

College Football's Scandalous Past & Present:
Hazing In the Modern Landscape

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Layperson Summary

The primary goal and objective of this thesis is to provide insight into the problematic culture of hazing within college sports, specifically within football programs nationwide. This thesis focuses on two cases primarily, while also using examples of cases that have taken place outside of each of these. The two cases studied here are the Northwestern University hazing scandal and the University of San Diego hazing scandal, both of which took place within the university's football program. By analyzing secondary cases, this will help create a better understanding as to why this may be a persisting problem amongst NCAA student-athletes.

With there being multiple hazing scandals in the world of college football alone, this thesis drew attention to the issue and raised the question: why is this still recurring and so prevalent within collegiate sports? This thesis's goal is to answer this question and to find out how and why this still remains to be an issue. In a time where college athletics has taken off, this is an issue holding back the product and shows that scandalous affairs still occur in the sport on a yearly basis.

The outcome of this thesis is an explanation of how and why hazing occurs using organizational communication theory and to discuss why it is an overall improper practice. By using concepts such as organizational identification and dissent, this thesis explores why hazing in college sports does not provide helpful or worthwhile outcomes for the building of team cohesion.

College Football's Scandalous Past & Present: Hazing In the Modern Landscape

In modern collegiate college football locker rooms, there are many issues that are present that were often not problematic in years past. In an era where some high profile NCAA athletes are now multi-millionaires, the dynamic has changed quite a bit. As of 2020, federal legislation has made it mandatory for the NCAA to require athletes to be able to profit off of their own name, image, and likeness (NIL). For example, Caleb Williams, the reigning Heisman winning quarterback at the University of Southern California, is currently worth \$2.7 million (On3). Although Williams has been able to experience great success en route to potentially winning another Heisman trophy, not everyone has been able to experience the same. In a recent article published by Will Backus from 24/7 Sports, it is reported that “some college athletes are not getting paid after NIL promises” (2022). Not only is this problematic for the player that is being deceived, but also to the sport in itself. This is an issue that will continue to play a factor in the decision making of athletes going forward.

With NIL being such a major factor in the modern college football landscape, seemingly everything has changed. However, there are other issues that have persisted and have continued to be problematic in the sport. At every level of college football, it is still common for hazing to exist within many programs throughout the country. Even though there is plenty of research and evidence to support the idea that hazing is not an ethical practice, why should individuals take notice of this issue outside of collegiate athletics? The answer to this comes behind the numbers of incidents over the course of an individual athlete's career. In a national survey conducted by the NCAA, it was found that 74 percent of student-athletes experienced some level of hazing at some point during their collegiate careers (Archibald, 2023). This is clearly an issue as there are

over 460,000 student-athletes associated with the NCAA, making for over 340,000 cases of hazing based on the findings of this survey. Not only is this having an effect on teams with high profile scandals, but also at the FCS (Division I-AA), Division II, and Division III level as well. Additionally, understanding hazing dynamics in college football may also shed light on how hazing relates to organizational identification, organizational dissent, and other outcomes.

One of the most recent (and most publicized) scandals in 2023 comes from Evanston, Illinois at Northwestern University. In November of 2022, an anonymous complaint was filed with concerns that hazing was an issue within the team's training camp in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Upon completion of the investigation by hired attorney Maggie Hickey, Head Coach Pat Fitzgerald was put on a two week suspension without pay (Masterson, 2023). Shortly after this, The Daily Northwestern, Northwestern's student-run newspaper, uncovered many of the specific details of the reported hazing which highlighted some of the monstrosities occurring within Northwestern's locker room. This would include rituals that "forced (freshmen) to strip naked and perform various acts, including bear crawling and slingshotting themselves across the floor with exercise bands" (Markus et. al., 2023). This is only one example of the many graphic and detailed hazing events that took place during Fitzgerald's tenure.

Outside of the realm of division one, 'power five' athletics, hazing continues to exist everywhere. Although this is now aforementioned, it should not be discounted how impactful this has been on programs outside of the FBS (Division I-A) level. A scandal involving the University of San Diego's football team has recently been uncovered for hazing within the program prior to the 2023 season. USD, an FCS (Division I-AA) program in the Pioneer Football League, was found to have "approximately half" of the football program face disciplinary action following the discovery of hazing within the program (Zeigler, 2023). This was following a

“preliminary investigation of hazing” that was then brought to local law enforcement, as well as an independent reviewer (Moody, 2023). It was then said that there were varying degrees of punishment and that some players were receiving an indefinite suspension prior to the season. However, it is believed that no players were physically harmed throughout these occurrences.

With each of these cases being independent of one another and leading to different results, it shows that hazing can take place in many forms and can cause harm in more ways than one. The issue behind each of these cases is likely related to a lack of discipline and control in collegiate locker rooms. For sports organizations, it is paramount that there is a controlled environment where teams can find cohesion without having to resort to acts of hazing. Although there may be a narrative that hazing can build cohesion, this is a flawed concept as there is much evidence that would suggest this is far from being universally true. In fact, it has been tested to show that there is a negative relationship between that of negative behaviors (embarrassment, ridicule, etc.) and team cohesion (Raalte al., 2007). It is not effective to haze in order to improve team cohesion or overall team performance.

The overarching goal of this thesis is to analyze two previously mentioned cases and identify the underlying social dynamics in each of them. It is important to look over each case and find ways that are similar and different. It will be key to explore the discrepancies of how, when, and why each of the scandals came to fruition in the first place. It is crucial to ask case-specific questions and relate them back to academic literature that can help explain how and why each case had such an effect on these student-athletes and locker room culture. By examining secondary data (i.e., news articles, university reports), this thesis analyzed each of the cases. By reviewing each case individually, I focused my analysis on issues related to organizational membership and how this may have affected internal hazing. Finding out how

these student-athletes came to further identify themselves as a part of the organization or become less identified with their organization is also recognized in this analysis. In this thesis, I give context to each case's key members and their association with each case and discuss how it pertains to the overwhelmingly noticeable issues within the programs. How Northwestern University and the University of San Diego handled each case differed but there are identifiable processes related to organizational dissent, membership, and identification that relate back to the many issues that each case withheld.

Literature Review

Hazing is defined as “any activity expected of someone joining a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers, regardless of the person's willingness to participate” (Allan & Madden, 2008). Although this is a simplified definition of what hazing is, we can learn a lot from this alone. It points to the fact that this is another form of bullying and consists of attacking one another in the form of an initiation process. There are many reasons that one may participate in these activities or rituals, including the basic desire to be part of the team's “inner circle” (Crow & Macintosh, 2009). This makes younger student-athletes, specifically freshmen and sophomores, very susceptible to hazing rituals since there is a need for inclusion with older and more experienced peers.

In the context of how this operates in sports, especially in football, there are often many larger and intimidating upperclassmen who tend to demand there to be some level of cooperation from those who are asked to participate in hazing rituals. Although the severity of this certainly ranges from light humor to harmful behavior, there are plenty of examples that can show and explain how this is an incorrect way of creating team cohesion. A former collegiate and professional football player has stated that many of the rituals done included small tasks such as

doing laundry for veteran players and singing at lunch time. Some of the more intense and grotesque assignments often made rookies and younger athletes participate in activities that demanded nudity while also performing physical tasks simultaneously (Bryshun, 1997).

