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A Comparison of Communication Practices in Hazing and Domestic Violence Situations

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Abstract

Hazing is an extremely dangerous practice that has plagued society for thousands of years. Despite its extensive history, meaningful solutions are seriously lacking and instead the problem appears to be escalating in frequency and severity. By comparing hazing to domestic violence and using a social constructionist lens to examine the issue, this paper aims to propose solutions. Ultimately, the solution lies in a breaking of the cycle or disruption of the negative patterns in place. However, in order to accomplish this, changes are necessary both within the organizations that generally practice hazing and society.

Executive Summary

Many theorize that hazing has existed for thousands of years and originated in nomadic groups that aimed to protect themselves and their resources by temporarily testing and terrorizing new members. Despite its relatively barbarous origins, hazing has managed to infiltrate many facets of our society today, including sports teams, Greek Life, and the military. Research indicates that hazing may cause an individual to suffer extensive physical and psychological damage, leading it to be outlawed by most states. Psychologically speaking, the practices of hazing and domestic violence carry striking similarities. Both sets of victims will often feel ashamed and compelled to conceal what is occurring behind closed doors. Additionally, one garners an unhealthy psychological attachment over time to their aggressor. However, instances of domestic violence have decreased in the past several decades. Notwithstanding its illegality, hazing continues to not only remain prevalent, but also is escalating, both in frequency and severity. Through an extensive literature review on these violent practices and examination of the situation through the lens of socially constructed communication, this paper aims to foster a better understanding of hazing and propose solutions.

Currently, a disconnect exists between the psychological research on victims of violence and the public's perceptions. This is evidenced by statements such as, "why don't they just leave?" or the belief that the victim is somehow responsible for the harm that befell them, known as victim blaming. Numerous studies indicate that in violent relationships, the victim becomes psychologically attached to his or her aggressor. For example, research utilizing the Investment Model has shown that a victim's decision to

stay or leave an abusive relationship is not based on satisfaction level but rather the size of the investment and the quality of alternatives. In order to leave, the victim must generally experience a turning or breaking point, or as it is referred to in the communications field, a bifurcation point. This is indicative of a complex psychological attachment that is difficult for victims to simply “leave,” as many members of society suggest they should. This oversimplification of the problem cannot be attributed to one uninformed individual. Instead, it has been socially constructed by our society over many years, and thus is exceptionally difficult to alter without extensive communication.

Specifically, this paper recommends using the Coordinated Management Meaning Theory of Communication (CMM) as a means of restructuring our perceptions. It can be used to redirect our conversations and interactions, both with victims and aggressors. Additionally, it can be used as a lens to focus on the aforementioned disconnect between societal perceptions and scholarly research. In this manner, it can alter our misconceptions about the role that victims play. CMM relies on the social construction model rather than the transmission model meaning that it is based on the premise that every interaction is constructing the social world that we live in. In contrast, the transmission model emphasizes a back and forth exchange between individuals. Additionally, CMM is unique in that it focuses on “turn by turn coordination.” The word turn refers to the individual speech acts one is performing in an interaction, such as complimenting, threatening, persuading, etc. By examining how each turn relates to the next or is “coordinated,” it becomes possible to identify our general patterns of communication. While this can be used to improve any pattern, it is particularly useful for analyzing the Unwanted Repetitive Patterns (URP’s) that we often become trapped in.

By identifying the bifurcation points, it becomes possible to disrupt the cycles we have fallen into.

A jarring event in one's life may also prove effective at breaking one's patterns of interaction by rearranging one's personal hierarchy of meanings. The CMM Hierarchy of Meaning Model is based on the principle that we have multiple social worlds within which we operate; each of which is distinct, constructed by our interactions, and largely uncontrollable. These social worlds become organized into a hierarchy, or nested set of contexts which influence meaning-making at the level of interaction. Higher levels of context generally influence meanings generated at lower levels in the hierarchy. For example, one might have their fraternity, family, and college courses. When the fraternity lies at the top of the hierarchy, it is unlikely that the individual will be able to resist hazing, regardless of whether they are the victim or the aggressor. Alternatively, if successful performance in college courses was at the top of the hierarchy and one's grades began to slip as a result of the amount of time that hazing required, the individual is more likely to alter their behavior. Our personal hierarchies also affect the context we interpret interactions in.

The concepts derived from CMM largely assist us in understanding how alterations in our communication at the individual level can lead to societal change. However, we are still left with the problem of how to create dialogue on a larger and more meaningful scale. The following proposals target legal and organizational changes that could realistically be made and serve as higher levels of context, thus fostering this constructive dialogue.

American concepts of justice generally follow a retributive model, meaning that the goal is to punish the offender. However, restorative justice is increasingly being used with a great deal of success. It aims at repairing the harm done to the victim, the community, and the offender. In practice, this could look like a fraternity, whose hazing practices resulted in an accidental death, speaking to others in Greek Life and the University community. The dialogue would discuss how things had escalated to such an extreme level and what could have been done to prevent it. In this way, multiple members of the organization are required to take responsibility for their actions and potentially prevent a similar occurrence in another organization.

The top three offenders of hazing (military, Greek Life, and sports teams) are primarily male dominated and often rigidly segregated by gender. Hazing is often a gendered activity that reinforces a traditional concept of what is “masculine” and what is “feminine.” By offering a greater amount of collaboration between the genders through coed institutions, it is possible that communication and gender equality will be improved, thus alleviating the problem of hazing as well.

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Preface

As with most research, my paper began with a simple statement that sparked an idea. While talking with a friend, who I knew to be pledging one of the fraternities on campus, I noticed cuts covering his hands and bruises scattered across his arms. Naturally, I inquired as to what had happened. An embarrassed look overcame his face as he bowed his head and muttered that he had “fallen down the stairs.” This blatant lie was identical to that I had heard hundreds of times in portrayals of victims of domestic violence. The more I considered it, the more I came to the conclusion that domestic violence and hazing were extremely similar practices.

However, this mere observation was not enough to create this entire project that lies in the pages ahead. Another event had to occur, my own bifurcation point, if you will. While studying abroad during the fall semester of my senior year, I was assaulted by another student at Syracuse University. He was a member of one of the fraternities on campus. Suddenly, it became difficult to work on my project and compare what essentially my assailant had gone through (hazing) to a practice similar to what he had done to me. Additionally, the Rolling Stones article, “A Rape on Campus: A Brutal Assault and Struggle for Justice at UVA,” had recently been released. Thus, reading about how a group of fraternity members had brutally raped and injured a girl made it distressing to compare what these men had assumedly gone through to the horrors Jackie and other members of domestic violence endure. However, with time I realized that the hazing may have made these men more likely to commit violence, just as one who is abused as a child is more likely to behave violently towards others during their adulthood. Keeping this in mind, it became that much more critical to me that I wrote this

paper, which not only identified similarities between hazing and domestic violence, but also used the field that I was familiar with to propose workable solutions.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Significance of Research

The presence of Sports Teams and Greek Life on college campuses are generally regarded as two of the most important marketing tools a college has at its disposal to attract prospective students. Research has definitively shown that success of sports programs in tournaments such as the BCS Football National Championships and the NCAA Basketball Championships is correlated to the number of applications the University receives the following year.¹² While participation in Greek Life varies drastically from campus to campus, at some universities, such as University of Texas-Pan American, it can be as influential as one hundred percent of the student body reporting membership. The presence, or lack thereof, of Greek Organizations has a great degree of influence on the social scene of a college campus, thus allowing it to play a key role in the decision of many prospective students as to whether or not they will matriculate at a particular university. Unfortunately, these organizations are also the top two offenders on college campuses for hazing, with 74% of those belonging to sports teams and 73% of those in a Greek organization reporting hazing activities.³

At the time of this paper's writing, six significant events have surfaced in the national media, which all clearly acknowledge the various controversies that surround violence and hazing, particularly within fraternities and sports teams.

¹ Judah, Kyle (2010). "NCAA Championships are Changing the Game of College Admissions." *Journal of Sport Administration and Supervision*: 2(1).

² Pope, D.G. & Pope, J.C. (2009). "The Impact of College Sports Success on the Quantity and Quality of Student Applications." *Southern Economic Journal*: 75(3), pg. 750-780.

