own IRB or may require conditional approval from Liberty's IRB before they will grant site approval. Thus, you may

have to wait to get formal approval to use this study site until after you complete IRB, but at least you are not trying to use a site that will not allow you to conduct your study there.

Recruitment Plan

In the phenomenological approach, the number of research participants can range from three to 15 (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study utilized 11 research participants that had to meet the requirements of a qualitative study using the phenomenological approach. More participants were utilized to gather equal representation from each site for this study. Purposeful criterion sampling was used to ensure that participants represented the phenomenon being studied. This type of sampling was helpful to ensure quality assurance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative questionnaire was utilized to screen potential participants to determine if they met the qualifications of the requested participant for this research. The screening questionnaire is provided in Appendix C. The initial request for research participants was sent electronically via email once approved by CC Public Schools. A draft statement was created and made available to the Superintendent of CC that contained information about the study and the search for participants. Additional emails were facilitated in collaboration with CC if the number of participants needed was not gathered.

Once IRB approval was obtained, data collection began. Prior to the official data collection process, a pilot study was conducted. The pilot study was used to help the researcher refine interview questions, test and verify procedures, and reveal challenges for the participants (Ismail, Kinchin & Edwards, 2018). This study used a qualitative approach which has its challenges when implementing a pilot study. Ismail, Kinchin and Edwards (2018) indicated that asking a participant the same set of questions could cause the participant to have a greater sense of rapport with the researcher or lose interest in the topic.

After feedback from the pilot study has been implemented, the main study can begin. The primary data collection method for a phenomenological study is interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Interviews took place virtually utilizing the Microsoft Teams platform at a time determined based on the availability of both the participant and myself as the researcher. Virtual interviews were the only type of interviews offered due to the global pandemic of COVID-19. It was in the interest of safety of the participants and the researcher that face-to-face interviews were not offered during this study. Participants were offered consent forms that provided them with detailed information of the study including procedures, associated risk, and ways to withdraw from the study, confidentiality, and contact information. The consent form is in Appendix B.

Interviews and focus groups were recorded on an audio and visual level to aid in data analysis. The recordings were a mechanism to capture the exact statements from each participant. The benefit of video recordings allowed for non-verbal communicators to be captured and later reflected upon. Each interview and focus group was recorded and transcribed through the virtual platform of Microsoft Teams following the interview to allow for thematic data analysis. All data that was recorded was transcribed verbatim within 72 hours of the meeting. Verbatim transcription allowed for identification of thematic structures between the participants' experiences (McGrath, Palmgren, & Liljedahl, 2018).

Teachers and coaches participated in the semi-structured interviews through the online platform. Interviews were conducted in a one-on-one format for approximately 60 minutes. Each interview was scheduled based on the availability of both the participant and researcher. At the beginning of each interview, the participant was informed of the recording guidelines and gave

verbal consent. All recordings and transcriptions were stored under an encryption key. An audit

trail was outlined in Appendix F.

Focus groups were comprised of school counselors and leadership team members. Each

focus group was maxed to five participants, which led to multiple focus group sessions. The

focus group was held at a time that worked for the availability of the majority of the participants

and myself. Each session lasted approximately 60 minutes. The sessions were recorded and

transcribed within 72 hours of the meeting. The same recording guidelines were implemented for

focus groups.

Student and school archival data were reviewed for data analysis. Documentation such as

disciplinary conduct and student demographic data was requested from the two research sites.

Disciplinary conduct data was reviewed to identify themes within incident descriptions, the

assigned disciplinary code based on CC's Code of Student Conduct, consequence, student

demographics, and incident details such as time, date, and location.

Data Collection Plan

The three forms of data collection utilized for this study were individual interviews, field

notes, and student and school archival documents. These qualitative collection formats were

appropriate for a qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Multiple data

collection formats were needed to provide an entire scope of the participants' experiences.

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

A semi-structured open-ended interview was conducted with each participant who

identified as a teacher or coach through the online platform of Microsoft Teams. In-depth

interviews allowed participants to become interactive in the process and provide a

comprehensive account of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). "Interview is by far the most

dominant method for data collection in phenomenological research" (Bevan, 2014, p. 137).

Predetermined questioning was recommended to create uniformity amongst interviews and focus

on the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth 2018; Bevan, 2014). Interviews took place

in a virtual format using multiple recording features to help with transcription. The recordings

were uploaded to an external hard drive and locked under an encryption key to ensure the

confidentiality of the stories shared. In addition, the external hard drive was secured in a locked

cabinet. Data will be stored for three years after the conclusion of the study.

Moustakas (1994) recommends that the first phenomenological interview be used to set

the climate by social conversation. It is the role of the researcher during this time to make the

participant feel comfortable and in a state where they can be honest of their experience. Multiple

interview sessions with the same participants are typical within this methodology. Interview

questions were created in the vocabulary and language of the interview to ensure that theoretical

terms did not interfere with the participant's access to theoretical knowledge (Bevan, 2014).

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me. Include your occupation title, current grade level assigned to, age, and number of years within your current role.

2. Describe what hazing means to you.

3. Describe how you are notified of hazing experiences.

4. Describe any personal experiences you have had with hazing.

5. Describe the prevalence of hazing in middle/high school.

6. Describe any training you have received around hazing.

7. Describe the procedures you are to take if you are in suspicion of or notified of hazing.

8. Describe the support system(s) that your school/school district has in place and their level

of effectiveness.

9. Describe what bullying means to you.

10. How are you notified of bullying experiences?

11. Describe any personal experience you have had with bullying.

12. Describe the prevalence of bullying in middle/high school.

13. Describe any training you have received around bullying.

14. Describe the procedures you are to take if you are in suspicion of or notified of bullying.

15. Describe the similarities between bullying and hazing.

16. Please tell me anything else that you would like to about this topic that I have not asked.

Questions one, two, four, and nine provided background knowledge on the participant that provided context for the perspective they would ultimately share (Bevan, 2014). The beginning of an interview should be utilized to set the social climate of the interview process (Moustakas, 1994). Hazing has been documented as having multiple definitions, which leads to individual interpretation (Diamond et al., 2016). Questions two and nine sought to reveal the individual definition they operated within.

Questions three and four explored how the participant was made aware of hazing situations and any personal experience with hazing. SCT indicates that external reinforcements, such as mass media, can directly impact perspective (Bandura, 1986). Phenomenology is the study of an experience lived out by an individual (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, it is essential that this study considered how personal experience with hazing or hazing-related acts could take into justification how one's perspective could be shaped. The experiences that were shared encompassed both negative and positive reinforcements associated with hazing (Campo et al., 2005; Dewitt & Dewitt, 2012; Waldron, 2015; Smokowski & Evans, 2019). Whether internal or

external reinforcements, these were key indicators in SCT (Bandura, 1986).

Question five sought to provide answers to the first three primary research questions. Current research indicates that hazing has taken place in middle and high schools (Allan, 2009; Gershel et al., 2003; DeWitt & DeWitt, 2012; Pecjak & Pirc, 2019). Therefore, the primary purpose of this research study was to explore the perception of teachers, school counselors, coaches, and members of leadership teams.

Questions six and seven were targeted toward determining if participants had received any formal or informal training around hazing. Training could be sponsored by their school district, school leadership, or own their own free. Any procedures associated with hazing training may be revealed from their responses. Questions 13 and 14 focused on training centered on bullying and procedures for when bullying arose. Training was used to bring employees to equal knowledge and skill level to ensure a program or policy was implemented effectively (Truitt, 2011). Allan et al. (2019) indicated that through lack of consistency within definitions of hazing, staff is left to their own personal interpretations, leading to inconsistencies in reporting. As a result, anti-bullying trainings have become more prevalent, which have led to the policy reform.

Question eight focuses on preventative practices. Data collected from this question would reveal if the current policies and recommendations implemented by the school/district were deemed as preventative amongst those who must enforce them. The emerging themes could provide recommendations to schools and school systems about their policies. With student safety being of primary concern for all, this question provided insight into its effectiveness.

Questions 10 and 11 requested the participant to indicate if they had any lived experiences associated with bullying through their personal or environmental (place of employment) factors. As stated in the literature review, bullying and hazing are often defined

together and used interchangeably despite being different acts of violence. The data collected

from these questions filtered through SCT to determine how their personal factors later affected

how they reacted to bullying.

Question 12 was based on the data that bullying is more prevalent in secondary education

than hazing. This question was geared to reveal if the teachers, school counselors, coaches, and

leadership team members' perspectives aligned with research.

Question 15 was linked to the fifth research question. The similarities that the participants

presented would identify any overlap between bullying and hazing. Schools have turned their

attention to ani-bullying initiatives, but have not yet addressed hazing.

Focus Groups Data Collection Approach

Focus groups interviews allowed participants to form new ideas in the social context, which was

unlikely to occur in one-on-one interviews (Breen, 2007). There was a minimum of two

participants in each focus group, with a maximum of five participants. Participants who

identified as school counselors and members of the leadership team were considered for the

focus groups. Within the focus groups, participants were able to share and compare experiences

based on their personal experiences that led them to agree or disagree with one another (Breen,

2007). The focus group interview questions were based on current literature. All questions were

comprised of open-ended questions that stimulated interactions among group members

(Rosenthal, 2016).

The interview questions for the focus group were selected from the personal

interviews. These questions were selected due to their belief to spark conversation among

research participants. These questions were based on current literature and flowed in order to

encourage conversations among participants.

Focus Group Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me. Include your occupation title, current grade level assigned to, age, and number of years within your current role.

2. Describe the prevalence of hazing in middle/high school.

3. Describe the prevalence of bullying in middle/high school.

4. Describe any personal experiences you have had with hazing.

5. Describe any personal experience you have had with bullying.

6. Describe the similarities between bullying and hazing.

7. Please tell me anything else that you would like to share about this topic that I have not asked.

Document Analysis Data Collection Approach

Student and document data was requested for data analysis beginning the academic school year of 2017-2018. The use of disciplinary data was analyzed for themes in assigned disciplinary codes, incident descriptions, student demographic information, and incident details such as time and location. The archival data was requested to begin in the academic year of 2017-2018 due to the mid-school year closure of 2019-2020. The requested data provided two and a half years of data to be reviewed. That data reviewed from the archival data revealed themes associated with the lived experiences of the research participants.

Field Notes Data Collection Approach

The thoughts and ideas that were documented throughout the research could be analyzed for rich context that could enhance the data (Philippi & Lauderdale, 2017). Short notes are often taken during the interview to maintain eye contact and participation levels (Philippi & Lauderdale, 2017). Field notes included basic information, demographic information, and

reflections as shared by the researcher. brief notes were taken throughout the interview; however, the primary thoughts of this topic were analyzed. Philippi and Lauderdale (2017) recommend that a well-framed approach to field note collection should be developed prior to the study with revisions as needed.

Data Synthesis

There are multiple steps to analyze data from a phenomenological study. Epoché, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis are the steps outlined by Moustakas (1994). A transcendental phenomenological approach requires specific data analysis methods to authentically describe the participants' lived experiences by developing categories and identifying themes.

Epoché

Moustakas (1994) describes epoché as the approach researchers utilize to remove any pre-conceived notion judgments as the research participants revisit the phenomenon being studied. This is the first step in the data analysis process. Epoché allows the researcher to be open to new ideas, feelings and understanding. Consistently removing the personal experience or biases related to the common phenomenon allowed for fresh ideas and themes to flow when I as the researcher attempted to reveal "how" the participants experienced hazing and "what" they experienced from it. Through bracketing, lived experiences were isolated (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I began this process by indicating my association with hazing and my role to this study in the above section of Role of the Researcher. I answered the same interview questions posed to the participants regarding their perception of hazing to avoid personal perspectives on the collected data. Moustakas (1994) views epoché as a way of preparing for new knowledge that will be received from the participants. Reflective meditation is a practice that Moustakas (1994)

stated that he used to reach epoché. He wrote out his prejudgments to be prepared for new information. Throughout this study, I maintained a reflective journal to document prejudgments throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Phenomenological Reduction

Phenomenological reduction is the process of documenting the observed actions internally and externally as it is related to the phenomenon to oneself (Moustakas, 1994). It allows one to experience the phenomenon from a new vantage point to later reflect and reduce it. "Phenomenological Reduction is not only a way of seeing but a way of listening with a conscious and deliberate intention of opening ourselves to phenomena as phenomena, in their own right, with their own textures and meaning" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 92). Moustakas (1994) discussed a smaller component of phenomenological reduction as horizontalization. As one takes time to revisit an experience, the feelings and thoughts associated with it are unlimited. The researcher should not expect the same feelings, thought, or considerations to be continued by the participant since horizons are unlimited (Moustakas, 1994). Listing and preliminary grouping are essential in collecting all expressions that could be considered relevant to the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Once the list has been done, reflection and elimination of statements must be conducted so that only those that influence the understanding of the experience remain (Moustakas, 1994). The removal of overlapping and repetitive expressions is done to expose potential themes of understanding (Moustakas, 1994).

Within this data analysis phase, the secondary data collection components were reviewed and followed the steps outlined by Moustakas (1994). Results were documented by identifying significant statements relating to the research questions, clustering them into themes, and organizing data into textual descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). The process of decontextualizing

was used to give meaning and insight to words and phrases from the data gathered by reviewing transcripts. This method helped to make large amounts of data manageable and established themes and codes (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002). Having smaller data clusters allowed the open coding process to be completed and provided necessary labels to specific data. Labeling data and establishing codes provided a manageable way of describing empirical data (Constas, 1992). These secondary data collection components were utilized to enhance the data collected through the interview process.

