

# **“EVER AFTER STRICTLY AND RIGIDLY OBEYED— WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS”: ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSES TO HAZING IN THE 1870s**

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*This article explores college hazing as a part of student culture in the 1870s using historical documents from Cornell University and the University of Michigan. These sources illustrate the conflict between students and the institutional administration over student autonomy and the role of faculty in student life, and characterize hazing as an event to test new students' loyalties to their peers over the faculty. However, as the student body grew larger, and diversified in terms of gender and ethnicity, hazing shifted to smaller exclusive organizations, rather than a demonstration of class solidarity and rebellion against faculty. This article explores the administrative responses at Cornell and Michigan in the late 19th century by documenting reaction to a student hazing death at Cornell in 1873, and detailing an 1874 hazing incident at Michigan, after which 87 men were suspended from the institution following a confrontation involving the freshman and sophomore classes. Connections are drawn to administrative responses to hazing in the early 21st century.*

In the years immediately following the Civil War, American higher education experienced a surge in enrollment, the founding of many new institutions, and an influx of philanthropic support (Leslie, 1992; Thelin, 2004). Along with this institutional growth, students expanded their activities from generally two literary societies to a multitude of clubs, organizations, and teams (Finnegan & Alleman, 2009; Sheldon, 1901). Students eagerly sought to create their own world, parallel to, yet outside of the established structure of their institutions (Geiger, 2000; Horowitz, 1987; Leslie, 1992). This new generation of students created dynamic communities on campus, characterized by diverse activities, collegiate athletics, and elaborate, sometimes deadly, rites of passage.

This article chronicles the practice of hazing at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in the late 19th century and the university administration's response to this type of student behavior. Hazing during this time period was associated more with class rivalries (e.g., sophomores hazing freshmen) than individual organi-

zations, such as fraternities or sororities. President James B. Angell's correspondence with colleagues, students, and parents are the primary data used in analyzing how he and other University of Michigan officials dealt with hazing on campus. Angell's personal correspondence on this subject with officials of other institutions of higher education, including Cornell, Dartmouth, Swarthmore, and Michigan State Normal School (now Eastern Michigan University), and their replies add regional and national perspectives to this analysis.

The perspective of university administrator is often tangential to accounts of student life and escapades. In *The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities*, Syrett (2009) offers a comprehensive history of the American college fraternity, focused squarely on the student experience. Other more general treatments of college life in the 19th century also focus primarily on the student point of view (e.g., Horowitz, 1987; Leslie, 1992; Turk, 2004).

The aim of this article is to explore the practice of hazing in late 19th century student

culture and investigate responses to this type of student behavior by faculty, parents, fellow students, and especially administrators. This article uncovers a story that sheds light on the conceptualization of hazing, administrative leadership, and institutional responsibility in 1870s academe. This historical account may be of particular interest to administrators and educators working with fraternity and sorority communities, given the genuine interest in eradicating hazing in fraternal organizations. Studying hazing practices and administrative responses is essential to understanding the culture and rites of passage of students in the late 19th century, and will provide a perspective on the historical roots of this phenomenon in the university setting for 21st century students, faculty, parents, and administrators struggling with harmful and even fatal hazing incidents on American campuses.

#### EARLY CAMPUS LIFE AND CULTURE

From the origins of American colleges in the 17th century, students rebelled against authority and sought to make their own rules of behavior and social norms (Jackson, 2000). In the early years, protests erupted over undesirable dining hall food, strict social policies, and what students considered outdated curricula (Bethell, Hunt, & Shelton, 2004). During this era, class rivalries became a common element of campus culture at schools throughout the young nation. Class divisions were institutionalized in the colonial era through "Freshman Laws" that created a social system where the sophomores instructed the freshmen in the ways of the college, and the new students were expected to run errands for the upper classmen (Sheldon, 1901). Though the official Freshman Laws were abolished by colleges near the close of the 18th century, the class system endured. Sheldon (1901) described the devolution of the system into physical mistreatment, noting the "degeneration of the tutoring and instructing of freshmen into rough horseplay, and finally into

the hazing and rushing of the modern period [late 19th century]. The Freshman Laws contained in germ all the abuse to which first-year men have since been subjected" (p. 87).

College men highly valued mutuality, creating bonds that united them against the faculty and administration of an institution. This opposition between the faculty and students was a mainstay in college life into the 20th century, and defined the relationship between perceived student leaders and the administration until the 1930s when more encouraging student affairs professionals were widely introduced at American colleges and universities (American Council on Education, 1937).

Following the American Civil War, the types of institutions that comprised higher education in the United States diversified. The Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 paved the way for land-grant institutions as public institutions specializing in agricultural and mechanical studies (Thelin, 2004). One of the most significant changes in higher education in the late 19th century was the development of the research university. Several institutions began to add graduate and professional degrees and engaged in more original research, modeling themselves somewhat on the German universities where so many American scholars pursued doctoral studies. Fourteen U.S. institutions came together in 1900 to found the Association of American Universities (AAU), marking the emergence of the modern university.

As the types of educational institutions differentiated and grew increasingly complex in the 19th century, so did the variety of student organizations and activities (Finnegan & Alleman, 2009). According to Frederick Rudolph (1962/1990), early student activities followed a predictable cycle. In the first stage, an activity would begin informally, sometimes even spontaneously. Faculty members were often aware of these activities, and ignored, if not encouraged them. If an undesirable activity took hold among the students, administrators were generally quick to try and either eradicate or legislate

against the behavior. Attempts to control these activities usually failed, and the activity would take on a clandestine form among students, occurring at night or beyond campus limits. Eventually, the institution would attempt to formalize the ritual nature of the event (Jackson, 2000).