³ Alfred University (1999). National Study for Student Hazing.

In September of 2014, as a new semester began, Rolling Stone magazine published an article entitled, “A Rape on Campus: A Brutal Assault and Struggle for Justice at UVA.”⁴ The article was met with an incredible amount of controversy, disbelief, and debate. The article gave Jackie’s account of a brutal gang rape at a fraternity party of Phi Kappa Psi on the University of Virginia campus that took place as a part of a hazing ritual, as well as the stories of other women who felt as if their sexual assaults had been brushed off by campus administration. While many details of Jackie’s account were and still are fiercely contested, the article raised the issue of sexual assault within fraternities and on college campuses as a whole in the public sphere as well as the ways in which masculine dominated organizations subjugate women and femininity.

In early March of 2015, Syracuse University made headlines due to a hazing incident involving the Nu Alpha Phi fraternity that resulted in severe frostbite and near loss of fingers in one of their pledges.⁵ Additionally, a Kappa Sigma pledge died in late January from alcohol poisoning after being forced to drink by senior members of the fraternity as a part of a hazing exercise.⁶ Finally, though the hazing occurred in 2011, a former student at Florida A&M University was found guilty of manslaughter and felony hazing of fellow student and marching band member, Robert Champion Junior⁷ and was

⁴ Erdely, S.R. (2014, November 19). A Rape on Campus: A Brutal Assault and Struggle for Justice at UVA. *Rolling Stone Magazine*.

⁵ Fraternity Pledge Could Lose Four Fingers to Frostbite After Hazing Stunt. (2015, March 5). Fox News.

⁶ Walters, S. (2015, January 28). West Virginia Frat Pledge Nolan Burch Had 0.493 Blood-Alcohol Level. NBC News.

⁷ Erdman, S.L. (2014, October 31). Former FAMU Band Member Convicted in 2011 Hazing Death. CNN.

later sentenced on January 9, 2015 to six years in prison.⁸ These three events address the dangers of hazing and brought a debate into the public arena regarding how organizations can be reformed and sanctions harshened to eliminate it.

Finally, a video of members of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity at the University of Oklahoma recently surfaced which showed the members singing, “There will never be a nigger in SAE. There will never be a nigger in SAE. You can hang him from a tree, but he can never sign with me. There will never be a nigger in SAE.” to the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It.”⁹ This is clearly an example of hate speech and an illusion towards racially motivated violence and exclusivity within fraternities. A video of Syracuse soccer player, Hanna Strong, also went viral in September of 2014 in which she referred to the person recording as a “faggot ass nigger.” This speech act resulted in her removal from the soccer team and other disciplinary actions.¹⁰ These two events open a dialogue about how the exclusive and secretive nature of organizations that traditionally practice hazing can manifest in hate speech and violence towards those whom fall in the minority, whether it be women, African-Americans, homosexuals, etc.

The prominence of these events in the national media indicates that society is attempting to have a conversation about hazing. However, it has yet to be particularly constructive, largely because it is operating on false premises that are deeply engrained in our societal values and beliefs. By drawing psychological comparisons to domestic violence and reframing the issue through a social constructionist model of

⁸ Ex-FAMU Band Member Gets 6 Years in Prison for 2011 Hazing Death, (2015, January 12). Fox CT.

⁹ Kingkade, T. (2015, March 8). Oklahoma Frat Boys Caught Singing ‘There Will Never Be A N***** in SAE.’ The Huffington Post.

¹⁰ Mink, N. (2014, September 6). Syracuse Women’s Soccer Player Hanna Strong Suspended After Using Slurs in Video. The Post-Standard.

communication, it is possible to create a more productive dialogue around this extremely prevalent issue.

Many researchers agree that hazing has been on the rise in recent years,¹¹ not only on college campuses but also in the military, professional sports teams, and street gangs.¹² While there is a large amount of public discourse about hazing and the associated problems, very little is agreed upon. Most of those outside of the organizations who have never undergone hazing make comments on social media that express the sentiment that those being hazed should simply “leave.” Indeed, the Syracuse University YikYak on March 5, 2015 (the day the article came out concerning the student with severe frostbite) contained statements such as, “Pledging is pledging. Pledges sign up for that shit and they drop if they can’t handle it. Simple, get over it.” “If you go to the military, you choose to subject yourself to hardships and may get hurt along the way. Same goes for frats. You chose a risky path, but you shouldn’t blame the path if you get hurt.” “No one is forced to join a fraternity.” and “How can I defend someone who made the decision to pledge the frat?” Statements such as these simplify the issue and ignore the intense psychological factors at work when one is going through the pledging process. Michelle Finkel observed that those who were injured during hazing to such a degree that they required medical attention, “have distinct issues, similar to domestic violence patients, because hazing can be a violent practice that affects individuals on a physical, psychiatric, and social basis and can lead to victims’ feelings of shame and the

¹¹ Flanagan, C. (2014, March). The Dark Power of Fraternities. *The Atlantic*.

¹² Finkel, M.A. (2002, May). Traumatic Hazing Injuries. *American Journal of Emergency Medicine*:20(3), pg. 1

consequent potential for concealment.”¹³ Just as many women feel trapped in domestic violence situations and struggle to leave, those caught in hazing rituals often suffer with the same inner turmoil and psychological attachments. Furthermore, both hazing and domestic violence are cyclical in nature and are serious problems that lack an effective solution. While this paper will largely seek to examine how communication can be used to reframe the conversation surrounding hazing and within the organizations that practice it, it will also address these aforementioned issues. Finally, it aims to propose specific measures that have the ability to alter current patterns or interaction and thus ultimately eliminate hazing.

Defining Hazing

Within society, domestic violence has a relatively well-understood and uniform definition. While there may be argument as to whether or not specific violent acts constitute as domestic violence or not, it is generally understood as “behaviors used by one person in a relationship to control the other.”¹⁴ While domestic violence involves the parties living together, comparisons can be drawn to relationship violence as well. However, because many of the organizations that practice hazing, also have close living quarters such as a fraternity house or barracks, I use the term domestic violence throughout this paper while drawing parallels because it mimics this similarity.

What constitutes hazing is far less clear. Most scholars agree that there must be a humiliating, degrading, or abusive¹⁵ factor to the act for it to be considered hazing.

¹³ Finkel, M. A., pg. 1

¹⁴ DomesticViolence.org/Definition

¹⁵ Waldron, J.J., Lynn, Q., & Krane, V. (2011, January 11). Duct tape, icy hot, and paddles: narratives of initiation onto US male sports teams. *Sport, Education, and Society: 16*(1), pg. 111-125.

However, when one considers that drinking alcohol often plays a large role in hazing rituals but is not necessarily humiliating, degrading, or abusive this definition becomes more complicated. Aldo Cimino defines hazing as any “generation of induction costs that appear unattributable to group relevant assessments, preparations, or chance.”¹⁶ Under this definition, even harmless traditions such as having new members of sports teams carry equipment falls into the realm of hazing. Many scholars believe that there must be an aspect of danger or harm present¹⁷, but the aforementioned examples also complicate this view.

There is also a distinction made between “initiation rituals” and “hazing.” Initiation rituals are imposed on new members but are relatively harmless and accepted by society while hazing ventures into dangerous and criminal territory.¹⁸ This relates to the difference between “hazing” and “criminal hazing.” Laws vary by state and thus the definition can vary as well, but generally criminal hazing results or could likely result in physical harm or death. Therefore, activities such as having new members carry equipment would not be prosecutable under the law. Regardless of this distinction, it is crucial to recognize that while there may be a difference in degree, these are not separate patterns of interaction.

Cimino identifies four consistencies across all hazing incidents. In his opinion, hazing only occurs on a short-term basis. It is solely directed to newcomers. It is coercive in nature if the group affiliation is treated as an inescapable social obligation and it only

¹⁶ Cimino, A. (2012, October 5). Predictors of hazing motivation in a representative sample of the United States. *Evolution and Human Behavior*: 34, pg. 446-452.