Although this type of hazing is not strictly held to sports, there does seem to be some level of physical demand since the group revolves around athletic ability. This can be due to the fact that the sports that identify masculine characteristics of aggressiveness, toughness, and strengths have some of the greatest power in society and collect the overwhelming majority of media attention (Waldron, 2015). This provides reasoning as to why sports such as football can attract extreme cases of hazing, especially in its physical nature. When the expectation on the football field is that the most intense and ferocious players are often the best, there is a clear relationship to why the hazing techniques would transfer to this context. Many of the best players on any given collegiate football team are often the largest and usually hold some seniority in one way or another. Hazing is primarily a way to gain dominance over another individual and using one's physical presence is often a measure to accomplish this goal. With this being said, hazing does accomplish a number of goals for a group. It gives older members a way of establishing their seniority (Josefowitz & Gadon, 1989). This may also guide many of the younger and non-initiated members of the program to look up to their peers as equals (having participated in similar rituals or tasks). There are plenty of other outlying issues and factors that will force non-initiated members to comply with their more dominant counterparts amongst existing and more prominent issues. But there are ways to interpret hazing in a way that can become beneficial in a more long-term situation.

Another notable factor of college football's hazing culture can partially be attributed to how hazing is presented in popular culture. Movies and television shows that portray football

programs often implement the idea that hazing not only exists, but is very prevalent and embraced by the team's superior members. In the television show, *Blue Mountain State*, there are multiple episodes that show hazing rituals in TV appropriated graphic content (Miller, 2015). In fact, former Texas A&M star and NFL first-round pick Johnny Manziel recently endorsed the show and volunteered his involvement amidst rumors of its potential revival. "I wanna be in this in the worst way. Blue Mountain State 4eva..." said Manziel (Morrison, 2024). This shows us that this was not only something of a joke (even in a satirical program such as BMS) to current and former college football players, but it was glorifying and sensationalizing the act of hazing within college football. This suggests that pop culture depictions influenced and incited the already toxic cultures that exist in many locker rooms to this day. Since this is still such a notable issue within collegiate sports, it is important to understand how and why this consistently occurs and what can be done to prevent this going forward.

Toxic Masculinity and Hazing

The role of toxic masculinity in scandals can become increasingly evident when graphic details emerge from released reports. This term generally refers to situations and instances where males look to thrive in a testosterone-driven environment. Early on in life, boys are often taught to suppress any vulnerability and channel aggression and dominance instead (Yammine, 2021). This can lead us to understand why hazing may occur in the first place, especially amongst boys at a young age. This topic is something where hazing can be simplified into terms that this is the root of the issue in itself. Although hazing generally occurs within male sports teams, it is also present amongst women and their organizations as well. So this poses the question: how does this apply to hazing as a whole? One answer is that hazing exposes the dark side of masculinity and shows how some masculine traits can be quite dark and overall negative amongst team

cohesion. This can be best expressed through understanding how both men and women can express “masculine” traits and portray them in a way that is not beneficial to either party of the exchange. Hazing of men and women stem primarily from acts that are described as toxic masculinity (McGinley, 2018). In studies of sexual assertiveness amongst men and women, a number of women have tested to show masculine traits that can alter the way they operate under stereotypical situations when hazing takes place in a women's sport (Azmoode, et. al., 2016). This is an assertion of how women may also commit acts of hazing that are commonly noted to happen within mens programs as part of enacting toxic masculinity.

Examples of toxic masculinity within hazing practices can come out in multiple ways and in forms that may not always fit the traditional boundary of what hazing is believed to be. This can come in forms of neglect, abuse, physically forcible acts, as well as many other forms of abuse that are directed in an outwardly aggressive or passive aggressive situation. Boys in an all-male sport, especially in football, often feel pressured to prove their masculinity by excelling in the sport, and the sport remains masculine by neglecting those who do not perform their masculinity at a high level. Hazing of the newest members of the team will also assure the masculinity of the program. This form of hazing can come in ways that aim to destroy the masculinity of another individual to create seniority with the goal of making the receiver of this action feel inferior. Specific examples of this can be things such as spewing homosexual language, making fun of body image, and physical touching and bullying with the goal of emasculating the individual (McGinley, 2018). This challenges the common misconception that hazing is a “bonding practice” and that it is good for team building. When individuals are brought to a point where they are tested and humiliated through emasculation, this would fall within the category of toxic masculinity.

Another important point here is the value of understanding how this can impact athletes and what it can do to those who are forced to participate in hazing rituals. A toxic culture can have long term effects on an individual and their actions during and after this experience. Hegemonic masculinity manifested within the sport of football has resulted in a multitude of negative implications, both physically and socially. The most dangerous and infamous example of this is Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, which all players are at risk of developing (Gilliam, 2019). Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, also known as “CTE,” is a very prominent and impactful disease that has recently become more apparent in both news and social media. CTE is defined as a progressive degenerative disease affecting people who have suffered repeated concussions and traumatic brain injuries, that may occur in some athletes and others who have been exposed to concussions and repetitive head impacts (Indiana, 2024). Although this is primarily targeted towards performance and not associated with hazing rituals themselves, it is important to recognize the impact that toxic masculinity has on college athletes and the implications it holds within the sport of football. The nature of masculinity, violence, and overall pressure associated with collegiate athletes plays a massive role in how hazing is present especially amongst college football programs today. This is a sport where violent contact is both preached and praised and those who perform the hardest are highly sought after. Although it is no secret that American football is a sport that welcomes physical contact, it cannot be stressed enough how important it is to separate on and off field aggression towards others. Top (former and current, respectively) NFL stars such as Adrian Peterson, Tyreek Hill, and Ezekiel Elliott are often praised for their fearlessness and ability to absorb contact. However, each of these players have also been involved in off-field issues involving domestic violence amongst other physically and mentally harmful acts (Hulse, 2022). Although this is not directly an example of hazing, this

is to show how aggression is seemingly a part of many players' behavior even when they are not performing on the field. It is not appropriate to assume that all or even most players act out in this way, but this is to show that the violent nature of the sport is something that carries with many of the players and can be cited as a direct cause of hazing within NCAA programs. In a space where athletes are very susceptible to traumatic injury, the presence of hazing can have a severe and lasting impact on those who often deal with physical damage as well. In an environment where hegemonic and toxic masculinity are set to thrive, the presence of a culture of hazing can physically and mentally damage someone for years after this experience.

Hazing and Organizational Identification

An issue that frequently occurs when hazing arises amongst team members is the desire to be accepted and to feel a part of the team. This can be looked at as the idea that individual members are finding ways to identify with their organization (even if this is in a wrongful sense, such as hazing). Organizational identification is the desire to establish or maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship to another person or group (Edwards, 2005). This is alluding to the fact that someone who is looking to join or identify themselves with any organization will allow this to define who they are as an individual. Another explanation of organizational identification is by someone's willingness to understand and accept "shared values, the way we do things around here, or the rituals and stories we share when bringing someone new into the organization" (Marker, 2009). This is why organizational identification (OI) is a key piece in understanding how hazing affects student-athletes. OI can lead to different types of reactions from individuals and how they claim their organization. Members tend to produce identification with an organization when they draw on the values and norms of an organizational identity (Endacott & Leonardi, 2022).