With the increase in the number of students on campuses came an increased competitive spirit and system of initiation into college life. This competition manifested itself in the birth and institutionalization of intercollegiate athletics, beginning with the first crew races between Harvard and Yale in August 1852 (Veneziano, 2002). College men competed for social status on the playing field and in the academic yard in organized athletics as well as ritualized violence in various rites of initiation into campus life (Horowitz, 1987; Sheldon, 1901; Townsend, 1996). These rites included hazing, a term that was just as prevalent in conversation among students and administrators on campus in 1870 as it is today.

### HAZING CONCEPTUALIZED

In our current 21st century American culture, hazing is defined broadly as:

An activity that a high-status member orders other members to engage in or suggests that they engage in that in some way humbles a newcomer who lacks the power to resist, because he or she wants to gain admission to a group. Hazing can be noncriminal, but it is nearly always against the rules of an institution, team, or Greek group. It can be criminal, which means that a state statute has been violated. This usually occurs when a pledging-related activity results in gross physical injury or death. (Nuwer, 1999, p. xxv)

However, the practice is not limited to modern or American contexts. Records show that hazing occurred in the learning institutions of

Berytus, Carthage, and Athens during ancient times. The Byzantine emperor Justinian I attempted to outlaw hazing among law students by issuing a decree forbidding the practice. European institutions in the Middle Ages also battled hazing, which was linked closely to alcohol abuse (Nuwer, 1999).

The first documented American student implicated in hazing was Joseph Webb, a member of the class of 1684 at Harvard College. Webb was expelled for physically abusing new students and requiring them to commit acts of personal servitude. After two months, Webb apologized and returned to the institution with the permission of administrators and eventually graduated with his class (Nuwer, 1999). Evidently, Harvard did not consider this a severe issue since Webb was allowed to return so quickly.

Nearly 200 years later, students at the University of Michigan engaged in highly organized hazing behavior that was quite visible on campus and to the general public. Athletic competitions or challenges between classes or departments were common rivalries that sometimes devolved into hazing events (Jackson, 2000; Sheldon, 1901). Each incoming freshman class was expected to prove itself as worthy of their place at the institution. To earn their place among their peers, the college freshmen were forced to endure the physical and psychological pain of initiation through various types of hazing. A common form of hazing was called a "rush." This was generally a rowdy and violent challenge that would quickly devolve into a no-holds-barred fist fight between the classes (Horowitz, 1987).

These "rushes," or competitions, sometimes took place between departments on campus as well, and the details were often reported in the local papers, much as intercollegiate sporting events are followed today. A letter to the editor appearing in the November 12, 1872 edition of *The Detroit Post* provided the highlights of a "rush" between the literature class (the "Lits") and the medical students (the "Medics"):

Throughout the day the best of feeling prevailed, as was shown by one Medic, who dismantled a Lit with one fell sweep and then kindly gave him some of his own garments to cover his nakedness. We trust that in the future the same good feeling which has characterized the past may continue, and that the two departments may ever be on the very best terms with each other. (Adelphos, 1872)

"Pumping" was another popular form of hazing at Michigan, where a group of sophomores forcibly held the freshmen down at a water pump and "pumped" water over their heads. A Michigan student's letter to the editor of *The Detroit Post* described the practice in benign terms:

When a man is pumped he is not wetted all over, but a little water is simply pumped on the back of his head, wetting him about as much as he would himself for the purpose of combing his hair. It does not hurt anybody. The writer has been pumped himself, and has seen others pumped and can vouch for the truth of the statement. ("Hazing: Collection of Letters," 1873)

The anonymous writer did not indicate what the purpose of this seemingly innocuous form of hazing might be in his defense of it. Yet another form of hazing in the mid- to late-19th century was "smoking out," in which a group of older students would rotate in and out of a new student's room and smoke tobacco furiously until the room filled with smoke, making it difficult to breathe, all with the intention of making the freshmen sick (Syrett, 2009).

Hazing was a rite of passage that students perceived to be a harmless, yet socially important ritual. They assumed that newcomers needed to be initiated into their institution. Not to participate, or worse yet to report hazing to the college or local authorities, would have been branded traitor-

ous by fellow students. To maintain a high social status on campus and the respect of his peers, a student had to be allegiant to his classmates above the faculty. To break this code was to risk ostracism from the student community and being classified as a "grind," "fisherman," or "brownnose" (Horowitz, 1987, p. 13). One mother wrote to President Angell describing the sociological side of hazing, saying:

When the Freshmen entered last fall they were ignorant of the tricks, but were soon initiated by the Sophomores, in the way of pumping and other christening ceremonies, and were obliged to play their part or be dubbed with coward or tattler, which boy men [sic] will not submit to with grace. (J. S. Smith, 1874, p. 2)

Administrators were keenly aware of the hazing on campus, and openly condemned the behavior. In a letter dated May 5, 1874, President Angell called hazing "an abuse which has brought great discredit on the University" (Angell, 1874). *The Chicago Tribune* echoed this sentiment in an 1874 editorial on the "rowdyish and outrageous practice of hazing":

