

They're just as sadistic as any group of boys! A content analysis of news coverage of sport-related hazing incidents in high schools.

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This article describes a content analysis of newspaper coverage of two instances of high school hazing, both by athletes and both receiving national attention. One incident involved females hazing underclassmen at a Powderpuff football game and the other involved football players from Long Island at a pre-season camp. Results showed that, while female hazing needed to be explained and contextualized, in general, the male hazing did not. It is argued this is because media coverage of both deviance and sport is highly gendered, relying on hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. Hazing by males is considered par for the course. Further, commentary about the incidents demonstrated racial and class biases.

Keywords: Hazing, hegemonic masculinity, emphasized femininity, high school sports

INTRODUCTION

Hazing of all types, especially those occurring in sport, has received widespread attention since the 1990s (see Johnson & Holman, 2004; Lenskyj, 2004; Nuwer, 2000; Nuwer, 2004a; Nuwer, 2004b; Oliff, 2002; Walsh, 2000). In 2003, much attention was focused on two high school hazing incidents in sport-related activities: one involving females at a Powderpuff football game in Northglenn, Illinois and another involving male football players from Long Island at a pre-season football camp. A special issue of the journal *CQ Researcher* focused on hazing and featured both cases in January 2004. More recently, the Web site badjocks.com, as well as many national news outlets including *ABC*, *CBS*, *CNN*, and *Fox*, featured coverage of hazing, largely at the collegiate level. Contrary to the goofy *Animal House* (1978) image people might have of hazing, many of these incidents are serious, violent, and criminal. Dr. Finkel, an emergency room physician, has often treated college hazing victims for irreversible intracranial damage, blunt abdominal organ damage, third degree burns, heat stroke, and suffocation, and other physical ailments (Finkel, 2004).

While both the Glenbrook North and Mephram incidents received a great deal of media coverage, both national and local, the tone of that coverage differed tremendously. This difference was largely due to the use of gendered assumptions and discourse about males and females in general, about males and females involved in sport, and about male and female crimes and violence. These gendered assumptions are not atypical; in fact, much research indicates that coverage of both deviance and sport is rife with the use of such discourse (Benedict, 1992; Boutilier & San Giovanni, 1983; Brackenridge, 2002; Cavender, Bond-Maupin, & Jurik, 1999; Connell, 1987; Cuklanz, 2000; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Holtzman, 2000; Lenskyj, 2003; Madriz, 1997). Analyzing the ways that the media covers gendered issues in sport and crime is important, as it is clear that many people learn about these topics largely from the media. For instance, as Kappeler, Blumberg, and Potter (2000) noted, the average American citizen receives as much as 96 percent of their information about crime and criminal justice from the media. The problem is, as Surette (1992) explained, "We have been conditioned to receive the entertainment and knowledge the media provide

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without considering where this entertainment and knowledge come from, what effect they have on our attitudes and perceptions, and how they affect society” (p. ix). Consequently, if coverage of hazing relies on gender stereotypes, readers or viewers may not only absorb the content of the material, but the stereotype as well.

This paper describes a content analysis comparing the newspaper coverage of the hazing incident by girls from Glenbrook North High School and boys from Mepham High School. A brief examination of the literature regarding sport hazing, gender in the media, and gendered coverage of crime and sport is included below. This is followed by a detailed description of the two incidents, research methodology, findings, and conclusions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sport Hazing: Origin, Prevalence, and Explanation

Hazing has a long history in the United States. The practice was borrowed from Europeans, where members of the aristocracy practiced fagging in prep schools. Fagging was defined as “the right exercised by the older boy to make the younger do what he likes, and what the younger one generally dislikes” (Nuwer, 1990, p. 117). The claim was that it was human nature for boys to behave horribly at times, much like the modern boys will be boys mentality. Not only does the practice of hazing persist in U.S. high schools, it has remained a largely (although not exclusively) masculine practice, occurring on sports teams, in the military, in fraternities, and in other clubs and organizations (Allan, 2004; Allan & DeAngelis, 2004; Arnold, 2004; Jones, 2004; Lenskyj, 2004; Malszecki, 2004; Nuwer, 2000; Nuwer, 2004b; Sweet, 2004). Nuwer, who has authored several books and articles and Web-based information on the subject, defined hazing as, “when veteran members of a class or group require newcomers to endure demeaning or dangerous or silly rituals, or to give up status temporarily, with the expectation of gaining group status and acceptance into the group, as a result of their participation” (cited in Oliff, 2002, p. 22). In a recent survey of high school students involved in at least one group activity, however, 39% of the females reported having been hazed and 17% were involved in hazing that is dangerous (Walsh, 2000). These statistics suggest that female hazing is on the rise, although it still occurs less frequently than male hazing. In general, female hazing tends to be less violent (Allan, 2004).