Imaginative Variation

This step attempts to bring meaning through varying themes, perspectives and positioning (Moustakas, 1994). Within this step, developing themes were aquired that were identified within the phenomenological reduction stage. The imaginative state of this stage allowed for consideration of multiple relationships, possibilities, and avenues to the truth and they were clustered them together based on significant commonalities (Moustakas, 1994). The evaluation of interviews and essential statements revealed core themes of the experiences which led to "the researcher to derive structural themes from the textural descriptions that have been obtained through phenomenological reduction" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99). Each participant's perspective was of the same phenomenon, hazing, but Moustakas (1994) reminds us that there is not a single path to identifying "what" and "how" the perspectives happened, but countless possibilities that must be considered.

Synthesis

The review of significant statements from the interviews and focus groups allowed for those themes to develop and be translated into textural and structural descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). "Time, space, bodily concern, materiality, causality, relation to

self, or relation" to others are structural components to consider underlying the themes

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 99). Next, descriptions were formed based on the structural themes to infer

how the participants saw the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The completed continuous

repetition of the analysis steps was completed in order to remain engaged with the data until a

description of the essence of the lived experience could be shared (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio,

2019). Intuitive integration was the final step of the analysis process where textural and

structural descriptions were placed into a combined statement that attempted to describe the

phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The unified statement represents the perception of hazing from

teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership teams in middle and high schools in

a public school district in the southeastern region of the United States at one point in time

through my viewpoint as the researcher (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was determined in qualitative research based on the concepts of

credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton,

2004). These strategies were applied throughout the research process to promote trustworthiness.

To be deemed trustworthy, researchers are expected to exhibit that data analysis was done in

great detail to allow the reader to determine if it is credible (Nowell, Noris, White, & Moules,

2017).

Credibility

Credibility seeks to safeguard that the study measured what it said it would (Shenton,

2004). The use of multiple forms of data, triangulation, validates the support evidence gathered

in the data collection phase (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, using the data collection

methods of interviews, focus groups, and student and school archival data allowed triangulation.

The use of multiple data collection methods allowed for the development of an integrated understanding of the phenomenon and drawn conclusions. Creswell (2002) explained that "triangulation allows the researcher to regard his or her own material critically, to test it, to identify its weaknesses, to identify where to test further" (p. 24). Shenton (2004) also indicated that triangulation counterbalances for individual limitations. Triangulation as member checking has been identified as the "most critical technique for establishing credibility and help refute concerns associated with transparency" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 261). Receiving feedback from participants about the truthfulness of the acknowledged themes has been previously utilized in phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994). Triangulation is a method that is utilized within research to increase the credibility validity of the findings (Noble & Heale, 2019). The combination of theories, methods, and observers assisted in not allowing for single biases to defeat the study. Nobel and Heale (2019) indicated that triangulation can deepen the research as it attempts to explain the phenomenon from different aspects.

Transferability

The ability to generalize research findings to other research areas is the intent of transferability (Shenton, 2004). Creating a rich, thick description allows for readers to decide if transferability was met (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is the researcher's responsibility to provide detailed information on the research design and the participants' responsibility to provide a transparent picture to readers (Cope, 2014). The researcher is to provide sufficient descriptive data points to allow for future judgments based on similarities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although a researcher would not know the future sites in which transferability would be sought, it is essential that they provide an adequate narrative to support the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability of a qualitative study seeks to repeat the study by modeling the same procedures in hopes to gain the same or similar results (Shenton, 2004). Confirmability seeks to ensure that the researcher has remained objective throughout data analysis (Shenton, 2004). Bracketing experiences through epoché allowed me as the researcher to not place preconceptions within the developed themes (Moustakas, 1994). I answered interview questions based on my perception in an effort to document thoughts, emotions, successes, and challenges associated with the phenomenon. A reflective journal was utilized throughout the data collection and analysis process to document the any prejudgments. External audits, which include audit trails, allow for an external auditor to review the findings, interpretations, and conclusions to analyze if they are associated with the data or not (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). Throughout the study, I documented the analytical steps the that were taken. The steps included key aspects such as process notes, personal notes, and interpretations and inferences from data that explained rationale and consequences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Providing the documentation assists in the auditor's determination if the study is "grounded in events rather than the inquirer's personal constructions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 324).

Ethical Considerations

Multiple ethical considerations were adopted in this study. IRB approval was received from Liberty University and CC granted site permission prior to data collection (Creswell& Poth, 2018). In order to protect the identities of the school district and research participants, pseudonyms were created and assigned. The school district was described vaguely to ensure that research participants and the associated school district would not be tracked. Participants were provided with an informed consent form that documented their rights, purpose of the study, known risk, and any potential benefits (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Moustakas, 1994). Interview responses were recorded and stored on a laptop under an encryption key. The encryption key served as a layer of protection of individual responses. The password to unlocking the responses is only accessible to me as the researcher. The storage medium utilized to store data should have security features known to the researcher and be appropriate for the information being secured (Stanton, 2004). An email account was created solely for direct contact with research participants, an electronic pre-screening questionnaire for participants, and administering and reviewing questionnaires. This email account was only used for the purpose of this study. If the password associated with the email account is ever forgotten, the my personal phone number will be used to request a new password. A backup email address was not provided to prevent research information from crossing paths with any personal emails. Since data was stored electronically, a master list was created and stored separately to protect anonymity (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

The perception of hazing from teachers and school counselors was studied in this transcendental phenomenological study. This chapter provided a detailed description of the research design, site, participants, data collection methods, and data analysis. Eleven participants from CC Public Schools were selected to participate in the study after completing a pre-selection questionnaire. Criterion sampling was utilized to ensure that participants met specific criteria for participation. Details were presented on how IRB approval was met, on the elicited participants, and on collected data. Interviews and questionnaires were the two forms of data collection that were utilized in this qualitative study. To remain true to the transcendental phenomenological approach, the four processes outlined by Moustakas (1994) were described for data analysis. Trustworthiness was established by providing strategies that implemented credibility,

dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Ethical considerations were documented to include the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage that was done throughout the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore teacher perceptions of hazing at the middle and high school levels. An additional purpose of this study was to explore coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team member perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students. By understanding how hazing is viewed by school staff, enhancements can be made on current hazing policies and trainings. A transcendental phenomenological approach was used to explore the perspective of teachers, coaches, school counselors and leadership team members on hazing in middle and high schools. Transcendental phenomenology seeks to understand human experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This methodology allows for perceptions to be examined through the individual experiences of participants and the development of structural and textural descriptions that are identified through data analysis of interview transcripts (Moustakas 1994).

There were five research questions that guided this study. The questions are:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

2. What are coaches' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

3. What are school counselors' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

4. What are school leadership teams' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

5. To what extent does hazing and bullying overlap among middle and high school students?

Participants

Eleven participants were involved in this study. Five participants participated in individual interviews, while the remaining six participants were a part of the focus groups. Each participant was employed as a current employee (teachers, school counselors, coaches, or members of the leadership team) at Mountain Middle School (MMS) or Treetop High School (THS) within the Cheering Citizens Public Schools District (CC). All participants of this study met the criteria to participate. Each participant had been assigned to Mountain Middle School (MMS) or Treetop High School (THS) for at least one academic year. Pseudonyms were utilized for each school, district, and the participants to ensure confidentiality. All participants agreed to the data collection methods established for the study. Consent documents were provided and affirmed to each participant to ensure they understood the research procedures. Table 1 shows the demographic data of the participants that was captured in the demographic survey.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Overview

Participant Name	Gender	Current Position	Age Range	Race	Experience at Site	Total Years in Education	Site
Larry	Male	Assistant Principal	36-45	White	6-10	16-20	THS
Tiffany	Female	School Counselor	26-35	Black	0-5	6-10	THS
Sophia	Female	Assistant Principal	36-45	White	0-5	16-20	THS
Elenore	Female	Teacher	26-35	White	0-5	0-5	THS

Johnathan	Male	Assistant Principal	26-35	White	0-5	11-15	MMS
April	Female	School Counselor	26-35	White	0-5	6-10	MMS
Maddison	Female	School Counselor	26-35	Black	0-5	6-10	THS
Derrick	Male	Coach	46-55	Black	0-5	26-30	MMS
Renae	Female	Teacher	26-35	Black	0-5	6-10	MMS
Zion	Male	Teacher & Coach	36-45	White	6-10	11-15	MMS
Chasity	Female	Teacher	26-35	Black	0-5	0-5	THS

Seven (64%) of the participants were female, and four (36%) were male. The participants' ages ranged from 26-55 years of age; however, the majority (64%) of the participants were between the ages of 26-35 years. The exact ages of the participants were shared in the interviews, but were not revealed for anonymity. Eight (82%) participants expressed that they were at their current site from 0-5 years, with two (18%) participants being at their site for 6-10 years. Five (45%) participants were assigned to Mountain Middle School, and six (55%) participants were assigned to Treetop High School. The study participants included three (27.3%) school counselors, three (27.3%) teachers, three (27.3%) assistant principals, one (9.1%) coach, and one (9%) who was both a teacher and a coach.

Six (55%) of the participants identified as White, and five (45%) identified as Black/African American. Educationally, six (55%) of the participants disclosed in the interview

process that they were seeking advanced degrees or certifications to support their current positions. The total number of years that participants worked within the field of education varied. Two (18%) participants worked 0-5 years, four (37%) participants worked 6-10 years, two (18%) participants worked 11-15 years, and three (27%) participants worked 15-30 years. The remainder of this section provides a participants' narrative with information gathered from the demographic survey and feedback presented in individual or focus group interviews.

Larry

Larry was an Assistant Principal at Treetop High School (THS). He identified as a White male. Participant L had been working in education for 20 years, with the last five serving in his current role of Assistant Principal. Participant L had worked several jobs in K-12 athletics, including being a teacher. Participant L shared, "I was a government teacher for five years at the high school, activities directors or director of student activities for 13 years, and now I am in my second year as an assistant principal" (Larry personal communication, September 16, 2021). Larry had exposure of working with students on the middle and high school levels. He described himself as an individual who had prior knowledge of hazing within K-12 and was extremely interested in the topic of hazing. Larry expressed currently pursuing an advanced certification/degree and hoping to enhance the field regarding education personnel burnout.

Tiffany

Tiffany had the title of School Counselor at Treetop High School (THS). She identified as a Black female. This participant had held this position for the last five years. Tiffany had been in the field of education for ten years. Tiffany shared, "I work with ninth grade through 12th grade with special attention on 9th grade transition. I was a former middle school social studies teacher" (Tiffany, personal communication, September 16, 2021). Tiffany shared that she was

seeking an advanced certification/degree in counselor education. She continued to express that she was involved in multiple national and international organizations.

Sophia

Sophia was an Assistant Principal at Treetop High School (THS). Sophia identified as a White female. She had been at THS for two years. Within 16 years of experience within education, Sophia had held multiple roles on the middle and high school levels. Sophia stated, "The past 16 years I was a teacher certified in Spanish and ESL, a dean of students, and now a assistant principal role. So, this is my second year in a leadership role" (Sophia, personal communication, November 17, 2021). The participant's previous roles provided her with a unique perspective on student dynamics. She expressed an interest in zero-tolerance for student violence combined with her previous exposure to hazing.

Elenore

Elenore was a teacher at Treetop High School (THS). She identified as a White female. Elenore had only held the role of teacher within her three years of education. She instructed one subject area. Elenore revealed that she was working towards advanced certification. Elenore provided a unique perspective because she got to see a set group of students consistently each day. When asked about personal experience with hazing, Elenore communicated, "I think when I was a kid on the volleyball team in high school. We had to do little dares and stuff like that to fit in with the upperclassmen" (Elenore, personal communication, November 20, 2021).

Johnathan

Johnathan held the role of Assistant Principal. He had served four years within this position at Mountain Middle School (MMS). Johnathan identified as a White male. Johnathan was a doctoral student seeking an advanced certification/degree to add to the overall field of

education through his research topic. He believes he had a unique background associated with hazing and this research topic due to previous experiences. Johnathan shared, "I joined an organization while in college and experienced hazing. It included physical activities like exercise, running errands and being put in embarrassing situations" (Johnathan, personal communication, November 17, 2021).

April

April served as a school counselor at Mountain Middle School (MMS). The participant identified as a White female. April had been in education for the past seven years. She had been at her current school in the school counselor position for four years now. April expressed, "My first year in education I was a behavior support counselor, which allowed me to start my journey to transition into a school counselor" (April, personal communication, December 1, 2021). At the time of the study, April provided support to all students in 6th through 8th grade.

Maddison

Maddison was a school counselor at Treetop High School (THS). Maddison identified as a Black female. She expressed her participation in local and international organizations that were geared to progressing the field of education. Maddison had been in her current role for four years, with three of those years being at THS. Overall, Maddison had dedicated eight years to education. When asked about personal hazing experiences, Maddison communicated, "Based off the definition of hazing, I have been hazed and put in the space where I was expected to haze others" (Maddison, personal communication, December 1, 2021).

Derrick

Derrick was a coach who had experience in both the middle and high school levels. Derrick identified as a Black male who served at Mountain Middle High School (MMS). "I am

an instructional assistant within the classroom and a varsity coach. I have had experience playing

and coaching on multiple levels" (Derrick, personal communication, December 8, 2021). Derrick

had held multiple roles within the athletics that ranged from assistant coach to athletic director.