Of the character of this practice there is no doubt. It is an ungentlemanly, low-bred, cowardly, and sometimes brutal sport, indulged in usually at the expense of the weaker class and those who are too timorous to resent the insolent outrage. ... It is the criminal offense of assault and battery in nine cases out of ten. It very often results in temporary injury. It has sometimes proved fatal. In its very lightest form it is an outrage which has not the excuse of mischievous fun which characterizes other college practices. ("Michigan University Hazing," 1874)

Under attack, the Michigan students defended their behavior and offered a window on

the meaning late-19th century men made from their hazing. In a letter from the junior and senior classes at the University of Michigan dated May 7, 1874, hazing was explained and defended by the upperclassmen:

We understand that away from the University there is prevalent a very strong feeling against what is termed "hazing." But we are of the opinion that such sentiment is generated through an ignorance of the real nature of the custom. As practiced in the University of Michigan, hazing is simply an athletic contest between the Sophomore and Freshman classes, and, like other athletic sports, is participated in with the best of mutual good feeling. *Only hazers are hazed* [original emphasis]. A principle of hazing here is that those who refrain from it are not molested. We deem it unjust to associate hazing here with traditions of English and Eastern dormitory-colleges, and with customs which are understood to have prevailed at the U.S. naval and military academies. (Maxwell et al., 1874)

Obviously, hazing was a controversial and publicly debated topic in the late 19th century at the University of Michigan, in no small part due to the 1874 incident at the heart of this article. Before delving into the details of the event, a context for campus culture at Michigan and the administrative connections between the institution and Cornell University, another prominent institution plagued by hazing at this time, is provided.

#### **STUDENT LIFE AT MICHIGAN: DIVERSITY AND STRUCTURE**

Life at the University of Michigan, or Michigan University as it was commonly referred to at the time, was rapidly changing in the late 19th century. The student body quickly diversified in

terms of gender and ethnicity, making Michigan look more like a modern university than an all-male religious seminary. In 1868, Gabriel Franklin Hargo became the first known African-American man to be admitted to the university, joining the law department (Bartlett & Koehler, 1997). Madelon Stockwell was the first woman admitted to the institution in 1870. By 1871, student enrollment at Michigan topped 1,100, making it one of the largest student populations in the United States. In 1876, Mary Henrietta Graham was the first African-American woman known to be admitted to the university (Bordin, 1999).

Recruited from his position as president of the University of Vermont, James Burrill Angell became the third president of the University of Michigan in 1871 after more than a year of negotiation with the Board of Regents. His annual salary was established at \$4,500 (approximately \$83,000 in 2012 dollars) and his final demand before accepting the position was that a water closet be installed in the president's home, the first indoor plumbing in Ann Arbor. Angell would serve as president for 38 years, the longest term of any University of Michigan president (Peckham, 1994). Leading the university through a time of tumultuous change, Angell established its position as one of the foremost research universities in the United States.

Student culture flourished on Michigan's campus due to an expanding and diversified student body, the members of which were able to create their own co-curricular experiences outside the reach of faculty and administrators. The University Football Association, Michigan's first football team, was organized in 1873 and played its first official intercollegiate game six years later. Sororities first entered campus life in 1879 with the establishment of Kappa Alpha Theta. Male students mocked them as imitators of the fraternity system, which had been in place on campus since the 1845 founding of a Beta Theta Pi chapter (Peckham, 1994).

Organized athletics gave students an outlet for physical activity that previously had been

directed toward rushing, pumping, and other physical types of hazing. Rudolph (1990) noted that the emergence of football and other inter-collegiate athletics was responsible for diminishing the incidence of rebellions and rioting, in addition to hazing.

The 1870s also marked a rapid diversification and professionalization of the curriculum, with several new colleges and schools being founded at the university, including the Homeopathic Medical College (1875), the School of Mines (1875), the College of Dental Surgery (1875), and the School of Pharmacy (1876). It was in 1880 that a music instructorship was added to the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. As the turn of the century approached, the School of Nursing opened its doors in 1891, and the Department of Engineering followed shortly after in 1895 (Bartlett & Koehler, 1997). This diversification and expansion of Michigan's academic offerings created more divisions and rivalries within the student body, promulgating more groups that could engage in competitions and hazing-style events (e.g., the rush between the Lits and the Medics described earlier).

#### MICHIGAN AND CORNELL: SISTER UNIVERSITIES

During this era, the curriculum at Michigan and several other institutions began to shift from the English-style liberal arts focus to the German-influenced emphasis on research and independent study. Combined with the growing appeal of secularism in the United States, several institutions, including Michigan, rose to the top of the higher education hierarchy to become the first research universities in the United States (Thelin, 2004). Characterized by professional schools, graduate programs, and the awarding of Ph.D. degrees, this new breed of institutions was the antithesis of the strong push for liberal education outlined in the Yale Report of 1828. A young professor at Michigan, Andrew White, was enamored with this idea of a secular university with the ability to pursue truth in a number

of highly specialized fields ("White," 2001).