According to researchers at Alfred University, approximately 1.5 million high school students are hazed each year, with about half of the victims being athletes (Walsh, 2000). Of these, almost one quarter were required to engage in substance abuse as part of the hazing. Twenty-two percent were subjected to dangerous hazing, defined as “any humiliating or dangerous activity expected of you to join a group, regardless of your willingness to participate” (Walsh, 2000, p. 14). Hazing is likely more common in competitive, contact sports, where aggression is rewarded (Tucker & Parks, 2001). These sports tend still to be dominated by males with some such as football and ice hockey rarely having female participants at the high school level.

Little research has focused on female hazing specifically, although it represents an interesting intersection of gender issues in sport and deviance. Allan (2004) acknowledged this, explaining that most research has focused on male hazing and has used gender, sexism, and homophobia as explanation. Holman (2004) explained “It would not be humiliating to dress like a woman if women were held in high regard and considered equals” (p. 55). While both males and females use sexual objectification in their hazing practices, women are more

likely to use objectification as the object of the hazing, whereas men more frequently objectify women as a prop for homoerotic hazing (Allan, 2004). When men use sexually explicit forms of hazing, they most often do so in front of a male audience (Allan, 2004).

Messner (1992) elaborated on how male-on-male hazing, even those incidents that are overtly sexual, is not generally considered either by the perpetrators or by the broader society to be homosexual in nature. "The answer is that the erotic bond between men is neutralized through overt homophobia and through the displacement of the erotic towards women as objects of sexual talk and practice" (p. 96). Robinson (1998) described how sexually objectifying forms of male hazing exemplify gender opposition and are part of what Farr (1988) called dominance bonding. "Somehow, by humiliating and degrading a man and stripping him of his humanity, he becomes less than a man. The only people who aren't men in this world are women, and...someone's got to take that role in a man's world where women don't exist" (p. 79). Tiger (2004) maintained that hazing activities often take the form of male on male courtship, whereby males can establish status with other males. Lenskyj (2004) likened male sexual-related hazing incidents to gang rapes, asserting that both are ways to manifest "status, hostility, control, and dominance" (p. 92). Male athletes hold closely to a code of silence that prohibits someone from blowing the whistle on athletes who commit physical and sexual assault in the name of group bonding. "Years of experience within the group have taught these boys that they will be rewarded for remaining complicit with the code of silence and punished for betraying the group. They know that a whistleblower might be banished from the group and possibly also beaten up. Or he might remain in the group, but now with the status of the degraded, feminized 'faggot' who betrayed the 'men' in the group" (Messner, 1992, p. 47). Some victims have even asked that they be hazed, despite a group's efforts to eliminate the practice, because they are concerned their sexuality will be questioned (Allen, 2004).

As Nixon (1997) explained, the traditional exclusion of females from sport and sport coverage has resulted in little attention to aggressive female athletes. According to Coakley (2003), though, "If we want to understand violence in sports, we must understand gender ideology and issues of masculinity in culture" (p. 208-9). Research regarding female sport deviance in general is relatively new and still quite sparse (Coakley, 2003). Deviance refers to violations of the norms of sport, and generally includes negative forms (those who do not measure up to the norms of their sport) and positive forms (those who go beyond the norms of their sport) (Coakley, 2003). In fact, it wasn't until the 1970s that females were a focus of any type of criminological studies or considered in the development of theory (Messerschmidt, 1993).