¹⁷ Finkel, M.A., pg. 1

¹⁸ Drout, C.E. & Corsoso, C.L. (2003). Attitudes Toward Fraternity Hazing Among Fraternity Members, Sorority Members, and Non-Greek Students. *Social Behavior and Personality*: 31(6), pg. 535-544.

occurs in groups with a long-term cooperative alliance.¹⁹ For example, a group that is convening for a few weeks to work on an academic project would not haze its members because while it may be a cooperative alliance, it is short-term in nature rather than long-term. This paper largely operates on these four premises. Additionally, when referring to “hazing,” I am mostly referring to acts that would be regarded as criminal hazing, rather than the more socially acceptable, though arguably equally coercive, initiation rites.

In analyzing hazing and the similarities to domestic violence on a definitional level, it is important to note that just as not all hazing acts are criminal, not all domestic violence acts are either. Under the definition offered prior, one could be severely emotionally abused by their spouse and suffer extreme psychological trauma. While this may not leave any scars, it is still extremely undesirable. Emotional and verbal abuse often escalates and leads to physical abuse,^{20,21} and studies have shown a correlation between the duration of one’s relationship and the amount of violence.²² Research has also shown that there is significantly more psychological abuse in relationships that also have a physically violent component.²³ Regardless of these facts, emotional abuse is not prosecutable under law. Similarly, to my knowledge, there have been no instances of individuals being prosecuted for hazing acts, which were not physical in nature. This is

¹⁹ Cimino, A. pg. 2

²⁰ Smith, M., & Segal, J. (2015, April 1). Domestic Violence and Abuse. Retrieved May 3, 2015, from <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/abuse/domestic-violence-and-abuse.html>

²¹ Zillman, D. (1984). *Connections Between Sex and Aggression*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

²² Miller, L.M. (2010, December 15). Physical Abuse in a College Setting: A Study of Perceptions and Participation in Abusive and Dating Relationships. *The Journal of Family Violence*: 26, pg. 71-80.

²³ Molitor, C.E. (1995). Gender differences of psychological abuse in high school dating relationships. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*:12(2).

indicative that part of the problem that our society needs to address is how harm can occur without the presence of physical violence.

Those who are victims of hazing generally switch roles within a year, from one who has formerly been hazed, to someone that perpetrates the hazing of new members. Contrastingly, victims of domestic violence may never shift roles, or if they do, it is much later in life. For example, one in three people who are abused as children will later abuse their own families.²⁴ However, this cycle of abuse is continued over the span of decades while the cycle of violence in a fraternity or sports teams has a much faster turnover. For this reason, hazing could theoretically be ended relatively quickly through the correct measures.

Disconnect Between Perceptions and Research

As mentioned prior, the issue of hazing is often oversimplified by members of society as something those who are being abused should just “leave.” However, as the dispute over definitions indicates, the issue is far more complex and requires a more intricate solution, particularly considering hazing’s longstanding place in our society. The following research further complicates the issue by providing evidence that the act of hazing generally produces an intense psychological attachment that is difficult to escape. This contradicts society’s assumptions that one is simply able to “leave.” To bridge this gap between the perceptions of society and the scientific research, it is necessary to restructure the dialogue surrounding hazing. This can largely be done by viewing hazing through the lens of a social constructionist theory of communication. As a society, we must analyze the patterns that have led us to believe the victim is at fault, break these

²⁴ Goleman, D. (1989, January 24). Sad Legacy of Abuse: The Search for Remedies. *The New York Times*.

patterns, and subsequently restructure the existing conversation. More specific details on how this might be accomplished are provided in a later chapter.

The Psychology of Hazing and Domestic Violence Within a Communication

Perspective Frame

Related to definitions is one of the biggest problems, which helps to explain why individuals remain in both hazing and domestic violence situations. According to the study by Alfred University in 1999, out of all the students who had, by the researchers definition, been hazed, only approximately 10% of them considered the acts to be hazing. Similarly, a study by Cornell University in 2002 found that while 37% of students had undergone hazing, only 12% considered it as such.²⁵ Studies concerning relationship violence found that while 1 in 4 college students was in or had been in a physically or emotionally abusive relationship, only approximately 15% recognized it as such.²⁶ Other studies have found that only 40% of people in a physically and sexually abusive relationship identified it as such.²⁷ Those undergoing abuse simply do not define it in these terms and have difficulty admitting that there is in fact a problem. In this sense, it is a combination of denial and unawareness.

Further evidence of a pattern of denial and unawareness is the fact that members of Greek organizations tend to have a more positive association with the organizations and the purposes of pledging as compared to non-members.²⁸ Similarly, women involved

²⁵ Sipple, J., Campo, S., & Poulos, G. (2005). Hazing at Cornell. *American Journal of Health Behavior*: 29(2), pg. 137-149.

²⁶ Miller, L.M. (2010, December 15).

²⁷ Stets, J.E. & Pirog-Good, M.A. (1989, March). Patterns of Physical and Sexual abuse for Men and Women in Dating Relationships: A Descriptive Analysis. *Journal of Family Violence*:4 (1), pg. 63-76.

²⁸ Drout, C.E. & Corsoso, C.L., (2003).

in chronically violent relationships hold more positive relationship expectations, such as the belief that they and their partner will be able to work things out, grow closer, and resolve differences.²⁹

While many theories have been offered as to why individuals haze and subject themselves to hazing, those that are also applicable to the concept of domestic violence, and thus most relevant to this discussion, are evolutionary psychology, lack of external constraints, identification with aggressor, and investment theory.

Aldo Cimino explores the notion of hazing as an evolutionary adaptation in his Automatic Accrual Theory. Essentially, stronger coalitions of individuals offered greater benefits, such as security. To avoid being exploited or endangered by newcomers, group veterans adopted hazing as a practice in order to ascertain one's level of competence, trustworthiness, and commitment. Based on this theory, Cimino made several predictions such as groups that are more powerful will haze more because the risk of being taken advantage of is greater, the more a member contributes to a group the more severely they will haze new members, and as the severity of hazing practices increases so does the coerciveness.³⁰ Additionally, the more automatic benefits a group has to offer, the more severe the hazing will be. This effect has been replicated in multiple studies regarding modern institutions and their hazing practices.³¹³² For example, fraternities that are considered more elite and thus provide more automatic benefits such as social status have

²⁹ Miller, L.M. (2010, December 15).

³⁰ Cimino, A., pg. 2-3

³¹ Ramey, Don T. (1982). Group climate, campus image and attitudes of fraternity men regarding pledge hazing. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 42, 3466.

³² Walker, Milton Glenn. (1968). Organizational type, rites of incorporation, and group solidarity: A study of fraternity hell week. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section A. Humanities and Social Sciences*, 29, 689.

consistently been shown to haze new members more severely. Related to domestic violence, the evolutionary theory explains why women with less resources, such as a stable income, living arrangement, etc., are more likely to remain in an abusive relationship than those with more resources. More concerning is how domestic violence has also been shown to be an obstacle to maintaining employment and thus gaining financial freedom from their partners. Reports show that violent partners may prevent the woman from going to work or batter her to such a degree that she is unable or too embarrassed to work.³³³⁴ In this way, a vicious cycle of entrapment is created in which the woman must remain with the man for certain benefits just as the fraternity pledge feels as if they must stay with their fraternity for certain social benefits such as status and access to parties. Researchers at Cornell also hypothesize that hazing is an evolutionary adaptation that remains because it is perceived to strengthen bonds that were previously necessary for survival.³⁵

Both instances of hazing and domestic violence often take place behind closed doors and are not discussed by the victims for fear of retribution.³⁶ As discussed prior, this is problematic because it leads the victims to form their own definitions as to what constitutes hazing and domestic violence and determine it is not applicable to them. Furthermore, this has the effect of leading the perpetrators to lack without societal constraints and thus deviate from societal norms, as theorized by researchers at Cornell

³³ Swanberg, J.E. & Logan, T.K. (2005). Domestic Violence and Employment: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology: 10*(1), pg. 3-17.

³⁴ Coulter, M. (2004, May). The Impact of Domestic Violence on the Employment of Women on Welfare. Department of Justice.

³⁵ Cornell University. Hazing: A Revealing Look at Hidden Rites. Research and Theory.

³⁶ Waldron, J.J., Lynn, Q., & Krane, V. (2011, January 11).