White left Michigan in 1863 to pursue this ideal as the first president of Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Though he and Angell never worked at the University of Michigan at the same time, the two were colleagues and friends, exchanging ideas and practices through lengthy correspondence and occasional visits. White was the featured speaker at the dedication of the new University Hall at Michigan on November 5, 1873. Angell introduced White in a friendly and collegial manner, as described in an uncredited newspaper article:

After a quartette, which was sung with spirit and energetically encored, President Angell introduced the next speaker in the manner following: During my recent visit to the East, the distinguished President of Cornell University remarked that he was so much indebted for his ideas and methods to Michigan University that he felt like calling the institution over which he presided the daughter of this; to which I could only reply by reciting the first lines of the ode, "*O mater pulchra, O filia pulchrior.*"

And, now, those mothers who, to avoid unpleasant inferences to their own age or looks, would fain pass off their grown up daughters as their sisters, will sympathize with me, I am sure, in the sentiment, when I introduce to you Andrew D. White, President of *our sister* University [emphases original]. ("Dedication," 1873)

The strong relationship between Presidents Angell and White, and their respective universities, would grow stronger over the years. Angell and White were friends, colleagues, and professional allies united in their vision and pursuit of the American research university. Both Michigan and Cornell would be among the founding members of the AAU in 1900

(Thelin, 2004). Over the course of their careers, Angell and White would share ideas on curricular reform, the elective system, and managing the increasingly volatile hazing situations on their campuses.

As American colleges and universities continued to diversify in mission, curriculum, student demographics and activities, hazing took hold as a method for students to bond, compete, and prove themselves among an ever-growing number of peers. As student organizations flourished and student populations became larger and co-educational, hazing spread from class or department rivalries to student organizations, athletic teams, and fraternities. A tradition of proving one's place at an institution also became a method for establishing even closer bonds within smaller organizations; this was certainly true at both Michigan and Cornell.

One of the first documented cases of a death from hazing happened at Cornell University in 1873. Mortimer Leggett, son of General Mortimer Dormer Leggett, the U.S. Commissioner of Patents, was fatally injured when he fell off a cliff during a ceremony to induct him into the Kappa Alpha Society (Nuwer, 1990, 1999; Syrett, 2009). This fraternal organization was founded in 1825 at Union College, and still exists today (with an active chapter at Cornell as of 2012). A local newspaper reported that:

[Leggett] and two fellow students had fallen down a steep ravine; Leggett was killed, his companions were seriously injured. It is now stated that the unfortunate youth was being "initiated," and while being led blindfolded through devious paths, up and down dangerous precipices, he and his initiators fell some 40 feet, with the fatal consequence to which we have referred. Relief was prompt, but poor Leggett's skull was fractured and his neck partially dislocated. ... In an hour or two he died. Of his companions, one had his hip broken and the other sus-

tained internal injuries. ("Fatal Ceremony," ca. 1873)

The newspaper was particularly critical of the Cornell administration, stating:

This terrible accident will arouse popular indignation to such a pitch that the practice and system of hazing, initiation, and other college orgies of that character will have to be forever abolished. If the college authorities cannot protect the lives and limbs of students, the law can and will. ("Fatal Ceremony," ca. 1873)

President White was well aware of this incident and became wary of the practice and its potential to ruin not only lives but also institutional reputation. Students at Michigan were keenly aware of the fatal hazing incident at Cornell as well. However, this knowledge did not dissuade students from participating in rushing, pumping, and other hazing activities at their own university. Several students, including at least one who would be suspended from Michigan for hazing in May 1874, had a copy of an article describing the Cornell Kappa Alpha Society death clipped from a newspaper and pasted into his scrapbook (Choate, ca. 1873).

#### THE 1874 MICHIGAN HAZING INCIDENT

On April 18, 1874, a hazing incident escalated into a fight between members of the sophomore (class of 1876) and freshman (class of 1877) classes at the University of Michigan. It was a Saturday evening, and representatives of the freshman class met in the freshman debating room on the Ann Arbor campus to discuss retaliation for a year's worth of hazing by the sophomores. A recent incident of "smoking out" had left several freshmen sick and eager for revenge against their intimidators. The freshmen decided to accost several members of the sophomore class on their way home



from evening classes and “pump” them in order to even the score and redeem the class’s dignity. However, their plan did not unfold as expected. The incident itself is described in a class history written for the 1877 graduation:

The question of the punishment due the sophs. was stormily argued until a quiet youth suggested that we catch them first. This plan was adopted, and as the sophomores came from their lyceum several were caught and carried toward the pump. But our plans had been betrayed, and the entire class was upon us. Then began a rush which lasted till midnight, when it dawned upon their sophomoric minds that rushing upon the Sabbath is immoral, and they withdrew. This is the only occasion upon which their respect for holy things was conspicuous. (Orcutt, 1877, p. 264)

Following the incident, three men from each of the freshman and sophomore classes were suspended from the University. Students were outraged by this decision, the first time that administrators had levied any type of punishment for hazing. The two classes held meetings to discuss their responses; each drafted petitions stating that the signers were also guilty of hazing and should be suspended with their classmates. Some of the women of each class wanted to sign the petitions in solidarity, but their male classmates would not allow it (“A Splendid Institution,” 1886; see p. 19).

The petitions were submitted to the faculty. Students paraded and demonstrated in the streets of Ann Arbor in protest. Some students publicly insulted individual faculty members during these demonstrations. *The Boston Journal* reported that “the Faculty, it is said, were groaned and hissed in public, and some of the demonstrations approached a riotous character” (“Emeute at Michigan,” ca. 1874).

The petition signed by the freshmen stated, in part:

TO THE FACULTY OF MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY—GENTLEMEN:

We, the undersigned, members of the man class, wish to respectfully inform you, that in the affair for which three of our number have been suspended we are equally implicated with them; and protest against the injustice of suspending three of us only. (Angell, 1874; “Freshman petition,” 1874)

Members of the sophomore class signed a similar petition, stating: “We respectfully request the attention of the Faculty of the University to the fact that we also have been engaged in hazing” (Angell, 1874; “Sophomore petition,” 1874).