Feeling a part of the team can come in the form of gaining the identity of the group by performing different hazing tasks. Attraction to group membership, cohesiveness, is a function of the balance between the costs and the benefits of membership (Kallen, 1960). The cost (hazing) can be something that is forced upon a member in order for their further acceptance in a group or on a team. In the cases of Northwestern and San Diego, these members likely felt as if it was necessary to perform tasks in order to become socially accepted amongst their peers. This would be an “added cost to the membership” to the team which, in turn, would likely not increase attraction to the group (Raalte al., 2007).

A common theme here is the idea that establishing identification to the group is the overwhelming reason for why hazing occurs in the first place. Referring back to the original definition of hazing by Allan & Madden (2008), this is an act where individuals are humiliated and degraded regardless of if they want to participate in the activity (Rosner & Crow, 2002). Although being hazed is usually not a desirable way to become integrated with a group or an organization, it does explain the willingness of individuals to participate based on the extent of their organizational identification. How one chooses to identify with their organization can often be attributed to how they were integrated and/or introduced into the organization itself. Those who identify are also more likely to want to go the extra mile on behalf of the organization (Edwards, 2005). This can give an understanding behind why potential members who desire a greater level of identification will look to push themselves during hazing rituals and duties.

Hazing and Organizational Dissent

However, the opposite can also occur where individuals may be drawn further away from the team (e.g. Northwestern whistleblower) and disagree with aspects of organizational practice. In cases where individuals observe practices which they see as negative, they may engage in

organizational dissent during or after their participation in these types of hazing events.

Organizational dissent occurs when members express disagreement or contradictory opinions about organization policies that exist, such as hazing rituals (Parks & Wenner, 2018). This can make individuals begin to develop negative opinions about the group or organization based on their perceptions of what they prioritize in how members identify themselves. Within the Northwestern football program, it is likely that team members experienced severe levels of hazing which lowered their identification with the team. This developed a sense of dissent that could not be altered in a short period of time. Creating the feeling of dissent can ultimately lead to whistleblowing and put team members in a state of duress (Kassing, 2011).

Another relevant concept to understanding the relationship between hazing and organizational identification and dissent is that of an anchor point. The experiences of those who spoke out in the Northwestern case seemingly had an altered ‘anchor point’ once they were heavily involved in extreme hazing rituals. An anchor point is when we receive persuasive information and locate it in our category of judgment (Creel, 2011). When players are constantly being harassed and bullied by their peers, this would place their perceptions of the program further away from their level of internal acceptance. This can give better reasoning as to why some players felt the need to speak out on this issue and why they may have engaged in organizational dissent in the first place.

Critical Questions

The literature cited above suggests several important areas to explore in regard to hazing in college athletics. For my honors thesis, I propose exploring the following critical questions related to hazing in collegiate football and organizational membership:

- What role does toxic masculinity play in a situation involving hazing within collegiate sports?
- Can incidents of hazing increase organizational identification in minor cases? At what point does identification decrease?
- How do each of these cases relate to the concept of organizational dissent and at what point do athletes reach the “breaking point” of dissent?
- What kind of implications can be drawn from Northwestern and USD’s on-field success in the season where excessive hazing was uncovered?

Methodological Approach to the Honors Thesis

This thesis is primarily based on the hazing scandals involving the football program at Northwestern University and the University of San Diego, respectively. By analyzing and comparing each of these two cases, this gives a broader understanding of how hazing is affecting programs from all around the country and at every level of collegiate football. Not only does this occur at lower levels of intercollegiate play, but it appears as if this is occurring in some of the top programs in the country.

Case 1: Hazing at Northwestern University

Although Northwestern is not a traditional “powerhouse program,” they are still in the BIG10 conference which currently houses two of the top five teams in the country according to the *Associated Press*. This case involved many individuals inside the program and it has been alleged that Pat Fitzgerald, the former head coach, was knowledgeable that hazing was happening under his watch (Masterson, 2023). As previously mentioned, this was a story originally released by The Daily Northwestern, Northwestern University's student run newspaper. This would break down individual player testimonies and release information

including this scandal through anonymous sources that were protected by the source. This would raise high concern and is still an ongoing issue with the university as Fitzgerald has filed a lawsuit worth \$130 million towards the university for wrongful termination.

In a now aforementioned subject to this thesis, the gross nature of what occurred within the Northwestern program is undoubtedly some of the most detailed, graphic and high-profiled cases of hazing seen within the last decade of college sports. The acts of hazing within this case seemed to occur not only over a span of time, but also in multiple locations. Northwestern's pre-season training camp occurs each year in Kenosha, Wisconsin where much of the reported hazing took place. The general nature of the hazing itself came in numerous forms of sexual, physical, mental, and emotional abuse where players began to fear being a part of the program at large for this reason (Masterson, 2023). In the original article posted by the Daily Northwestern, it was stated that, "upon entering the showers, the player alleged that players set up a hose they connected to the shower to spray people." It was claimed that this act was very painful for those who had to endure this level of hazing (Markus et. al., 2023). It was also stated that there were many acts of other forceful sexual harassment in the form of hazing with a punishment if the player fails to comply. "...He witnessed and was forced to participate in what he called a naked center-quarterback exchange, wherein a freshman quarterback was forced to take an under-center snap from a freshman center, while both players were naked. The player said that on one instance, another player was "very vocally adamant" about not wanting to participate in this exchange (Markus et. al., 2023). This level of hazing is clearly very far beyond the "let boys be boys" and shows the nature of toxic masculinity that can pose serious psychological trauma for athletes going forward. These two examples are some of the graphic descriptions of what players

within the program expected of older counterparts when hazing rituals were practiced, whether this be in Kenosha or Evanston.

Case 2: Hazing at the University of San Diego

The second case under review comes from the University of San Diego, a much smaller private institution located in Southern California. Although this did not garner as much national media attention, this was still a very serious incident that resulted in penalties towards a large group of players for hazing within the football program. Since this is an FCS program, naturally there is not going to be as much emphasis around a scandal released by the local news. However, this does not take away from the idea that what was being done was just as severe and created widespread turmoil for team members involved. This is still an ongoing issue for the program as this has continued to develop in the presence of the local media. This story is a prime example of how hazing can affect each level of college football and also exemplifies the widespread issue of having an entire team involved in a scandal.

Some examples of hazing that took place in this instance have come out in multiple reports involving whistleblowers from within the program. Former freshman quarterback AJ Perez filed a lawsuit claiming sexual hazing upon his departure from the university. Perez stated that hazing began only eight days upon his enrollment on August 1 which involved a forced participation in a “rookie show” where upper class football players allegedly drank booze and used drugs while about 30 rookies were coerced to perform graphic sexual acts and dance naked. If one of the participants were not to comply they would get hit with wooden spoons (Gottfredson, 2023). Since this has been released, a second former USD player has filed a lawsuit for similar claims of hazing. In an extensive article written in The San Diego Union-Tribune, there are detailed accounts of hazing that include examples of the same night

referenced by Perez. Kollen Murphy, a freshman receiver, made numerous statements that align with the idea that intense hazing practices were taking place within the program. This included quotes such as rookies being forced to “strip naked” and were then “shown pornographic videos.” Murphy also alleged that many of the coaches on the staff had participated in rituals similar to this as former players of the program, and also insisted that head coach Brandon Moore had knowledge that this was taking place (Zeigler, 2023).