University.³⁷ Hazing and its acceptance within the organizations has been defined as a result of “deviant overconformity” combined with a strong social goal orientation and a willingness to make sacrifices for the group.³⁸ Deviant overconformity refers to the paradox in which members act in a deviant way that is not generally accepted in society; however, within the organization there is a compelling need to conform to this deviant behavior. Thus, members must grapple with whether or not they choose to adhere to society’s norms or that of their organization. Their decision can largely be explained by how their hierarchy of meanings are arranged, a concept I will explain more in depth later.

One is more likely to tolerate hazing rituals or domestic violence if they identify with their aggressor. In hazing, this identification is created in two main ways. First, the concept of “brotherhood” or “sisterhood” in a Greek organization, a “teammate” on a sports team, and other similar unifying terms leads the newcomer to feel as if they are a part of a whole and are the same as their aggressor. Second, because one often joins the organization knowing they will one day be the ones doing the hazing rather than being hazed, it allows them to identify with their abuser to a greater extent. Dr. Susan Lipkins theorizes that hazing occurs at a slightly more intense level with every new group of members due to the older members desire to increase the intensity and severity and leave their mark.³⁹ Similarly, research from Cornell University theorizes that there is an element of displaced revenge and entitlement present which causes formerly hazed

³⁷ Cornell University. Hazing: A Revealing Look at Hidden Rites. Research and Theory.

³⁸ Waldron, J.J., Lynn, Q., & Krane, V. (2011).

³⁹ Lipkins, S. (2006). *Preventing hazing: How parents, teachers, and coaches can stop the violence, harassment, and humiliation* (First edition.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

members to model their actions after those who hazed them.⁴⁰ Domestic violence also seems to carry from one generation to the next. One out of three children who is abused and neglected will later act violently towards their own families⁴¹. Furthermore, the single highest indicator as to whether or not a woman is in an abusive relationship is whether or not she has been in one before.⁴² Growing up in or having experienced an abusive relationship before leads the victim to both normalize the experience and identify with it. Violence perpetrated by one's family or partner is generally more likely to be accepted, just as members of organizations will accept the violence in a manner they likely would not have if a random stranger performed it. Additionally, research shows that women in a college setting are more likely to abuse their partners than men, though the severity and need for medical attention is decreased. This may lead women in severe domestic violence situations to identify with their aggressor, knowing that they themselves have performed other violent acts in the past. This relates to the acceptance of hazing because one knows they will perform such acts in the future.

It becomes increasingly difficult for one to leave a situation after they have placed time and energy into it. Therefore, when the abuse or hazing does not begin immediately or begins in small ways and then escalates, it becomes increasingly difficult for one to simply leave without the presence of a "turning point" or "final straw."⁴³ The Interdependence Theory interplays with this which states that one's commitment level is

⁴⁰ Cornell University. Hazing: A Revealing Look at Hidden Rites. Research and Theory.

⁴¹ Emery, R.E. & Laumann-Billings, L. (1998, February). An Overview of the Nature, Causes, and Consequences of Abusive Family Relationships: Towards Differentiating Maltreatment and Violence. *American Psychologist*, pg. 121-135.

⁴² Miller, L.M. (2010, December 15). Pg. 71-80.

⁴³ Edwards, K.M., Murphy, M.J., Tansill, E.C., Myrick, C., Probst, D.R., Corsa, R. & Gidycz, C.A. (2012, April). A Qualitative Analysis of College Women's Leaving Process in Abusive Relationships. *Journal of American College Health: 60*(3), pg. 204-210.

key to determining whether or not someone will stay or leave a relationship or an organization. This commitment level is based on the investment size and the quality of alternatives. As long as the amount of investment is relatively sizeable and the quality of alternatives is poor, one will remain committed despite their satisfaction level.⁴⁴

Particularly in the case of fraternity and sorority members undergoing hazing, this is applicable. They may have a low satisfaction level but believe it is their only chance to be a part of a Greek organization, which is a strong desire for many. Some researchers have sought to create a formula which reflects the Investment Model:

$\text{Commitment} = \text{Satisfaction} - \text{Alternatives} + \text{Investment}$.⁴⁵ In this form, it served as a reliable indicator of whether or not a woman would choose to stay or leave a relationship.

While this theory has not been applied to individuals undergoing hazing and their decision to drop out of organizations, it is logical to conclude that similar factors are at play.

Gender Differences in Hazing Within a Communication Perspective Frame

As discussed prior, 30.4% of females have physically abused their partners while only 17% of males have. However, it is less common for a woman to severely hurt her partner and it is generally performed for very different reasons. Researchers believe that women feel less powerful within relationships and depend more on their partners. This is potentially explained by the continued lack of gender equality in our society that leads women to believe they are subordinate to men, and therefore forced to depend on their

⁴⁴ Martz, J.M. & Rusbult, C.E. (1995, June). Remaining in an Abusive Relationship: An Investment Model Analysis of Nonvoluntary Dependence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*: 21(6), pg. 558-571

⁴⁵ Rhatigan, D.L. & Axsom, D.K. (2006, July 28). Using the Investment Model to Understand Battered Women's Commitment to Abusive Relationships. *Journal of Family Violence*: 21(2), pp. 153-162.

partner to a greater extent. Women tend to use violence as a means of gaining attention or as a self-defense or reaction to their partner's violent or hurtful behavior. In contrast, men see violence as a means to conflict resolution. They hold this belief at a 2.7x higher rate than females. Furthermore, they are 5.2x as likely to believe violence is appropriate and 3.5x as likely to find it acceptable and necessary.⁴⁶ Again, this is potentially explained by the gender norms within our society that place men in an authoritative role over women. Additionally, physical violence is generally deemed as "masculine;" therefore, men may feel as if it more appropriate to solve their problems in this manner as compared to women.

While not true of all, many organizations that traditionally perform hazing such as Greek Organizations, Sports Teams, and the military are largely segregated by gender. Additionally, domestic violence, while it does affect both genders, generally is viewed as more harmful to female victims. Thus, gender plays a very important role in these practices. The concept of "doing gender," was created in the late 1980's by Candace West and Don Zimmerman. Their definition views one's gender as a behavioral performance rather than a biological design. This theory has become critical within the realm of Communications Studies in seeking to explain difficulties that genders have relating and communicating to one another. In the aforementioned segregated organizations, the notion of one's gender is often strongly adhered to with the male groups such as fraternities displaying overtly masculine behaviors and the female groups such as sororities displaying overtly feminine behaviors. This is present in the ways in which these organizations haze their new members as well.

⁴⁶ Miller, L.M. (2010, December 15).

In general, men are more likely to be hazed than women, particularly with acts that involve physical strength and endurance, stealing, and drinking. These behaviors are often viewed as “masculine.”⁴⁷ Contrastingly, women are often hazed in ways that sexualize women by focusing on ways their images can be improved, requiring “slutty” clothing to be worn, and partnering with the counterpart male organizations for events which force subordination of women to men.⁴⁸ Surveys have shown that individuals who are involved in Greek Life have more traditional views of women and reject male dominance less than those who are independent of such organizations.⁴⁹ It is likely that those with more traditional views of gender choose to participate in Greek Life because the context fits with their chosen higher level of meaning.

Furthermore, those being hazed by male organizations are often required to dress up in drag as a way to humiliate the new members. In these ways, the rites of passage have become “heterosexualized.”⁵⁰ Were women given equal respect and dignity as men, cross-dressing and sexualization of women would not be embarrassing and would not serve its purpose in the hazing process to humiliate. Furthermore, if homosexuals were not still on the margins of society to some extent, cross-dressing and other hazing practices, which seek to emulate “gay” behavior would not be effective as a tool of humiliation and degradation. As discussed in the first few pages of this paper, organizations, which perform acts of hazing, isolate non-members and often create animosity between those who are not included. Thus, these organizations are about

⁴⁷ Hechinger, J. & Glovin, D. (2013, December 30). Deadliest Frat’s Icy Torture of Pledges Evokes Tarantino Films, *Bloomberg News*.

⁴⁸ Johnson, J., & Holman, M. (2009). Gender and hazing: The same but different. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 80(5), 69.

⁴⁹ Drout, C. E., & Corsoro, C. L. (2003).