### *Administrative Response to Incident*

President Angell and the faculty of the university decided to give the students time to settle down and think about their actions. The petitions from the freshman and sophomore classes were left in the hands of the university steward, an early administrator appointed by the Board of Regents. The faculty gave students the option of either withdrawing the petitions altogether or removing their names from the documents individually. Several students took advantage of this opportunity, and 22 students withdrew their names and avoided any type of punishment from the university. However, it is likely that these students lost the respect of their classmates for this action.

After a five-day waiting period, the faculty took action against those whose names remained on the petitions. As a result, President Angell and the faculty of the university decided to suspend an additional 81 students from the University of Michigan on May 4, 1874. The formal suspension order contained the following explanation of the measures taken by the faculty:

The public voice of the State demands that the university faculties, which are but the servants of the State, shall eradicate from



the university the practice of hazing and every other form of disorder which may bring upon it harm and disgrace, whether it costs the suspension or the absolute exclusion of a hundred or hundreds of those who have been admitted to its privileges. The university can better afford to be without students than without government, order, and reputation. This action of the faculty is nonetheless imperative because the traditions with which they have to deal have so lowered the tone of sentiment in this as in other institutions that practices which at home and away from college would be thought by students shameful and criminal are regarded as innocent amusement in the university. ("A Splendid Institution," 1886)

The suspension letters were mailed to each student's father, informing him of his son's punishment and providing a summary of the situation; Angell personally signed the suspension letters. Students were expected to leave campus for the remainder of the academic year and return in late September. At that time, students would be expected to pass exams covering all of the material that their classmates would have covered in their courses, except for botany, and give a written pledge to abstain from hazing or any other interference with the government or operations of the university (Angell, 1874).

Angell's approach was more tempered than that of the faculty during the University of Michigan's "Fraternity War" of 1847, when students were given the choice of renouncing membership in all secret societies or leaving the institution permanently. The effort of the faculty was ultimately unsuccessful, and all fraternities were reinstated at the institution in 1850 (Shaw, 1920).

### **Parent and Student Reaction**

Several parents responded writing letters to President Angell, most of whom praised (or

at least supported) his decision and apologized for the indiscretions of their sons. One mother from Colorado wrote:

After all our self sacrifice to give our son the advantages of an education, it would be the most severe trial of my life to have these privileges prove his ruin, it would be poor encouragement to parents [to] send sons where their morals are perverted and their good names blacked. I do not know how under the circumstances you could have yielded the point and maintained authority and I hope this step will forever put a stop to the barbarous practice of hazing; I hope Lyndon will make suitable apology for all that he did wrong in the matter, and be prepared to go on with the course without giving any further trouble. (Smith, J. S., 1874, pp. 3-4)

Predictably, the students were not as supportive of the university's action. An international student, M. S. Tayama of Japan, wrote a lengthy letter to the faculty of the university, which was published in full by *The Chicago Times*. In the letter, he protested his suspension, arguing:

Only three ways were left to us—either to turn informers, to be hazed without self defense and retaliation, or to reserve to ourselves the primitive right of defending ourselves and retaliating, *in the absence of a due protection by the proper authorities, you, the faculty of the university* [original emphasis]. To turn informers seemed to us not only disgraceful but futile, for the reason stated above. As to the second recourse, we were no more Christians than the faculty and the people in general; we did not feel like turning our left cheeks when the right were smitten. You would have us to invite the sophs to smoke us when they had pumped us. If

such is your preaching, I should think you would do a great good if you would set the example yourselves. (Tayama, 1874)

### ***Inter-institution Interest:***

#### ***Presidential Correspondence***

The news of the suspension was reported nationwide, and drew attention from many other institutions of higher education. Particular interest was given by White at Cornell. President White, of course, knew all too well the serious implications of hazing on campus, as a Cornell student had been killed in a fraternity initiation ceremony just months earlier. In fact, White wrote to President Angell after the first six men had been suspended from Michigan, requesting their names. "Will you be so kind," he wrote, "if you think there is any possibility of their coming Eastward as to send me a list of their names. I should feel greatly ashamed to have our institution entrapped in this case as we were once before" (A.D. White to J. B. Angell, April 28, 1874). This letter demonstrates the high level of direct communication between university presidents, in this case cooperating to block the transfers of trouble-makers and alleged hazers.

Upon reading the news of the larger suspension, White sent a Western Union telegram to Angell, stating briefly: "Accept congratulations of our Trustees and faculty on determined stand of your University against hazing. Please send full list" (A.D. White to J. B. Angell, May 5, 1874; see p. 20). Angell also received congratulatory letters from Presidents Sill at the Detroit Female Seminary, Smith at Dartmouth College, Potter at Union College, Magill at Swarthmore College, and Estabrook at the Michigan State Normal School. The communications from Dartmouth, Swarthmore and Union Colleges indicate that those institutions had also received a list of the suspended students from Dr. Angell (Estabrook, 1874; Heyward, 1874; Magill, 1874; Sill, 1874; A. D. Smith, 1874).

The Temperance movement was well underway in the United States at this time, and ad-

herents perceived that alcohol was a major contributor to the behavioral problems on campus. Joseph Estabrook, who was a member of the University of Michigan Board of Regents as well as the President of the Michigan State Normal School (now Eastern Michigan University) in neighboring Ypsilanti, was particularly pleased with the progress made in early 1874. He wrote to Angell in early April, prior to the hazing incident in question, "I learn that the saloons are all closed in Ann Arbor. If so one of the greatest sources of lawlessness, among students, is dried up. I trust they will never be allowed to commence their ruinous business again" (Estabrook, 1874, p. 2).