Coakley (2003) maintained that deviance in sport is often a result of over-conformity to the sport ethic. The sport ethic is primarily associated with male-dominated sports and hence is intricately tied to notions of masculinity. There are four norms that constitute the sport ethic: athletes make sacrifices for the game; athletes strive for distinction; athletes accept risks and play through pain; and athletes accept no limits in their pursuit of sport (Coakley, 2003). Connell (1987) explained that sport is viewed as empowering for males because it authorizes attaining power through physical force and skill. In explaining why the sport ethic is more applicable to males, Pronger (1990) stated, "Boys and men who are willing to put themselves through such violence do so out of an attachment to the meaning of orthodox masculinity. The pain is worth it because masculinity is worth it" (p. 23). The media promotes the sport ethic through their commentary about athletes, their advertisements, and their film and television depictions (Coakley, 2003). Again, this

mediated emphasis on the sport ethic tends to be male-oriented, generally stressing males who exhibit these characteristics (Messner, 2002; Messner & Sabo, 1994). Since it is still true that being an athlete is the primary criteria for male popularity, when adolescent and adult males are viewed in aggressive and violent sport activities “these males help to provide a masculine standard against which all males judge themselves” (Katz, 1996, p. 105).

The sport ethic may encourage hazing. Hazing or initiation rituals allow athletes to reaffirm they are unique and extraordinary (Nuwer, 1990), thus some individuals and teams may seek to do bigger, better forms of hazing. Sport-related violence in general is often grounded in over-conformity to the sport ethic. It may be difficult for males in contact sports to know where to draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable violence, and it seems as though teammates, coaches, and sport organizations do not work very hard to emphasize the importance of doing so. Female athletes, too, may have this problem, but it is less common since aggression in sport is not tied to femininity in the way that it is tied to masculinity (Coakley, 2003). As Messerschmidt (1993) explained, the participation in sport “creates an environment for the construction of masculinity that celebrates toughness and endurance, incessantly advocates competitiveness and shame of losing, and connects a sense of maleness with a taste of violence and confrontation” (p. 93). Males often see violence that occurs within the rules of a sport activity as legitimate and normal (Messner, 1992). A great deal of research supports the contention that males view in-sport aggression, both rule-breaking and rule-adhering forms, as more acceptable than do females (Benedict, 1998a; Benedict, 1998b; Tucker & Parks, 2001). Off-field violence by male athletes is also often tolerated, and male athletes are disproportionately represented in criminal cases involving assaults on women (Benedict, 1997; Benedict, 1998a; Benedict, 1998b; Benedict, 1998a; Benedict, 1998b; Benedict & Klein, 1998). Off-field violence is generally considered unacceptable for female athletes (Coakley, 2003; Nixon, 1997).

Gender and the Media

It is well documented that all types of media rely heavily on stereotypes in their coverage of issues concerning gender (Benedict, 1992; Connell, 1987; Cucklanz, 2000; Holtzman, 2000; Kimmel, 2000; Messner, 1992). As Cavender, Bond-Maupin, and Jurik (1999) asserted, “In modern, complex societies, the media disseminate gendered images” (p. 643). According to Benedict (1992), the most common portrayals of females are as sex objects, glamour girls, or alluring sirens. Holtzman (2000) documented that women in all media are portrayed as being in relationships rather than careers and as seeking romance more frequently than male characters on television and in film; in essence, the media stresses their domestic interests. Some scholars use the terms hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity to describe the way media does gender (Connell, 1987). “Hegemonic masculinity today is a matter of the subordination of women, authority, aggression, and technical competence. Emphasized femininity is subordinate to and defined by hegemonic masculinity. [It is] organized around themes of dependence, sexual receptivity, and motherhood” (Cavender, et al., 1999, p. 644). Similarly, masculinity is often characterized as “tough, professional, public, outdoor, and strong, whereas femininity is sensitive, domestic, private, indoor, and weak” (Cucklanz, 2000, p. 20). Messner (1992) explained how boys learn to define their gender identity: “Indeed, boys learn early that if it is difficult to define masculinity in terms of what it *is*, it is at least clear what it is *not*. A boy is not considered masculine if he is feminine” (pp 35-36).