He had a total of 28 years of athletic experience across multiple levels and had been at his

current site for three years.

Renae

Renae was a teacher at Mountain Middle School (MMS) and identified as a Black

female. She had teaching experience on the middle and high school levels. Renae had been in

education for nine years. Renae shared, "Across all my years of education, I have only taught

English, primarily honors and AP courses" (Renae, personal communication, December 14,

2021). She shared that she was exploring advanced certificate/degree programs.

Zion

Zion served as a coach and teacher at Mountain Middle School (MMS). He identified as a

White male. Zion shared the ability to support students inside the classroom and in his respective

courts/fields. In addition, he shared his personal connection to athletics on the high school and

collegiate levels. When asked about training centered on hazing, Zion communicated, "It is

quickly mentioned when we discuss harassment and other topics to look out for, but it is only a

slide or two in the presentation" (Zion, personal communication, December 15, 2021).

Chasity

Chasity was a teacher at Treetop High School (THS). Chasity identified as a Black

female. She had been in multiple school districts within the state within her five years in

education. When asked for additional input, Chasity communicated, "This topic is really

important for teachers to understand what they are seeing. It made me think, have I witnessed

bullying or hazing" (Chasity, personal communication, December 21, 2021). Chasity indicated that she was seeking advanced certifications/degrees to be the best for her students.

Results

Data was collected using a demographic survey, individual interviews, focus group interviews, field notes, and student and archival document data. A journal was utilized to record notes from the interviews and focus groups. Before interviews and focus groups, each participant was provided an overview of the study before each collection method. In addition, each participant completed a consent form. The demographics survey was completed through Qualtrics. Individual interviews and focus groups were audio-and video-recorded and transcribed. Focus groups and individual interviews allowed the participants' perspectives and experiences to be obtained (Baillie, 2019). Questions that were presented in both the individual interviews and focus group interviews focused on exploring the perceptions of the participants of hazing within middle/high schools. Analysis was constant throughout each data collection method.

Data analysis was completed using the phenomenological methods outlined by Moustakas (1994). Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The phenomenological steps of horizontalization, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and meaning synthesizing were used during data analysis. Transcripts were read multiple times in search of noteworthy statements. The selected noteworthy statements were utilized to identify themes of the phenomenon being studied. Textural descriptions were captured from the transcripts to describe the hazing experiences among middle and high school students. Moustakas (1994) indicates that the last step should be to synthesize the data to understand what is still hidden. This information was used to draw conclusions to make recommendations.

Archival Data

The third data collection method for this study was the analysis of archival student discipline data for all students at Treetop High School (THS) and Mountain Middle School (MMS) within Charming Citizens Public Schools (CC). The discipline data encompassed four academic years, including 2019-2020, which was affected by school closures due to the global pandemic of Covid-19, and 2020-2021, when schools offered multiple learning mediums (in-person, hybrid, or entirely virtual). Archival data was acquired from Charming Citizens Public Schools' (CC) Department of Assessment, Research, and Evaluation. Additional data was retrieved from Virginia's Department of Education Safe Schools Information Resource portal and School Quality Profiles. Data was downloaded into Excel and PDF documents for analysis of frequency. Disciplinary codes associated with hazing and bullying were reviewed.

Figure 1

Treetop High School Student Enrollment Breakdown (2018-2019)

	All Students	Female	Male	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian	White	Multiple Races
2018-2019	1917	875	1042	4	21	1539	119	1	185	48
2019-2020	1928	889	1039	6	24	1555	115	2	172	54
2020-2021	1977	914	1063	5	21	1590	123	4	175	59
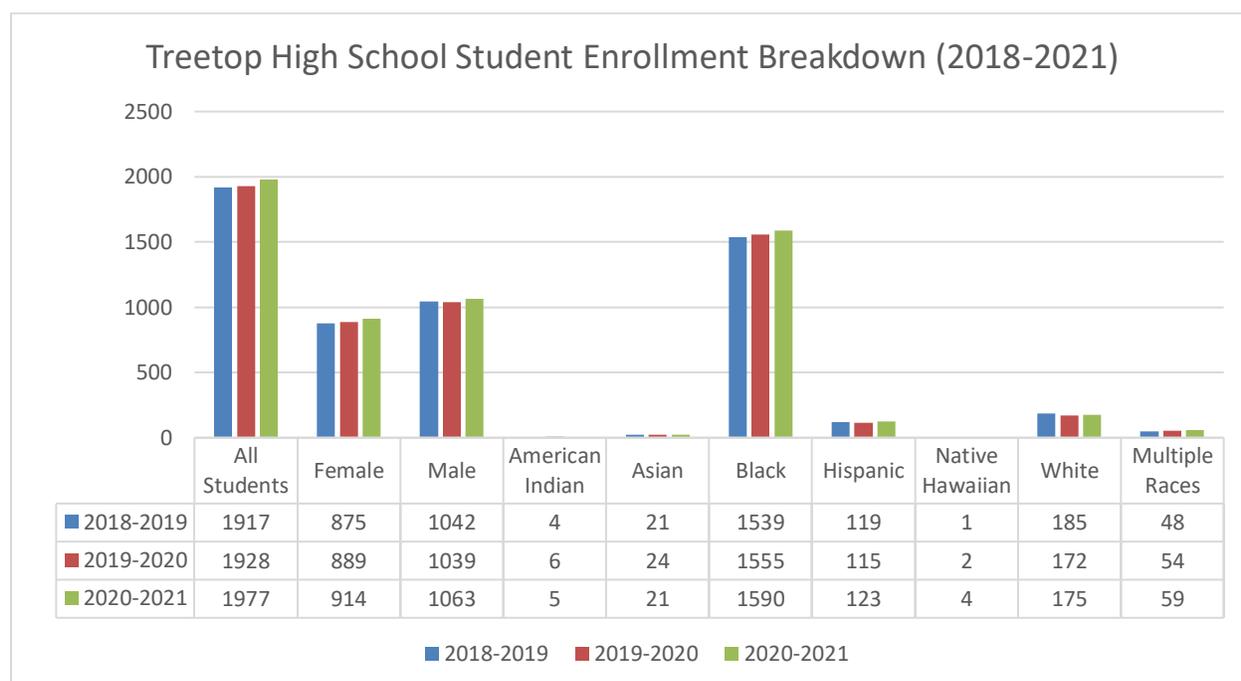
Figure 2

Mountain Middle School Enrollment Breakdown 2018-2021

	All Students	Female	Male	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Multiple Races
2018-2019	1005	462	543	1	121	196	96	520	71
2019-2020	998	478	520	2	124	205	95	495	77
2020-2021	893	415	478	1	107	207	84	425	69
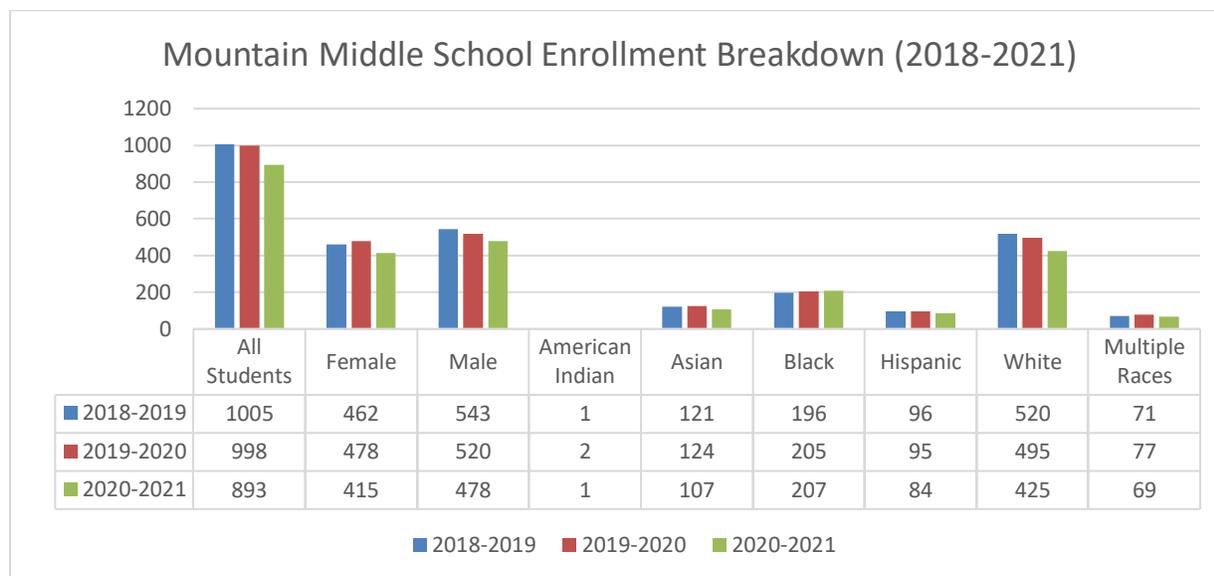
Figures 1 and 2 displaying the student population data extracted from Virginia

Department of Education School Quality Profiles only encompasses three academic years of

data, 2018-2021. Although missing one academic year, this data provides a snapshot of the

school prior to and during the Covid-19 pandemic. Figure 1 displays the student enrollment at

Treetop High School from the three most recent academic years. This data reveals that 80% of

the student population identifies as African American/Black. The Covid-19 pandemic did not

appear to affect overall student enrollment at Treetop High School. Figure 2 showcases the

gradual student enrollment decline across the three academic years at Mountain Middle School.

Within that decline, it should be noted that the overall percentage of White students decreased as

the enrollment of African American/Black students increased. In 2018-2019, 52% of White

students were enrolled at Mountain Middle School, while 20% of the student population

identified as African American/Black. In the most the recent academic year of 2020-2021, the

student population shifted slightly to 48% White students and 23% African American/Black

students. Despite the shift in ethnic identification, males had been the predominant gender (over 50%) at Mountain Middle School during the last three academic years.

Figure 3

Student Discipline Referrals

Student Discipline Refferals				
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Treetop HS	1486	998	485	7
Mountain MS	777	569	335	13
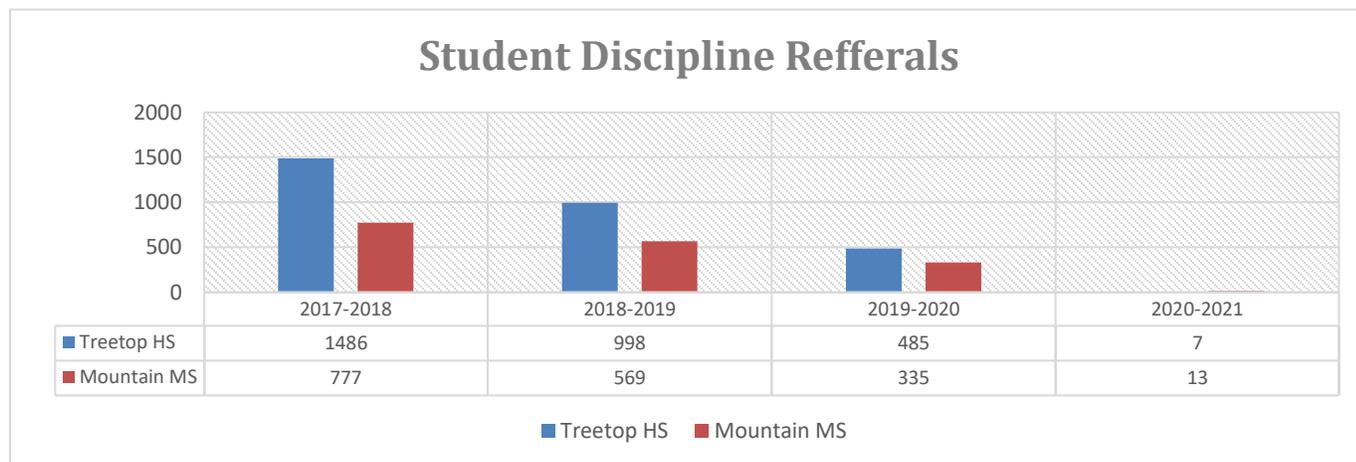
Figure 3 depicts the number of documented discipline referrals incurred by all students for the past four academic years, 2017-2021. Figure 3 shows a gradual decrease in student discipline referrals for the academic years. It must be noted that both the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years were affected by the global pandemic of COVID-19. School closures took place in March 2020. In 2020-2021, schools provided instruction through entirely virtual, hybrid, or in-person modes throughout the year.

The discipline data can be further broken down to be analyzed by students' ethnicity. Tables 3 and 4 are depictions of the discipline breakdown by student ethnicity across the four academic years. The number of discipline referrals across the four academic years at Treetop High School indicated that 92% of the discipline referrals were from students who identified as African American, as depicted in Table 3. White (3%) and Hispanic (3%) students had remarkably fewer documented discipline referrals. The student discipline referrals appear to reflect the student population since data indicates that African American/Black students were the

majority (80%) ethnic group within the last three academic years. Further, analysis into gender

could not be conducted due to information not being provided by Charming Citizens Public

Schools (CC).

The discipline data from Mountain Middle School (MMS) reveals that 41% of the

referrals were of students who identified as African American out of the four academic years.

38% of the referrals were associated with White students. The referrals appear to be more evenly

distributed across the two dominant ethnicities, unlike Treetop High School. However, it appears

to be more evenly distributed that data still reveals that African American/Black students

received discipline referrals more often despite being slightly over 20% of the student

population. The remainder of the referrals is broken down to ethnic groups, with 9% Hispanic,

7.6% Multiracial, 3.9% Asian, and less than 1% American Indian.