During the 2023 season, Athletic Director Bill McGillis resigned amidst the first of two civil lawsuits filed against the university from former members of the football program. A former recipient of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics Cushman & Wakefield Athletics Director of the Year Award, McGillis would step down to “embark on exciting new opportunities that are ahead” (Murphy, 2023). It is merely speculation to say that McGillis had any active involvement in this scandal, but it is clear that his departure was influenced by the events taking place. This would prove that there was a level of an unorganized and untamed culture within the program to the point where an award-winning athletic director found himself in an unsalvageable situation. This makes this situation out to be severe and suggests there is an overall lack of stability amongst others at the institution and specifically those involved with the football program. Public reactions on social media sites expressed a similar sentiment regarding the belief that McGillis stepped down due to the problematic culture that existed within the USD program. Many considered McGillis a man who they did not feel would be open to allowing this to happen on San Diego’s campus. X (Twitter) user @csgwe70 posted the following statement: “Don’t believe Bill would knowingly let this happen.” X (Twitter) user @gurl_louisiana added to this conversation as well posting the following statement: “Bill McGillis is a standup man. I feel badly for him, not knowing anything more.

My daughter was at USD when Mr. McGillis landed there. It was always so great to see him, and also at baseball games with his family, to see Will. This had to be tough on USD Pres. Harris too.” Although the athletic director is likely detached from the situation entirely, it is a significant move that should be noted when piecing together the important parts of this story.

Data for Analysis: The primary point of reference for each of these scandals have primarily come from news articles, social media (X, Reddit, YouTube) data, and investigative reporting. The use of primary and secondary sources will be important when getting a full understanding of exactly what was happening within each of these programs. The original report from the Northwestern scandal was released by The Northwestern Daily which offered a look into the specific details surrounding this case. Using this primary source provided insight into exactly what was happening during Pat Fitzgerald’s tenure. Also, using official court documentation, keyword searching, and other media analysis to analyze the volume of media allowed me to see how widespread each case was in terms of local and national attention. Although using commenters' opinions on each case will not be a viable source of information on key players’ attitudes and perceptions, it will be valuable to see the overall interaction of media related to these scandals. Since this was a national story, this was also picked up by Sports Illustrated, The Athletic, ESPN, and other large media conglomerates. These sources will be a helpful tool in analyzing the facts and the opinions of the cases involved.

Specifically in the San Diego case, I consulted secondary sources since the story was picked up by most of the local news networks. The local ABC, CBS, and NBC all gave excellent coverage involving this case. The ongoing reporting that was involved also was able to identify players and received testimonies regarding their experience of hazing at the university.

Findings and Analysis

Toxic Masculinity

In the recent cases of both the Northwestern University and University of San Diego's football programs, there are strong indications that toxic masculinity played a key part in the acts of hazing within each respective program. Many of the gruesome and grotesque details that transpired from the Northwestern hazing scandal uncover real-world examples of what this level of toxic culture can do to a program. Not only is it harmful for individuals who fall victim to these acts, but it has overall negative consequences for the football program and the university as a whole. The acts of sexual harassment and mental abuse strained the outlook of the program to multiple underclassmen who were forced to experience these actions. Many of the acts took place behind closed doors where sexual and physical abuse would take place, mainly from upperclassmen to younger and less prominent players on the team. Players grouped up and would seemingly attack many of these individuals in ways that expressed untamed sexual urges onto other male counterparts (Masterson, 2023). The undertones of homoeroticism and homophobia is another key aspect of understanding what hazing practices often entail, especially within these cases. Homophobic acts such as having to "basically (rub) up against a bare-naked man" and "Upon entering the showers, the player alleged that players set up a hose they connected to the shower to spray people" are some of the many examples of homoerotic acts that were taking place at Northwestern (Markus et. al., 2023). These examples are questionable and lead to ask the question: why is homoeroticism so heavily involved in hazing practices? As mentioned earlier, this is an environment where most can assume that there are mostly heterosexual men who are a part of this program. It is certainly odd to see that these are some of the primary acts of hazing, and it can most definitely be considered as toxic in its nature. There is reason to believe that toxic masculinity was not only a driving force behind many of these acts,

but rather the quantifiable reasoning for why many of these came to fruition in the first place. Many of these acts are sustained by toxic masculinity by its way of “baking them in” to the process of how hazing is commonly defined.

Both of the cases of Northwestern and San Diego (and many reported hazing activities more broadly) are fixated on inappropriate male sexual behavior. Examples of this guaranteed that players would feel uncomfortable by forcing nudity, touching, and other sexual acts onto other teammates. The “horrific” stories that have come out all seem to focus on men forcing other men to act in a way that looks to emasculate them. As previously defined, hazing is an act that aims to humiliate and pressure another individual to conform regardless of their desire to participate in an act (Allan & Madden, 2008). What makes each of these toxic behaviors related to masculinity is the aggressor's eagerness to use sexual behavior to make younger athletes feel embarrassed and uncomfortable in a situation that could be presented in a much different fashion. Although this does not justify the act of hazing, it does give more purpose rather than simply looking to emasculate another individual. In a sport as physically aggressive and demanding as football, being a “real man” is perceived as important and something that is key to being a top level athlete. However, what exactly is a “real man?” Although there is no direct answer to this question, there are suggestions for what this may look like. One article raises the same question, “What is a real man? Is it defined by how big your salary is, how big your intellect is, how big your muscles are, how big other things are?...” (Blechner, 1998). This quote helps explain what some of the things are when thinking about what describes men and their overall masculinity. These opportunities to make younger players feel less of a man is to intimidate and assert dominance over another in a space where masculinity determines the success of the athlete. This, however, contradicts the idea of what hazing is ultimately supposed to achieve. In this case, it is

setting up younger and/or more vulnerable teammates to become more insecure about themselves and question their place within the program. In reality, hazing is mostly aimed to build team chemistry, cohesion, and build a bond that will make these players stronger “men” going forward.