Gendered Crime Coverage

Media coverage of gender is especially problematic regarding crime and sport. Both have tended to represent gender through the prism of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. Perhaps this is due to the fact that males have historically dominated both areas. Regarding crime, males are more frequently offenders as well as victims and typically control criminal justice institutions. Gender has been called the best predictor of criminality (Schmallegger, 2002). Further, males have long had more opportunity to participate in and control sports (Sperber, 2000).

Rafter and Stanko (1982) described several images of female offenders used in the media, all of which reflect notions of emphasized femininity. First, deviant women are seen as the pawn of biology, where they succumb to the hormonal influences of menopause and PMS. Second, women are viewed as impulsive and non-analytical. Third, active women are portrayed as masculine and thus deviant. Finally, criminal women are depicted as purely evil. Media coverage of female delinquency stressed the increase in female arrests in the mid to late 1990s, emphasizing that girls are becoming more like boys (Chesney-Lind, 1999). Some of the first criminologists to consider female offenders theorized that as women made gains in the workplace, they would also offend at increased rates and in different ways. This was known as the liberation hypothesis (Schmallegger, 2002). It follows, then, that as women made gains in sport there would also be more sport-related deviance committed by females. Others have said the media is to blame for the rise in female violence by portraying aggressive young women as attractive and successful. For instance, an *Education Digest* article cited the movie *Dazed and Confused* (1993) as well as the 1970s hit *Animal House* (1978) as modeling for students how to haze (Oliff, 2002). Some have even blamed the Girl (or Grrl) Power movement of the 1990s, suggesting that rather than teach girls self-confidence it has taught them to be bullies (Girl power, 1998).

As victims, women are depicted in two primary ways, as virgins or as vamps. This is especially true in cases of sexual assault and is typically the result of rape myths. According to Benedict (1992), these myths are presented in the media, used in the courtroom, and shape public understanding of a crime. For example, one myth is that the victim provoked the rape through her sexuality, or, similarly, she deserved to be raped based on her reckless behavior. These are part of a larger myth, referred to as the just world ideology, which instructs people that bad things don't happen to good people. By default, then, if a bad thing like rape happens to a woman, she must have done something to warrant it. Applied to other instances with female victims, the just world ideology explains that we should assume the victim is partially complicit in her own victimization.

Gendered Sport Coverage

Like media coverage of crime, sport coverage also suffers from stereotypical portrayals of masculinity and femininity. Men's sports still receive over eighty percent of the total coverage of sport (Coakley, 2003). When women are covered, they are often described as girls, and words indicating weakness, such as weary and dejected, are used more frequently than in coverage of male athletes (Duncan & Messner, 1998). Commentators also spend more time discussing female athletes' personalities, rather than their achievements (Horne, Tomlinson, & Whannel, 1999). Further, sport journalism is a gendered institution; most reporters are male and their work is scheduled around the timing of men's sports (Coakley, 2003; Nuwer, 2004a). Some scholars have argued, "sport has proven to be one of the key

institutional sites for the study of the social construction of gender” (Duncan & Messner, 2002, p. 17). Attitudes toward the institution of sport both generate and support sexist beliefs about gender. “Descriptions of the performance of female athletes are likely to reflect the dominant beliefs about gender in the larger society” (Jones, Morrell, & Jackson, 1999, p. 184).

Media coverage of male sports tends to reaffirm masculinity. Coverage of female sports is often intended to assure readers or viewers that the athletes are heterosexual, since the assumption that active women are masculine at least, if not lesbians, holds true here as well. Such coverage thereby reifies traditional notions of what is feminine (Lenskyj, 2003). Male athletes are typically **assumed** to be heterosexual, although Knight and Guiliano’s (2003) research suggested that male athletes in less masculine sports (e.g., gymnastics and figure-skating) are also susceptible to the image problem. As Katz (1996) asserted, “because violence is equated with masculinity, it is impossible, in the context of sports, to be too violent. That would be like saying someone is ‘too masculine.’ On the other hand, if a male is not sufficiently aggressive, his masculinity is likely to be called into question” (p. 105). Knight and Guiliano (2003) found that male and female athletes perceived by viewers as clearly heterosexual are viewed more favorably than those whose sexuality is more ambiguous. One way the media addresses the image problem is by highlighting the personal characteristics of female athletes, emphasizing their attractiveness and domestic interests (Coakley, 2003; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998; Lenskyj, 2003).

