Joining in, Blowing the Whistle, or Intervening: Examining the Effects of Severity and Organizational Identification on Fraternity/Sorority Members' Responses to Hazing

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JOINING IN, BLOWING THE WHISTLE, OR INTERVENING: EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF SEVERITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION ON FRATERNITY/SORORITY MEMBERS' RESPONSES TO HAZING

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Hazing, a form of organizational wrongdoing endemic to fraternities and sororities, persists on college campuses, often resulting in deleterious outcomes. To better understand organizational members' responses to hazing, we considered the influence of members' organizational identification and the severity of the hazing situation on three response options: participating, whistle-blowing, and intervening. Members of fraternities and sororities (N = 243) were randomly assigned to read one scenario in which hazing severity was manipulated and then asked to complete a questionnaire containing measures of organizational identification and hazing response options. Hazing severity influenced two of the three outcomes. As the hazing event became more severe, willingness to participate decreased and motivation to blow the whistle increased. Hazing severity also moderated relationships between organizational identification and the three response options. When severity was low, organizational identification was positively associated with willingness to participate and negatively associated with intentions to whistle-blow and motivation to stop the activity. The results are discussed in terms of reducing hazing through education, training, and culture change.

Hazing is "any humiliating or dangerous activity expected of you to join a group, regardless of your willingness to participate" (Hoover, 1999, p. 8); hazing activities range from innocuous demands or requests of new members to extreme acts of aggression (Etzel, Watson, Visek, & Maniar, 2006). Hazing has endured on college campuses, often resulting in physical, psychological, and emotional abuse for victims (McCreary, Bray, Thoma, 2016; Montague, Zohra, Love, & McGee, 2008; Nuwer, 2018). Allan and Madden (2008) found that 55% of college students participating in university organizations have experienced hazing. Hazing is particularly endemic to fraternities and sororities, many of which are historically rooted in such traditions (Owen, Burke, & Vichesky, 2008). Indeed, 39 fraternity and sorority members were killed in hazing incidents from 2009-2019 (Nuwer, 2019). Despite official, mandated prohibitions to end hazing passed by legitimate authorities including universities, states, and (inter)national fraternity and sorority organizations, hazing and the negative consequences associated with it persist (Montague et al., 2008).

Keating et al. (2005) argued hazing generates a number of important group-related outcomes, including enhanced group dependence, belonging, and identity, suggesting that both influences to engage in hazing and solutions to the fraternity/sorority hazing problem could be addressed *within* the group. However, fraternity/sorority members' high identification levels with their respective organizations create a significant obstacle to stopping hazing as such groups are typically very cohesive, which "can cause group members to prohibit fellow group members and even themselves from expressing sensible dissenting points of view" (Palmer, 2013, p. 16). Fraternity/sorority members who witness hazing may respond in a number of ways. They may engage in whistleblowing, by reporting what they have seen to someone who may be able to put an end to the unethical behavior (Near & Miceli, 1995). Whistleblowing is the most widely studied response to organizational wrongdoing, a

focus which has led to a whistleblowing/silence dichotomy that does not consider other responses to such behavior (Teo & Casperesz, 2011). This near singular focus on whistleblowing has led us to ignore other, perhaps more common, ways of responding to organizational wrongdoing (Knapp, Faley, Ekeberg, & DuBois, 1997).

Such responses include participating in unethical behavior, or engaging in inaction, both of which would foster the continuance of wrongdoing (McLain & Keenan, 1999). Considering the routine occurrence of hazing, this form of response is likely commonplace, especially among fraternities/sororities with favorable attitudes toward hazing (Owen et al., 2008). Fraternity/sorority members could also attempt to intervene in the hazing in an attempt to end it, though this action requires them to immediately and visibly oppose group norms (Keating et al., 2005). Finally, they could attempt indirect forms of bystander intervention, e.g. distraction, in order to divert the group's attention away from a hazing activity (Oesterle, Orchowski, Moreno, & Berkowitz, 2018). Individuals witnessing hazing have each of these various response options at their disposal and the option they choose will perpetuate or help end the behavior.

Ellsworth (2006) proposed future research should explore "whether or not students would report or seek to intervene in (hazing) activities" (p. 57). In order to reduce hazing, we need to better understand how fraternity/sorority members respond to it, and factors influencing their choices. The purpose of this study was to examine two such factors, including perceived severity and organizational identification. Through offering insights about the role of the hazing event and group-related factors such as organizational identification, the results of this project advance our understanding of how and why organizational members respond to wrongdoing. Findings of this study can also inform intervention strategies devised by universities, and national and local chapters, that seek to stop

hazing activities as they are being planned or are being carried out. Next, we review the literature addressing ways organizational members respond to wrongdoing, including hazing.