⁵⁰ Johnson, J., & Holman, M. (2009).

exclusion rather than inclusion. Those who are not “doing their gender” correctly have difficulty finding a place in these groups and struggle to communicate and relate with them in such a manner that they might be accepted.

Potentially most concerning is the fact that research has shown that merely belonging to these organizations is enough to reinforce these behaviors that cause men and women to assume certain roles. For example, men in fraternities are more likely to use verbal coercion and physical force, two examples of overtly abusive behavior and a masculine role. Sorority members were found to be more likely to be a victim of alcohol or drug coercion and physical force.⁵¹ This victimization of women forces them to assume a subservient role to men. These results can potentially be explained by the presence of alcohol, which has been connected to the likelihood of women becoming victims of sexually coercive strategies. According to research, members and leaders of the Greek system consume the greatest amount of alcohol on college campuses.⁵²

Gender as an Obstacle to Communication

In W. Barnett Pearce’s book, Making Social Worlds: A Communications Perspective, he rightly points out that the communication perspective struggles to gain attention in our contemporary Western culture because it is considered “soft” or “feminine” in that it deals with relationships and patterns of communication. Alternatively, our society prefers to divert our attention to things that are “hard” or “masculine” such as power, money, buildings, and equipment.⁵³ As discussed in the

⁵¹ Finkel, M.A., pg. 4.

⁵² Drout, C. E., & Corsoro, C. L. (2003).

⁵³ Pearce, W.B., *Making Social Worlds: A Communication Perspective*. 1st ed. Vol. 1. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2007.

previous section, both hazing and domestic violence are heavily influenced by the continued gender equality. Additionally, those in Greek organizations have more traditional ideas about gender roles and norms and are more likely to accept male dominance. Thus, the unfortunate irony is that one of the most practical solutions to the societal problems of hazing and domestic violence is often rejected or ignored because of this same gender inequality.

Chapter 2: Communication

Why Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM)?

Traditionally, our society has viewed communication through the lens of the transmission theory. In this concept, communication is defined as the ability of a *sender* to transmit a *message* to the *receiver* through a *channel*. *Noise* may serve as an obstacle, but ideally the sender ultimately aims to receive congruent *feedback* from the receiver. Considering the immense complexity of human beings and our interactions, this model seems incredibly simplistic. As a result, social constructionist theories are growing in popularity, particularly with the increasing focus on New Science and its application to our societal structures.

Recognizing the oversimplification of the transmission model, W. Barnett Pearce proposed five ways in which communication could be used more effectively using a social construction model. First, it can construct a richer story of what has occurred including a fuller understanding of others, the historical context, and ourselves. Second, it aids in creating a more systemic description of what has occurred beyond the usual polar dichotomy. Third, it fosters an awareness of how individuals create the worlds they live in, noting both personal responsibility and opportunities for improvement. Fourth, communication changes the context by providing new interpretations and possibly altering the spaces and participants in which interactions take place. Finally, communication assists in minding or caring about the “energy” that an interaction carries. This translates to an awareness of the underlying emotions or feelings that other participants may have.⁵⁴ In short, a social

⁵⁴ Pearce, W.B. (2007), pp. 18.

constructionist theory of communication relies on the premise that communication is the process by which we are building the social worlds in which we reside and it is always performed with other people.⁵⁵

While any social constructionist theory of communication would largely aim to achieve these goals, Pearce specifically advocates for the use of Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM). The name derives from the concept that communication is a two-sided process of coordinating actions and meaning making/management. These two processes converge in the performance of speech acts, such as insults, compliments, or coercions.⁵⁶ Currently, the process of making meaning and managing it is the predominant goal of our society. Pearce submits that because behavior is easier to change than attitudes, values, and worldviews, if the focus shifted from attempting to force an agreement on meaning towards a coordination of actions that satisfy both parties, our interactions would be more successful.⁵⁷

Jensen, Pearce, and Grimes identify four basic concepts around which CMM is largely structured: (1) the concept that speech acts are ongoing and sequential (Patterns); (2) the concept that speech acts may be interpreted at multiple levels of meaning (Hierarchies); (3) the concept that each of these levels is shaped and contextualized by other levels (Social Worlds); and (4) the concept that our actions

⁵⁵ Pearce, W.B., (2007), pp. 30.

⁵⁶ Pearce, W.B., (2007), pp. xiii

⁵⁷ Pearce, W.B. (2007), pp. 95

and meanings are governed by a sense of “oughtness” (Logical Forces).⁵⁸ These ideas will be elaborated on in the following sections.

Finally, it is important to recognize what CMM offers that other theories cannot to our discussion of hazing and domestic violence. CMM is unique within the social construct view of communication in that it focuses on the “turn by turn coordination” of a conversation. Pearce emphasizes that by understanding what people say and do in conversations as “turns” rather than “signs” we are able to fully understand how their behavior fits into an ongoing pattern of interaction with other people. By understanding domestic violence or hazing through this lens, it allows us to analyze how the relationships are creating the negative pattern of behavior rather than attempting to decipher what is “wrong” with the individual.⁵⁹ In other terms, CMM analyzes *how* relationships become abusive rather than *why*, which is often the target of psychological research.⁶⁰

Patterns

“CMM posits that the events and objects of our social worlds are the products of social actions whose continued existence depends on their reconstruction in patterns of communication”⁶¹. Thus, the analysis of patterns in CMM is crucial. By viewing communication as systemic and focusing on

⁵⁸ Jensen, A. Pearce, B. & Grimes, D. (2003). *The Art of Making Better Social Worlds: Communication as a Social Force in a Global World*. Unpublished manuscript, pp. 131.

⁵⁹ Pearce, W.B., (2007)., pp. 89.

⁶⁰ Sundarajan, N. & Spano, S. (2004). CMM and the co-construction of domestic violence. *Human Systems: The Journal of Systemic Consultation and Management: 15*(1), pp. 46.

⁶¹ Sundaranjan, N. & Spano, S. (2004)., pp. 47.

relationships and patterns, rather than on isolated events or individuals,⁶² meanings can gradually be ascertained from the developed patterns and responses.⁶³

Speech Acts refer to the “actions that we perform by speaking,” such as promises, threats, and insults.⁶⁴ Practices are “actions referring to any situated collaborative accomplishment of an event, such as a conversation, a family picnic, an abusive or a violent act.”⁶⁵ Episodes are “bounded sequences of messages that have a narrative structure and are perceived as a unit”⁶⁶ or “communicative routines which [people] view as distinct wholes, separate from other types of discourse, characterized by special rules of speech and nonverbal behavior and often distinguished by clearly recognizable opening or closing sequences.”⁶⁷ In other terms, the episode is a frame through which we can examine various speech acts and practices. The speech acts one performs and the episodes they engage in are influenced by their “resources.” This term refers to the experiences, memories, and narratives that have been formed prior to a practice or episode. ⁶⁸ After the present episode or practice occurs, it will become a part of an individual’s resources for use

⁶² Jensen, A. Pearce, B. & Grimes, D. (2003)., pp. 113.

⁶³ Jensen, A. Pearce, B. & Grimes, D. (2003)., pp. 122.

⁶⁴ Pearce, W. B. (1994). *Interpersonal Communication: Making social worlds*. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, pp. 104

⁶⁵ Pearce, W. B. (1989). *Communication and the Human Condition*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

⁶⁶ Jensen, A. Pearce, B. & Grimes, D. (2003)., pp. 125

⁶⁷ Pearce, W.B. (2007)., pp. 134

⁶⁸ Pearce, W.B., (1989).

in subsequent interactions. Pearce refers to this as an “afterlife” of a conversation.⁶⁹

When the speech acts, episodes, and practices that one performs become ongoing and sequential, it can be said that a pattern has been formed. Our patterns of communication have the ability to shape us as individuals⁷⁰ as well as our quality of life.⁷¹ Therefore, if a negative pattern of communication, such as verbal and physical abuse, is predominant in one’s life, the likelihood is that the individual’s satisfaction levels are extremely low. CMM aims to identify these negative patterns between individuals and target where improvements can be made by disrupting the usual pattern, thus creating a more positive pattern of communication.