Messner, Dunbar and Hunt (2000) found several themes in their analysis of sport programming identified as the programs most watched by boys aged 8-17. One theme was that sport is a man’s world. “Images or discussion of women athletes is almost entirely absent in the sports programs that most boys watch” (Messner, et al., 2000, p. 382). The implication is that female sport is of little to no interest. When it does receive coverage, then, it is often sensationalistic. Further, aggressive males succeed, while nice guys fail in sport, according to televised sport programming. “This injunction for boys and men to be aggressive, not passive, is reinforced in commercials, where a common formula is to play on the insecurities of young males (e.g., that they are not strong enough, tough enough, smart enough, rich enough, attractive enough, decisive enough, etc)” (Messner, et al., 2000, p. 386). In addition, “announcers often took a humorous ‘boys will be boys’ attitude in discussing fights or near-fights during contests, and they also commonly used a recent fight, altercation, or disagreement between two players as a ‘teaser’ to build audience excitement” (Messner, et al., 2000, p. 387). Players are also admonished to play through the pain. If they do not they may be berated by announcers, often in terms associated with femininity (Coakley, 2003; Messner, et al., 2000; Messner & Sabo, 1994).

In sum, men are expected to act aggressively, both in and out of sport, because that is part of the dominant definition of masculinity. When males act aggressively in sport, either on or off the field, it is generally accepted as normal—both normal gender behavior and normal sport behavior. On the reverse, women are not supposed to act aggressively, either in or out of sport. When they do, they are generally considered less than feminine. Because females sometimes do act aggressively in sport, for instance, when they are involved in certain types of hazing, it requires extra examination and contextualization by the media, since it contradicts the traditional conceptualization of femininity. To date, some work has stressed the way media covers hazing in general (see Nuwer, 2004a), but no research has examined the notions of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity to coverage of

hazing. This piece is a first attempt to fill that gap and to contribute to the growing bodies of work in gender and sport and media depictions of crime.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INCIDENTS

Powderpuff Football at Glenbrook North

In all, six juniors were injured, 31 seniors were expelled, and 20 juniors from Glenbrook North High School were disciplined as a result of the hazing that occurred at the Powderpuff football game held May 4, 2003 in Chipilly Woods near Chicago. The community was taken aback when news of the incident broke, as the school was highly regarded. *Newsweek* had recently selected Glenbrook North as among the top four percent of high schools in the country. The incident involved both verbal and physical violence, and at least twenty juniors total were targeted. Some victims were punched and kicked and one had a cooler slammed over her head. They were covered with urine, paint, fish guts, and trash, wrapped with pig intestines, and smeared with feces. One girl needed stitches and another had a broken ankle. One was forced to eat excrement, resulting in a bacterial infection. All of this was videotaped and viewed around the world.

The girls, as well as a few boys who were involved, were sanctioned by the school and tried criminally. Twenty-eight of the thirty-one expelled students signed waivers allowing them to graduate (but not attend the graduation ceremony), providing they completed community service and counseling. The waiver also barred them from exploiting the incident with a book or movie deal. The juniors involved were also asked to sign the waivers. In their case, their suspensions would be rescinded if they agreed to undergo counseling, community service, and not to profit from the events. Several refused to sign, as they felt that they had committed no wrong in attending the event. When principal Michael Riggle announced the ten-day suspensions--the maximum punishment allowed--several parents responded as though it was too harsh. Three families sought legal orders to rescind the suspensions, claiming that the missed school would irreparably harm the girls. The suit has since been dismissed.

Sixteen students were charged with misdemeanor battery. Twelve pleaded guilty to the charges and the remainder was found guilty. Most received community service and/or probation and were required to steer clear of the victims and remain drug and alcohol free. None received jail time. Three people, including two parents and one young man already on probation for a different offense, pleaded guilty to providing alcohol for minors. Marcy Spiwak admitted in court that she allowed underage teens to drink in her home prior to the event. Judge Timothy Chambers allowed many of the girls involved to travel for college orientations pending the outcome of their cases.