Much of the fear of speaking up on an issue like this can revolve around the notion that it is not masculine to endure hazing rituals and it is weak to speak up. This can be in fear of being labeled a “snitch” and being cast a leper by the organization as a whole. As previously mentioned, it is important for team members to endure rituals that they may not want to partake in otherwise they are seen as an outsider and possibly even a “weak link.” Even though this is often considered nothing more than a bonding practice to some, it is an issue that can cause years of trauma and becomes increasingly more toxic when there is no option to opt out of being hazed. Since most people want to fit in and be a part of a team, many will give in and participate in these rituals solely due to the idea that they want to express their identification with the program at large. This could be in a way that is positive (liking the school, embracing culture) or negative (avoiding labels, acting out of fear). Players will go very far in order to avoid being singled out since this can alienate them from the group entirely. However, this may not always be the case: “Not all group members necessarily adhere to the group's norms (i.e., its explicit or implicit rules); in other words, they show norm-deviant behavior” (Sassenberg & Ditrach, 2017). In the case of A.J. Perez, the whistleblower at the University of San Diego, was comfortable with separating himself from the team and the university as well. Perez, in his filed lawsuit, was able to cite multiple graphic stories and provided imagery that gave the reader an idea as to what level of toxic masculinity was reached within the program. This gave a new perspective on just how toxic things had gotten and the lack of control at the top level of the program. Although most of

this has been cited in the “Case 2: Hazing at the University of San Diego” section of this thesis, there are still numerous more examples stated by Perez that help grant an understanding of the severity of the hazing practices being done. Perez states that he “was desperately trying to avoid (these) attacks, he heard his underwear tear and felt several people grabbing him. He then tried to cover his genitals with a towel, which again was ripped off by other individuals. When the show was completed, plaintiff immediately went to his locker, put on his shorts and shirt and left the locker room feeling violated, and shamed” (Perez, III v San Diego, 2023). This is directly from the lawsuit filed by Perez against the University of San Diego citing the multiple incidents that were traumatic during his time on the team. Incidents like this were not only examples of what happened to Perez, but also for multiple other teammates who were affected by similar occurrences.

What made this so toxic was the level of sexual assault and mistreatment involving groups of (assumed to be) heterosexual men. The reported victims derived no satisfaction or pleasure stemming from this practice and would prove to be hurtful to multiple freshmen who were forced to participate in this. There was a mixed level of pressure in these practices due to the notion that this had been done in the past with former players, now coaches, and that it had been done to the players orchestrating the ritual itself (Zeigler, 2023). In USD’s case, there was an accusation that coaches and staff were well aware of the hazing rituals as they were once a part of them themselves.

In contrast with this case, Northwestern University players only made the claim that there was some level of knowledge in the head coaches’ office, but there had been no active participation by staff members in the past (Masterson, 2023). Although it can only be speculated, one can assume that there was a certain level of pressure for each whistleblower in their efforts to

call out these acts and make their voices heard. In a program such as Northwestern, the national media is constantly covering the program as they are a member of the FBS (Football Bowl Series) and more specifically the Big Ten Conference. As previously noted, USD is a much smaller, private institution that does not generally make national headlines for their athletic programs. The amount of attention, funding, and overall viewership of a program such as Northwestern makes it very difficult to have a public whistleblower as this can attract national scrutiny. This level of pressure can also be explained through the lens of toxic masculinity and the implications it can have on speaking up in these situations. Although it can easily be deemed that these were ethical decisions made by each of the whistleblowers, it still does not discount the fact that this is hard to do for a multitude of reasons. Separating oneself from the “in group” is a difficult thing, especially for young men who are seeking acceptance. In some cases whistleblowing appears heroic whereas in other cases it appears reprehensible, and in these cases it is often the latter (Dungan, et. al, 2015).

Organizational Identification and Whistleblowing

As touched on in the previous section, whistleblowing is an occurrence that is not uncommon in situations where hazing arises, but it is often unpopular and/or scrutinized by other team members. Whistleblowing can be hard since people often define themselves, at least in part, by the social groups to which they belong (Endacott & Leonardi, 2022). However, when a team member allows themselves to become detached based on their own ideologies of what is right and wrong, it can make for a much easier process of deciding to speak up on a situation. The outlying differences between how the Northwestern and USD hazing scandals had much to do with whistleblowing anonymously as compared to denouncing the program publicly. Detaching oneself from the program, as AJ Perez did, made for a seemingly much smoother exit and

method of being able to speak up on the matter. The initial whistleblower in the Northwestern case was originally anonymous and did not make his name be known during the process of investigating head coach Pat Fitzgerald. This could be to protect his own reputation, remain in good standing with former teammates, or simply remove their identity from the situation as a whole. This alleged whistleblower in the Northwestern hazing scandal was former quarterback Carl Richardson, a backup on the team who saw very limited action during his two year stint at the university. An accusation was made against him by Eduardo Soto, a manager on the team, who alleges that this was made-up by Richardson in an effort to get Fitzgerald fired (Bando, 2023). True or not, it is clear that this whistleblower desired to remain anonymous during the process for one reason or another.

This raises a question: How does identification affect how whistleblowing is done – does it make a difference? In the case of AJ Perez, he was a student for less than a month at the university and had primarily negative experiences during his short tenure. In comparison to the whistleblower at NW, he was almost still an outsider in his own right compared to someone who had been a part of the program for months or even years. For someone who did not identify with the program any longer, it seemed that they were much more open to sharing their stories and experiences on the matter. As previously mentioned, organizational identification is the desire to establish or maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship to another person or group (Edwards, 2005). The case presented here shows that Perez never sought to identify himself with this program and was able to disassociate himself after reaching a breaking point in this process. An internal whistleblower seems to be rare as this could be problematic for the whistleblower and the team as whole. A large factor in this is the variability in cultural norms that emphasize or de-emphasize loyalty affects the likelihood of whistleblowing. For example, individuals from

many Asian cultures, including Japan, China, and Taiwan, view whistleblowing less favorably than individuals from America. This cultural difference often relates to a culture's degree of collectivism, or the degree to which individuals perceive interdependence with their group (Dungan, et. al., 2015). In the cases of both AJ Perez and Kollen Murphy, there was an obvious sense of independence from their organization since they felt that their personal values did not uphold what was happening within the program. As someone that was not entirely assimilated into the program, Perez was much more immediate in reporting and speaking up on the events that took place.

Months after the initial whistleblower in the Northwestern scandal, there was another wave of whistleblowers who had been removed from the program for years who came forward. Nearly 50 former Northwestern football players filed lawsuits for their experiences of facing physical and mental harm during their time with the program. This included examples of abuse and racism with many of the players who had been a part of the program during Fitzgerald's tenure as a coach at the university. There had been a phenomenal amount of outcry after the initial release of abuse within the program that cited many more toxic and troublesome incidents beyond acts of hazing (Kaufman, 2023). The identification of these players is difficult to know since their concerns were not immediately reported, but there was a near two-decade delay in the reporting. This could be due to these players being alumni of the program and the school itself. In the case of the (alleged) NW whistleblowers at each of the programs, there was very minimal identification with the university as each player had transferred far before their graduation from the respective universities. It seemed that many of the players identified that this was ultimately the "way things were down around here" which was key to understanding the overall identification of the organization (Marker, 2009). When fairness increases in value,

whistleblowing is more likely whereas when loyalty increases in value, whistleblowing is less likely (Dungan, et. al., 2015).

