

## 23 Ways to Detect Hazing

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### Constant factors in hazing

- Hazing is not about “Earning your way in”. That is the standard excuse. However, hazing is truly about control, authority, domination and bullying.
- Hazing is usually but not always practiced and supported by those who are “Incomplete” people. They lack courage, fortitude and self-confidence. Their self-esteem is low. They use hazing as a means of justifying, ratifying and validating their perceived place in a group or culture.
- Hazing requires victims who will not resist or fight back.
- Hazing thrives in secrecy and darkness. However, many of those who believe in hazing are compulsive about revealing certain aspects of hazing. They do this because they see hazing as a test of character and they perceive themselves as having passed that test. In reality, they are cowards. Bullies are cowards, and hazing is a semi-organized means of bullying.
- Once embedded in a chapter, the culture of hazing develops a set of descriptive terms, phrases and code words--a lexicon that is carried forward for generations.
- Hazers are not professional espionage agents. They are not especially skilled at thinking ahead in terms of, “Uh, oh. National(s) will be here and we’ve got to cover our tracks”. Therefore, one way to detect hazing is to listen and watch.
- The PAMs (Pledges/Associate Members) cannot be controlled so that they do not act as they normally would in the context of the hazing chapter. They will say and do things that cause the members to cringe and which will give the astute observer a number of indications that hazing is being practiced.

### Let’s look at 23 ways to detect hazing.

- 1) **Emphasis upon pledge class unity (PCU).** PCU and hazing share a symbiotic relationship. Each needs the other in order to survive and thrive. PCU provides a primary basis for hazing—that the pledges need to be “Unified”. In reality, this creates a series of horizontal cliques and classes in the chapter that compromises if not destroys sisterhood or brotherhood. It also allows the hazers to justify hazing. It also forces the PAMs away from the members and objectifies them. If you hear a member bragging about “Unity” in the pledge class, it almost always means that hazing is embedded in the chapter. **Suggestion: Ask, “Which is more important—pledge class unity or chapter unity?” and watch the hazers in the chapter squirm.** Some will be unable to contain themselves and they will respond that PCU is more important. That will confirm any suspicions that you may have—this is a hazing chapter.

- 2) **Window coverings.** This is an easy one. Newspaper, tin foil, sheets of plywood, blankets, newsprint or any other material placed over the windows on the first floor of a chapter house. This is a good indication that hell week is being conducted. Occasionally chapter members will also attempt to block out basement windows if one may peek through those into lower level. First line of defense: “Hey, c’mon! We’re doing ritual(s) (sic)” Nope. Not for 48 to 72 consecutive hours.

Also: **Any note, placard or notice** placed on or near the doors to the chapter house that restricts entrance to “Brothers only” or “Members only!” near the end of the semester. Sometimes a passage is added to explain that “Initiation is in progress”. In reality, hazing is in progress.

- 3) **Ask for a printed copy of the PAM program.** Hazing chapters will usually use one of two approaches to this nettling request. The program will either be one page in length or several pages and written in great detail. The one-page program will be devoid of details. Example: “Week One: Get to know the other pledges...read chapter one in the red book...learn Greek alphabet”. Week two will be remarkably similar to Week one, and so on. The intent is to portray an innocuous series of activities that appear to be free of hazing. These are usually compiled in haste after you ask for a copy.

The detailed program may present a challenge but only if you don’t read between the lines. On its face, it appears to be legitimate. Clever chapter members may incorporate concepts outlined in the national program into their program. As always, the devil is in the details. Check the days and dates listed in the program against the calendar—hazing chapter members often forget to change the dates each year. Using the program as a guide, ask the PAMs about a particular exercise or lesson in the program—“Hey, I see you learned about the founders last week—tell me about that!” The detailed program is used to discourage nosy national staff members and volunteers—it is intimidating in its length. Because of that, hazing chapters seldom keep it up to date nor do they (or can they) prepare the PAMs to lie about the program. Regardless, ask in detail about the period of time just prior to initiation.