Pre-season Football Camp at Mephram High

Sixty football players at Mephram High School were taken to a pre-season training camp for five days in western Pennsylvania. While there, three players, ages 15, 16 and 17, used broomsticks, pine cones and golf balls to sodomize three freshman players on at least three occasions and over three or four days. One report says there were as many as ten attacks on the three victims, with at least one so vicious it caused a witness to vomit. One assailant was a senior lineman who had lettered in football his last three years. He was one of six seniors selected as a bunk captain for the trip and is a Boy Scout. One of the juniors, Kevin

Carney, had been suspended before for disciplinary violations. In a December 2003 article, he was castigated as being a bully who had previously made sexual threats against a female teacher and was kicked off the baseball team.

The assailants allegedly brought the broomsticks used in the attacks to the camp with them, as well as stereos that some have reported were used to muffle the sound of the attacks. According to several reports, the broomsticks were dipped in Mineral Ice, an ointment that burns when applied to sensitive skin, and then used to sodomize the young players. Younger boys were also allegedly sprayed with shaving cream, had powder and gel put in their eyes and hair, and had the hair ripped off their legs and buttocks with duct tape. A Black player on the team was also allegedly subject to racial harassment at the camp.

The boys stayed in five different cabins. No coaches stayed with them, and the coaches claimed they were unaware of any hazing at the camp. Initially, the victimized boys said nothing, but eventually they told their parents, as they were experiencing continued bleeding from the attacks. One had to endure a surgical procedure.

The school board of Mephram High School voted to cancel the football season before it got underway because so many players were obviously aware of the attacks and had done nothing to intervene or to tell the coaches, a violation of the district's code of conduct. The three accused assailants were suspended from school. Head Coach Kevin McElroy later apologized for the incidents, but still denied that he knew anything about them until after the team returned from camp. There is some suggestion, however, that similar incidents had occurred in the past.

Authorities were considering trying the boys as adults based on the severity of the event. Had they done so, the boys would have faced a possible sentence of 15 years in prison without parole. The boys were eventually charged as juveniles for more than 10 crimes, including involuntary deviant sexual intercourse, aggravated assault, kidnapping, and unlawful restraint-all first and second-degree felonies. Three defendants admitted sodomizing the younger players and received sentences ranging from military-style boot camp to probation in January 2004. As of late October 2003, the three victims had filed legal notices of their intent to sue the assailants. The authors were unable to find updates about these lawsuits at the time of this writing.

RESEARCH METHODS

Methodology

This research is a content analysis comparing news coverage of these two high profile incidents of high school sport-related hazing. These incidents were selected for a number of reasons. As scholars of the sociology of sport, both authors are interested in sport deviance and gender issues in sport. The topic of hazing is at the intersection of these, prompting our interest in comparing hazing incidents committed by males and hazing incidents committed by females. Second, having both worked as high school coaches and both written previously about issues concerning deviance among high school-aged populations, we wanted to compare incidents related to hazing in high schools. Drawing on the work of Nuwer (2004a), we wanted to see how the media discusses high school hazing involving males and high school hazing involving females. In regard to the specific cases selected for this analysis, they occurred within six months of one another, and both received national coverage, on television

as well as in newspapers and magazines. These incidents thus provided an opportunity for greater understanding of the gendered discourse surrounding one form of sport violence.

The research was intended to answer the following general questions we developed from the review of literature:

1. In what ways, if any, did media coverage of these cases use the framework of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity to describe offenders?
2. In what ways, if any, did media coverage of these cases use the framework of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity to describe victims?
3. In what ways, if any, did media coverage of these cases use the framework of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity to describe the response to the incidents?