Responses to Organizational Wrongdoing

Whistleblowing, defined as "the disclosure by organization members (former or current) of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action" (Near & Miceli, 1985, p. 4), appears to be the most researched response to organizational wrongdoing. Henik (2008) described whistleblowing as a sequenced, communicative act that is carried out over several stages. In the first stage, an individual witnesses a trigger event, an act of suspected organizational wrongdoing. The second stage is marked by the individual considering the act to be 'wrong,' and engaging in a decision-making process about how to respond. In the third stage, the individual either blows the whistle or remains silent. The fourth stage involves the accused organization or group reacting to the report. Finally, in the fifth and final stage, the whistle-blower considers the organization's responses, which may include retaliation, and ponders whether and how to proceed. A preponderance of whistleblowing research has examined stage two, with a focus on factors influencing someone to blow the whistle or remain silent, and stage four, addressing what factors predict organizational retaliation against whistle-blowers (Mesmer-Magus & Viswesvaran, 2005). Mesmer-Magus and Viswesvaran's (2005) meta-analysis of whistleblowing research revealed a number of factors correlated with whistleblowing intentions. These factors include individual characteristics such as age, role responsibility, and ethical judgment; situational characteristics, including threat of retaliation and supervisor support; and organizational factors, such as organizational climate. More recently,

scholars have found the type of wrongdoing (Somers & Casal, 2011), a team climate, having supervisory status (Rothwell & Baldwin, 2006), and working in a participatory culture (Richardson, Wheeless, & Cunningham, 2008) influence reporting intentions.

Because the bulk of previous studies limit respondents' options to either whistle-blow or not, questions remain about whether, if given the opportunity, respondents might choose another response. An emerging criticism of this line of research is its reliance on a whistleblowing/ silence dichotomy that ignores alternative member responses (Teo & Caspersz, 2011). In fact, a number of whistleblowing models and studies limit response options to reporting the wrongdoing or remaining silent (Henik, 2008; Miceli & Near, 1992; Rothwell & Baldwin, 2006; Trongmateerut & Sweeney, 2013). For example, in their critique of Miceli and Near's (1992) whistleblowing model, Teo and Caspersz (2011) argued "Miceli and Near pose the choice for the individual as either to whistle-blow (publicly) or remain silent. Notably, the authors do not explore alternatives other than this public-level option of whistleblowing or retreating into the private sphere of silence" (p. 238).

While studies are limited, researchers have found that organizational members pursue a wide range of bystander intervention behaviors upon witnessing wrongdoing including using coded language, sarcasm, humor, gossip, informally communicating with peers, including the alleged wrongdoer, and intervening to end the wrongdoing (Orbe & King, 2000; Teo & Caspersz, 2011). Intervening is one response to organizational wrongdoing that this study addresses. Though both whistleblowing and intervening are attempts to end wrongdoing, they do so in very different ways. By intervening, an individual is very publicly and immediately attempting to end an act. Thus, they are at risk in the moment for going against group behavior (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005). Whistleblowing is typically done after an observed violation; for example, the individual reports suspected wrongdoing to an official who is typically not on the scene. While whistleblowing could ultimately put an end to hazing practices, it would allow it to continue in the moment. Still, whistleblowing can be done in an anonymous or confidential fashion, offering the whistleblower protection from retaliation, while still bringing attention to wrongdoing.

While the research cited above expanded the response options of witnessed unethical behavior, they still neglect the possibility of organizational members choosing to participate in wrongdoing. Research indicates individuals will engage in behaviors that foster organizational wrongdoing, particularly in highly competitive situations, when they are highly identified with the organization, or when following directives from legitimate authorities (Bocchiaro, Zimbardo, & Van Lange, 2012; Ploeger & Bisel, 2013; Richardson et al., 2008). Further, McLain and Keenan (1999) asserted "many individuals respond to the observation of wrongdoing by participating," (p. 264) which suggests this option should be considered in studies of responses to organizational wrongdoing. To summarize, individuals witnessing unethical behavior, including hazing, have a number of response options at their disposal. The present study addresses two response options in opposition to hazing, including whistleblowing and intervening, and one option, participating, that would allow hazing to continue. Next, we explore two variables expected to play a particularly important role in response options. These include organizational identification, which is linked to verbally defending an organization's illegitimate practices (Ploeger & Bisel, 2013), and severity of wrongdoing, a variable consistently linked to whistleblowing behaviors (Cassematis & Wortley, 2013).

Severity of Wrongdoing

One factor expected to influence how organizational members respond to wrongdoing

is its perceived severity or harmfulness. Severity has been operationalized as wrongdoing which could physically harm someone or is financially costly in nature (Richardson, Wang, & Hall, 2012; Miceli & Near, 1985; Singer, Mitchell, & Turner, 1998). Researchers have found perceived severity has both direct and moderating effects on whistleblowing intentions (King, 1997; Singer, Mitchell, & Turner, 1998). More specifically, research generally indicates that as perceived severity increases, so too do whistleblowing intentions (Mesmer-Magnus & Visweswaran, 2005). Related to the present study, researchers have examined the influence of perceived severity of *hazing* acts on whistleblowing intentions. In their study of undergraduate college students, Campo and Poulos (2004) found perceived harm to victims was the strongest predictor of initiates and group members' willingness to report hazing. Similarly, Richardson et al. (2012) found intentions of fraternity and sorority members who witnessed hazing increased in relation to the perceived severity of the wrongdoing. They conceptualized severity as physical harm that could affect hazing targets. While these studies demonstrate a link between severity and whistleblowing intentions, other response options were not considered.