Table 2

Treetop High School Student Discipline Ethnicity Breakdown

		Student Ethnicity					
		Asian	African American	Hispanic	American Indian	Multiracial	White
Treetop High School	Academic Year						
	2017-2018	2	1361	56	1	23	43
	2018-2019	0	942	14	0	21	21

2019-2020	0	443	22	2	4	14
2020-2021	0	4	0	0	0	3
School Total	2	2750	92	3	48	81

Table 3

Mountain Middle School Student Discipline Ethnicity Breakdown

		Student Ethnicity					
		Asian	African American	Hispanic	American Indian	Multiracial	White
Mountain Middle School	Academic Year						
	2017-2018	24	343	66	1	55	289
	2018-2019	23	244	66	0	43	193
	2019-2020	20	104	22	1	31	157
	2020-2021	0	5	2	0	0	6
	School Total	67	695	156	2	129	645

The archival discipline data retrieved from the State Department of Education indicates that some incidents were associated with the offense category of Bullying (BU1) documented in the 2018-2019 year at Mountain Middle School. Incidents of Bullying at Treetop High School were reported during 2017-2018 and 2019-2020. The number of incidents cannot be reported because the group was below the state definition for personally identifiable results. The sanctions administered for these incidents included no disciplinary sanction provided/taken or short-term out-of-school suspension on the high school level and in-school suspension for the incidents on the middle school level.

Themes

Data analysis revealed four primary themes, including (1) Power; (2) Culture of Silence; (3) Unwritten Rules and (4) Intentionality. Figure 2 represents the four themes. These themes were present throughout the experiences of teachers, coaches, school counselors and school leadership team members.

Table 4

Primary Themes and Sub-Themes

Primary Themes	Associated Code Words
Power	Membership status, Identity, Athleticism and Hierarchy
Culture of Silence	Tradition, Rites of passage, Lack of/no Consequences for Perpetrators, and Terminology
Unwritten Rules	Hierarchy, Deference, and Not Challenging the process
Intentionality	Loyalty, Dedication, Commitment, and Serving the Mission

Theme One: Power

During the data collection process, participants were transparent with their perspectives of the power dynamics within students and student groups. Throughout data analysis, power was associated in multiple ways. The theme of power was indicated within all interviewed and focus groups through the different concepts. Membership status, identity, athleticism, and hierarchy were the concepts identified from the participants to support the theme of power. As referenced in theme one, membership is a power source in student dynamic. Membership status is traditionally referenced to those who are current/active members within the organization. Participant J highlighted that membership did not limit itself to just active/current members, but also to alumni. The network of former students and students who cling to their membership titles hold it with high regard. This network of current and former students creates a support system to uphold the organizations' culture and values. The stories that former/alumni group members share keeps traditions going. Johnathan shared, "I know when I go back to my organization as an alumni member, I share stories. At times, I might even question why they no longer do certain things."

Gender identity amongst group members was believed to play a role in hazing dynamics. Those who identify as the most masculine or feminine are associated with power. Elenore described multiple bullying scenarios in her school were those who identified as queer males or plus-size females tended to be the primary victims of bullying. It appeared that students who had those identities had a more challenging time in school. Tiffany referenced how media impacts what is displayed as acceptable social interactions, which students may mimic. Societal structures have confirmed and upheld the perceived power associated with gender identity. Household roles, behavior, work, and money are examples of societal structures impacting

gender identity, according to Renae. Renae continued to reflect by stating, "Many are fighting to change the way 'things used to be' but it takes time when it comes to gender."

The current literature that surrounds hazing has a strong emphasis on athletics. Athleticism, how well you are at your assigned sport, was credited to being omitted from or having a lighter degree of hazing. The individual's skill set was deemed more valuable to the organization's success than a test of loyalty. Larry disclosed that "I was hazed on my high school athletics team (9th grade). Due to nature of athleticism, hazing acts geared towards me were on the 'lighter' end in comparison of some of my teammates." Being viewed as an asset, students could protect themselves from brutal acts, a level of power that others did not have. Sophia brought up that a team's athleticism can cause hazing practices to be ignored by school personnel. When referencing a high-ranking athletics team, Sophia "addressed the issue [students wearing humiliating costumes around school] with my administrators," although these practices were able to take place years before her arrival. The need to have skilled athletes on the team cannot be placed above the holistic needs of other students. Derrick shared, "Instilling values within my team is more important than winning, which is why I did not hesitate in removing a player from the team when he attempted to haze new team members."

A hierarchical structure is embedded within the educational system. Students are given titles based on their years of enrollment (freshman, sophomore, etc.) and ranked based on their academic performance (grades, test scores, attendance, etc.). These same students operate within a school building where there are different levels of leadership presented to them throughout the day, from lead teachers to the principal. Maddison shared that "middle schoolers already have a hard time defining who they are, but then we place a hierarchy structure on them like the simple phrases of 'seniors of middle school' which causes a shift in the power dynamics." The titles

assigned to students provide them with a sense of power. Renae states, "My 8th graders are nervous about transitioning to high school next year. They will no longer be viewed as 'seniors' but at the bottom of the totem pole." The fear of having power removed from a person through their title is displayed in Renae's statement. The removal of power demonstrates the implied power in a title.

Theme Two: Culture of Silence

During the interview process, participants expressed through non-verbal gestures that discussing the topic of hazing was taboo. Current literature indicates that the overall perception of hazing in society is misunderstood. A sense of fear was associated with the topic, which was displayed during the research study. Many participants struggled with saying the word "hazing" at the beginning of the interview. Research questions were met with deep exhales, whispered responses, and expressions that signaled a participant's deep thought. Data analysis revealed that the associated concepts included tradition, rites of passage, lack of/no consequences for perpetrators, and terminology.

The word *hazing* varied in definition by research participants. Multiple participants expressed that hazing involved a person participating in an activity against their will; however, the similarities within the definition stopped. Elenore identified physical stature in her definition of bullying. Participants routinely used bullying and hazing as synonyms despite being asked to provide the different definitions of the two words. Larry identified that "bullying is more marketable than hazing, so people focus on what they can sell." This statement can contribute to the overall perception of hazing. Policies and procedures, training, and overall understanding associated with hazing are negatively impacted because it is not considered marketable. The inconsistency in the definitions creates barriers in support which can lead individuals to

misidentify actions. The harsh reality is that the media more often will only report acts of hazing associated with the death of a student. The focus on student deaths which in many cases are small, creates a facade for understanding acts of hazing. All participants agreed that educators, leaders, and society should not only pay attention to acts of hazing when there was a loss of life because students are impacted on other levels. April expressed that she had never witnessed acts of hazing throughout their career, which resulted in students being hospitalized, which impacted how they reacted to those incidents. On the other hand, Sophia shared that she had experienced and heard of behaviors that had resulted in student hospitalization throughout her career. These were behaviors that she would have considered acts of hazing.

The inconsistency within the definition continued within individual interviews. Three participants indeed questioned if they knew how to define hazing compared to what they had learned about bullying. For example, Renae questioned herself on her knowledge by saying:

I think sometimes it is hard to define just as a teacher. What is the difference between the two [bullying and hazing]? How do you decipher? How do you know what is what? Especially when you have never been trained on identifying one of the acts. Maybe I need a little help with understanding what is the difference.

The statements mentioned by Renae began to reflect the actual discrepancy within the training offered to school personnel. Zion divulged that hazing was typically placed in training segments where harassment was mentioned within the athletics realm.

The lack of information centered on hazing in professional development sections leaves educators space to select what offense is taking place. Derrick reflected on organizations associated with higher education prior to the 1990s, where hazing was more prevalent. The discussion led to a belief in a trickle-down effect where higher education and the K-12 system no

longer stood for rites of passage and traditions that had been in place. Derrick believed that "hazing has left, and bullying has taken its place." The lack of training focused on hazing, but amplified bullying supported their belief. The inconsistency on training created a gap in the terminology understood by staff and students.

The lack of conversations centered around hazing was transparent in the training that the participants had received. Those associated with athletics in a previous role or played collegiate-level sports had been trained on hazing. Participants who were hazed while on athletics teams in both high school and college discussed how there were no avenues to report. Elenore said it was "impossible for the victims to speak out" against the hazer. The code of silence that was described by Jeckell et al. (2018) references a culture of silence within a said organization where information is not dispersed to non-group members. This same culture of silence is believed to be in place. Participant S considered how hazing acts may have shifted from what others view as "traditional hazing." The shift in the current secondary student has changed teaching practices, safety standards, and much more. Zion referenced how he believed hazing acts have mutated through the years. Zion stated,

Majority of students have access to some form of electronic device where they are getting direct access from their peers. Hazing may no longer be being forced to wear embarrassing clothes in public but now doing embarrassing acts on social media. Students have evolved so I can only believe inappropriate acts have as well.

Many traditions or rites of passage have shifted to evolve with other aspects of the 21st century. For example, participants noted that members participated in hazing acts in specific organizations, such as wearing a humiliating uniform or carrying items. Participant J explained that acts of hazing were not directly available for school personnel to witness as they were in the

past. The lack of discussion supports victims to remain silent. It supports no consequences ever to be administered. It creates a taboo atmosphere around the topic of hazing that appears to be uncomfortable for all. A taboo atmosphere is where individuals attempt to avoid conversations on hazing; exhibit deep exhales when discussing hazing, display body language that communicates discomfort and whispers of the word hazing in talking as witnessed by the research participants.

Theme three: Unwritten Rules

Rules and guidelines are described as tools for a successful organization, group, or team. The K-12 education system has its own rules, guidelines and standards that are expected of a staff person who will interact with the youth. These parameters revealed associated contexts by participants that supported this theme. Participants identified hierarchy, deference, and not challenging the process. All participants referenced how school-approved terms supported the hierarchal structure that may have fed into hazing.

Chasity, Derrick, and Zion referenced how athletics utilizes terms such as rookie, veteran, most valuable player, benchwarmer, and enforcer that immediately create a power dynamic and positionality amongst teammates. Four participants who played a sport in high school reflected on how athletics terminology was referenced to them and impacted how they were treated on the team. Elenore reflected on her basketball team experience and how she initially received mixed interactions by her teammates due to her lack of athleticism, although her physical height was a team advantage. Terminology that indicates power and positionality are not limited to athletics alone. Class status (First-year/freshmen, sophomore, junior and senior) is another immediate indicator of status for a student. Chasity remembered hearing students saying, "Oh, that is the job of the freshies [freshmen/first years]" when asked to push in the chairs within the classroom.

Deference was identified as an unspoken power dynamic that is instilled within organizations. Two participants reflected how deference still affected them in their lives as adults. Maddison stated,

It is a part of my organization's culture. Although I have been in my organization for multiple years, I would never ask someone who has been in longer than me to pass me a chair. Now, on the other hand, a younger organization member will be asked and expected to comply.

The experiences expressed by the participants provided insight on how alumnae or senior members of the team could make demands or requests to younger members without it being viewed as a problem.

The cultural dynamics of groups/organizations/teams play heavily into what group members view as appropriate and inappropriate. The modeling that was displayed within the group cultivated future responses. Sophia and Johnathan shared experiences with students that were considered hazing, but students did not believe they were doing anything wrong. Johnathan stated, "I witnessed students being required to disregard hygiene practices and walk in a straight line. When interviewed, students believed they were participating in harmless interactions due to seeing many others do it years before them." According to Renae, hazing acts and other forms of interpersonal violence appeared to be desensitized within high school. Phrases such as "If it is not media worthy," "Well no one has been hurt for real," and "No one has died, chill out" were shared by Renae when she had intervened on student misconduct.

Theme four: Intentionality

The agreement from all eleven participants was that they believed that hazing within an organized group served as a form of test to those seeking membership. The hazing acts intended

to test the loyalty and dedication of those pursuing the group/team member title. Participants who self-identified as being hazed and those who were not hazed indicated that they believed that those on the receiving end of the hazing acts saw group membership as the ultimate prize. Maddison stated, "I felt that the hazing acts I participated in were acceptable, even though I knew they were wrong. I wanted membership." It was noted that within the high schools and middle school sports teams that directly before and after tryouts was where hazing or inappropriate behaviors may have occured within that group type. Derrick expressed that,

> Athletic teams have caps on the number of students that can be on a roster. When try outs come around you may suspect that behaviors may change around the school as students are trying to cozy up to the senior members on the team to try to secure a spot. If the 55 students try out for football and the league only allows 40, then someone is going to get cut which might end their association in the group.

Membership privileges appeared to be the primary purpose of enduring hazing acts, but multiple participants indicated that learning skills were important during the pursuit of membership. Larry, Maddison, and Johnathan expressed that they learned skills that they could use currently in life: teamwork, creative thinking, punctuality, organization, and commitment. Although these life skills were needed within their current roles, one ponders if there were different avenues for those skills to be developed. Johnathan pointed out that although members in the organization bragged about their skill set, the reputation of being a "hard hazing organization" increased the number of applicants.

Despite the development of life skills and membership access, all participants agreed that hazing results from "hurt people, hurting people." Sophia shared her personal experience of being hazed on an athletic team, including alcohol use, kidnapping, humiliation, and

hospitalization. The culture of the team was to haze. The senior members placed potential members or rookies into the same experiences they once found themselves in. Sophia expressed that her personal experiences and the knowledge of the pain her friends endured challenged her to take a zero-tolerance approach for hazing in her current role. Maddison shared that "I have been hazed and have been in situations where I have hazed others, but it is sad to say, it was expected of me. It was the culture of my organization."