Sample Selection

News coverage used in the analysis was identified through a search conducted in Lexis Nexis Academic database. After initially selecting these two incidents, Hazing at Glenbrook North High School and Hazing at Mepham High School were used as search words. The database identifies the 125 news pieces that best fit the search parameters. Of these, we eliminated those that were repeats (for example, an article from a local paper is picked up by the Associated Press), although we did include informative as well as editorial pieces. No effort was made to distinguish between local and national coverage. The vast majority of pieces, however, came from large sources reaching national audiences, such as the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *New York Daily News*. Also included were multiple pieces chronicling televised coverage or interviews, such as transcripts from *CBS Morning*, *ABC*, and *CNN*. Many pieces included in the analysis were from the *Associated Press*. A total of forty articles about Glenbrook North and forty-nine about Mepham were included in the analysis and are listed in the references.

Analysis

Following the work of Altheide (1996) and Merriam (1998), this was a qualitative document analysis seeking to capture the meanings, emphasis, and themes of the coverage. The goal was not to quantify specific concepts but rather to see if, and in what ways, the coverage of the incidents differed. We recognize that one limitation of this type of methodology is that other researchers might develop different themes and might classify these examples differently and that findings from this research cannot generalize to coverage of other incidents of hazing. Rather, it was intended to be an exploratory study and a starting point for a gender-based analysis of hazing coverage.

Using a process similar to analytic induction (Merriam, 1998), each researcher identified salient points from the articles and created a list of themes in the overall coverage by gender. These themes were then shared, and the researchers continually refined them until a collaborative list was developed, as described by Merriam (1998). Each researcher then separately categorized the news pieces as fitting into one or more theme, for instance, one piece might include gendered language as well as race and class concerns.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Use of Gendered Language

Perhaps the most obvious difference in the coverage of the two incidents was the shock expressed that girls were involved in hazing. This type of shock was unparalleled in news about the Mephram incident. The articles about Mephram were not completely lacking a tone of shock, but the shock was expressed in regard to the atrocity, severity, and sexual nature of the attacks. Although the articles did not specifically emphasize that the sexual violence was between males, it is likely that at least part of the tone was due to this. This is distinct from the coverage of the Glenbrook North incident in that no one expressed surprise that boys themselves would haze.

In fact, the girls' actions were compared to the violence that is virtually expected of males in general, and male athletes, specifically. An article that exemplified this reliance on gendered language and illustrating the sense of shock at female violence was titled *Rough, tough, cream puffs? Girls are bullies, too, these days and that aggression can go too far*. The same article cited a public school teacher: "Women have tried for equality. They've also taken some of the negatives of male behavior" (Devlin, 2003, p. E1). Another article stated, "Boys will be boys? Not this time. The perpetrators and victims were all girls" (Girl troubles..., 2003, p. 1). Later, the same article cited a male classmate of the girls involved in the hazing. "I was in complete awe... To see girls doing that to other girls..." (p. 1). In describing the expulsions of some of the girls involved, one Pennsylvania editorial relied on gender stereotypes, "Suspension and the prospect of jail couldn't have come at a worse time for young women who, until recently, had only to fret over the arcane details of prom dresses and graduation" (Hard on hazing, 2003, p. A16).

Further illustrating the use of gendered language, two articles about Glenbrook North specifically invoked the sugar and spice adage about girls' behavior. One of the authors claimed these girls were every bit "as sadistic as any random group of boys" (Hard on hazing, 2003, p. A16). The other article that used this phrase was about the Glenbrook North Powderpuff Booster Web site, which offered decidedly gendered and inappropriate memorabilia commemorating the hazing. Polo shirts with "GBN: Our Girls Can Kick Your Girls' Asses," frisbees that say, "I was playing Frisbee while all the girls in my school beat the crap out of each other at Powder Puff," and bumper stickers proclaiming, "Proud parent of a GBN Powder Puff Girl. My daughter can kick your honor student's ass," are available for purchase through the site (Smith, 2003, p. 24). Interestingly, the author of this piece provided no commentary about the appropriateness of this entrepreneurial activity.