- 4) **The “Take me through a week” question.** Ask the PAM educator this question: “Let’s pretend I’m joining your chapter this semester. Walk me from Sunday night (or the night when the PAMs meet) to the following Sunday afternoon, day by day, and describe what I will be doing” Many educators, even in hazing chapters, will blandly recite “The rest of the program” In turn, you are looking for the requirements, tasks and duties that are not written down. Example: You ask, “Okay, so it is Monday morning. Do I have anything to do that morning?” An educator may say, “Uh, yeah—you have to come over to the house to study unless you are in class” That is a strong indicator that the chapter is hazing. Control and domination of the pledges are key facets of hazing.

In turn, you must listen quietly—this is not a time to question, challenge or engage in debate. Take good notes and maintain a professional decorum.

Another good indication that hazing is present—ask the PAMs when initiation will be. If they don't know, ask them if they have been informed why they haven't been told. Hazing chapter members will almost always conceal the date of initiation as a means of intimidation and coercion. Example: "You guys are never gonna get activated (sic) or brotherized (sic) because you ain't proven yourself (sic) to us yet!"

- 5) **"Stuff" ...that must be carried.** Consistent with control and authority, requirements usually surface after the first week of the PAM program. "You gotta have these things with you at all times".

Examples of items to carry include:

Change—sometimes, the venerable, "Change for a quarter", as though there was a telephone that required dimes.

A cigarette lighter, usually in the dominant color of the organization.

For men: prophylactics. For women: sanitary pads.

Three quarters that display the year of birth of the chapter president, the big sister and the NM educator.

Pledge paddles—not too often these days but still can be found.

Cigarettes. Candy. Other snacks.

Of course, the PAMs must pay for these items. Occasionally an independent thinker among the New Members will ask, "Why wasn't this mentioned during recruitment?" or "Why do we have to pay for things that only members can use?" Good questions. In a hazing chapter, the members will quickly stifle debate with the ultimate hazing justification: "Hey, when you get to be a sister/brother you can make the pledges buy you things!"

- 6) **Things that must be possessed at all times.** Same as # 5 except that these items are usually visible. Examples: PAM pin or insignia, an interview book (see #9), the new member manual of the fraternity—this is usually a men's requirement. Note that the manual is often required to be carried in a particular way, such as, "At a 37 degree angle in the right hand". Hair ribbons, "Colors".

**Suggested question: “Show me a straight line correlation between expectations for PAMs and expectations for members. In other words, if the PAMs must wear their PAM pin 24/7, I want to see the members wearing their badges 24/7” And listen as the hazers mumble and stumble through their excuses and rationalizations. That question always brings out the finest in illogical and irrational arguments from the hazers.**

- 7) **Ask the question. “Does your chapter have hazing practices?”** Listen for the non-answers, such as: “Our college/university has a strict policy against hazing” or “Gee, our national has a zero tolerance policy against hazing”. Those answers confirm that hazing exists.

Members of a non-hazing chapter will usually answer the question in a straightforward manner. Members of a hazing chapter will attempt to dodge the question with a safe answer.

Also listen for the rhetorical non-answer, as in, “Why would our chapter want to involve itself in hazing?” Be patient but persistent. The first casualty of hazing is the truth.

Also, watch and listen for the emotional response. Most hazing members possess a low level of self-control. They will react with anger, defensiveness and incredulity when someone threatens their territory.

- 8) **Ask the question II:** You may strike hazing oil if you receive one or more of these answers: “It depends on what *some people* define as hazing”...”You may call it hazing but we call it showing that you want to belong”...”Let’s face it—everything is hazing”. Those answers and others reflect the culture in the chapter—that hazing is indeed acceptable.