The intentions behind hazing others are to reveal their dedication. Chasity shared that she believed the quote, "Anything worth having is worth fighting for," and similar quotes like it have been embedded in individuals. Relationships, goals, teams/groups, and job opportunities all have variations of the quote. Persistence is a trait that is often admired by those in authority roles. Zion referenced how he gave students a chance if he saw a student try out more than once after being cut from tryouts. Zion said, "It shows me, as a coach, that you are willing to go and truly want to be on the team." Elenore shared a student perspective of persistence. She stated, "I know I made the team the next year because the coach saw that I came back out to try again."

<div align="center">**Research Question Responses**</div>

Research Question One

What are teachers' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

The perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students from teachers were described through the data collection process. Individual interviews were transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed to gain an understanding of each perspective. Each participant who identified as a teacher shared their experiences inside and outside the classroom. The commonality among the majority of the teachers was that hazing existed among middle and high school students. The responses gathered from teachers aligned with the theme of culture of silence. Chasity shared,

As I reflect on my experience as a teacher and truly think about the differences between hazing and bullying, I can say hazing has occurred. On the surface it can appear as bullying or teasing but the humiliation and the servitude truly fall in line with the definition of hazing. It is not until this very moment I can see how staff could have reported so many situations incorrectly unintentionally.

Student athletics was the primary setting that hazing was believed to take place, according to 10 out of the 11 participants. Sophia expressed, "hazing was extremely prevalent in the athletics department at one of my former schools when I was a teacher." Although participants indicated that hazing existed, they could not determine if hazing existed in other settings within the schools. The participants indicated that although they believed hazing existed within middle and high schools, they understood that they did not see everything, especially in the age of social media. Sophia indicated that the advancement of technology had placed students in contact with other students 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

One participant who identified as a teacher expressed having previous experience with hazing during her middle and high school years, while three other non-teacher participants expressed experiencing hazing while in high school or at the collegiate level. Elenore shared,

> I remember being the worst player on my middle school basketball team. I remember having another player boss me around when the coach wasn't looking. She would toss the ball and other items around to make me go fetch them. When I was in high school on the volleyball team, I was made to do dares to fit in with the upperclassmen.

The personal reflection from Elenore highlighted her athletic experience with hazing. The responses shared by teachers indicated that hazing took place among middle and high school students, primarily within an athletic setting, and other acts were often miscategorized or

ignored. The miscategorization of offenses amplified the culture of silence that allowed hazing to continue.

Research Question Two

What are coaches' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

The perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students were captured from coaches through the data collection process. The individual interviews were recorded, reviewed, and analyzed to gain understanding. Two participants identified as coaches during the data collection process. The overall perception from coaches was that hazing existed, but primarily on the middle school level. Derrick believed that hazing happened on the middle school level, but bullying was more prominent. The participants indicated that students attempted to replicate scenarios from media on the middle school level and battled to display their perceptions of what was masculine and feminine. Middle school years are associated with students struggling with self-identity, the want to fit in, and the crave for popularity. The current level of media exposure that students have access to displays what is popular at the time. Misrepresentation of values and societal norms can be translated and taken at face value for students. The participants described how athletics was typically viewed as the primary setting where hazing could occur, but other organizations such as band, science club, or class status could be where hazing occurred as well. The responses gathered from coaches aligned with the themes of power and intentionality. Zion expressed, "In athletics, no matter the sport, you are expected to be the strongest, fastest, and most talented player. It is easy for people to associate aggression and other behaviors typically associated with acts of hazing with this student population." Although the participants expressed their belief that hazing took place, they indicated that they did not allow it to be present on their teams. Derrick had released team members and made reports to administrators when there was

suspicion of hazing. Both Derrick and Zion had not participated in any in-depth training on hazing while in the K-12 setting. Derrick also indicated that now that bullying had begun to morph, identifying the differences of hazing and bullying were becoming harder. The lack of training that was identified by Derrick and Zion means that these coaches had to use their own intuition based on previous experience to identify hazing. The responses shared by coaches indicated that hazing took place primarily among middle school students, and the lack of training may have led to hazing acts being miscategorized or ignored.

Research Question Three

What are school counselors' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

School counselors' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students were captured during the focus group interview. Responses were recorded, reviewed, and analyzed to gain understanding. Two out of the three participants who identified as a school counselors expressed the belief that hazing took place in middle and high school settings, primarily within athletics, but they acknowledged the possibility of hazing in other organizations. The responses gathered from school counselors aligned with the theme of unwritten rules and culture of silence. April strongly expressed that hazing did not exist within middle and high schools. April shared,

> I believe that hazing is happening on the collegiate level. That is what the also presented in the news. Bullying, on the other hand, is heavily associated with middle and high schools. We have done a lot of preventative measures at my school when it comes to bullying.

The perception shared by April leads one to consider their exposure to bullying prevention compared to hazing prevention. There has been an influx of bullying prevention initiatives across

federal, state, and school districts. Could April's perspective be built on the lack of exposure to hazing prevention initiatives?

For the participants who believed hazing existed, they identified times when they worked directly with students helping them process different events. Tiffany said,

As a counselor, I think I see a lot of the aftermath when a student calls to me, or parent or teacher comes to me. I think [hazing] is often disguised as bullying, teasing, and picking on someone because I really haven't heard it in the context of K-12.

The warning signs of hazing and bullying can be similar, according to Maddison. "As someone who was hazed, I kind of know what to be on the lookout for," stated Maddison. Participants' personal experiences fueled their support of students who may have been victims of hazing. Unclear reporting policies and procedures on hazing left school counselors to support students using strategies learned from bullying prevention training. The overall responses shared by school counselors indicated that hazing took place among middle and high school students, primarily within an athletic setting, with the possibility of it being in other organizations. The influx of bullying prevention trainings may have contributed to hazing acts being miscategorized.

Research Question Four

What are school leadership teams' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?

The perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students were captured from school leadership teams during a focus group interview. Their responses were recorded, reviewed, and analyzed to gain understanding. All participants identified as a school leadership team member communicated that hazing existed among middle and high school students, despite

not having any documented occurrences at their current schools. All three participants had previous educational experiences as teachers or coaches prior to being an administrator. Their previous experiences allowed them to have a broader perspective on hazing among middle and high school students. Each participant also indicated personal experiences with hazing in their high school or collegiate journey. The responses gathered from school leadership team members aligned with the theme of power and culture of silence. Two of the three participants indicated that their personal hazing experience was in athletics. Larry shared,

I think it is prevalent. I think it takes many different forms from kind of lightweight. I was just picking, I was just playing to, you know, felony assault. My time as a high school activities director I dealt with the very minor all the way to the federal title nine investigations that resulted in adult dismissals and communities being divided.

All participants indicated that athletics was the primary, but not only source for hazing to take place within middle and high schools. Participants who were members of school leadership teams expressed that they did investigations of hazing and bullying allegations in their roles. Although they had not found any hazing incidents in violation of their school's code of conduct, they still indicated that they knew it existed. The lack of training on hazing limited the ability of school leadership team members to properly apply their school's code of conduct to all situations. Staff was left to utilize their personal experiences to interpret hazing disciplinary protocols. Larry communicated that his investigations were driven by his personal experiences, "I'll forever be informed by a couple of situations we had at my former school and an adjacent school division."

Participants expressed that students may choose to avoid school leadership team members such as assistant principals when they may not be displaying behavior or participating

appropriately in school-sanctioned activities. "I am an Assistant Principal. Most students tend to avoid me if they want to do something that is against the rules," said Johnathan. Participants indicated that prior to the research study, they never truly reflected on the differences between bullying and hazing and whether they were exposed to hazing training in their current roles. The lack of knowledge on hazing, the differences between hazing and bullying, and the inconsistency within the definition create an environment for hazing to continue unrecognized. It allows for actions to be miscategorized and for hazing to continue to live in the educational system. The responses shared by school leadership team members indicated that hazing exists among middle and high school students.

Research Question Five

To what extent does hazing and bullying overlap among middle and high school students?

The overall perception of hazing in middle and high school students was described throughout the data collection process. Responses from individual and focus group interviewees were transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed to gain an understanding of the individuals. Each participant contributed to identifying the overlap between bullying and hazing. The most consistent theme that was presented among the responses from all participants in the individual and focus group interviews was centered around the theme of power. Those initiating bullying and hazing acts give them a sense of control over the other. Therefore, power and control are an overlapping factor in both hazing and bullying. However, each instance's end goal is different; bullying seeks to inflict harm, while hazing often results in harm too, but harm is not the main end goal. Larry shared, "Bullying is about enforcing that power differential and excluding others some form whereas, hazing leading to the rite of passage."

The primary similarity that was identified was power. Tiffany, Elenore, and April expressed that a person/group uses their power, real or perceived, to isolate individuals from the overall group or experience in bullying scenarios. When discussing hazing, participants described power, real or perceived, to determine if and how an individual would be included in the group or experience. The power structures that participants identified included team status, class structure, athleticism, and at times, gender. These power structures exist in both hazing and bullying. Elenore shared that the individual with the power creates an environment where others cannot speak out against them.

Real power is recognized within official titles where authority is given, and decision-making power is expected within the guidelines. Perceived power is given through individuals and social constructs, and it is the belief that others should have authority over another based on status or experience. Real power has been used to define a hierarchy for years and has become a common language within the school system and athletics. Perceived power was developed within the culture of the groups, organizations, teams, and school systems through classism. For example, participants described that the perceived power of a senior student might be displayed in the school's ability to allow those individuals access to certain activities or spaces in which others are restricted. Maddison shared how perceived power within her organization hindered her from asking a more experienced member to complete a task compared to a young organization member.

Another similarity between bullying and hazing, because of the power dynamic, is silencing. Individuals are often afraid of the repercussions from those in power if they speak up against them. Elenore highlighted that the students were concerned about being viewed as a snitch, which may have led to withholding of information. This fear of being labeled and the fear

of bullying or hazing acts supports their silence. Tiffany shared how she was often notified to support a student through parents and staff members, very rarely from the student themselves.

When a student is silenced, it allows for the bullying or hazing to continue. When incidents are not reported, it limits the staff's ability to intervene and support those who are being harmed. The cycle of harm continues. Sophia shared, "Hurt people, continue to hurt people." Residing in an uncomfortable space, physically or mentally, can lead to long-lasting adverse effects on a student. Renae stated that she wanted to help her students and stop bullying, but could not when she was not notified. Understanding similarities between hazing and bullying can help educators, families, and community members build the skills needed to intervene. Because hazing can contribute to abusive school environments where bullying and other problematic behaviors are more likely to thrive, identifying it and intervening can help support a school community that is healthy and inclusive.

Summary

In this chapter, the perspectives of 11 educators (teachers, coaches, school counselors, and leadership team members) was summarized and presented based on the research questions. Data was collected through a demographic survey, individual interviews, focus group interviews, field notes, and archival documents. Participants defined hazing in their own words and described their experiences with hazing. Four themes were identified from their responses as having an impact on their perception of hazing among middle and high school students.

The first theme of *Power* described the societal approved terms that have provided hierarchal structures within schools. Terminology associated with class rank or sports teams reinforces the real and perceived power within middle and high schools. The participants expressed personal experiences where they were victims of hazing based on some school-

approved terminology. Finally, participants described how athleticism can be a preventative factor for some students on sports teams.

The second theme was *Culture of Silence*. This theme discussed the taboo nature that surrounds discussing hazing. The hazing acts that are likely to occur on the middle and high school levels are overlooked because they do not reach the heightened levels of hospitalization or death referenced in the media. In addition, the lack of training for both staff and students keeps hazing out the conversation, creating a space of unknown.

Unwritten rules was identified as the third theme from the interviews and focus groups. This theme described the cultural dynamics of groups, organizations, and teams with hazing as a practice. Traditions and group member expectations were referenced by participants as norms they have identified in groups. These norms typically go unchallenged.

The fourth theme of *Intentionality* referred to the intent behind initiating the hazing practices. Participants explained that hazing was used to test loyalty to the group/organization. In addition, the hazing practices were used to weed out potential undedicated members and to set cultural expectations. Finally, participants described exclusion as a way for teams to build unity and set standards.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain the perspective of teachers on hazing among middle and high school students. An additional purpose of this study was to explore coaches', school counselors', and school leadership team member perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students. The problem is that students are being hazed in middle and high school (Gershel, Katz-Sidlow, Small, & Zandieh, 2003). This final chapter presents a review of the research findings. A discussion of the theoretical and empirical implications will be shared. A reflection of study limitations and recommendations for future research will conclude this final summary.

Discussion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the perception of teachers of hazing among middle and high school students. An additional purpose was to gain the perception of coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members of hazing among middle and high school students. This section identifies the connection between the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The findings of this study confirm the perception that hazing exists among middle and high school students and broadens the literature on hazing in the K-12 setting.