In order to identify the pattern of communication, one must utilize the “conversational triplet.” This term stresses the importance of not only examining a single act, but also looking at what took place prior and immediately afterwards. This examination of the turn-by-turn coordination is crucial because, “each turn is a response to a “previous” turn and an anticipation of a “next” turn by the other person. The meaning of a single turn is impossible to know without some reference to the other turns of which it is a part.”⁷² Additionally, the term “punctuation” refers to how we organize interactions into patterns, specifically focusing on the beginning and end of our episodes. By identifying the beginnings and ends of various

⁶⁹ Pearce, W.B., (2007), pp. 2

⁷⁰ Pearce, W.B., (2007), pp. 186.

⁷¹ Jensen, A. Pearce, B. & Grimes, D. (2003), pp. 106

⁷² Jensen, A. Pearce, B. & Grimes, D. (2003), pp. 123.

communication cycles, one is able to identify critical moments and thus break the punctuation and patterns of negative behavior.⁷³

Through the conduction of a case study, Nalla Sundarajan and Shawn Spano attempted to identify the patterns occurring in an abusive relationship from a CMM perspective. Their research identifies three distinct stages: (1) creating abuse in the relationship; (2) sustaining abuse in the relationship; and (3) terminating abuse in the relationship. The following paragraphs will discuss these phases in greater detail, as well as relate them to our discussion of hazing.⁷⁴

During the first phase, two main themes were identified: (1) the women positing the “relationship” over their “self” in the hierarchy of contexts (a concept that will be explained more in depth in the “Hierarchies” section); and (2) women coming to fear their male partner. Similar themes exist when a hazing environment is first cultivated. The new member will be psychologically coerced into placing the organization as a temporary higher level of meaning than the self. For example, the group bonding that will result from hazing is more important than the temporary pain and humiliation a new member will be subjected to. In this sense, the organization takes a higher context in the Hierarchy Model. However, a senior member may be subjecting new members to hazing practices out of a selfish, misplaced desire for revenge. In this case, this member’s sense of self is placed in a higher context than the organization. Additionally, fear is created early through secrecy and extensive threats and punishments. Thus, new members quickly begin to fear consequences of what will happen if they break the organizational rules.

⁷³ Pearce, W.B. (2007), pp. 138-139

⁷⁴ Sundaranjan, N. & Spano, S. (2004)., pp. 50-53.

Three themes have been identified in the sustaining phase of abuse: (1) co-construction of confusion; (2) denial and minimization of abuse; and (3) hope of restoration. In abusive relationships, confusion is created through isolation, thus forcing a woman to rely on her partner to shape her reality. Similarly, in fraternities during “Hell Week,” usually the last week of pledging where members receive the most brutal abuse, members are often required to stay at the Fraternity House full time and only interact with other members. This serves as a means to exclude the meanings and values of other Social Worlds, or at least make them less likely to be invoked. The hazing also becomes increasingly normalized as the only people a victim has to shape their reality are those that perpetrated the crime. Those who hazed the individuals may minimize it through statements such as, “We all went through it. It’s not that bad.” Additionally, other new members may deny that they are physically or emotionally hurt by the hazing in an effort to reaffirm their masculinity. Finally, intense abuse in domestic violence situations is often followed by a “honeymoon” period during which the perpetrator apologizes to the victim and there is a hope that the couple will be able to “work things out.” Similarly, intense hazing may be followed by rewards for new members such as alcohol and parties, therefore, making it extremely difficult to leave as they accrue these benefits.

Two themes were associated with terminating abuse in the relationship: (1) intense fear and (2) intense anger. These two emotions are generally the motivating factors that cause an individual to restructure their hierarchical order of contexts and break the cycle. This is consistent with research that indicates that individuals who are psychologically abused are more likely to leave than those who are

physically abused.⁷⁵ Additionally, one's turning point is usually psychological rather than physical.⁷⁶ While no research exists on why individuals choose to leave organizations that haze them, it is logical to assume it is out of fear and anger that have led to a change in their hierarchical order of contexts.

While Pearce suggests that the most effective way to counteract a large number of undesirable speech acts and thus negative patterns of communication is to move.⁷⁷ However, as established through the review of psychological research, this is much easier said than done. Thus, we must find other effective methods of breaking the pattern. Pearce suggests that this can be accomplished through a refusal to participate in an unwanted episode, the blocking of an episode from occurring, a reframing of the context, and an initiation of more desirable speech acts.⁷⁸⁷⁹ These methods are particularly effective when utilized at the turning or bifurcation point of a pattern. However, it is often difficult for one to realize they are at a bifurcation point while in the moment because one is so focused on the meaning of individual actions or statements, rather than the bigger picture, which provides opportunities for one to break the pattern of communication.⁸⁰ This is a problem that I will return to in the final chapter on solutions to hazing.

⁷⁵ Rhatigan, D.L. & Axsom, D.K. (2006, July 28).

⁷⁶ Edwards, K.M., Murphy, M.J., Tansill, E.C., Myrick, C., Probst, D.R., Corsa, R. & Gidycz, C.A. (2012, April).

⁷⁷ Pearce, W.B. (2007). Pp. 123.

⁷⁸ Pearce, W.B. (2007), pp. 106.

⁷⁹ Sundarajan, N. & Spano, S. (2004), pp. 53

⁸⁰ Pearce, W.B. (2007), pp. 93.

Hierarchies

The Hierarchy Model may be used in two ways. It could be used to organize one's social worlds. Those layers of meaning on top of the model take prominence in an individual's life and are thus more likely to influence their decision-making and how they interpret interactions. The layers of the Hierarchy Model may also be used to organize the context through which one is viewing an event. While there are innumerable contextual levels, the typical ones are: speech acts, episodes, relationships, sense of self or life script, cultural patterns, and transcultural patterns.⁸¹

To reiterate, speech acts are the individual actions that are being performed during our interactions, such as a threat or promise. The episode is the collection of these speech acts as well as the event, such as a family dinner. The relationship level of the model is defined as, "the emerging and ongoing definition of how we see ourselves as a unit, as a couple or dyad."⁸² Each individual in the relationship is guided by our sense of self, also referred to as a life script. Cultural pattern and transcultural pattern refer to the larger meanings that are shared outside of the individual interactions with a cultural group or human kind as a whole, respectively.⁸³ It is crucial to understand that these various contexts are flexible, meaning they vary not only from person to person but also from moment to moment depending on what an individual is engaging in. For this reason, there is no

⁸¹ Jensen, A. Pearce, B. & Grimes, D. (2003), pp. 124.

⁸² Jensen, A. Pearce, B. & Grimes, D. (2003), pp. 126.

⁸³ Jensen, A. Pearce, B. & Grimes, D. (2003), pp. 127-128.

way to “rank” these contexts.⁸⁴ It is merely the lens through which we are looking at a particular interaction. For example, one may place their self highest when interacting with a cashier at a fast food joint, but their relationship highest when interacting with their spouse.

As mentioned prior, the work of Nalla Sundajaran and Shawn Spano aimed to show how abuse is first created when a woman begins to place the relationship above her self. The authors argue that by helping the woman explore other hierarchies and give her interactions new meanings, it is possible to assist her in terminating the relationship. Theoretically, a similar process could be used with individuals who are undergoing hazing; however, it is important to recognize that many in these situations may be unreceptive. In this circumstance, it may be necessary to alter the conversational partner. In other terms, the conversation would not be between the pledge and his fraternity brothers but rather the fraternity and the University.

Social Worlds

Applying the concept of social worlds can begin to explain why some might be unreceptive to offers of assistance. Our social worlds have what Philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer referred to as “horizons of understanding.” We don’t perceive the edge of a horizon as we do with a boundary. We are not unaware of the limitations placed upon us. We merely accept the horizon as the limit to our vision.⁸⁵ In this manner, one may refuse offers of help because they have become enveloped

⁸⁴ Jensen, A. Pearce, B. & Grimes, D. (2003), pp. 124.

⁸⁵ Pearce, W.B. (2007), pp. 42.

in the social world of their abusive relationship or hazing organization and are unable to see past this.