Jones (1991) developed the term "moral intensity" to capture "the extent of issue-related moral imperative in a situation" (p. 372). Dimensions of moral intensity include "magnitude of consequences," or how many people could be harmed by an act, "probability of effect," or the likelihood an act will cause harm, and "temporal immediacy," the amount of time between an act and the onset of harm to others. Jones argued individuals are increasingly likely to intervene as situations increase in moral intensity. Considering Jones' arguments and other research focused specifically on whistleblowing (King, 1997; Mesmer-Magnus & Visweswaran, 2005; Richardson et al., 2012; Singer et al., 1998), we would expect hazing acts which possess the potential to cause immediate

and direct harm to many people would foster more intervention attempts and less intent to participate. Conversely, low severity hazing conditions might lead to respondents reporting they would participate and be less likely to intervene because the potential for the hazing target to be physically or psychologically harmed is lower. Thus, we offer the following hypothesis:

> Hypothesis 1: Hazing severity affects (a) willingness to participate, (b) motivation to stop, and (c) intention to whistle-blow about the activity such that greater levels of severity result in decreased participation, increased attempts to intervene, and greater intentions to engage in whistleblowing.

Organizational Identification

Although characteristics of a hazing event such as severity should play an important role in determining member responses, within-group factors are also likely to be critical in fostering or impeding hazing activities. Organizational identification, which involves an individual's perception of belongingness or oneness with an organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), might be particularly useful for understanding how fraternity/sorority members' respond to witnessing hazing. Organizational identification has origins in social identity theory, which posits that people classify themselves and others into various social categories enabling them to identify or locate themselves in the social environment (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). This identification process leads to a sense of oneness between individuals and the particular groups to which they are identifying (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Individuals further perceive the group's fate as intertwined with their own fate. Identification with the organization seems particularly salient for fraternity/sorority members, as they tend to possess high levels of attachment to their fraternities and sororities (Davis & Myers, 2012). As Williams and Connaughton (2012) argued, values are salient characteristics of social organizations such as fraternities and sororities,

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and identifications are often constructed around shared values between organizations and their members. Accordingly, organizational identification is likely a group-related factor that has implications for reporting wrongdoing.

Identification as a form of attachment can have great benefit for organizations and their members. For example, research has noted that individuals with higher identification levels are less likely to exit the organization (Apker, Propp, & Ford, 2009), engaged in more ethical behavior (Akaah, 1992) and were more team oriented (Croucher, Long, Meredith, Oommen, & Steele, 2009). These findings make sense, considering "an individual is said to identify with an organization when his membership in the organization is integrated into his personal identity" (Davis & Myers, 2012, p. 195). As individuals' organizational identification levels increase, they will become increasingly attached to the organization and see things from its perspective (Ploeger & Bisel, 2013). However, this claim muddies the water with respect to communicative responses to organizational wrongdoing. Consider the case of organizational members who are highly identified with their organizations. Upon witnessing unethical behavior, their high identification levels may cause them to see things from the organization's perspective, join in the wrongdoing, and/or allow it to continue. Conversely, upon witnessing wrongdoing, they may perceive that stopping it or blowing the whistle will ultimately protect the organization and restore it to its idealized state.

Research results offer tentative evidence that increased levels of organizational identification are linked with the former of these options: decreased whistleblowing and greater efforts to enable wrongdoing. For example, Grube, Piliavin, and Turner (2010) studied the influence of nurse role identity, or identification with one's profession, and organizational role identity, or identification with one's organization, on nurses' reporting of unsafe practices. They found nurse role identity was not predictive of reporting by itself, and that organizational role identity moderated the relationship between nurse role identity and reporting. Specifically, while nurses may be highly identified with their roles, their attachment to their employing organizations seems to take precedence as they consider whether to report unsafe practices. This conclusion led Grube et al. (2010) to suggest "the highest probability of reporting occurs when organizational role identity is low and nurse role identity is low" (p. 161); so, *lower* organizational identification leads to reporting unethical behavior. In fact, the nurses may blow the whistle in order to harm the organization which they do not identity. Ploeger and Bisel (2013) found that highly identified members will defend their organizations against allegations of wrongdoing more intensely and more frequently than their less identified counterparts. Taken together, these findings suggest that, as organizational identification increases, attempts to stop unethical behavior should decrease. We offer the following hypotheses to test this notion:

> Hypothesis 2: Organizational identification is associated with (a) willingness to participate, (b) motivation to stop, and (c) intention to whistle-blow about hazing activity such that as organizational identification increases, participation increases, and intervention and whistleblowing decrease.

Finally, we sought to understand how hazing severity affected the various response options differently depending upon the participant's level of organizational identification with their fraternity/sorority. We expected that level of severity would moderate the relationship between organizational identification and response options. When hazing is severe, there should be no relationship between organizational identification and the three response options. Because the magnitude of consequences, proximity, and immediacy are great, individuals will take ethical action regardless of their

organizational identification level. Conversely, when the hazing severity is low or moderate, organizational identification will be positively associated with participation and negatively associated with whistleblowing or attempts to stop the activity. If the harm to targets is either moderate or mild in terms of severity (Richardson et al., 2012), then the desire to be considered a "good" organizational member will override one's motivation to behave ethically. These possibilities are detailed in the following hypothesis:

> Hypothesis 3: Hazing severity moderates the relationships between organizational identification and (a) willingness to participate (b) motivation to stop, and (c) whistleblowing intentions. Organizational identification is positively associated with participation and negatively associated with intervention intentions and whistleblowing when the level of hazing severity is low and moderate; when hazing severity is high, the relationships between organizational identification and the three outcome variables are not statistically significant.