Interpretation of Findings

The results of this study were captured using a transcendental phenomenological research approach as outlined by Moustakas (1994). Bandura's social cognitive theory (SCT) (1986) was used as the theoretical framework for this study. The research design permitted research participants to describe their perception of hazing among middle and high school

students through individual interviews and focus group interviews. Eleven participants identified as either a teacher, coach, school counselor or school leadership team member at one of two sites contributed in this study. Purposeful criterion sampling was used to select participants. Creswell & Poth (2018) recommend this sampling approach for quality assurance. Data collection methods included a demographic survey, individual interviews, focus group interviews, field notes, and document analysis. The data collected was analyzed using the transcendental phenomenological approach to review coding to identify themes. The themes were reviewed and used to determine the perception of hazing among middle and high school students. Participants' quotes were utilized to endorse the descriptions of the identified themes. The research revealed that four primary themes impacted the perception of hazing among middle and high school students to include (a) power; (b) culture of silence; (c) unwritten rules; and (d) intentionality.

Archival document analysis revealed that during the academic years of 2017-2021, there were 2,976 documented student discipline referrals at Treetop High School (THS) and 1,694 student discipline referrals at Mountain Middle School (MMS). Archival discipline data provided by Charming Citizens Public Schools (CC) did not include discipline codes associated with the student referrals. The archival discipline data retrieved from the Virginia Department of Education Safe Schools Information portal indicated that bullying cases were documented at both Treetop High School (THS) and Mountain Middle School (MMS). Zero documented disciplinary incidents of hazing were associated with Treetop High School (THS) and Mountain Middle School (MMS).

There were five research questions that this study sought to answer. Question one asked, "What are teachers' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?" The most prominent theme revealed from the teachers' responses was Culture of Silence. The participants

reported that hazing existed among middle and high school students. Their perception largely associated hazing practices to be centered among athletics. Their responses were coupled with their personal experiences, which were utilized to support their stance. It was noted that no formal training centered on hazing had ever been offered to the teachers to help them to identify hazing within the school setting correctly.

The second research question asked, "What are coaches' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?" The two themes revealed from participants' responses were power and intentionality. The participants expressed their belief that hazing occurred, but primarily amongst middle school students. The coaches also believed that bullying was more prominent in middle and high schools than hazing. When discussing training associated with hazing, participants indicated there was little to no training solely dedicated to hazing prevention or intervention.

The third research question asked, "What are school counselors' perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students?" The two themes identified from school counselors' responses were unwritten rules and culture of silence. There was a mixture of supporting and opposing stances shared by the participants. Two of the three school counselor participants indicated that they believed hazing existed among middle and high school students, primarily within athletics. One participant indicated that hazing did not exist amongst these students. All school counseling participants implied that bullying appeared to be a more significant problem on the middle and high school levels, which was supported by the number of trainings and resources they received to combat bullying. The participants also indicated that they had not participated in any hazing-related trainings for their positions.

The fourth research question asked, "What are school leadership teams' perception of hazing among middle and high school students?" The prominent themes revealed from the participants' responses were power and culture of silence. Participants revealed that through their previous personal and professional experience, they knew hazing existed among middle and high school students. However, in their current schools, they had not found any student violating their school's code of conduct regarding hazing. Finally, participants expressed how their personal and professional experiences around hazing impacted their approach to investigating hazing and bullying allegations.

The fifth research question asked, "To what extent does hazing and bullying overlap among middle and high school students?" The most prominent theme associated with the responses from all participants was power. Participants felt silencing was another vital factor that could be identified in the overlap of bullying and hazing, in addition to power. Real and perceived power derived from titles or group experience weighs heavily on those being harmed. The atmosphere created by the power dynamic also supports those being harmed to remain silent. Students strive to be accepted socially. Social acceptance contributes to them not wanting to be viewed as snitches. These behaviors support the culture of silencing and the power of others.

In conclusion, most participants (teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members) believed that hazing existed among middle and high school students, emphasizing athletics. Bullying was believed to be present, but more openly discussed within the school setting. Training centered on bullying appeared to be more readily available than training on hazing prevention.

Empirical

The empirical literature revealed that hazing is heavily studied and associated with higher education, focusing on student athletics and fraternity/sorority life. When considering the K-12 setting, hazing has been referenced as a type of bullying that may exist among middle and high school students (Smokowski & Evans, 2019). Students' perception of hazing is justified within certain limits to achieve a desirable goal (Pecjak & Pirc, 2019).

Overall, the study captures the perception of hazing from teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members and indicates its existence. Ten of the 11 participants shared a similar perception of hazing. All participants discussed in detail the lack of training made available to them regarding hazing. The study expands the current research on hazing to include perceptions of the school personnel. The perspective shared by school personnel provides a holistic view of hazing within education since previous research has addressed student perception.

The first theme that was identified in the study focused on power. This finding was consistent with current literature, which discussed the power dynamics associated with hazing (Smokowski & Evans, 2019; Waldron, 2015). Group members who have a title or are considered more experienced influence the group's inner workings. Smokowski and Evans (2019) found that group norms and expectations are modeled for new and potential members to follow, which continues the cycle of hazing. The study identified how power can be associated with membership status (current/active and alumni), identity, athleticism, and hierarchy. When power is still associated with former group members, it creates a support system for the current group members to continue in the footsteps of their predecessors. Waldron (2015) indicated that when there is a strong culture of hazing within a group, it is likely to continue. The indication that alumni/former group members still hold a level of power, supports Waldron's very stance

(2015). Participants shared that a student's athletic ability provides them with an elevated status amongst their team.

The culture of silence was the second theme identified in the study. Participants discussed certain events that were viewed as tradition or rites of passage that continued to support hazing practices. Dewitt and Dewitt (2012) focused on an upset community where a long-lasting tradition stopped due to hazing. Community members (parents, city leaders, and students) favored the tradition because it provided elite status to the selected students (Dewitt & Dewitt, 2012). Participants also shared how their lack of knowledge of the official definition may have contributed to the lack of conversation around hazing. Current literature indicates how the definition of hazing is inconsistent across the United States, and is lumped into bullying definitions (Diamond et al., 2016). The lack of discussion on hazing in the K-12 setting creates a taboo atmosphere that was demonstrated throughout the study. Participants appeared to be uncomfortable when discussing hazing and even whispered their responses. Their actions and findings from their discussion support the culture of silence created around hazing.

Unwritten rules and intentionality were the last two themes identified in the study. The current literature highlights how educational policies written on hazing are reactive and offer no layer of protection to students (Gower, Cousin & Borowsky, 2017; McGlone & Schaefer, 2008). Multiple participants openly shared that they were unaware of their school district's hazing policy and reporting procedures. Hakkola, Allen, and Kerschner (2019) indicate that this is due to the lack of formalized training that staff would receive to support awareness, identify warning signs, and learn procedures. With school personnel being inadequately informed, there are not many advocates to challenge current practices of groups and allow for current practices, including hazing, to continue. The hierarchical structure within education supports some having

more power or privilege than others. Titles such as senior, junior, sophomore, and freshmen create a space to use their position over another. Participants identified multiple acts where deference had been seen within the school based on a school-provided title. Intentionality was referenced to determining loyalty to the group/team, their mission/goal, and upholding their standards. Current literature indicates that teams seek to use hazing practices to create a sense of cohesion and teach the group's current expectations (Waldron, 2015). Many have noted that hazing practices have more negative outcomes than positive (Allen et al., 2018; Cimino, 2011; Diamond et al., 2016; Gershel et al., 2003; Nuwer, 2000; Scott-Sheldon et al., 2016; Smokowski & Evans, 2019; Waldron, 2015).

The discussion shared by participants directly coincides the belief that hazing exists among middle and high school students. However, it does strengthen the stance that school personnel is unaware of how to identify hazing. The documented number of bullying cases is low across the four academic school years at both educational institutions. The number of documented bullying cases could be aided by increased training, open discussion, and readily available support for bullying.

Theoretical

This study was guided by Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory as a framework. Social cognitive theory explores human behavior by viewing the triadic factors of personal, behavior, and environment through the interaction of the five human capabilities (Bandura, 1986). The five human capabilities are symbolic, vicarious, forethought, self-regulation, and self-reflection (Bandura, 1986). The participants' responses captured personal, behavioral, and environmental factors through a human capability that contributed to their overall perception of hazing among middle and high school students. This framework has been applied to current

literature exploring the experiences of those who have been hazed. The data collected in this study demonstrates social cognitive theory as a suitable framework to examine the experiences of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members of hazing among middle and high school students.

This study contributes to the research on social cognitive theory and its application to understanding hazing within education. It supports social cognitive theory's claim that personal factors, behavior, and environment contribute to a person's behavior. The study participants communicated how behaviors, personal factors, and their current environments contributed to their approach and perspective on hazing overall and within schools. Participants provided connections to the five human capabilities that interacted between personal factors, behavior, and environment within social cognitive theory.

The five human capabilities were revealed through experiences shared by the participants. Bandura (1986) describes the symbolic capability where words, phrases, or images can be given meaning. The meaning that is associated with the words, phrases, or images can influence a person's interactions. Within the study, symbolic capabilities were captured when discussing hazing; participants utilized words and referenced images that they had associated with hazing from prior exposure or experiences. Four participants associated the words *paddle*, *uniforms*, and *pledging* with hazing. At the same time, the remaining seven participants associated the word *hazing* itself with *pain*, *death, forced servitude*, or *humiliation*. Based on participants' responses, the word *hazing* was associated with a feeling, physical items, and actions which supports the influence of symbolic capability on the overall behavior geared towards hazing.

The second human capability is vicarious. Vicarious capability is for an individual to influence how the attitudes, values, communication, and beliefs are within a particular setting (Bandura, 1986). It is believed that within this capability, a person can learn group norms through modeling. Hamilton et al. (2018) indicated that within vicarious capability, an understanding of hazing is formed. One participant shared how they never directly participated in hazing practices, but by observing their peers, they knew how to navigate that group. Another participant viewed her organization's expectations while joining the organization, so when she became a member she already knew what was expected of her. The responses from participants serve as evidence of vicarious capability impacting overall behavior towards hazing.

The third human capability is forethought. Bandura (1986) describes forethought to be a guide that the individual intends to follow based on their observations. Multiple participants described experiences of witnessing how their peers were treating and planning a different outcome for themselves. This guide does not prepare individuals for slight changes in the behavior of others, which could lead to them not following their own guide. Self-regulation is the fourth human capability and is triggered when the person's actions do not align with their values (Bandura, 1986). One participant shared that they knew hazing was wrong, but chose to participate as the receiver and initiator. This led the participants to search for justification of their actions to align with a different personal or organizational value. Forethought and self-regulation were evident in participants' responses which influenced their overall behavior towards hazing.

The fifth and final human capability is self-reflection. Self-reflection is an internal action where self-evaluations are conducted to determine a personal level of satisfaction with one's actions (Bandura, 1986). It was believed that participants had the ability to analyze their statements within focus group interviews while hearing from others. Participants who had

participated in hazing sought to justify their actions by searching for positive life skills such as time management and organization to associate with the acts. Participants utilized euphemistic language. The euphemisms that were associated with hazing were bullying, traditions, and rites of passage. Each term attempted to soften the harsh reality of what hazing really is and their personal association with it. Self-reflection capability was documented in participants' responses to indicate its impact on overall behavior towards hazing.

The findings from this study are fielded with evidence to support the interaction of the five human capabilities that influence human behavior through personal, environment, and behavioral factors. Participant responses revealed that words, phrases, and images are associated with hazing through symbolic capability. Group expectations were learned through modeling of current organization members through vicarious capability. Participants described personal intentions of operating within an organization, which aligns with forethought capability, and experiences of self-regulation capability when they operated outside of their personal values. Finally, self-reflection capability was believed to be conducted the most amongst focus group participants when they had the opportunity to justify their actions and experiences associated with hazing. This study supports that human behavior is not influenced by one factor alone, but by the equal interaction of all factors through human capabilities. This study also supports the future use of social cognitive theory in gaining perspective on hazing.

Implications for Policy or Practice

The findings from this study have several significant implications for education. More specifically, they can be directly applied to supporting teachers and administrators in the K-12 setting. This phenomenological study produced theoretical, empirical, and practical findings for teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members engaged in assessing

behavior and supporting students. This section discusses these implications and provides recommendations to teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members.

Empirical Implications

Hazing exists within multiple levels of education. Stakeholders need to examine current policies, training, and traditions impacting students. There must be a regular review of policies and procedures related to student behavior in a K-12 setting. Ample training must be offered on interpreting and implementing the created policies. Educators must recognize the dangers associated with some traditions and educate all on safety and implement proper support strategies within the school system. Students' educational journeys cannot be compromised for the sake of traditions. This study focused on gaining the perspectives of school personnel on hazing among middle and high school students. The findings of this study have empirical implications that can be applied to teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members.

Findings show that there is a lack of training on the topic of hazing. All participants indicated that they had not been offered or attended training solely on hazing within their current roles—participants varied in positions, years of experience within the field, and years at their existing site. However; lack of training on the topic remained the same, despite diverse educational backgrounds. In addition, the participants vocalized being unsure of their school division's reporting policy for hazing. This lack of familiarity in the reporting procedures can lead to the misidentification of the incident.

Ten of the eleven (91%) participants believed that hazing was taking place in middle and/or high schools. The perspectives gathered indicate an area that needs to be explored further. Participants stated hazing to be a detriment to the overall learning environment and school

community. Participants shared how dealing with bullying was always the primary focus of training and school campaigns. The participants expressed that schools should provide the same effort on training to prevent and deter acts of hazing.

There is a lack of understating of what hazing truly is. Participants all shared their own versions of the definition of hazing, which all differed. The lack of a universal definition allows for misinterpretation. For example, no one knew the exact definition despite all participants operating under the school division's Code of Conduct and Responsibilities, which defines hazing. Participants openly shared how bullying trainings, definitions, and interventions were provided more often which contributed to their lack of knowledge.