Four features roughly define social worlds. (1) Each is distinct, hence the term “worlds.” (2) There are many of them. (3) Each is made through the things that we do to and with each other. (4) While social worlds are largely uncontrollable, each person is an agent within their own worlds.⁸⁶

These features implicate that one who belongs to an organization that hazes or is involved in a domestic violence situation will also belong to other social worlds outside of these organizations. Largely, a problem arises when one becomes increasingly invested in these ties, which inevitably cause them physical and emotional harm. According to the Investment Model, when this investment increases and number of alternatives decreases, the individual will become increasingly trapped in the organization or relationship. The notion of social worlds also indicates that while one has an active role in their numerous worlds, they may nevertheless be incapable of producing change within it besides the removal of their involvement. In other words, while an individual could leave an organization that is hazing or a domestic violence situation, this will most likely not lead to a change in behavior of those that remain. Thus, the cycle of hazing and violence will continue. In order to bring about meaningful change, one cannot simply leave as Pearce suggested was the best option for those displeased with their patterns of communication. Rather, one must remain and utilize the tools offered by CMM to generate meaningful dialogue.

⁸⁶ Pearce, W.B. (2007), pp. 40.

To avoid falling into this trap, it is important to remember the third main concept of CMM. While we have already discussed how coordination and coherence work in shaping and making meaning out of our interactions, the third concept, mystery, serves as a reminder that there is much outside our control.⁸⁷ In other terms, mystery serves as our reminder to look beyond the horizon.

Logical Forces

Logical Force refers to the notion of “oughtness” which one feels that motivates their various actions. It has the ability to shape, create, and direct our every interaction.⁸⁸ Research has indicated that when questioned, those that perpetrated family violence report an “overwhelming sense of obligation” and that anything other than “a physical attack would not count as a sufficient response.” Pearce describes logical force as what we are impelled to do that will perpetrate whatever pattern is occurring in a situation.⁸⁹

There are four different kinds of logical forces that motivate situations: prefigurative, contextual, practical, and implicative. Prefigurative force is motivated by a prior act. For example, if a man hit his wife because he did not like the dress she wore, he is compelled by prefigurative force. The contextual force is motivated by a feeling associated with the context of meaning, rather than an act. For example, if a man hits a woman because “he loves her,” he is expressing that he was motivated by the relationship context. One performs actions out of practical force when they are aiming to bring about a specific response; for example, a man hitting his wife

⁸⁷ Jensen, A. Pearce, B. & Grimes, D. (2003), pp. 111, 116.

⁸⁸ Sundarajan, N. & Spano, S. (2004), pp. 47.

⁸⁹ Pearce, W.B. (2007), pp. 120.

because he wants to prevent her from leaving. Finally, implicative force governs actions that we perform in an effort to reinforce or change the higher-level context of meaning or action.⁹⁰ For example, an abused woman may suddenly defy her husband in a manner that she normally would not in an effort to disrupt the pattern of abuse.

Logical Force can be a dangerous tool, particularly in the context of hazing and domestic violence. One may perform an act that they never would otherwise because they are governed by the feeling of “oughtness.” Pearce describes how one’s patterns of behaviors can be altered by removing or shifting the logical force that motivates them.⁹¹ Alternatively, implicative force can be equally powerful in stimulating change by altering the higher levels of context in which interactions are occurring.

⁹⁰ Jensen, A. Pearce, B. & Grimes, D. (2003), pp. 129-130.

⁹¹ Pearce, W.B. (2007), pp. 162.

Chapter 3: Solutions

Solutions that Have Failed

In response to the overwhelmingly number of deaths that have occurred at the hands of Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) members across the country, the national chapter proposed several changes to the structure of the fraternity. First, the term “pledges” was removed from the vernacular and it was required that initiates be referred to as “new members” in the hope that this would promote more human treatment.⁹² Considering the recentness of the change, research has yet to be conducted on its effectiveness. However, it is my opinion that it is unlikely to make a difference. Members already refer to themselves as “brothers,” a term that certainly carries a more positive connotation and inspires more comradely than the term “new members.” However, the frequent use of this term has never prevented brutal hazing practices. While CMM does instruct us that changing our language is important, merely changing one word in official vernacular is not enough to change the institution on a whole.

Secondly, SAE’s new policies banned pledging, meaning that an induction period is no longer permitted and those who are chosen to join the fraternity must immediately become full-fledged members. However, in response, current members and alumni rallied under a Facebook Group entitled “SAE Cause for a Change” with the description reading, “this page is for SAE members who are not happy about the discontinuance of pledging at SAE.” The presence of this page is indicative that the practices will merely be forced to become more underground and thus potentially more dangerous.

⁹² Hechinger, J. & Glovin, D. (2014, March 27). Fraternity Chief Feared for Son as Hazing Spurs JPMorgan Snub. Bloomberg News.

Universities and National Chapters alike have official policies that “ban” hazing. However, they are clearly not effective or need to be seriously overhauled. A mere presence of rules is clearly not enough to counteract a longstanding tradition that operates behind closed doors. Part of the problem at hand is that those organizations that are caught hazing are generally removed from campus. However, this is essentially ignoring the problem. Removal of one organization on one college campus does not change the practices and traditions of the hundreds of others across the United States.

Additionally, 42 states have legislation concerning hazing and its illegality. However, it is unusual for individuals to be charged with this crime and those that do generally face less than a few months of jail time.⁹³ Moreover, generally only a few members of the organization will be charged, such as the President or the “Pledge Master.” Obviously, one or two individuals are not responsible for the dangerous practices of an entire organization. Thus, in order for legislation to be effective, it must target all of the members responsible and utilize punishments that fit the severity of the crime. Additionally, if responsibility was shared equally and came with a substantial punishment, many members may be more responsive in preventing things from escalating, rather than letting the bystander effect overcome them.

In terms of domestic violence, research has shown that policies aimed at reducing recidivism do not generally work. One study showed that approximately one in three men, after completing a state certified program, ultimately end up committing abuse again. Additionally, other studies have indicated that the long-term success of these programs is extremely unlikely and the physical abuse is merely replaced with

⁹³ Finkel, M.A. (2002, May), pp. 5.

psychological and emotional abuse, which is equally problematic.⁹⁴ CMM would suggest that these programs have failed because they target the aggressor, rather than how the aggressor and the victim coordinate to form a pattern. Considering that violence is co-constructed, any workable solution will need to consider both the perpetrator and victim. However, it is also crucial to recognize that many pledges are increasingly willing to assist in the construction of hazing, despite the pain it causes them. In these circumstances, it may be necessary to recast the victim-perhaps as the University who is losing students, the classmates who are losing friends, or the next potential victim of extreme hazing.

Solutions that Have Succeeded

Domestic violence has decreased significantly in the United States over the last several decades. Between 1994 and 2012 the instances of nonfatal domestic violence have decreased 63% and between 1994 and 2011, serious intimate partner violence has fallen 72%.⁹⁵ By identifying what succeeded in causing this significant decline, it is possible that we can apply the same methods to eliminating hazing.

Amy Farmer and Jill Tiefenthaler prepared a report to explain the recent decline in domestic violence and proposed it was for three main reasons: (1) an increase in legal services available to battered women, (2) the improved economic and educational status

⁹⁴ Gondolf, E. W. (1999). A comparison of four batterer intervention systems. *Journal of interpersonal violence*. **14**, 41-61

⁹⁵ Khadaroo, S.T. (2014, August 26). In US, a decline in domestic violence. *The Christian Science Monitor*.

of women, and (3) demographic trends.⁹⁶ Considering demographic trends are largely uncontrollable, the first two are the most relevant to our discussion on hazing.

Legal services for women were largely established through the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, which allocated 1.6 billion dollars towards the investigation and prosecution of crimes against women. Additionally, this act essentially made the reporting of domestic abuse mandatory whenever police were called to the scene of the crime.⁹⁷ Previously, the victim had to decide whether or not to file charges, which rarely happened due to fear or intimidation by their partner. Following similar policies, were colleges to place more funds into education and resources for their students undergoing hazing, it is possible that the problem could be improved. Additionally, it should be mandatory for allegations of hazing to be handled by law enforcement. As described in the introduction, colleges depend on the organizations that tend to haze, such as sports teams, far too much. Thus, any internal investigation is likely to carry a bias as the interests clash.

The economic and educational position of women was largely improved through the demand for women's rights. As discussed prior, hazing is an extremely gendered practice that often reinforces traditional gender norms. Thus, a continued improvement in gender equality could also lead to a decrease in hazing.

