

## Book Review by Bridget Guernsey Riordan, Emory University

Lipkin, S. (2006). *Preventing hazing: How parents, teachers, and coaches can stop the violence, harassment, and humiliation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 192 pages. ISBN: 978-0-7879-8178-5 (\$14.95)



The term “hazing” connotes a variety of meanings to different people. To most higher education administrators it is unconscionable and a practice that should be eradicated. To most parents or community members it is difficult to comprehend something practiced by unruly college students. To the perpetrators and victims it is often a “rite of passage” that accompanies becoming a new member of a team or organization. Regardless of the meaning, hazing is well documented in today’s high schools and colleges and every student is at risk.

In *Preventing Hazing: How Parents, Teachers, and Coaches Can Stop the Violence, Harassment, and Humiliation*, Dr. Susan Lipkin seeks to demystify hazing and provide guidance to the people who advise and influence the possible victims and perpetrators. She provides insights into the dynamics involved in hazing, including the history, the pressures for students to be accepted, as well as the psychology behind the different roles played by participants in the hazing. What makes Lipkin different from other authors of books regarding hazing is that she looks at the topic through the scope of an anthropologist and a child psychologist. As someone who has counseled adolescents, she understands the sensitive psyche of the young people most typically involved with hazing practices.

Through his books, *Broken Pledges: The Deadly Rite of Hazing* and *Wrongs of Passage: Fraternities, Sororities, Hazing, and Binge Drinking*,

Hank Nuwer reports his extensive research into college hazing practices and highlights particular cases. Nuwer provides factual information in a strong journalistic style. His extensive research and documentation serve as major resources for higher education administrators. More recent books including *Goat* and *Pledged* document the experiences of college students hazed during the pledge process. These are told as first-person narratives. Although different than Nuwer's books, these books are valuable as college and university professionals seek to understand the facts behind the practices and hear about hazing from the student viewpoints.

Lipkin's approach is scientific and was compiled through surveys, interviews, and the study of a variety of cases. She claims her book is "the first book to offer methods and techniques to help parents, teachers, and coaches prevent hazing" (p. 7). Nuwer and others have offered strategies in their books, too. However, Lipkin appears to be the first whose techniques are "rooted in child development theory, educational best practices, and years of psychological and educational research" (p. 7). In addition, Lipkin includes cases of high school hazing and discusses how hazing mentalities often begin in early adolescence. The discussion of this can assist college and university professionals in understanding the mentality of the students who may eventually become involved in hazing and are coming to their institutions.

The first chapter of the book, "Understanding Hazing," offers a research-based definition of hazing and explains how hazing is usually tradition-based and intended to build loyalty and trust. Lipkin also identifies the groups of people who are not only involved in the hazing, but also are affected by it. Those include perpetrators, victims, bystanders, supervisors, administrators, and community members. She also discusses why hazing occurs, which includes the strong need for belonging and connection.

In Chapter 2, "Preventing Hazing," Lipkin offers advice on how to keep hazing from becoming a reality. That advice includes creating a trusting relationship with children, student leaders, and potential victims. Lipkin also recommends communicating and educating children, and one another, about hazing, as well as encouraging adolescents to question authority figures when they propose activities that go against their morals or values.

Determining if hazing may occur is discussed in Chapter 3, "Detecting the Warning Signs." Lipkin identifies behaviors and actions that may lead to hazing practices. She also reports on how to approach a hazing participant and how critical it is to work with the participant within the first 36 hours after the report. Her specific questions can serve as guidelines for student affairs professionals who investigate these often complicated cases.

In "Helping a Victim of Hazing" (Chapter 4), Lipkin offers questions for families, educators, and fraternity and sorority leaders to consider regarding "breaking the code of silence." She also outlines steps to take in reporting the hazing and keeping records and documentation about the activities. She offers advice on whether a lawyer should be consulted and how to deal with the media.

From a psychologist's perspective, Lipkin writes Chapter 5, "Understanding Perpetrators." She answers perplexing questions such as "How can someone be so cruel?" (p. 110) and helps advisors deal with the complex issues faced by those responsible for the hazing.

Chapter 6, "Empowering Bystanders," explains how a "bystander" (p. 120) can evolve from an innocent onlooker to a victim and then to a perpetrator. Lipkin explains how using early intervention can prevent this evolution and the continuation of further hazing.

In the last chapter, "Healing the Community," Lipkin describes the "second hazing" (p. 137), which is what occurs in the aftermath of the original hazing report. Oftentimes the victim is wrongfully treated as someone who contributed to the problem and may be shunned by the community. She suggests interventions for working through these subsequent issues. Lipkin offers hope in this chapter, citing examples of students and parents who have made a difference by coming forward to expose hazing. She also offers goals for the future in helping community members prevent hazing. In addition, Lipkin explains that as a social scientist studying with Margaret Mead, she believes Mead's words apply to our attempts to stop hazing, "Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has" (p. 146).

*Preventing Hazing* is a resource and a reference book that college and university professionals should include in their libraries. Lipkin provides numerous strategies, action steps, and advice on how to prevent hazing through communication, education, and intervention. Also, in dealing with the aftermath of hazing, Lipkin's book can serve as a crucial tool in the investigative process. *Preventing Hazing* is a book that will help us understand and handle the complexities of hazing and how it affects the entire community. It is a must-read for all of us as teachers within higher education and within our communities.

## References

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