- 9) **Signature books:** It doesn’t get any easier than this to detect hazing. “Sig books” or signature books are a means of tracking the progress of PAMs in interviewing members for their “Rundowns” or personal information. This is another root of the pledge class unity tree. The PAMs “Gotta get to know the brudders (or sisters)”. Therefore, lengthy interviews of each member by each PAM are necessary. And, the information must be recorded. No one in the history of Greek life has been able to explain why members who were initiated only a few months ago can’t recall the “Information” that was so terribly important to learn, but hey—that’s hazing. Never, ever expect logic or rational thought when we discuss hazing.

It is a given that at least 25% of the PAMs will not maintain the interview schedule—they will not obtain the required number of interviews each week. What is a hazing chapter to do with such recalcitrant and stubborn PAMs who refuse to follow directions? Haze ‘em!

Signature books are often but not always consistent in size and design and sometimes have the primary color of the organization as the color of the cover.

- 10) **Uniformity in dress:** Look at the PAMs. Look for consistencies in dress or accessories. Hair ribbons, a handkerchief, cheap jewelry, bandanas, scrunchies, socks, shoelaces, and plastic bracelets are a few examples.

Your author once watched a group of PAMs from a men's fraternity at a university in the Midwest enter a presentation on hazing while wearing identical blue blazers, white shirts, khaki trousers, rep ties, and tassel loafers. They filed into the room in single file, without conversing, eyes straight ahead. They waited until all of the PAMs had lined up in front of two rows of chairs. The PAM president then said, "Seats", and the PAMs sat down. That is not typical dress or behavior for first year students. Of course, hazing was going on in the program.

The chapter was found responsible for hazing and was placed on probation within a year by the university. Lesson here: never, ever underestimate the ego factor by members of a hazing chapter who want everyone on campus to know that they are dictating behavior to the PAMs. Think about it: why would you advertise the hazing through regimented behavior? But, they do.

- 11) **Uniformity in appearance:** Look for shaved heads. Tattoos are a larger step but surface occasionally. Knapsacks—some women's chapters require PAMs to carry all of their stuff in identical knapsacks, usually but not always in the primary color of the organization. Even if not of the same color, look for consistencies in the manner in which a knapsack is carried—over the right shoulder, for example.
- 12) **Ingress and egress:** If a chapter house or area is involved, watch the PAMs as they enter or exit. Standard hazing practice: require PAMs to use a back or side door, a certain stairwell, or not to walk on certain floors or areas. This is a means of making them feel inferior.
- 13) **Greetings and Interaction:** Another "Listen first" moment. As PAMs greet members on campus, listen. Is it a standard college student greeting or a painfully contrived and delivered greeting from a PAM to a sister or brother? How are PAMs greeted in the chapter house, area or lodge? This is a home game for the members of a hazing chapter—they will tend to be more candid in the friendly confines of their house or area.

If you are sitting with a group of members and a PAM approaches, what happens? If you are sitting with several PAMs and a member approaches, what happens? Awkward, uncomfortable silence? Glares? Is the PAM treated as an intruding child?

How do the members refer to the PAMs? Listen for "Yo, the pledges didn't show up last night" or "What is up with the pledges?". Those comments reflect a mentality that the pledges are a lesser form of life and should be treated as a group and not as

individuals. It is a rare hazing member who talks about the PAMs and uses first names.

The use of the collective noun is a means of objectifying the PAMs. Why is it that hazing members in a chapter rarely use the first names of the PAMs? Because that would send a signal to the PAMs that they are indeed people and future members. Hazing members do not want the PAMs to think that they will be initiated. Therefore, the theory goes, constantly remind them that they are second or third-class citizens.

While we're at it: listen for the canned or orchestrated answers from PAMs if you are asking questions about the program. If you are conducting an investigation of a chapter for hazing, you will probably tell the chapter president, "Don't meet with the PAMs and don't try to orchestrate their answers". In fact, the president or others in the chapter will do exactly that. It is human nature and it is also a standard hazing chapter response. You are the outsider—the intruder. The hazers will immediately attempt to block any investigation. Some of the non-hazing members and some of the PAMs will be drawn into the net, if only because they will be told, "If you tell the truth, national(s) (sic) will pull the charter!"