Methods

Participants

A total of 243 fraternity and sorority member participated in the study. In order to maintain consistency in the type of respondents composing our sample, we only recruited members of fraternities/sororities affiliated with the Collegiate Panhellenic Council, Multicultural Greek Council, Interfraternity Council, and National Pan-Hellenic Council, rather than those belonging to service or academic organizations. Participants were recruited from two large, public universities in the southwestern United States. Students in undergraduate communication courses completed the survey if they were in a sorority or fraternity; if they were not in a fraternity or sorority, they recruited such individuals

to complete the survey in exchange for extra credit. In order to recruit a participant, they provided the student's name and email address. We then sent the surveys to those respective addresses. Seventy-two participants were from University A and 171 were from University B. The mean age of participants was 20.6 years ($SD = 1.41$), and participants were more likely to be female (61.7%). Two-hundred and one participants described their race as Caucasian, 10 as Latina/Latino, 10 as African American, 12 as Asian American, five as Other, and five did not indicate their race. Participants reported being a member of their current fraternity or sorority for a mean of 3.9 semesters ($SD = 2.12$).

Design and Procedure

Hazing severity (low/moderate/high) was the single manipulated variable in this study. Participants were randomly assigned to read one scenario in which hazing severity was manipulated and then asked to complete the study questionnaire. At the conclusion of the study, participants were given information about local resources that could help with any questions or concerns they had about hazing on their campus.

Materials

Three brief scenarios, which were developed in previous research (Richardson et al., 2012), were used to manipulate hazing severity (see Appendix A for the scenarios). Scenario development occurred over three stages; first, fraternity and sorority members at a large Southwestern university were tasked with listing hazing acts they had heard about or witnessed, and asked to rate those acts as "not severe," "moderately severe," or "most severe." Next, the researchers selected three hazing scenarios, one from each category. Finally, the Greek-life advisor and an advisor for a local sorority at the same university vetted these scenarios by ranking them from least to most severe. Their rankings corresponded with the researchers'

initial rankings. In each scenario, participants were asked to imagine witnessing the hazing event being described. The low severity condition involved a situation in which a group of fraternity/sorority members were having dinner at a restaurant. Active members of the group instruct the pledges to retrieve napkins and water for the group after the restaurant wait staff neglects to do so. The moderate severity condition addressed an event in which all members were required to dress up in business attire. At the event, a group of active members begin pelting the pledges with water balloons. The high severity condition involved an incident in which pledges were required to drink large quantities of alcohol. After they have become intoxicated, the pledges were then instructed to engage in physical exercise (e.g., lunges, running in place, etc.) that leads many of them to become physically ill. The scenarios were exactly the same for fraternity and sorority members, with one exception: the word "sorority" was used in place of the word "fraternity."

Measures

Variables related to responses to hazing were rated on a five-point scale while those related to organizational identification were rated on a seven-point scale. Scales were anchored with *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

Responses to hazing. We created three measures for this study to evaluate participants' responses to the hazing scenario. Three items were used to evaluate participants' likelihood of participating in the hazing event described in the scenario. Participants were asked to rate their agreement that they "would consider participating in this activity," could see myself participating in this type of activity," and "would never participate in an activity like this" (reverse scored). The mean of these items was computed to form the measure of willingness to participate in the hazing event ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.14$, $\alpha = .88$).

We utilized three items to measure participants' intervention efforts. Participants

rated their agreement that they would "try to put a stop to this activity," "step in to put a stop to this type of activity," and "allow this activity to continue" (reverse scored). The mean was computed to create the measure of motivation to stop the hazing event ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.15$, $\alpha = .92$).

Finally, we used three items to evaluate participants' intentions to engage in whistleblowing. Participants rated their agreement that they would "report the hazing incident to someone who could affect action," "tell someone in power this occurred in order to put an end to it" and "not report the hazing incident to someone who could affect action" (reverse scored). The mean of these three items was computed to create the intention to whistle-blow measure ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.16$, $\alpha = .85$).

Organizational identification. Mael and Ashforth's (1992) six-item measure of organizational identification was used to evaluate participants' identification with their fraternity or sorority. Sample items include: "When someone criticizes my fraternity [sorority], it feels like a personal insult" and "When I talk about this fraternity [sorority], I usually say 'we' rather than 'they.'" Items were rated on a seven-point scale with larger values indicating a greater level of identification. The mean was computed for these six items ($M = 5.69$, $SD = 1.14$, $\alpha = .86$).

Manipulation check. We included a single-item measure to help evaluate the severity of the hazing scenario. Participants rated the degree to which they felt that the actions described in the scenario could have been harmful for pledges ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.31$). We expected the respondents would rate severity of the hazing scenarios in a manner consistent with the way they were devised, e.g. they would rate the low severity scenario lower than the other two.