Cornell's efforts to prevent the suspended men from Michigan from enrolling there were successful, although some of the suspended students did attempt to enroll. In late May, President White wrote to Angell:

Returning to Ithaca, I find that your lists and my precautions served a very good purpose. Some of your young men, it appears, have applied here to find whether any arrangements could be made with regard to receiving them, but were met with refusal and good advice. (A.D. White to J. B. Angell, May 30, 1874)

It appears that the administrative strategy employed by the university presidents was effective in this instance.

#### ***Resolution***

The suspended students ultimately left University of Michigan without further protest. The Class of 1877 history describes the 39 freshmen suspended as preparing for a vacation and notes that prior to their departure there were "a few private suppers, songs prepared for the occasion were sung, then the final hand-shaking, and 'away they sped with gamesome minds and souls untouched by sin.'" The remainder of the

class completed the rest of the term without interruption (Orcutt, 1877, p. 264).

The suspended students were eligible to rejoin the University of Michigan in September 1874. However, not all returned. Also missing from the campus that fall were some who had avoided suspension. The class history recounts that the cohort dwindled to just 62 students at the beginning of the sophomore year, slightly less than half who had begun studies as freshmen the year before (Orcutt, 1877).

Upon returning to campus, each of the suspended students was required to sign a printed pledge, which read: "I hereby promise that, during the period of my connection with the University, I will abstain from hazing and from any attempt to interfere with the government of the University" ("Hazing Abstention Promise," 1874; see p. 21). This administrative intervention was not universally supported. One of the university regents commented in a speech that the suspended freshmen, now sophomores, had served their punishment and should be treated impartially at the institution. Although the opinion was applauded by students, absolution was not forthcoming, and the students signed their pledge cards (Orcutt, 1877).

The incident did not pass into oblivion with the signing of the pledges. Hazing still posed a problem on Michigan's campus. Just a month after the suspended students returned, on October 15, 1874, a rush occurred between the Classes of 1877 and 1878. The sophomores claimed victory over the freshmen, who reportedly were well organized and had started the rush. Predictably, the incident was regarded by the faculty as interference of the university government, and actions of the students involved were called into question. This situation was resolved more amicably than the previous spring's rush. "The next week the olive branch of peace was waved in the chapel, and all tumultuous collisions were prohibited. This command was ever after strictly and rigidly obeyed—with some exceptions" (Orcutt, 1877, p. 264).

Furthermore, each year members of the class held elaborate celebrations at the University of Michigan to mark the anniversary of the mass suspension, complete with bonfires, heavy alcohol consumption, and drunken processions (Orcutt, 1877).

As graduating seniors, the Class of 1877 did not have a change of heart toward the way university administrators handled the original suspension. Their class history in the yearbook, *The Chronicle*, aired an apparently common class attitude toward the incident, blaming both classmates and the administration:

Three years of reflection have strengthened our belief that the suspension of the first six for a fault which had always been winked at was wrong and unjust; that the invitation to signers to take their names from papers in which they had confessed their participation in hazing, and the exemption from punishment of those who did so, were inconsistent and temporizing measures. (Orcutt, 1877, p. 264)

Hazing incidents diminished after 1877, and the administrative response of Angell and his colleagues was proven effective. The University of Michigan received a great deal of praise from the media regarding its stance against student lawlessness. Newspaper clippings found among President Angell's personal papers compare the action taken at Michigan to similar measures taken at other higher education institutions, including the United States Naval Academy. Rear Admiral Worden, who served in that post from 1872 to 1875, suspended Midshipmen for the offense of hazing and supported a bill introduced in Congress that would immediately dismiss any cadet found responsible for hazing and render him ineligible for any future appointment or service within the U.S. Navy ("Student Hazing," ca. 1874; "Worden," 2001).

Hazing was not the only reason for student suspension in the 1870s. The model of a strong

president and administration was employed in response to a number of student behaviors at several institutions in the United States. In an attempt to assert more control over student behavior, college and university administrators sanctioned students for rebellion and general disobedience. Following the lead of the Naval Academy and the University of Michigan, Bowdoin College in Maine suspended 100 students in June 1874. Known as the "Drill Rebellion" of 1874, students protested against a mandatory drill established by college president and Union Civil War hero Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain. When three quarters of the students refused to participate in the drill, they were all sent home and given one week to return to campus and participate. All but three returned, and a year later the military drill became voluntary ("Bowdoin rebellion," 1874; Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, Administrative Records, n.d.).

#### THE ENDURING NATURE OF HAZING

Although the findings discussed in this article chronicle events nearly 150 years ago, the student behavior is likely familiar to higher education leaders today. Once the purview of class rivalries and rowdy fights, hazing behavior diffused to smaller, secretive student organizations, including fraternities and sororities, as campus activities diversified and administrators took aim at public, campus-wide hazing events. Recounting this history may leave some higher education administrators frustrated that despite more than a century of efforts to eradicate hazing from college campuses, the practice endures. Today, fraternities and sororities receive much of the attention in regard to hazing practices, though many incidents occur within athletic teams, school bands, and church or service-related student organizations (Hoover, 1999; Nuwer, 1990; Nuwer, 1999).