Suggestion: meet one on one with the PAMs. Understand that after your first interview, that PAM will be pelted with, "What did she/he ask you?!" Be prepared with different questions. Take careful notes. In a hazing chapter the PAMs will have been told what to say, which of course confirms that hazing practices are being used. The hazers would be smarter to let each PAM answer the questions as they choose, but they can't give up that control nor do they want the hazing practices to leak out.

Your author is not a large fan of the, "Let's meet with the entire PAM class to find out whazzup with the program" approach. The PAM educator in a hazing chapter will behave like a shepherd whose flock is being threatened by a wolf. He or she will hover and stare at any PAM who deigns to tell the truth. Woe unto the PAM who rats out the chapter, the PAM educator or the hazers. A second level of hazing will then occur, followed by threats and intimidation. You would think that the hazers would attempt to mitigate the damage by shutting up and leaving things alone...but they are incapable of doing so. Standard practices in men's hazing chapters include stalking PAMs or former PAMs, sending them threatening text messages, or attempting to catch them alone—often in a parking lot, for some reason.

Individual interviews protect the PAMs, and if answers are orchestrated (and they usually are), that will inure to your benefit. Our PAMs are people, and rarely do people provide the same information in the same fashion. Ask any police officer who has four witnesses to an intersection collision—the stories vary wildly.

**14) Who does the work? What are the standards for grades?** Check around.

Theoretically, PAMs should be doing no more and no less than members. This is a one size fits all situation. In theory. In reality, hazing chapters dump as much work

as possible onto the PAMs. This also includes Delta Delta (Designated Driver) duties as well as cleaning up.

Another sign: two standards for grades—one for PAMs and a lower standard for members.

15) **Hours.** As in, “You gotta be at the house/lodge/on the floor/in our area when you aren’t in class or have other obligations”. A sure-fire sign of hazing. Think in terms of control and authority. This is an example of “h” hazing leading to “H” hazing. And, do the members have this same requirement? Gosh all fishhooks, they don’t. If it is important for the PAMs, it should be equally important for the members.

16) **Collecting cell phones.** This one has those of us who follow hazing trends scratching our heads in bewilderment because it is such a plain view example of hazing. If you are going to commit a misdemeanor—a felony in some states—why would you advertise that by collecting the cell phones of members prior to, for example, “Pre-initiation”? Everyone—well, everyone who has studied the Millennial Generation—knows that Millennials call their parents, friends and others on a daily if not hourly basis. If you take away the phones from the PAMs, the people who normally communicate with them are going to begin calling other folks (read, “national(s) (sic)) to express their concern. A true “Doh!” moment for hazers.

This is done, of course, to make the PAMs “Focus” on pre-initiation. In reality, it causes those of us who care about the elimination of hazing to focus our efforts upon the hazing that is occurring in the chapter.

17) **Silent periods, can’t speak with men or women, can’t communicate in normal fashion.** These practices are usually found at or near the time of pre-initiation. The avowed purpose is to make the PAMs focus upon the significance of the forthcoming initiation, but what it really does is send the message that the members are attempting to employ more control & authority tactics. Another great way for hazing chapters to advertise that they are indeed hazing.

18) **Code words and phrases.** Look and listen for these to be sprinkled throughout the program and the process.

In a practice that is looped and coiled with ironies, most people who believe in hazing are also compulsive about revealing certain aspects of the hazing. Are you kidding me? Nope.

One would assume that one should never, ever reveal anything about practices that could result in a membership review, loss of the charter, criminal prosecution or civil litigation. But we assume far too much. In chapters with embedded hazing, it becomes important to members to reveal that the hazing is occurring without revealing too many details.