Control variables. We used three control variables in the analyses to account for their influence and ensure that the results were not an artifact of these factors. Given potential differences in the

cultures of the social organizations between the two universities, the university at which data were collected was included as a control variable in the analyses. Additionally, participants' sex was included as a control variable to account for differences stemming from whether participants were members of a fraternity or sorority. Finally, participants' length of membership in their fraternity or sorority was evaluated to account for any possible differences stemming from the amount of time participants had been a member of their fraternity or sorority. Descriptive information for these variables was included in describing the sample.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

We used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the measures of identification and responses to hazing. The items for willingness to participate, motivation to stop, and intentions to whistle-blow were evaluated in a three-factor model. The alternate fit indices demonstrate that this model adequately fit the sample data, χ^2(df = 24) = 220.09, p < .01, CFI = .94, SRMR = .08. The model involving the measure of identification, χ^2(df = 9) = 35.65, p < .01, CFI = .97, SRMR = .04, also fit the sample data.

We conducted a check to determine the efficacy of the hazing severity manipulation. The one-way ANOVA was statistically significant, F (2, 238) = 50.01, p < .01, η^2 = .33. Post-hoc pair-wise comparisons showed that the low severity (M = 2.43, SD = 1.10, n = 79), moderate severity (M = 3.32, SD = 1.25, n = 82), and high severity conditions (M = 4.28, SD = 0.86, n = 80) were all perceived to be significantly different from one another. The results indicate that the severity manipulation was effective.

Hazing Severity and Organizational Identification

Hypotheses 1 and 2 predicted that hazing severity and organizational identification were associated with (a) willingness to participate, (b) motivation to stop, and (c) intention to whistle-blow. Hypothesis 3 predicted that hazing severity moderated the relationship between organizational identification and the three outcome variables. Because organizational identification was a continuous variable, OLS regression was used to test the hypotheses. Prior to conducting the analyses, we created two dummy-coded variables to evaluate the three hazing severity conditions. The low severity condition was used as the reference group; thus, positive relationships between the two dummy-coded variables and other variables indicated that scores were greater in the moderate or high severity conditions.

We constructed three identical regression models, with the exception of the outcome variable, to test the hypotheses. The three control variables were entered in the first block. The two dummy-coded variables representing hazing severity were included in the second block, and the measure of organizational identification was entered in the third block. The interactions between identification and the two dummy-coded variables were included in the fourth block. The variables in blocks two and three were mean-centered prior to constructing the interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991).

The results, which are reported in Table 1, are mostly consistent with Hypotheses 1a and 1c. The change in variance associated with adding the second block to the model served as the test of the main effect for severity (Aiken & West, 1991). Adding the second block resulted in a statistically significant increase in variance explained for motivation to whistle-blow, ΔF (2, 230) = 4.19, p = .02, ΔR^2 = .03. The p-value associated with the change in variance explained for willingness to participate approached the traditional criterion for statistical significance, ΔF (2, 230) = 2.98, p = .053, ΔR^2 = .02. The beta coefficients for the dummy-coded variables were both statistically significant, indicating that

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Table 1

Results of the Regression Models Examining Hazing Severity and Organizational Identification as Predictors of Member Responses

	Willingness to participate				Motivation to stop				Intention to whistle-blow			
	β	β	β	β	β	β	β	β	β	β	β	β
Block 1: Control variables												
Participant sex (0 = male)	-.28*	-.28*	-.28*	-.30*	.22*	.22*	.23*	.24*	.26*	.26*	.27*	.29*
University (0 = Withheld)	.18*	.17*	.19*	.19*	-.21*	-.20*	-.22*	-.21*	-.27*	-.26*	-.28*	-.28
Length of membership	.12	.13*	.13*	.10	.02	.01	.01	.04	-.01	-.03	-.03	.01
Block 2: Severity												
Mod. severity (dummy)		-.16*	-.16*	-.14*		.12	.12	.11		.18*	.18*	.16*
High severity (dummy)		-.15*	-.14*	-.14*		.07	.07	.06		.18*	.18*	.18*
Block 3: Identification			.05	.30*			-.05	-.29*			-.05	-.29*
Block 4: Interactions												
Mod. severity (dummy) × Identification				-.25*				.25*				.21*
High severity (dummy) × Identification				-.21*				.19*				.24*
ΔR²	.11*	.02	.003	.04*	.08	.01	.002	.04*	.12*	.03*	.002	.04*
R²	.11*	.13*	.13*	.18*	.08*	.09*	.09*	.13*	.12*	.15*	.15*	.19*

* $p < .05$. Note. Mod. severity = Moderate severity. The variables *Moderate severity* and *High severity* were dummy coded so that the reference group consisted of the low severity condition; a positive beta coefficient for either of these variables indicates that scores for the outcome variable were larger among participants in the moderate or high severity conditions than participants in the low severity condition. VIF scores for individual predictor variables ranged from 1.002 to 2.664.

willingness to participate was significantly lower and motivation to whistle-blow was significantly higher in the medium and high severity conditions than the low severity condition. Hypothesis 1b was not supported; there were no differences in intentions to stop the hazing across the three levels of severity. Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c also were not supported. Organizational identification was not associated with any of the three outcome variables.