Organizational Culture

The culture of a program is often what defines the actions off the field and performance on the field. Although this does not always necessarily imply a negative relationship between the two, it does explain how culture can impact a team and their effectiveness as a program that is expected to perform at a high level. One approach to better understand how culture was related to hazing among each of the two programs can come by looking at their on-field performance. To begin the year, the University of San Diego's program suffered an embarrassing loss to Colorado Mesa, a NCAA Division II program from Grand Junction, CO. This loss came in overtime with the game resulting in a final score of 28-21 (Arnold, 2023). Not only was this the first loss of the season for the Torero's, but it was one of the only losses to a Division II program in conference history. Granted, there was a numerous amount of suspensions, primarily with older members, that had faced suspension ranging from one game to an indefinite suspension (Zeigler, 2023). This is still not much of an excuse for a program that participates in the Division I-AA level. Also, this can provide an outlook on the state of the program and exactly how this scandal had impacted the program as a whole. The organizational culture of the team and how they reacted to the scandal was a clear testament to the problematic nature of the program at the time. This idea of culture can be seen as something that defines a program and can ultimately create a stigma for a team's identity. Culture as a whole has become firmly anchored in important aspects of organization and management, and this showed within San Diego's football program.

Looking at the impact of organizational culture in the Northwestern University case, there is much more history of a unified organizational culture compared to its counterpart. This was a

case that went back much further in time as Head Coach Pat Fitzgerald had been with the program for 20 years. Although there are accusations that some staff members were former participants in hazing rituals in the USD case, this case seemed to have much more serious implications of having a leader knowingly allowing hazing within his program (Masterson, 2023). As previously mentioned, there are now over 50 pending lawsuits against Pat Fitzgerald and Northwestern University for its role in the harassment of players over the last two decades. The culture created at this university can likely be attributed to much of what had gone on for the previous twenty years. Although it could be assumed that the events of hazing created this toxic culture, it is likely the opposite as a poor culture allowed for the hazing to take place.

Moving forward, Northwestern not only had a weak start to their season in 2023, but there were also many seasons in the 2000's where the team did not reach bowl eligibility (Sports Reference, n.d.). It would be improper to blame the downfall of this program on hazing alone, but it is not impractical to believe that there was some impact on the program when these practices seemingly intensified. Having only won four games between 2021 and 2022, it seems as if this program was on the downturn after having successful seasons in 2015, 2017, and 2018 (Sports Reference, n.d.). Culturally, it seems as if there was a downswing of what is expected at Northwestern as the production on the field became very poor. Even though Northwestern is not necessarily considered a "powerhouse program," it is still a school that plays in the Big Ten Conference – arguably the second best in the country. With average to mediocre conference play for nearly two decades, one can assume that the culture within the program that lends itself to success at a level of Big Ten standards. One player noted that "It's just a really abrasive and barbaric culture that has permeated throughout that program for years on end now" (Masterson, 2023). This is clearly not a new issue to the Northwestern program as Fitzgerald has cultivated a

culture that allowed this to continue to occur. Having players such as former quarterback Lloyd Yates, a member of the Wildcats from 2015 to 2017, speak on this matter gives greater insight into what was happening even during short stints of success: “Upon arrival to campus, we were thrown into a culture where physical, emotional, and sexual abuse was normalized. No teammate I knew liked hazing. We were all victims, no matter what our role was at the time, but the culture was so strong that we felt we had to go with it to survive, to be respected, and to earn the trust within the football program” (Odigwe & Tye, 2023). This gives light into the situation at Northwestern during this period where there were years of success following. However, this quickly diminished and would go to show that there was no pattern of winning nor had it become appropriated to end hazing within the program. In 2023, Northwestern began the season losing three of their first five games, with wins only against the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and the University of Minnesota, both of which finished their seasons with more losses than wins (Sports Reference, n.d.). This rough start could potentially be attributed to the whirlwind of drama in the offseason as well as a team that had not recovered from the trauma and backlash it had faced leading up to its first game.

After the duration of non-conference play and entering into the latter weeks of the season, both programs seem to have a difference in attitude, culture, and overall demeanor in their on and off-field image. Once practices of hazing were uncovered and condemned at both universities, there was a near instant uptick in how each team performed against their conference opponents. Both San Diego and Northwestern would show great signs of improvement into the latter parts of the season. Although USD would ultimately end the year with a negative record, there were still many positive signs of on field success, winning three of their last four games (San Diego Athletics, 2023). Northwestern, however, would go on to win eight total games under

the direction of interim head coach David Braun. A change in culture, as well as a change in personnel, would prove to be very beneficial to the program as an underdog Northwestern team was brought from the bottom of the Big Ten West to a successful bowl-winning program in 2023. The organizational culture of the program in years prior would prove to be chaotic and sporadic in ways that negatively impacted the long-term success of Northwestern's football program. Since there was never any sustained success, a broad assumption can be made that the direction and the overall leadership of the program was mediocre and seemingly unreliable.

In the case of San Diego, the new leadership proved to have a limited impact on the lasting legacy of hazing within the program as alleged by the accusers, A.J. Perez and Kollen Murphy (Zeigler, 2023). The culture that was present at this university's program proved to be very different from what was acceptable for both Perez and Murphy. Perez, being a highly touted quarterback in the state of California, likely did not seek to assimilate into the hazing culture of the program at USD for multiple reasons. Having said this, USD did seem to have an overall change in culture in terms of their on-field production later in the year. As previously mentioned, there was a turnaround after a season that seemed doomed from its inception, losing to a Division II program prior to conference play. With having numerous successful seasons years prior to the arrival of new head coach Brandon Moore, the Toreros seemingly had a track record of on-field success leading up to these incidents.

This raises a separate question and concern for the practice of hazing going forward: How damaging is the effect of hazing on a program that has an established pattern of success? Certain examples of this can be seen in programs such as the University of Florida, Penn State University, the University of Miami. Each university has undergone a certain amount of scrutiny for hazing, bullying, violence and other problematic issues within a locker room culture (Baker,

2024, Beauge, 2020, Tressel, 2011). Some of these examples go as far as providing similar details to that of the USD or Northwestern case, however there was little evidence of any on or off field issues revolving around these players or staff members (Beauge, 2024). By looking further, it seems as if hazing may be able to persist in programs with previous prestige or programs that can already attract large amounts of money, recruits, and other external resources that outweigh the negative consequences of a problematic culture. However, the outlying difference in these cases seem to come from the culture of interpersonal relations within the program rather than personnel itself. To add to this point, the University of Georgia and the University of Alabama have each had issues with player character, especially upon their departure from each of their respective programs (Kasabian, 2023). But the difference is that each player has had a coach of high character, an established program demanding on and off field excellence, and an expectation that hazing is not present within a locker room (Casagrande, 2016).

Also, at the professional level, examples of hazing and creating a chronically toxic culture can be cited in the case of Richie Incognito during his time with the Miami Dolphins. Incognito was cited as being a “racist” and a “bully” who would often terrorize teammates and demand participation in unwanted rituals inside and outside of the facility (Chappel, 2013). Incognito would leave the Dolphins shortly after these reported incidents, however his career would last nearly an entire decade after these reports, raising concern for hazing also being an issue at the professional level. It was cited that “the broader issue is hazing in the NFL” and that “Hazing goes on in the NFL much more so than it does in a lot of other institutions” (Chappel, 2013). In another connection to hazing in this reported incident, it is important to note that

according to *Sports Reference*, the Dolphins never finished with a winning record every year Incognito was a member of the team.