How to Break the Cycle

Literature regarding domestic violence encourages women to counteract abuse, take control, and live differently. These suggestions are regarded as the most effective

⁹⁶ Farmer, A. & Tierenthaler, J. (2003, April). Explaining the recent decline in domestic violence. *Contemporary Economic Policy: 21(2)*.

⁹⁷ Title IV, sec. 40001-40703 of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, H.R. 3355

way of altering a relationship from one of violence to one of civility.⁹⁸ In essence, what these suggestions are advocating for is that victims break the cycle and change the communication pattern that they have become entrenched in. Without realizing it, these articles are calling for a practical application of CMM.

As established in Chapter Two, one of the most promising ways to create change and improvement in our violent and negative practices is to break reoccurring patterns. This can be accomplished through the identification and response to turning points, or bifurcation points. However, as mentioned prior, the problem lies in that it is often difficult for one to realize they are at a bifurcation point while in the moment because one is so focused on the meaning of individual actions or statements, rather than the bigger picture.⁹⁹ CMM can be used as a tool for individual reflection on how our negative interactions can be improved and our Unwanted Repetitive Patterns (URP's) altered. Specifically, Pearce recommends the use of the conversational triplet, punctuation, and the removal of one's logical force.

The conversational triplet encourages one to examine the interactions that precede and succeed an event and stipulates that all interactions are unfinished. Similarly, punctuation refers to how we organize interactions into patterns, specifically focusing on the beginning and end of our episodes. By identifying the beginnings and ends of various communication cycles, one is able to identify critical moments and thus break the punctuation and patterns of negative behavior.¹⁰⁰ For example, within a specific act of

⁹⁸ Wuest, J. & Merritt-Gray, M. (2008). A theoretical understanding of abusive intimate partner relationships that become nonviolence: shifting the pattern of abusive control. *Journal of Family Violence: 23*(4).

⁹⁹ Pearce, W.B. (2007), pp. 97

¹⁰⁰ Pearce, W.B. (2007), pp. 138-139.

hazing, the first turn may involve a senior member's demand that a pledge receive a paddling. The second turn would be how the pledge receives the paddling. Should he wince, the senior member may feel a sense of guilt and choose not to continue with the paddling. This choice would be the third turn in the triplet. Alternatively, if the pledge became defiant, this may be interpreted as a sign of disrespect, and the third turn would be a more aggressive beating. Through an examination of how previous turns in various episodes had led to specific responses, a pledge or senior member could change their patterns of communication. However, it is important to note that in order for this to occur, the member of the organization must desire to disrupt the pattern of the communication, which currently many do not. Additionally, other members of the organization can be involved in these turns, usually as bystanders. Considering the responsibility for hazing should be shared across an organization, these other members have a duty to utilize their turn in the conversational triplet, thus altering the subsequent act.

As discussed prior, logical force refers to what compels someone to perform a particular action Pearce describes how one's patterns of behaviors can be altered by changing the logical force that motivates them. In practice, this could look like a pledge recognizing that the senior member is looking for a particular response during the paddling, for example, a scream. This would indicate the senior member is motivated by a practical force. By refusing to supply that response, the pledge is able to alter the behavior of the senior member, who will either provide a more aggressive beating or cease his behavior.

As patterns of interactions change through the use of these tools, so might the hierarchical order of an individual's contexts. For example, if a pledge was more brutally

beaten for their defiant nature and then refusing to yell out, this may cause them to begin to think about how they have structured their various contexts. Additionally, actions and words are not always congruent. Through the use of “conversational implicature,” which calls for a double consciousness so that one can identify what is being said versus what is being done, it may be possible to identify a disassociation between the senior member’s actions and words. This followed by a turning point, such as an older sibling commenting to the pledge that even he (the sibling) had never beaten him that badly, could lead to the pledge considering different contexts and ultimately placing his self above his relationships with his Fraternity “brothers.” This also serves to “reframe” the issue, which “helps participants to step out of their set patterns, interpret their situation differently, and ultimately act on that interpretation in order to change the hierarchical order of their social worlds.”¹⁰¹ However, for this to occur the pledge must both desire a change and have the ability to identify the bifurcation point, which is unlikely.

While useful, the reality is that victims are largely unable to use the tools provided by CMM without assistance. Additionally, these tools describe how patterns of behavior can be altered on the individual level, which does not particularly assist in explaining what individual members of society outside of these organizations can do. The following proposals are specific initiatives that could be implemented in order to provide victims of hazing with a greater number of bifurcation points. Additionally, these suggestions allow for another conversational partner to enter the dialogue, other than the victim, who, as discussed prior, is often unable to counteract the violence themselves.

¹⁰¹ Sundarajan, N. & Spano, S. (2004), pp. 55.

Coupled with the solutions taken from domestic violence research, these measures have the ability to assist in effectively ending hazing.

First, it is crucial to recognize that it is impossible to end hazing with the immediate implementation of any measure. It is a longstanding tradition in many organizations and their members are resistant to change. Thus, the first step is to begin with a program that focuses on harm reduction rather than eradication. Programs of this kind essentially attempt to teach ways the safest way to perform an unsafe practice. In this manner, they recognize that the act will occur regardless but hope to minimize the damage it causes. Harm Reduction programs also offer an education on the topic, which researchers believe is key to reducing the number of hazing occurrences.¹⁰² Additionally, student run campaigns have the capability to spread education and awareness about particular issues. For example, following the release of the SAE Fraternity members singing racist slurs at the University of Oklahoma, the football team suspended practices for two weeks and used their time to campaign for an end to racist behavior on campus. Considering the status of the football players, this campaign was well received and offered a much needed education to the student body. While harm reduction programs and student-run campaigns may not be able to end all the violence, they may be able to prevent many deaths and hate crimes.

If a death or severe injury does occur, the organization should be punished through restorative justice rather than retributive. Restorative justice relies on the principle of restoring the community to what it was prior to the incident, if not better. Therefore, as a community service element of their sentence, the offenders could be

¹⁰² Johnson, J., & Holman, M. (2009).

required to speak with other organizations and conduct a dialogue on how things escalated to such a dangerous degree. This potentially would serve as more of a deterrent than the mere threat of potential punishment if caught that currently exists. Additionally, using the Restorative Justice model has been shown to create the highest rate of victim satisfaction, true accountability by the offender, and reduced recidivism.¹⁰³

Finally, it's possible that the creation of a coed social organization could alleviate the current gender paradigm and thus help to further gender equality. While coed organizations exist, they are still referred to as "fraternities" and are for professional, academic, or community service oriented purposes. There are currently no organizations that are both social in nature and coed. Thus, the introduction of one could potentially begin to bridge the dichotomy and create a collaboration between male and females. Additionally, this unconventional social structure would assist in disrupting the usual patterns of communication.

Complications

As with any research, this body of text carries its own set of imperfections. First, while the original proposal outlined an intention to conduct interviews, in practice, this was far more difficult. Due to the secretive nature of hazing, many would only provide extremely vague descriptions of their experiences or would refuse to talk about it at all. Additionally, those I had access to for interviews were largely current members rather than alumni. In this sense, they were extremely limited in their views of hazing and could offer little commentary on how the situation could be improved. For these reasons, the

¹⁰³ Mowrey, R. (2012). After the Hazing: Restoration! *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, & Dance: 83*(9).

interview portion of my research was removed. While appropriate, it does limit the application of my work in some respects.

It is also important to note that as a writer, I carry a certain bias. While open about my experience as described in the preface, I may be more inclined to assume a higher level of violence is present than is in actuality. I am also not a member of any organization that has practiced hazing. While arguably I would be more biased if this was the case, it is still important to note considering this body of research lacks that perspective.

Finally, my research concentrates largely on fraternities as compared to sororities, sports teams, or the military. This is because most of the media coverage centers here and thus where the conversation is currently taking place. While I believe that many of my suggestions are applicable across these organizations and therefore this concentration is not a hindrance, it is still a limitation.

Suggestions for Further Research

Clearly, more research is needed concerning these proposals on a practical level. CMM began on a theoretical level and it is only recently that researchers have begun to explore its applications in the “real world.” Thus, as this trend continues, the examination of how CMM can be used to improve hazing can be integrated into the conversation and subsequent research.

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