Despite centuries of attempts to eradicate the practice of hazing, it has marched strongly into the 21st century at institutions across the

United States. In 2011 alone, at least two American university students died as a result of hazing incidents (Nuwer, 2012). While diverting student energy into other physical activities such as organized athletics was successful as a tactic for reducing dangerous hazing in the late 19th century, hazing has become a large part of entry into collegiate athletic teams at modern colleges and universities. A 1999 nationwide study conducted by Alfred University and the National Collegiate Athletes Association (NCAA) found that over 75% of athletes experienced some sort of hazing to join a college athletic team; 50% of athletes reported that alcohol was involved in hazing (Hoover, 1999). Allan and Madden (2008) found hazing behavior to be pervasive in campus culture with 55% of students participating in clubs, teams, and organizations experiencing hazing. However, 95% of these hazing cases were not reported to campus officials.

At the University of Michigan, nine fraternities and sororities were investigated for hazing during the fall 2004 semester. This was in part the result of heightened awareness as an anti-hazing law was enacted in the state on August 21, 2004, making hazing a criminal offense. Matney and Taylor (2008) chronicled the administrative response to the 2004 Michigan incidents, which included creation of a comprehensive Community Education and Development Model (CEDM). The CEDM was designed as a customized intervention to prompt cultural change by identifying and eliminating harmful traditions within organizations and leveraging the community-building potential of fraternities and sororities. This administrative response has been successful, and incidents of hazing have declined since implementation of the CEDM.

In February 2011, a Cornell University student died from alcohol poisoning in an alleged hazing incident at Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity. Later that year, David Skorton, president of Cornell, published an editorial in *The New York Times* calling for an end to fraternity hazing.

Skorton attributes hazing at Cornell to circumstances reminiscent of those in 1874:

Why would bright young people subject themselves to dangerous humiliation? Multiple factors are at play: the need of emerging adults to separate from family, forge their own identities and be accepted in a group; obedience to authority (in this case, older students); the ineffectiveness of laws and other constraints on group behavior; and organizational traditions that perpetuate hazardous activities. (Skorton, 2011, ¶8)

New York established an anti-hazing law in 1894, making it the first state in the nation to criminalize hazing (Chambers, 2010). Unfortunately, the legal system has not been as effective in preventing hazing fatalities as the local newspaper had anticipated following the first hazing fatality at the institution: "If the college authorities cannot protect the lives and limbs of students, the law can and will" ("Fatal Ceremony," ca. 1873).

#### IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Hazing in the late 19th century was a public ritual of induction into an organization or institution. At a time when the university population was growing and diversifying at an unprecedented rate, hazing was viewed by students as a means of rebellion and solidarity against authority. At Michigan, new students admitted to the university were tested through hazing rituals to prove their physical strength, ability to work together as a cohesive unit, and their loyalty to their student peers over the faculty and administrators. In reflecting on the details of the 1874 incident, three items are offered for consideration by modern higher education administrators.

#### *Changed Landscape for Administrators*

One of the noteworthy findings in research-

ing the 1874 Michigan hazing incident is the personal correspondence among college presidents. The personal letters related to the incident document the genuine concern they had about combatting hazing on their campuses. This administrative frame is often tangential in historical accounts of campus life, and these letters provide valuable information about how campus leaders such as Presidents Angell and White conceptualized administrative responsibility and their role in student conduct.

The landscape is very different for administrators today. Faculty and executive leaders would rarely be first-responders to a hazing incident; this task would more likely be the purview of a fraternity/sorority advisor or a dean of students. Sanctions today are seldom as sweeping as Angell's response and infrequently come directly from the president of the institution. The nature of student records and privacy has changed significantly such that a university president or any administrator today who sent letters about a student conduct matter to parents without the student's consent would be in violation of federal law (FERPA: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). Likewise, it would be unlikely that a university president would release the names of sanctioned students to his or her peer presidents in an effort to restrict students from enrolling elsewhere.

However, today's landscape of student attitudes bears more resemblance to examples from the 1800s; a sense of rebellion against authorities appears inherent in many hazing incidents. Administrative sanctions may be successful for a limited amount of time but often lack permanence given a revolving student population with little institutional memory. Many students feel a need to establish a culture of exclusion, for which hazing is the entry, in an attempt to create smaller communities and fashion a student culture over which they have control. In effect, a struggle exists in terms of who constructs culture and community on campus; this struggle pits administrative power against student power.

### ***Migration of Hazing in Student Culture***

Hazing is not endemic to fraternities and sororities. The vast majority of fraternal organizations are founded on values inconsistent with hazing behaviors. Hazing may not have been a part of the early chapters in operation in the 19th century, but hazing was clearly a part of the campus context by the 1870s. Fraternity and sorority lore passed down to incoming generations of students through new member handbooks and educational programs asserts that hazing had no place in the founders' ideals. This may be true, but it should not be forgotten that hazing existed in the early years of fraternities and sororities. Early chapter members certainly would have been aware of hazing and perhaps even participants in class rivalries and rushes.

The 1873 hazing death in Cornell's Kappa Alpha Society and the 1874 Michigan freshman-sophomore rush may provide a glimpse at a transition period for college hazing behavior. As public hazing incidents such as the class rushes came under more scrutiny and the administrative response to such activities became bolder, hazing practices diffused to smaller, exclusive, secret organizations such as fraternal groups. The secrecy provided cover for the practice of hazing and remains a challenge today in the fight against hazing. Fraternity and sorority professionals need to understand the origins of hazing within our organizations to educate students about the historical context of hazing in fraternities and sororities; professionals and advisors should be careful not to omit hazing from the environment of early fraternal groups.