Example: Two members of a men's fraternity are talking about a PAM (whom they consider "Cocky") while standing at a social event with two women. One fraternity member may refer to the "White Volcano". The other member nods knowingly.

The women understand that something has been communicated but they do not understand the term or the context. The fraternity members are communicating about a practice that involves PAMs ingesting large amounts of milk until they vomit. This also communicates, in indirect fashion, that the hazing members are Very Bad Dudes. They want the women to admire them for their manhood. In reality, they are cowards. If they were Very Bad Dudes, they would at least reveal that they are talking about hazing and that they believe in it.

Look for words, terms or phrases that seem out of place in a program or that have no apparent relationship to other activities that are listed. Hazing chapter members who insert these terms into the written program don't usually sanitize the program before it is shared with someone else.

- ❖ Hazers like to use words, terms or phrases from movies that resonated with them as individuals. While the movies or quotes may be obscure, the hazers consider themselves to be very *avant-garde* by using these quotes or phrases. They also consider it a significant achievement to institute a quote or phrase associated with a hazing activity that will be used long after they have graduated. When they return for homecoming, the first question they will ask is, "Are you guys still doing \_\_\_\_?" and then say, "Dude, I invented that!"
- ❖ Hazers like to use words, phrases and terms from popular movies or from cult movies such as "Blazing Saddles" or "Bull Durham". Action movies such as "Band of Brothers" are also popular as hazers consistently strive to draw the illogical parallel between hazing and success in war or business.
- ❖ Check the chapter website—alumnae/i are often invited to particular events that involve hazing, and references may be made by careless hazing members to, "Remember this one?"
- ❖ Listen for quotes and phrases from movies or other sources that contain a comparatively high number of fights, deaths, gunfights or crash scenes or situations. Hazers like to use terms or phrases from military history, as in "Bombs over Tokyo", the "Ho Chi Minh Trail", or "Highway of Death".
- ❖ Some hazing terms and phrases bear absolutely no relationship to the actual activities. A hazing practice that surfaced in a men's national fraternity was known as, "The Fire Bench". It involved holding a sword at arm's length until the arms of the PAMs would give way. A member would stand nearby, rubbing another sword with a pad of steel wool...apparently to create an

additional level of tension. No one was ever able to explain the correlation between the words, “Fire”, “Bench” and a sword but undergraduates would repeat the term as though it was a magic phrase or mantra. Hazing? Absolutely, and it set the stage for more hazing.

- ❖ Also check the alumni/ae newsletter. Your author and several staff members discovered hazing in at least six chapters based upon comments in the alumni newsletter for those chapters. They...just...don't...think.

19) **The Fourth, Fifth or Sixth Section/Segment/Discipline.** Many organizations use an initiation that is separated into three sections. Hazing chapter members usually consider the national initiation a necessary evil—something that some old people cooked up to complicate the lives of undergraduates. As hazing chapters develop their own culture and values—and your author uses that term in the generic sense-- those will gradually supplant the national organization values and ethics. In an effort to standardize the local chapter experience, provide continuity and perpetuate the gang-like culture that hazing chapters develop, members of hazing chapters will often add a section or segment to the ritual.

This local initiation is extremely important to hazers. It separates the chapter from the national organization, as do the various hazing activities that precede it. Hazers may not be able to articulate why a local initiation is important but they will tell you that it is important.

In most cases, that section will be conducted before the national ritual. Ask about the “Fourth \_\_\_\_\_” in a nonchalant way.

20) **Uniformity in behavior.** Examples: a women’s chapter mandating that all PAMs must walk in pairs while on campus regardless of the circumstances. Watch for PAMs walking, running, skipping or acting in a way that is inconsistent with general practice.

You have to ponder the IQ of members of men’s chapters who will “Fun Run” the PAMs around campus, almost always late at night. They will be observed, of course. Usually, they have the PAMs yelling cadence. Their members then express anger, shock and disbelief that “Some dude” would flag them for hazing. My favorite excuse: “We were just exercising—healthy body, healthy mind, right?”