The tests of the interaction term showed statistically significant interaction effects that were largely consistent with Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c. The change in variance explained by adding the fourth block containing the interaction terms functioned as the test of significance for the interaction between hazing severity and organizational identification (Aiken & West, 1991). As can be seen in Table 1, adding the fourth block resulted in a statistically significant increase in variance explained for willingness to participate, $\Delta F (2, 227) = 5.67$, $p < .01$, $\Delta R^2 = .04$, intention to stop, $\Delta F (2, 226) = 5.09$, $p = .01$, $\Delta R^2 = .04$, and motivation to

whistle-blow, ΔF (2, 227) = 5.62, $p < .01$, ΔR^2 = .04. Finally, we should note that we evaluated the variance inflation factor (VIF) scores for all of the preceding models and the results offer evidence that multicollinearity among the predictor variables was not a problem. The range of VIF scores can be found in the note for Table 1.

The PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) was used to decompose the significant interaction

between organizational identification and the dummy coded variables for all three dependent measures. The results, which are illustrated in Figures 1 through 3, consistently show statistically significant associations between organizational identification and the three outcomes when hazing severity was low. The unstandardized beta coefficients indicate that, when the severity of the hazing event was low, participants who were
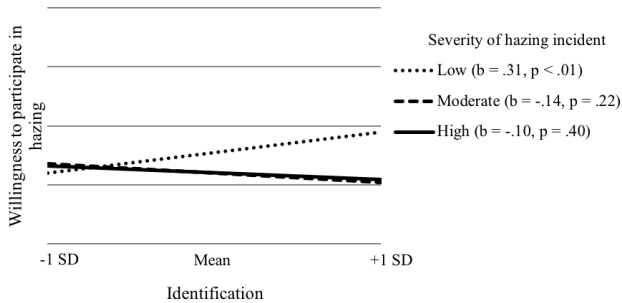

Figure 1

Organizational Identification Moderates the Relationship between Severity of Hazing Incident and Willingness to Participate in Hazing
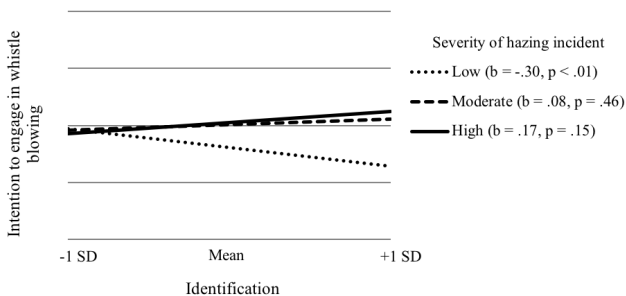

Figure 2

Organizational Identification Moderates the Relationship between Severity of Hazing Incident and Intention to Engage in Whistleblowing
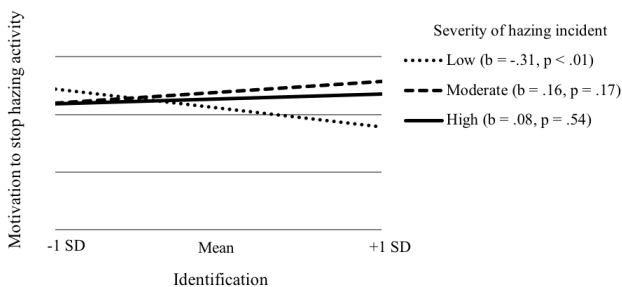

Figure 3

Organizational Identification Moderates the Relationship between Severity of Hazing Incident and Motivation to Intervene

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more identified with their fraternity or sorority were less motivated to intervene, less likely to whistle blow, and more likely to participate in hazing. When the severity of the incident was high, organizational identification was not associated with any of the three outcomes. These two findings were consistent with the predictions made in Hypotheses 3a-3c. Although Hypotheses 3a-c also predicted a significant association between identification and the three outcomes at moderate levels of severity, the simple slopes were not statistically significant when severity was moderate.

Discussion

While many studies examine organizational members' responses to wrongdoing, most use a whistleblowing/silence dichotomy that may not reflect communicative options available (Teo & Caspersz, 2011). The purpose of this study was to investigate impacts of hazing severity and organizational identification levels on fraternity/sorority members' use of several response options (participating, intervening, and whistleblowing) upon witnessing a hypothetical hazing situation. Results of this study indicate hazing severity influenced two of the three outcomes. As the hazing event became more severe, intentions to participate decreased and motivation to whistle-blow increased. Moreover, hazing severity moderated the relationships between organizational identification and the three outcomes. When severity was low, organizational identification was positively associated with willingness to participate and negatively associated with intentions to whistle-blow and motivation to stop the activity. Each of these findings will be discussed next.