Students at Michigan, and most likely other colleges and universities in the late 19th century, were aware of the public and institutional disdain for hazing. Their scrapbooks contain newspaper clippings and references to hazing events taking place on their own campus and across the nation. Still, hazing persisted. Some students believed that hazing was a good-natured welcome to new students, a rite of passage (for men at least) required to gain admission to the

student society. Regardless of injuries or fatalities attributed to hazing, the mentality of "boys will be boys," couples with a belief in immunity to the harmful or fatal effects of hazing.

A similar pattern continues in the 2010s, with significant public outrage against hazing and bullying in high school and college contexts. However, incidents of rookie hazing in professional sports (notably the National Football League), including personal servitude and public humiliation, are widely broadcast and rarely questioned. This sends mixed messages to students as well as to the educators and administrators who are charged with preventing hazing.

### ***Connections to Identity and Community Development***

Although hazing carries an increasingly negative and sadistic connotation in 21st century America, and is illegal in 44 states (StopHazing.org, 2010), the underlying conceptualization of hazing remains steady. Hazing on American campuses has long been about identity and exclusivity, first exhibited through class identity (freshmen versus sophomores) and later shifting to fraternity identity and other organizations.

However, college and university administrators today have a much better understanding of the complexity of college student development, in particular identity development and community building. Notions of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1999, 2001, 2009; Kegan, 1994), gender identity (Edwards & Jones, 2009; Handler, 1995; Harper & Harris, 2010), and intersectionality (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000) should be utilized to help student groups such as fraternities and sororities conceptualize identity without a hazing experience. Likewise, community building can play a powerful role in combating hazing, as evidenced by the Community Education and Development Model employed at Michigan in 2004-05 (Matney & Taylor, 2008). The residential component that exists in many fraternities and sororities provides a prime environment for

establishing a robust learning community, building on the foundation of decades of research on college student housing, student organizations, and group dynamics. Student affairs professionals are expertly trained and well positioned for these tasks.

Certainly some of the motivations remain the same as they were in Ann Arbor and Ithaca in the late 19th century. Hazing today is still an outward illustration of a power struggle in a college students' social hierarchy on campus and a form of rebellion against faculty, administrators,

and any type of institutional authority. Hazing persists as a means of controlling aspects of student culture and perpetuating power differentials similar to those established by the Freshman Laws at colonial colleges. In an institutional context characterized by diversity and specialization unthinkable in 1874, the challenge for current administrators and educators is to find ways to guide students in developing identity and constructing healthy community(ies) on multiple scales without putting student safety at risk.

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To the Faculty of the University of  
Michigan.

Whereas, - Some of our class-mates have recently  
been suspended from the University  
for the offense of hazing, and

Whereas, - The undersigned desire that  
justice shall be done to all

Therefore, We respectfully request the at-  
tention of the Faculty of the University  
to the fact that we also have been engaged in  
hazing.

✓ C. M. Potter,	✓ E. S. Regal,
✓ G. H. Haile,	✓ Fred. K. Austin
✓ J. C. Ramsey,	✓ L. H. Shaw
✓ Ed. C. Swift,	✓ C. H. Heley
✓ B. Saffley,	✓ F. R. Buel
✓ Chas. Marshall,	✓ J. A. Laundry
✓ W. W. Sherrin,	✓ C. W. Woodbridge
✓ Ben. C. Richards,	✓ L. O. Kruhn
✓ J. Dana Sanders,	✓ E. F. Thomas
✓ S. V. R. Froobridge,	✓ Miss H. Tuttle
✓ B. B. Campbell,	✓ Albert C. Stevens
✓ W. G. Campbell,	✓ D. G. Allen
✓ A. D. Devoe,	✓ A. C. Puring
✓ W. P. Lurphy,	✓ E. F. Babcock
✓ M. H. Phelps,	✓ J. H. Moore
✓ J. H. McFarlan,	✓ C. W. Fisher
	✓ O. L. Bognor
	✓ A. J. Cooper

First page of the petition from members of the University of Michigan sophomore class (Class of 1876) informing the faculty of their involvement in hazing. Reprinted with permission of the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. ("Sophomore petition," 1874)

Blank No. 1.

# THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.

The rules of this Company require that all messages received for transmission, shall be written on the message blanks in the Company, under and subject to the conditions printed thereon, which conditions have been agreed to by the sender of the following message.

ANSON STAGER, Gen'l Sup't.,  
CHICAGO, ILL.

WILLIAM ORTON, Pres't., NEW YORK.  
GEO. H. MUMFORD, Sec'y.

Dated *Ithaca NY May 5 1874*

Received at *Ann Arbor 8:10 pm*  
*J. Trust-Angell*

Accept-congratulations  
of our Trustees and  
faculty on determined  
stand of your University  
against-hazing please  
send full list-  
W S White

Telegraph from President White at Cornell to Michigan's President Angell requesting "full list" of students suspended from the University of Michigan for hazing, May 5, 1874. Reprinted with permission of the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. (White, 1874b).

Buffalo N.Y. -  
~~Ann Arbor, Sept.~~ May 24, 1874. 6

TO THE FACULTY:

I hereby promise that, during the  
period of my connection with the Uni-  
versity, I will abstain from hazing and  
from any attempt to interfere with the  
government of the University.

Albert L. Brown

Card promising to abstain from hazing signed by a student at the University of Michigan, May 24, 1876. These cards were originally printed for suspended students returning to campus to sign in September 1874. Reprinted with permission of the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. ("Hazing abstention pledge," 1874).