Watch the way that PAMs enter a room or a meeting. On many occasions, your author has watched groups of PAMs enter rooms or meetings in single file, eyes straight ahead, sometimes walking in step. These are military tactics and hazing chapter members are very fond of using military hazing tactics to “Teach” sisterhood or brotherhood. It is a slam dunk signal that hazing is occurring.

A women's fraternity at a Big Ten university was reportedly requiring the PAMs to sit on newspapers on the floor, *sans* clothing, while members used felt tip markers to identify areas on the bodies of the PAMs that "Needed work". That behavior will be manifested in other ways as well.

- 21) **Families.** When hazing becomes acceptable in a chapter, some members will adapt the hazing to a different level—the "Family" model. Having Grandmothers or Grandfathers in a loose, casual group in a hazing chapter is not enough. The family of bigs becomes a focus point and members then establish a culture within the family that is often manifested through hazing practices.

An example: a women's fraternity at DePauw University was sanctioned for hazing when several of the women who were joining the organization (and who were by default becoming members of a "family" in the chapter) were burned with cigarette butts after consuming alcohol.

Several members of the chapter attempted to blunt the criticism and responsibility by noting that the activities involved a family and not the chapter—i.e., "This wasn't our responsibility". Yes, it was.

Your author has seen some men's fraternity chapters that have adopted the "Five Families" (the Mafia families highlighted in "The Godfather" series of books), with the change that the families have more common names such as, "The Fish Family". Each family had its own traditions and ritualistic requirements. Hazing was a part of each "Initiation". Initiates of the Fish Family were required to drink beer from a large aquarium that also contained several small fish.

- 22) **Over-identification of PAMs with their PAM classes.** A good sign that hazing is occurring is the focus upon the PAM class as opposed to focus upon chapter unity. Your author has never been a fan of identifying PAM classes with Greek letters because that practice usually contributes to the hazing mentality.

A chapter of a men's national fraternity in New Jersey was closed in 1998 for hazing and other issues. When the email notice was sent to alumni, the executive director of the men's fraternity began receiving angry emails from alumnus members. The first message was sent within an hour of receipt of the original electronic message. The author identified himself by using two Greek letters and a particular year. The two Greek letters did not match up with the chapter designation. After further review, it was learned that the alumnus was using his New Member class letter designation and the year in which he joined and not the standard year of graduation. That was but another sad example of a chapter in which the hazing culture had replaced the ritual, the ideals and the values of the national fraternity.

If you are visiting a chapter: Listen to the PAMs talking about their PAM group or class.

While it is acceptable and indeed expected that those going through a common experience will or may be closer to others who are sharing that experience, our chapters are not composed of sub-groups of members. Our chapters are theoretically composed of one group of women or men—seniors through freshmen—who are bound together through their beliefs and values. Listen for the catchphrase “These are gonna be your best friends” (the PAMs). That is another sign that PCU is a priority. It is not damning in and of itself, but it is an indication. In reality, your best friends are from across the spectrum of members.

23) **Think conformity, control, authority.** That will help you diagnose what is going on with a PAM program. Remember that the tone for the program will usually be set within 48 hours after the PAMs join. Consider these factors as well:

- The hazers cannot control every aspect of the program.
- The hazers cannot control every hazer in the chapter. Each semester some hazers will go over the top with their behavior which will lead to issues.
- The hazers cannot control every PAM. The PAMs that they were bragging about at the completion of recruitment as “The very best on campus” will—some of them at least—continue to display that leadership, courage and common sense, and they will step forward to address hazing given the opportunity.
- The hazers cannot and will not think of everything that they must conceal in order to maintain the hazing in the chapter. They will commit a number of errors each semester. Then, they will panic and attempt to close the borders when confronted with facts.

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