

Active Bystanders Can Prevent Hazing

By Travis T. Apgar



Bystander intervention training is being utilized increasingly in America and Canada, most commonly applied to sexual assault prevention, other violence prevention, or preventing alcohol and/or other drug poisoning. There are other appropriate applications, hazing prevention is among them.

Over the past several years I have had the privilege to travel to various campuses across America to share my anti-hazing program with students, staff, faculty and coaches. During those travels I have intentionally engaged students in conversations about their experiences with hazing in order to better understand the information and other elements they need to assist them in their prevention efforts.

There have been two consistent themes emerging from those conversations. First, students fail to identify activities which they have experienced as an expectation of membership of a group or team, which meet the definition of hazing, as such. This is consistent with the findings presented in *Hazing In View: College Students at Risk* (Allan & Madden, 2008). The second theme, is even when students recognize an activity as hazing, or generally problematic, they don't know what to do about it, and therefore did not take action. They often shared feelings of helplessness, not knowing how to intervene, or where to turn for help. Others described feeling paralyzed by the fear of being ostracized.

The conversations with students made clear to me that they want to be part of the solution, and will take action if they are provided information which enables them to recognize hazing for what it is, develop intervention skills, and finally, know what resources are available should they need to enlist help from a third-party (e.g., student affairs staff, campus police, athletics staff).

At Cornell University, Bystander Intervention training has been added as a part of the campus strategy to address hazing. This training has been a successful addition to the annual education and awareness

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programming, social norming and marketing campaign, and the confidential online reporting mechanism (www.hazing.cornell.edu), rounding out the campus' social ecological approach. In the past two years, since bystander intervention training was introduced, Cornell has seen a significant increase in reports of hazing, and more importantly, a change in the category of people who are reporting. In the past, most reports came from people outside of the team or organization being reported. Since implementing bystander intervention training, there has been significant growth in the number of reporters who are members of the organization being reported.

While there are plenty of models to consider, a well-developed bystander intervention training model should include information which allow bystanders notice the incident; recognize it as problematic; take on responsibility; know how they can help; or, know the resources they can utilize for third-party intervention. If bystanders,

students in particular, are empowered, they will intervene, and the most successful intervention for a student controlled social dilemma is student intervention.

Reference List

E.J. Allan, M. Madden. (2008). Hazing in view: College students at risk. Initial findings from the national study of student hazing. http://www.stophazing.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/hazing_in_view_web1.pdf

<http://hazing.cornell.edu/>

<http://www.mencanstoprape.org/Theories-that-Shape-Our-Work/bystander-intervention.html>

<http://www.raproject.org/>

<http://stepupprogram.org/students/strategies-for-effective-helping/>

<http://www.stophazing.org/>

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<http://missionmade.com/hazing-prevention>

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