With all of this being said, it still cannot be understated the shock that occurred to the USD program prior and during the 2023 season. Having had one of its worst starts to a season in years, the football program took a major blow with suspensions to key players and the impact of holding a major investigation prior to the season's start (Zeigler, 2023). Although the end of the season was a much improved ending to the year, it was still an overall collapse to a season that had much promise under a first-year head coach. It is certainly notable that the team was able to win multiple games at the end of their conference play schedule, but it was still an underwhelming year due in large part to the scandal(s) it had faced prior to the start of the 2023 season.

In the case of Northwestern and San Diego, it is important to recognize that each team had a gradual uptick in performance on and off the field. With more accountability from coaches and staff, each program was able to work its way back into contention of being a competitive football program. In a counterargument to this, even though hazing is an impractical measure of team bonding, there are outliers to this and that can be a solution for a team's success (Raalte al., 2007). This does not mean that hazing is correlated to success by any means, but instead offers the idea that a hazing-free environment likely ensures more success. In order to find the best way to combat this, methods of redefining and retooling hazing practices should reevaluate bonding and utilize less embarrassing practices to offer a positive “hazing” outcome. Finding alternatives to hazing that focus on similar practices (Non-alcoholic parties, Freshman talent shows, etc.) could be beneficial for team bonding and cohesion, as stated in the study above. Culturally speaking, hazing is a negative for programs and does much more harm than good for achieving

the goal of becoming a winning program in the NCAA. Finding a solution to removing hazing and implementing team building programs is key to protecting the livelihood and security for the many collegiate athletes who experience hazing on a yearly basis (Archibald, 2023).

Formal Organizational Structure and Policy

With clear issues in both the USD and Northwestern programs prior to the 2023 season, it raises the question: what policies were in place prior to these occurrences? Each school had its own policies against hazing in place, condemning the act and offering reprimanding acts if this was not upheld (Diego, 2014, Affairs, 2021). Even though this is primarily aimed towards hazing practices commonly used within Greek life organizations on campus, it also is applicable to clubs, organizations, and athletic teams on campus as well.

Specifically within the parameters of San Diego's policy, it was noted that "The University of San Diego has a zero-tolerance policy in regards to hazing. Hazing, in any form, is not congruent with our calling to treat each person with dignity and respect" (Diego, 2014). This directly denounces the acts committed by members of the football program and acts as the foundation for the suspensions for numerous team members prior to the 2023 season. With hazing being considered a "zero tolerance policy," the USD football staff was able to reference this guide in determining the severity of the consequences allocated to members of the football team. Although this resource guide was clearly not directed towards athletic programs specifically, it does allude to the brutal nature of hazing and the implications it can have on the health and safety of an individual. Along with this document, there are also guidelines of strict no hazing policies posted to the university's website. This states that "students may not engage in any hazing activities whether on or off campus and whether planned or spontaneous" (Policies, 2024). This is another clear example of the condemnation of hazing at the university where this

was unacceptable behavior. It adds a list of acts (many of which were committed by those within the football program) that would be deemed as hazing within the structure of its definition.

At Northwestern University, there were also policies set in place that looked to deter students from acting in this manner. Although there was never any direct mentions of hazing policies within the football program (or any athletics organizations), there were plenty of ways that policy denounced the alleged acts that occurred within the program at the university. There are guidelines in place that define, give examples of, and condemn the acts of hazing on the university's website. Within the Student Affairs section of Northwestern's website, it says that hazing is any action taken or situation created, intentionally or unintentionally, whether on or off University premises and whether presented as optional or required, to produce: mental, physical, or emotional discomfort; servitude; degradation; embarrassment; harassment; or ridicule for the purpose of initiation into, affiliation with, or admission to, or as a condition for continued membership in a group, team, or other organization, regardless of an individual's willingness to participate (Northwestern Policy, 2021). Although this does castigate the nature of the acts that allegedly occurred, there is no mention of hazing prevention within athletic programs specifically. However, there is a separate section of hazing prevention primarily focused for fraternity and sorority hazing. In this section, there are plenty of examples of hazing and the issues that this presents within IFC guidelines in state law that point towards the issues that generally persist within these organizations. Some of the language used in this includes a similar definition of hazing in the general guidelines, as well as a mention of the Illinois state law that gives way for criminal procedures to be taken if a student is found guilty of facilitating any of the listed acts (Hazing: Fraternity & Sorority Life, n.d.). Although this is important to have in place, especially with the persisting issues of hazing within fraternities and sororities across the United

States, there does seem to be an overall lack of discussion of athletic hazing prevention measures. This is especially an issue at an institution that has an evident issue of hazing over a prolonged period of time.

Implications

One contribution of this thesis is that its findings can help us understand a topic that is not covered by the media as painstakingly as it should be. Hazing is often problematic for a program and can be exposed to the media in a national spotlight (Northwestern) or primarily stay at the local level (USD). However, incidents that surround hazing scandals generally seem to be uncovered and are covered on an incident to incident basis. The greater problem comes from the fact that incidents occur but tend to quickly lose coverage, making advocacy more difficult. This is problematic because it creates an environment where hazing can continue to keep happening within programs without major changes taking place. This should not be entirely surprising, though, as many states do not have strict hazing laws in place that prohibit this behavior (Rosner & Crow, 2002). When these events occur and are made known in the media, it should be noted that this is no longer an individual incident, but a rather large-scale issue that has persisted over time.

Another valuable contribution from this thesis is the notion that coaches should cultivate an environment where players are able to speak up against hazing practices. By being able to foster a space where hazing is unacceptable, this can help players feel much more comfortable with the team and its overall commonalities. Although each organization may have different rituals or certain undertakings to join a program, it is important to differentiate this from traditional hazing. Student-athletes should not feel the pressure to succumb to hazing whilst in a program that is designed to play in a cohesive team sport. When these student-athletes are asked

to give in to acts of hazing, this can explain why there may be feelings of dissent involved with the program itself. Dissent is often created when individuals are faced with illegal and unethical practices; this can help explain the idea that hazing falls under this phenomenon (Graham, 1983). When impractical forms of cohesion (such as hazing) are presented, this creates an issue where the member may feel dissent towards the organization as a whole.

Practically speaking, hazing can occur anywhere and in any organizational setting. In the large system of collegiate sports this has shown to be a particular issue at each level. It is paramount that coaches understand that this is happening and that it needs to be addressed within their locker room. Not only does this present issues for the players that are involving themselves with hazing rituals, but also for the coaches and the leaders on staff. The prime example of this falls within the Northwestern football program where Pat Fitzgerald was ultimately fired after allegations that he was well-aware that hazing was being performed within the program (Masterson, 2023). If these acts are not fully condemned by the head of the program, there could be an increase of incidents that occur (based on this case). A head coach should be motivated to ensure these acts are not tolerated and that players should be able to speak up if this is an issue. Not only does this make for less team cohesion, but can ultimately impact the play on the field (Raalte al., 2007). A push to stop hazing in collegiate football should not only be an important topic during this pivotal time, but a primary issue that should be addressed at the forefront of the NCAA and their investigative team.