Practical Implications

Practical implications for teachers, coaches, school counselors, and the school leadership team were derived from this study. The research findings from this study support the practical implementations presented previously on the topic of hazing. Previous recommendations have included universal definition (Allan et al., 2019; Diamond et al., 2016; Keller et al., 2015), federal litigation (Crow & McGlone, 2018), educational training, (Reid et al., 2019; Allan et al., 2019; Waldron, 2015), policy revision (Swick-Duttine, 2018), and clarified standard operating procedures (Allan, Kershner, & Payne, 2019; Keller et al., 2019). The findings support the previous implications and highlight that there has been limited traction in addressing hazing on the K-12 level. There is a need for a universal definition of hazing to be adopted across the United States and territories. Inconsistencies regarding the definition of hazing were evident in participants' responses. Each participant shared a different definition of hazing during their individual interview or focus group. These variations indicate no baseline understanding shared across varying roles within middle and high schools. Participants' experiences in their roles range

from one to 30 years; despite having this level of experience, participants could not accurately define hazing as identified within their school division's Code of Conduct and Responsibilities. The inconsistency in which hazing is defined is not only present in K-12, but varies from state to state. The Commonwealth of Virginia has legally defined hazing. School divisions must know and understand what hazing is as defined by law. According to Virginia § 18.2-56, hazing is defined as

> to recklessly or intentionally endanger the health or safety of a student or students or to inflict bodily injury on a student or students in connection with or for the purpose of initiation, admission into or affiliation with or as a condition for continued membership in a club, organization, association, fraternity, sorority, or student body regardless of whether the student or students so endangered or injured participated voluntarily in the relevant activity.

The Commonwealth of Virginia created this definition with the hope that it would create a shared comprehensive approach to prevention.

Training dedicated to increasing hazing awareness among school personnel is needed. Hazing can no longer be grouped into topics such as bullying or harassment. This grouped training approach has not adequately prepared educators to understand, identify, or support students who may be hazed. This training should be made available to all school personnel, but an emphasis placed on coaches since research indicates student athletics as a setting for hazing. Training would move toward creating an uniformed approach that school divisions can take to ensure staff has access to policy, procedures, warning signs, and preventative measures to combat hazing. The training should not fail to include how to properly document hazing within the student database and select appropriate sanctions for violators.

Training must not be limited to the staff, but scaffolded sessions available to all stakeholders, especially students. Another practical implication is providing training to middle and high school students. This training would create a space for students to learn about the definition of hazing, what to look out for, ways to report incidents or suspicion of incidents, and how to find support. Training sessions do not have to be the only format for educational resources to distribute to students. Educational links, posters, and ongoing conversations are examples of continued efforts to bring awareness and increase students' understanding of hazing. Current literature indicates that students do not believe they are being hazed since they are gaining membership into the desired club/group/team (Allan et al., 2019; Pecjak & Pirc, 2019; Allan, 2009). Students must be provided with the proper tools to advocate for themselves and others regarding safety.

The study's practical implications for school division leaders and school-level leaders were to review current traditions and practices within the school division. This study revealed there is power within classification titles that restricts or gives access to a particular aspect of the student population. School-supported traditions such as senior pranks and rookie or freshmen rituals should be reviewed to determine overall student safety and its impact on the overall learning environment. After traditions are reviewed, school division and school-level leaders should consider removing traditions that may be considered hazing under state law.

Theoretical Implications

Results of this study have theoretical implications for future researchers of hazing, student behavior, educational policies, and educational training. The five human capabilities outlined within Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory were used as a lens to understand the behavior that impacts teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members when it

comes to hazing among middle school and high school students. These capabilities are symbolic, vicarious, forethought, self-regulation, and self-reflection. Participants revealed how their stances, behavior, and environment had shaped their view of the K-12 education level hazing. The outlooks shared by participants were directly connected to one of the five human capabilities of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. Personal factors disclosed were previous exposure to hazing while in middle school, high school, or at the collegiate level. The participants' subjective experiences were directly connected to the self-reflection human capabilities. Based on Bandura's theory, these reflections shape how the participants respond to student behavior and acts of hazing. It ultimately influences how they report and support students without proper training or guidance.

Additionally, participants shared that their previous direct or close exposure to hazing acts was used to guide future interactions, which is connected to the human capabilities of vicarious and foresight based on Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. Educators adapt skills and knowledge from various sources to support their environment. Based on the results, participants revealed that their overall understanding of hazing was from sources such as mass media and the stories of others. These findings support Bandura's social cognitive theory that vicarious human capabilities impact an individual's activities and responses. The absence of proper training focuses teachers and administrators on relying solely on personal experiences and the observations of others.

All participants expressed that their current educational institution appeared to be a space where hazing was not known to take place, which impacted their overall impression of hazing within their setting. Participants expressed a lack of familiar symbolic images within their schools, such as paddles or humiliating uniforms traditionally associated with hazing. This

concept of visual representation to indicate acts of hazing now shows how the participants solely associated hazing with items or words, creating a domino effect on their perception of hazing. Teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members associating visual objects with hazing align with the human capability of symbolizing presented in Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. Participants involved in hazing acts as the initiator expressed how acts did not align with their values but those of the organization. They were seen justifying their actions by associating positive attributes learned from the experience in a reflective aspect. Overall, the findings support how human behavior impacts the perspectives of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members on hazing among middle and high school students.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study put boundaries in place to limit the scope and applicability. The boundaries or delimitations relate directly to the study's setting and participant selection, unlike limitations associated with the research method and design (Patton, 2002). For example, participants were required to be employed by Charming Citizens Public Schools (CC) as a teacher, school counselor, coach, school principal, assistant principal, or associate principal. I set this delimitation based on positionality to screen individuals who may hold one or more titles within their school. A second boundary was that participants, except coaches, must also hold a valid professional educator license in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Requiring professional licenses from the Commonwealth of Virginia ensured that participants had proper credentials for their positions. Finally, the third boundary was that all participants must have been assigned to one of the sites for at least one academic year. Securing one year at the sites meant that they had time to form staff and student relationships and had a good understanding of the school climate. A

phenomenological approach was utilized to gain understanding from a specific group on the phenomenon being studied. This design allowed me to capture more descriptions of the participants' experiences than personal interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study contained several limitations. First, the location that was selected for this study limits its transferability. Participants were recruited from two sites within Charming Citizens Public Schools (CC) in Virginia. Participation was also limited to those of teacher, coach, school counselor, and school leadership team members who had been at that location for at least one academic year. The participant's role contributes to the study's limited sample due to criteria. The limitations described above allowed me to capture the perspective of a population to speak to the current gaps in the literature.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on understanding the perceptions of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership teams on hazing among middle and high school students. Based on study findings, limitations, and delimitations, the following recommendations for future research are proposed.

This study focused on the perspective of teachers, coaches school counselors and school leadership team members from a public school district in Virginia. Future research of similar populations should consider recruiting participants from the entire school division. Expanding the recruitment to the whole school district allows future studies to strengthen the diversity of backgrounds within the sample. The variety of the participants may contribute to the transferability of the findings to a larger population. Additional research is needed in states with documented hazing practices within K-12 historically to learn of the current perspectives of hazing among school personnel.

The second recommendation for future research is to consider a mixed methods study to examine perspectives of school personnel on hazing in comparison to the number of documented disciplinary referrals or cases over the years. Using this method to perform this comparison would provide insight into how hazing is viewed and recorded within K-12 education. In addition, a view of the educational training on the topic may provide insight into how incidents are being documented.

The final recommendation is to consider replicating this study again, but focusing on a particular position, such as coaches. The reviewed literature and study findings revealed that hazing is associated with student athletics. It would provide insight into coaches' accurate perception of hazing within their teams, examine what support systems are in place, and if they are prepared to prevent hazing from occurring. Focusing on this population can also provide a framework for prevention that can be adapted to other school units. The findings from these recommendations could shape policies and training opportunities for students and staff and create a comprehensive plan for prevention against hazing.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain the perspective of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members on hazing among middle and high school students. A transcendental phenomenological research approach provided participants the opportunity to share their experiences and perspectives in a format that their stories could be heard clearly. During the coding and analysis process, four themes were revealed: Power, Culture of Silence, Unwritten Rules, and Intentionality. In addition, the participants' experiences showed inconsistencies among school personnel regarding their

understanding of hazing. As a result, more training is needed, and students are experiencing

hazing at middle and high school levels.

This study sought to answer five research questions. The first four research questions

sought to gain the perspective of either a teacher, coach, school counselor, or school leadership

team member on hazing among middle and high school students. The study found that across the

four positions, ten out of eleven participants (91%) believed that hazing existed among middle

and high school students. To be more precise, teachers and school counselors noted that student

athletes were more likely to be exposed to hazing, while coaches believed hazing was more

likely to take place on the middle school level solely. When it came to school leadership teams,

they indicated that hazing took place among middle and high school students based off their

personal experiences. The fifth research question sought to find the overlap between bullying and

hazing among middle and high school students. Participants expressed that power, real or

perceived, and the ability to silence those affects are where bullying and hazing overlap.

Several implications were drawn from this study. Theoretically, this research supports

human behavior being defined using social cognitive theory. The interactions among the human

capabilities influence the triadic factors. It validates that behavior cannot be defined solely on

aspect, but the interaction among them. It also validates that one factor does not outweigh the

influence on human behavior.

Empirically, the study validates the existence of hazing among middle and high school

students from the perspectives of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership

team members. It revealed that training was not readily available for school personnel so they

could identify and report hazing incidents confidently. Participants expressed feeling unprepared

to identify, report, and later provide emotional support to students when discussing hazing incidents.

Practically, the study pinpoints areas of improvement within the field of education. There is a need for training associated with hazing. Second, school personnel is unfamiliar with the definition, warning signs and reporting practices related to hazing. Third, administrators need to review student traditions and rituals to ensure student safety on an individual school level. These practical implications can lead to a healthier school environment where students can succeed.

The knowledge gained from examining the perspectives of teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members on hazing among middle and high school students broadens and corroborates previous research that hazing is widespread and occurring at this level. This study also reveals an enormous need for more training to clarify how hazing is defined, support strategies, and prevention techniques to curb these dangerous behaviors. The data also debunks the myth that hazing only occurs in athletics. Participants' experiences confirm that it may be more prevalent in athletics, but it happens across many school-based activities. Additionally, the findings from this study shed light on the gaps regarding genuinely understanding the impact of hazing.

Furthermore, it highlights how unprepared teachers, coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team members are to tackle this complex issue. Hazing is dangerous for students and staff and jeopardizes the safety of an educational setting. Given the increase in acts of hazing and hazing-related deaths in a higher education setting, more attention is needed at the K-12 level to curb this behavior at the earlier stages. There is an immediate need for students and staff members to understand hazing and prevent this from occurring. In addition, a more defined plan is needed from education policymakers of how hazing is documented. Finally, individuals

who experience hazing are impacted physically, mentally, and emotionally. As an educator, I

believe that proper mechanisms must be implemented to ensure students feel supported and

recover from these experiences.

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    Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Washington, DC.

Appendix A: Liberty University IRB Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

July 1, 2021

Delisa Joseph
Antionette Stroter

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-843 Teacher Perceptions of Hazing Among Middle & High School Students: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Delisa Joseph, Antionette Stroter:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B: Consent Form

Trustworthiness Section Example

Title of the Project: Teacher Perceptions of Hazing Among Middle & High School Students: A Phenomenological Study
Principal Investigator: DeLisa Joseph, EdS, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be employed as a teacher, school counselor, coach, school principal, assistant principal, or associate principal in Public Schools, hold a valid professional educator license in the Commonwealth of Virginia, with the exception of coaches, and have been assigned to either a middle school or high school for at least one academic year. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore teacher perceptions of hazing at the middle and high school levels. An additional purpose of this study will explore coaches, school counselors, and school leadership team member perceptions of hazing among middle and high school students.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Grant permission for the researcher to use your demographic information obtained via the screening survey as study data.
2. Complete a virtual, one-to-one interview (teachers and coaches) or a focus group (school counselors, principals, assistant principals, and associate principals), which is a group interview, that will take you about 50 minutes to complete. All interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed.
3. Teachers and coaches will review the transcript of their interview, which will take approximately 10 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a clearer understanding of how educators perceive hazing. This understanding can lead to school districts gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon of hazing, and the information gathered can be used to enhance reporting, training, and student support.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher serves as school counselor at Southampton Elementary in Richmond Public Schools. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study DeLisa Joseph. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Antionette Stroter.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name   Signature & Date

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

1. First Name

2. Last Name

3. Occupation Title

4. Number of Years Licensed as Title

5. Which school are you currently assigned to?

6. How many years have you been assigned to the above school?

7. Race/Ethnicity

8. Sex

9. Email Address

Appendix D: Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me. Include your occupation title, current grade level assigned to, age, and number of years within your current role.

2. Describe what hazing means to you.

3. Describe how you are notified of hazing experiences.

4. Describe any personal experiences you have had with hazing.

5. Describe the prevalence of hazing in middle/high school.

6. Describe any training you have received around hazing.

7. Describe the procedures you are to take if you are in suspicion of or notified of hazing.

8. Describe the support system(s) that your school/school district has in place and their level of effectiveness.

9. Describe what bullying means to you.

10. How are you notified of bullying experiences?

11. Describe any personal experience you have had with bullying?

12. Describe the prevalence of bullying in middle/high school.

13. Describe any training you have received around bullying.

14. Describe the procedures you are to take if you are in suspicion of or notified of bullying.

15. Describe the similarities between bullying and hazing.

16. Please tell me anything else that you would like to about this topic that I have not asked.

Appendix E: Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me. Include your occupation title, current grade level assigned to, age, and number of years within your current role.