Hazing Severity, Organizational Identification, and Member Responses

Though university policies and state laws are established to prevent hazing (Montague et al., 2008), this behavior persists within fraternities and sororities (Owen et al., 2008). Palmer (2013) argues that, when members of highly-cohesive groups see their co-workers behaving unethically, they are more likely to participate and less likely to dissent against the wrongdoing. Our findings support this claim to a point. Hazing severity affected willingness to participate and whistleblowing intentions such that as severity increased, participation intentions decreased and whistleblowing intentions increased. These results have important implications for efforts to end hazing. It is promising that fraternity/sorority members indicate being less likely to participate and more willing to blow the whistle against severe hazing, particularly considering harsh treatment during hazing can increase targets' dependency upon the group (Keating et al., 2005). Our findings suggest this dependency may be difficult to attain if fraternity/sorority members are indeed more likely to report harsh hazing. Moreover, being strongly identified with a fraternity or sorority had no impact on respondents' motivation to participate or attempt to report the wrongdoing when the severity of hazing was moderate or high.

Yet it is also concerning the results revealed members who were more identified with their fraternity or sorority reported being more likely to participate and less likely to intervene or whistle-blow when the severity of hazing was low. This finding suggests fraternity/sorority members see some hazing as acceptable, and even indicate a willingness to join in its practice—when they strongly identify with their organization. It is possible that fraternity/sorority members view low level hazing as a key cultural value of their organizations, making it difficult for them to see the problematic aspects of this behavior (Keating et al., 2005). In Owen et al.'s (2008) study, students recognized that having pledges run errands for active members (similar to our low severity condition) was a form of hazing; however, fraternity/sorority members in the present study may not see these behaviors as harmful, or even hazing, as they

indicated the highest level of participation for this scenario.

The lack of change in respondents' intentions to intervene across the severity conditions represents another problematic result. While it is admirable that fraternity/sorority members will increasingly whistle-blow as severity progresses, it is important to remember that whistleblowing is a process that takes time (Henik, 2008). Whistle-blowers must identify the proper target and channel for reporting wrongdoing, and deliberation over these factors takes time. It is only through intervention that hazing can be stopped in the moment. However, based upon this study's results, victims are at risk of harm if fraternity/sorority members are not willing to intervene in the moment to end hazing. Additionally, it is worth noting that, by itself, organizational identification did not predict any of the three responses to wrongdoing. When considering the question of whether organizational identification influences responses to unethical behavior, it appears the answer is "it depends" on the wrongdoing's severity. This was particularly true when severity was low. In this condition, a high level of organizational identification fostered participation, and served to undermine attempts to whistle-blow and intervene. However, these trends did not extend to the moderate and high severity conditions, supporting Jones' (1991) notion of moral intensity. Jones asserts that as an event becomes increasingly likely to cause harm, particularly in a direct and immediate manner, individuals are more likely to respond in an ethical manner. In the present study, when severity was relatively great (i.e., more than low), organizational identification had no bearing on participation, intervention, or whistleblowing. It is possible that severe hazing produces an individuation effect for observers, freeing them from organizational identification bonds and enabling them to act in ways true to their individual values (Pearce & Giacalone, 2003).

The present study contributes to a line of research examining interrelationships between organizational wrongdoing, responses, and organizational identification. Grube et al. (2010) found reporting against unsafe practices is highest when both organizational and role identities are low. Ploeger and Bisel (2013) found as members' levels of organizational identification increases, so too did their propensity to defend their organizations' unethical behavior. Such results indicate a downside to fostering organizational identification, as organizational identification reduced employees' willingness to speak out against unethical behavior. Likewise, the present study surfaced similar concerns. We found fraternity/sorority members indicate an increasing willingness to participate in hazing in low severity conditions as their organizational identification increased. This finding demonstrates the double-edge sword that is organizational identification; while, it fosters increased intent-to-stay and other positive outcomes, it may distort members' abilities to think critically and for themselves (Davis & Myers, 2012; Ploeger & Bisel, 2013). This is especially important considering the high levels of attachment members have to their fraternities/sororities (Davis & Myers, 2012; Williams & Connaughton, 2012). Fortunately, the pattern did not hold true for the more severe conditions, suggesting organizational identification has its limits when threat of harm is close and immediate.

Implications for Practitioners

This study's results offer several practical implications related to fraternities and sororities, hazing, and efforts to end it. First, universities, fraternities, and sororities, need to do a better job educating fraternity/sorority members on what is hazing. Scholars have recognized it is problematic there is not a common, uniform definition of hazing (Ellsworth, 2006; Hollmann, 2002). Based upon this study's findings, it is apparent that when a target may be injured by hazing, fraternity/sorority members are

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willing to speak out against it. However, they do not whistle-blow, and might even participate, when hazing is not health threatening. Similarly, in their study, Montague et al. (2008) found fraternity/sorority members "overwhelmingly saw a threshold past which hazing becomes inappropriate" (p. 268). Campus administrators could utilize on-campus campaigns and discussions with influential members/leaders to make sure fraternity/sorority members are able to readily identify what is hazing by legal definitions not by socially-accepted thresholds and norms.