At both Northwestern and USD it will be key to addressing hazing and the prevention of hazing within its athletic programs going forward. On Northwestern University's official website, the last update on hazing policy is shown to have been added in 2021, nearly three years ago now (Northwestern Policy, 2021). As mentioned earlier, this does take the proper measures of not

condoning hazing at the university, but this does fail to mention any acts of hazing that take place within athletic programs and how this may differ from hazing that generally occurs within Greek Life organizations on campus. This is also the case at the University of San Diego where there is very limited information regarding hazing and there is essentially nothing that denounces acts of hazing within athletic programs. USD, also having alleged issues of prolonged hazing within the football program, does not offer any material about hazing within athletics on university or athletic websites. There are certainly issues with hazing within the NCAA, as previously mentioned, and not having any prevention measures in place for this specific act is damaging to the programs that have had this as a persisting issue for years on end (Archibald, 2023).

The hazing that took place at each institution should teach universities to take extra measures of hazing prevention and find ways to make sure that this does not take place going forward. Even though implementing online policy enforcement is a way to make it known that this is an improper and illegal act, this is not an adequate measure to make sure that this does not take place within university organizations. A better way to prevent hazing from occurring within athletic programs would be to adopt programs that actively engage with athletes and provide insight as to why this may be an issue for on and off field production. Rarely do we hear about hazing prevention and intervention programs aside from news stories about fraternities being disbanded for hazing. Programs for hazing and for bullying, however, need to be more proactive than reactive (Kowalski, et al., 2021). Proactive measures could come in the form of student-led hazing prevention programs, team meetings, and team held events that actively encourage teammates to support one another when hazing may arise. Coaches, both head and assistant, should be actively inquiring about hazing with their players and making sure that preventative measures are in place. By having these in place, it allows for a much more free flowing

conversation of what should and what should not be taking place within the program. Reactive measures have proved to be eventually beneficial, but it has limited positive impact during the process of uncovering scandals such as these.

Since athletic programs can often be its own entity away from the university itself (separate classes, preferential treatment, specialized tutoring, alternate scheduling), it can be difficult to connect athletes to policies directed to the university's students. Oftentimes, athletes see their experience of being a college student as being more difficult than someone who associates with non-athletic organizations or no organization at all. Athletes perceived group membership to pose greater difficulties to academic performance and involvements outside the group than did members of other types of extracurricular groups (Aries, et. al., 2004). This could be for a multitude of reasons, but it does give insight into how athletes may not see university policies specifically applying to them as students at the university. One particular reason could come in the form of the label of the individual as a student-athlete rather than simply being a student. This simple label can be the difference between someone considering themselves a "normal" student and someone who deserves different and preferential treatment at their respective university. This also could be because student-athletes (on scholarship) are recruited to the university and have their tuition paid for, amongst other things. As mentioned in the introduction, NIL (Name, Image, and Likeness) is also another factor that has become a massive implication of college athletes and their rise to financial success while still being considered an amateur athlete. These factors suggest that universities should consider having a way to present hazing and its wrongness to athletes differently than students involved in other organizations at the university. In a time where being a student-athlete can mean national stardom and a plethora of wealth, it is key to communicate with these students as people who see themselves as

different and apply different measures when looking to solve a massive issue within the NCAA. Although the NCAA does have mentions of hazing and its condemnation on its website (NCAA.org), it does lack overall outcry about the situation and is very limited in speaking about this as an issue across the thousands of programs throughout the country. By creating more awareness, the NCAA could do its part in eliminating hazing at the organizational level. When doing a broad Google search on “Hazing Prevention NCAA” there is nothing more than a website stating that “Athletics administrators, coaches and student-athletes need to work together to develop anti-hazing policies which promote healthy team activities and avoid practices that humiliate members. All student-athletes and members of the department must be educated on the policy annually” (Addressing student-athlete hazing, 2024). This is the NCAA’s primary policy in place at the moment and there are very few online or in-person advocacy measures that address this on a nationwide scale. From an advocacy standpoint, the NCAA must do a better job of finding ways to prevent hazing at the organizational level. Also, programs must be better at preventing this from occurring and this comes from positive leadership and adopting new measures that make for a more supportive environment for athletes .

Directions for Future Research

Looking forward, it will be important to attempt to address some of the unanswered questions of this thesis. One of the key pieces of future research will come in the form of attempting to explore the motivations of the hazing practices themselves. The aforementioned practices of homoerotic hazing acts are contentious and controversial in their own regard, but it is crucial to have a grasp on why this occurs in the first place. It is not necessarily questioned as to why these may occur, mainly due to the fact that the acts are publicly deemed as heinous and inexcusable. However, these acts persist in locker rooms. Future research should attempt to find

how people are taught to accept their own contradictions in this process and find the reasoning behind the actions taken place. Why do acts of hazing include this degree of sexualization and what motivates heterosexual men to continue behaving this way? This is a question that could be better answered by further research and analysis, primarily by taking a scientific approach for a more conclusive answer.

As also mentioned earlier, the effects of on-field performance and hazing have been linked to inhibiting the development of athletic performance. In fact, it was pointed out that hazing lessened the degree of cohesion and would ultimately become a costly hindrance of the program's development in itself (Raalte al., 2007). Further research could help develop a better understanding of which acts have the most costly effect on performance and why this may continue to take place even after the outcomes have shown to be mostly negative. To add to this point, it would be beneficial to find the motivating factor behind hazing and its continuance even if it has shown to decrease team morale and cohesion as a whole. Not only is hazing something that is an outlying negative for team bonding practices, but it blocks teams from developing a sustainable culture of success. Finding as to why a team would continue to work against itself and adopt impractical measures of cohesion is a question that could be answered with further evaluations of examples in context and meaningful literature.

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Appendix A: List of Analyzed Documents tNorthwestern

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<https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2018/may/22/just-not-blonde-how-the-diversity-push-is-failing-australian-fashion>
2. The Daily Northwestern. Former NU football player details hazing allegations after coach suspensions
<https://dailynorthwestern.com/2023/07/08/sports/former-nu-football-player-details-hazing-allegations-after-coach-suspension/>
3. X (Twitter) post, RedditCFB
<https://x.com/RedditCFB/status/1724875201622561068?s=20>
4. X (Twitter) post, Bjk1441
<https://x.com/Bjk1441/status/1725549704102994409?s=20>
5. X (Twitter) post, Fox News Sports
<https://x.com/FoxNewsSports/status/1726253998737678498?s=20>

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6. Half of USD's football team disciplined following hazing incident, president says
<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sports/toreros/story/2023-08-29/university-of-san-diego-usd-toreros-football-hazing-incident-suspensions-cal-poly-slo-opener-james-harris-letter>

7. University of San Diego football players being investigated after hazing allegation

<https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/university-of-san-diego-football-players-being-investigated-after-hazing-allegation/3292139/>

8. Freshman quarterback accuses USD football program of hazing and sexual assault

<https://www.kpbs.org/news/local/2023/10/27/freshman-quarterback-accuses-usd-football-program-of-hazing-and-sexual-assault>

9. X (Twitter) post, Reddit CFB

<https://x.com/RedditCFB/status/1700654033193906371?s=20>

10. X (Twitter) post, NotGuilty01

<https://x.com/NotGuilty01/status/1717633280936419572?s=20>