2. Describe the prevalence of hazing in middle/high school.

3. Describe the prevalence of bullying in middle/high school.

4. Describe any personal experiences you have had with hazing.

5. Describe any personal experience you have had with bullying?

6. Describe the similarities between bullying and hazing.

7. Please tell me anything else that you would like to about this topic that I have not asked.

Appendix F: Audit Trail

Participant	Date of Contact	Collection Method	Notes/Reflections
All Eligible Participants	8/2/2021	Email to request participation	School district indicated that multiple away messages were on. Another date scheduled.
All Eligible Participants	8/31/2021	Email to request participation	Successful email deliver, no away messages
Participant Larry	8/2/2021	Email of interest	
	8/2/2021	Demographic Survey Complete	Met requirements to participate
	9/16/2021	Focus Group Interview	Recorded & transcribed responses
Participant Tiffany	8/16/2021	Email of Interest	
	8/16/2021	Demographic Survey Complete	Met requirements to participate
	9/16/2021	Focus Group Interview	Recorded & transcribed responses
Participant Johnathan	8/31/2021	Demographic Survey Complete	Met requirements to participate
	9/16/2021	Focus Group Interview	Participant cancelled due to emergency
	11/13/2021	Participation Follow Up email	
	11/17/2021	Focus Group Interview	Recorded & transcribed responses
Participant Elenore	11/11/2021	Email of Interest	
	11/11/2021	Demographic Survey Complete	Met requirements to participate
	11/20/2021	1 on 1 Interview	Recorded & transcribed responses
Participant Sophia	11/11/2021	Email of Interest	
	11/11/2021	Demographic Survey Complete	Met requirements to participate
	11/17/2021	Focus Group Interview	Recorded & transcribed responses

Participant Maddison	11/12/2021	Demographic Survey Complete	Met requirements to participate
	11/13/2021	Email of Interest	
	11/23/2021	Focus Group Interview	Interview cancelled due to work
	11/30/2021	Email Follow up	
	12/1/2021	Focus Group Interview	Recorded & transcribed responses
Participant Oscar	11/12/2021	Demographic Survey Complete	Met requirements to participate
	11/13/2021	Email of Interest	
	11/23/2021	Focus Group Interview	Interview cancelled due to work
	11/30/2021	Email Follow up	
	12/1/2021	Email	Informed no longer able to participate
Participant April	11/19/2021	Demographic Survey Complete	Met requirements to participate
	11/19/2021	Email of Interest	Participants discuss concerns about participating
	11/28/2021	Follow up interest email	
	12/1/2021	Focus Group Interview	Recorded & transcribed responses
Participant Gene	11/17/2021	Email of Interest	Participant mentioned upcoming scheduling concerns
	12/8/2021	Demographic Survey Complete	
	12/14/2021	Email of Interest	
	12/20/2021	Follow up Email of Interest	No Response
Participant Derrick	12/8/2021	Email of Interest	
	12/8/2021	Demographic Survey Complete	Participant requested assistance filling it out
	12/8/2021	Individual Interview	Recorded & transcribed responses

Participant Renae	12/10/2021	Email of Interest	
	12/14/2021	Demographic Survey Complete	
	12/14/2021	Individual Interview	Recorded & transcribed responses
Participant Zion	12/13/2021	Email of Interest	
	12/15/2021	Demographic Survey Complete	Participant Completed prior to interview
	12/15/2021	Individual Interview	Recorded & transcribed responses
Participant Chasity	12/17/2021	Email of Interest	
	12/17/2021	Demographic Survey Complete	
	12/21/2021	Individual Interview	Recorded & transcribed responses

Appendix G: Sample Individual Interview

Elenore
Interviewer: DeLisa Joseph
November 20, 2021

Interviewer: Can you please introduce yourself to me? Include your occupation, title, current,

great level you're assigned to your age. If you would like and the number of years you've been

within your role.

Elenore: Sure my name is Participant E. I am a third-year English teacher, teaching two sections

of English.

Interviewer: Thank you for that. Now if you could describe what hazing means to you.

Elenore: I think of hazing as behaviors or activities that somebody is pressured into engaging in

in order to be a part of a social group.

Interviewer: Thank you, can you describe how you are notified of hazing experiences within

your school?

Elenore: I don't know that I formally have been notified of one. I guess I felt like that was a bad

answer, but I guess that would be an important finding to come. I don't know that I've been

explicitly made aware of it, and I think probably because of the deeply social nature of hazing. I

think a lot of it probably flies under our radar as adults in the building.

Interviewer: Describe any personal experiences you have had with hazing.

Elenore: I think when I was a kid, and I was on the volleyball team in high school. We had to do

a little dares and stuff like that to fit in with the upperclassmen. I don't feel like I was harmed by

it or was forced to do harm to anybody else, but it was fairly innocent. Like all right, everybody's

got to tell us who they like or something like that. I don't know.

Interviewer: Thank you for that question five. Describe the prevalence of hazing in middle and

high school.

Elenore: My experience or in my teaching experience.

Interviewer: Whatever you would like to share.

Elenore: Mine was very minimal up. I don't think I really dealt with that, I think. Dumb athletics was probably the beginning and end of my experience with hazing, as a kid myself. And I'm sure this is a part of your research to come but parsing the difference between bullying and hazing can be difficult. And seeing where those overlap? So, I'm wondering what I'm remembering if it could have been construed as one or the other. I definitely remember being the worst player on the basketball team in 8th grade and I like I didn't make it in 7th grade and, but I was really nice and the coach was my teacher so when I tried out again in 8th grade. I think they're like well, you're 5'8 will make something happen here. So, I do remember having another player like kind of boss me around like if she would like when the coach wasn't looking she'd toss a ball out of bounds on purpose and then like make me go get it. So that was definitely just bullying but I'm wondering if that could have been construed as hazing too. It's hard to say.

Interviewer: OK questions six. Can you describe any training you have received around hazing?

Elenore: I don't think I've received any training about hazing, and I think that the extent of it would maybe the trainings that we've received an interpreting what could be like. Mental health challenges symptoms in students, but those could be the result of hazing or could be the result of several other factors, but expressly. I don't think I've received training on this.

Interviewer: Question seven: describe the procedures you are to take. If you aren't suspicion of or notified of hazing acts.

Elenore: Uh, because I don't think I've received formal instruction or protocols on this, and I'll answer this with the steps that I would logically take to respond to it. I think the first one would

be noting the behavior somewhere privately for me, so that I can describe it accurately enough.

Then I would probably. And I may have a blind spot on this by interpreting it as primarily in a

sports setting, and it may not always be, but I think my second move would be to get with the

coaches a lot of our coaching staff for our student athletes happen to work at the school, so that's

probably who I would go to 1st. I also have a relationship with them because they're who I go to

about academic and behavioral concerns for athletes. And then from there I'd probably speak

directly to the kids, but also take what they say with a grain of salt, because nobody wants to

snitch on people.

Interviewer: I appreciate that and the steps that you would take even though you haven't received

anything formal. Question 8 can you describe the support system or systems that you are school,

or school district hasn't placed and their effectiveness or outpatient.

Elenore: I can't speak to their effectiveness around hazing, but I can speak to this support

systems we have in place for. Negative social situations like bullying, so for that we have some

administrative support and then we also have a team of two school social workers as well as a

school psychologist who shares time between us and another school. We have seven or eight

counselors at our school. However, as a school counselor yourself you know caseloads are high.

Things can go unnoticed, unintentionally. This is the time, it's always been a time to be in this

profession, especially where we are. But even now I think the guilt has been something hard to

deal with because we're doing our best and it can't fall to us that we that we don't catch

everything because we don't have enough qualified people in the building to catch everything.

Interviewer: Question 9, can you describe what bullying means to you?

Elenore: I think bullying isa single act, but it's more often a pattern of behavior where a student

exerts, they're either real or perceived power over another student or child. In order to intimidate

them or manipulate them into behaving a certain way, and I guess other words it would be away for a kid to put another kid in their place, whatever that means. Whether that's a real or perceived place.

Interviewer: Thank you number 10. How are you informed of bullying experiences within your school?

Elenore: More often than not, I have to rely on my own perception, which of course is limited and at times faulty because I'm one person and I have a lot of students. Thankfully students will make me aware of it. But more often than not, it's something that I have to notice, identify, and investigate on my own, and a big limit to that is people not wanting to say that they have been victimized in that way.

Interviewer: Can you describe any personal experiences you've had with bullying?

Elenore: And as a child or as a teacher.

Interviewer: Which ever you would like to share.

Elenore: OK, so I guess I can go briefly back to my experience on the middle school basketball team. I was fortunate enough for whatever reason, to have not been targeted by bullies for most of my life, so that's cool that this one situation. Lizzie (pseudonym made up by participant), she didn't. She didn't want me there. She felt like she had power over me and I think in hindsight, as an educator I have a better perspective on why she may have felt the need to exert power over another kid and because she didn't really feel like she had a lot in her life. I think that's probably the extent of it, and luckily, I had plenty of family and social support to weather that storm. And it wasn't a prolonged thing that scarred me. But I've also experienced it as a teacher. Seeing a great deal of bullying, particularly in the population that I serve at my school and how a lot of our students, even though we're in this, this modern 2021 age, still have varying degrees of

tolerance and acceptance of LGBTQ identities. Some of our students construct gender and

sexuality in a pretty rigid way, so when there are especially boys, I've found that queer girls are

still bullied sometimes, but they're given a degree of respect that queer boys are not always

awarded, so I think I've primarily seen bullying in those contexts where, even if boys aren't

specifically targeted. Other students will use terminology and slurs around them, knowing that it

will hurt them in an effort to kind of keep people in the closet or force them back into it. And I

think that's the most prevalent. A type of bullying that I see the as well is, misogynistic kind of

bullying, particularly against a much larger girl. Being a plus size girl and being a queer boy are

some of the hardest things that you can be at the school where I work.

Interviewer: Thank you for that. I believe you provided input on Question 12. I will share it and

allow you to add additional information if you would like. Describe the prevalence of bullying at

middle/high school.

Elenore: I believe I shared enough to answer that question.

Interviewer: Question 13: Describe any training you have received around bullying.

Elenore: Yes, [hesitation] and I hesitate because I'm trying to think of a coherent through line

that I've received about specifically what to do. I know that there are ways that we've been

trained to attempt to preempt bullying instances in the classroom and in a lot of that involves I'm

an English teacher, so a lot of that involves inclusive literature and teaching strategies. A

diversity of types of activities and means of engagement and all the kind of things that competent

teacher's kind of already do can be a good like first line of defense against bullying. But of

course, we're talking about kids who are works in progress, so it still happens. I think after that

my first line of defense is to lean on school counselors. Even though they have a lot on their plate

and when the classroom teacher who sees things firsthand and the school counselor who's a

specially trained in responding to those issues come together. Usually that can be pretty impactful.

Interviewer: Thank you for that and I believe you did a little bit of question 14. I'm going to read it out loud if you would like to add more you can, but I think you kind of touched on it that is fine. Described the procedures you are to take if you are in suspicion of or notified of bullying.

Participant E : I may respond in a way that leaders at my school might say, oh, you know, we talked about it and we taught faculty to do it a different way. And forgive me if that's the case, but for me, I think I would first try to take the temperature of the students involved and as you know, sometimes they'll be forthcoming and sometimes they will downplay and minimize. Which I also see and I'll I won't go too far into this, but there's a little cross over here with some dating violence and sexual harassment. A little bit where sometimes if you check up and you say everything OK with your boyfriend. Oh yeah, everything is fine, so sometimes that happens. Which is sad and concerning. So same thing with bullying. Sometimes the students are ready to talk about it and sometimes they wanted to go away, and the worst possible thing could be some random teacher, knowing that they're suffering and feeling like they have to do something about it. They should be tough. They should handle it on their own whatever. I talked to the student and if I feel like they're forthcoming, but if I know that they're not going to talk to me about it, that's when I bring in school counselor. And then after that, that's when I bring in apparent and bringing in the parent. Of course, you do so delicately and with straight facts. Understandably, some parents will receive it calmly and others will receive it with shock, and they'll respond with shock and frustrated. So, I think first line of defense is see if I can talk to the kid if I can't talk to the kid, I go straight to the counselor asked the counselor their opinion on bringing in the parent and or the student as well.

Interviewer: Thank you just two last formal questions. Question 15: Can you describe the similarities between bullying and hate?

Elenore: I would say what makes bullying and hazing similar is the social pressure to go along with whatever the kids exerting power are asking of you or doing to you. I think one thing that they have in common is the way that the hazer or the bully makes it almost impossible to speak out against what they're doing. The silencing aspect is what I think of. In my experience, the presumption is that if you, whether this you'll be a part of this social group, so it's almost like an entry point or an access point bullying that doesn't always happen. There's not necessarily the hope or the promise of inclusion afterwards, it's just. It's purely to keep another kid down and for another kid to exert their social power over somebody else. So, I think the silencing and the exertion of power are what they have in common. The end result is where they differ.

Interviewer: The final question is: Please tell me anything else you would like to tell me about this topic that I have not asked.

Elenore: I have nothing else to add. Thank you.