The present study also raises questions about how to transform behavioral intent into actual behavior, particularly converting intentions to report hazing incidents to genuine interventions. Research indicates the relationship between intent and actual behavior is not as strong and direct as previously thought (Webb & Sheeran, 2006). Scholars argued individuals who engage in an implemental phase, in which they plan when, where, and how to act, are more likely to perform the behavior in question (van Hooft, Born, Taris, der Flier, & Blonk, 2005). Thus, if university and fraternity/sorority organization leaders can foster members engaging in these sorts of planning behaviors, they might be able to enhance the relationship between intent to intervene or whistleblow into actual behaviors. Role-playing provides one avenue to encourage planning behaviors. Specifically, facilitators could develop role-play scenarios depicting fraternity/ sorority members hazing pledges, while bystanders observed. The facilitator could ask observers: "When would be an appropriate time to intervene/blow the whistle?" "Where would you go to intervene/blow the whistle?" and "How would you intervene/blow the whistle?" Then, the observers could act out the behaviors they have planned. This sort of training could instill appropriate planning behaviors to facilitate the intent-action link.

The study's finding that low level hazing invites participation needs to be addressed by practitioners. Research indicates exposure to low-level unethical behavior may desensitize individuals in ways that allow them to persist with more routine and harmful types of misconduct (Fida, Tramontano, Paciello, Ghezzi, & Barbaranelli, 2018). Case study evidence suggests when large numbers of individuals participate in relatively harmless unethical behavior they create a sense of conformity that enables increasingly severe unethical activity (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). Roosevelt (2018) recommended new member activities be guided by goals, or "engaging students on the basis of what they hope to accomplish with the activity" (p. 27). Thus, university and national fraternity/ sorority leaders might engage in dialogue with local chapters about what they hope to accomplish with their new member activities. With those goals as starting points, the various stakeholders could map out the most appropriate activities, e.g. team-building, for reaching these goals. By including local chapter leaders in these conversations, they gain a sense of ownership and responsibility in designing new member activities that serve constructive purposes, rather than seemingly pointless hazing activities that serve no apparent agenda (Roosevelt, 2018).

Finally, we hope this study fosters discussion about the myriad ways individuals or small groups within hazing fraternities and sororities can positively effect change. While whistleblowing and direct intervention can reduce hazing, these acts may also invite retaliation against those who engage them. A more productive, long-term strategy involves fraternity/sorority members attempting to change the culture of their respective organizations. Methods of culture change include gaining leadership roles that facilitate culture change, creating informal coalitions with like-minded members who are against hazing, recruiting new members who share anti-hazing attitudes, and inviting alumni, university administrators, or faculty members to social events (Hassan, 2019; Westenfeld, 2019). Research should identify successful examples of

this sort of culture change so that a set of best practices can be initiated.

Limitations and Future Directions

The results of this study must be weighed against its limitations. As mentioned above, we measured behavioral intentions rather than actual behaviors. It is impossible to know whether fraternity/sorority members would employ these behaviors in real-life situations. Future research should identify those who have actually witnessed hazing, collect their responses, and derive predicting factors from these experiences. Next, the present study also failed to account for control variables, e.g. campus culture, students' academic standing, or their self-esteem, which might influence the results. Future studies could take these and additional variables into account to test their effect on the relationships between organizational identification, harmfulness, and behavioral intentions. Another possible limitation stems from our use of a convenience sample. Self-selection and other forms of bias like non-response bias may have been an issue in that participants who were more highly identified with their organization may have been more motivated to participate. Two considerations, however, should serve to mitigate such concerns. First, all respondents were awarded extra-credit in exchange for their participation. This incentive should have encouraged all eligible respondents to complete the study. Second, the use of random assignment in the experiment should ensure that any existing bias was equally distributed across conditions and should not have unduly influenced the results.

Finally, the present study only examined organizational identification without failing to consider how salient this identification is during an occurrence of unethical behavior. Considering organizational identification is situational (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998), it is possible that acts of hazing could either (a) increase organizational identification or (b) increase organizational disidentification in the moment. However, the present study only captured participants' general organizational identification state. Future research must determine how hazing affects organizational identification in situ, and then examine its effects on response behaviors.

Conclusion

The present study sought to continue research into responses to organizational wrongdoing, severity of wrongdoing, and organizational identification. On one hand, the findings are promising, suggesting as severity increases, so too do whistleblowing intentions. Still, work remains to be done in hazing education and prevention as evidenced by other findings. Indeed, this study is unique in that it identifies a condition in which organizational members admit they would participate in unethical behavior. As long as there is no apparent harm to hazing targets, fraternity/sorority members appear to be willing to participate. Such findings suggest we have a long way to go in preventing injuries, psychological trauma, and even death attributed to hazing activities.

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Appendix

Description of hazing scenarios.

Scenario 1 (not severe)

A group from your sorority/fraternity goes out to eat one night. One of the actives discovers that the waitress neglected to bring her/his table napkins. You witness the active say to one of the pledges, "Hey pledge, go get some napkins for my table." Later, when one of the actives runs out of water, you hear an active tell him, "Just send a pledge to get you some."

Scenario 2 (moderately severe)

Your sorority/fraternity has an event that requires all members to dress formally. After instructing a group of pledges to get dressed for this event, you witness a group of actives throwing water balloons at the pledges.

Scenario 3 (most severe)

During a rush event, you witness a group of actives insisting that a group of pledges continue to drink heavily. It is evident that the pledges are already intoxicated. After the pledges have consumed the alcohol as requested by the actives, the actives ask the pledges to participate in a series of physical activities such as jogging in place, doing lunges across the floor, push-ups, and jumping-jacks. During this, many of the pledges become ill.

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