In addition to the shock that females were involved in hazing, a good part of the dismay expressed in the articles about Glenbrook North was tied to social class and race. Several articles specifically described the Glenbrook North girls as wealthy, white, affluent, or suburban. In contrast, only one article mentioned the social class of the Mephram boys, and none even hinted at their race. This is despite the fact that, allegedly, there was an incident of racial harassment of a Black player at the Mephram camp. For example, witness this quote from a *Christian Science Monitor* article: "But what really seems to be striking a chord with many commentators-and ensuring that the footage has been playing on news stations around the clock since the story broke on Wednesday-is that these were girls being so brutal to each other. Middle-class, suburban, high-school girls" (Paulson, Gardner, & Paul, 2003, p. 4). Another article compared the hazing with attempts to create order in Baghdad, asserting that

it is “suburban Chicago that needs civilizing,” especially these privileged, white, upper-middle class kids (Russo, 2003, p. A29). Another stated, “Despite all their privilege, they had failed to learn a basic moral prohibition against cruelty” (Hymowitz, 2003, p. 11).

Several articles expressed contempt for the punishment the girls received, especially the way that their privileged parents reacted to those punishments. For instance, one article compared the girls’ relatively mild punishments with that meted out to the African-American boys involved in a fistfight in Decatur, Illinois several years ago. The author argued that the race of the girls was a protective factor and was definitely not for the Decatur boys (Mitchell, 2003). Another article used race and class to respond to a quote by a community member, Mark Damisch. Damisch maintained the girls were just goofs (Kelly, 2003). The response: “Damisch’s words reflect the bizarre moral system of at least some of the adult denizens of middle-class America. Beating a girl with a baseball bat is just a goofy prank, or at worst, an unfortunate personal decision. What really matters in life is going to Brown” (Kelly, 2003, p. 44). One article attempted to explain the media fascination with the Glenbrook incident, explaining the excessive airing of the videotaping as erotic and a function of the fact that the incident involved wealthy white girls, a population not typically assumed to be nor portrayed as violent (Taylor, 2003).

Blame For the Incidents

The hazing by Glenbrook North girls was often described in relation to the increase (or perceived increase) in female violence on the whole. In opposition, none of the articles about the Mephram incident explained the violence that occurred there as a function of male violence in general, despite the fact that males are much more likely to commit and be the victims of violence. For example, one article explained that society says we must fight for what we want, and since girls tend to have less access to achieve what they want in other ways, they must fight even harder. The same article attributed some of the blame for female violence on the media, explaining that shows such as *Alias* and films like *Charlie’s Angels* (2000) demonstrate successful, attractive, and aggressive females (Taylor, 2003). Invoking another popular culture reference, one article said “Now that Buffy the Vampire Slayer has finished her duty at Sunnydale, perhaps someone can charge her with responsibility for Northbrook” (Greeley, 2003, p. 41). A *Current Events* article explained that increasing numbers of girls are being charged with crimes and sent to juvenile detention centers, although later explained this as partly due to policing and arrest policies (Girl troubles... 2003).

Many articles, however, explained male hazing as part of the sporting culture, something noticeably absent from the coverage of Glenbrook North. While this may be due in part to the fact that the females were participating in a one-time incident rather than an organized season, it also likely reflects the fact that males in general, and male athletes in particular, are expected to exhibit some degree of aggressive behavior. Thus, unlike the situation in Glenbrook, which needed explanation because it defied the common feminine stereotypes, male hazing seemed to require little explanation. Similarly, many articles included quotes in which speakers, generally community members, expressed dismay at the failure of the Mephram football hazers to consider the team and to be leaders. Wayne County District Attorney Mark Zimmer commented that the boys betrayed the trust they had been entrusted as leaders of the team (Hutchinson, 2003). An editorial used British Statesman Edmund Burke’s 18th century admonition, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing” to display the conflicting definitions of what constitutes a

“masculine” leader. Is a manly leader someone who honors codes of silence and remains loyal to teammates regardless of their activity, or is a leader someone who has the courage to tell officials when something has gone wrong” (One brave witness, 2003, p. A40)? None of the articles admonished the girls for their failure to lead; this language was reserved for discourse about the boys.

Although the vast majority of articles about both cases expressed sympathy for the victims, some of the coverage about Glenbrook North implied the juniors were somehow complicit in their victimization. By attending the Powderpuff event, where hazing of younger girls had occurred in the past, these girls put themselves into a risky position. The implication that victims should have known better was not found in any of the articles about Mephram, again despite the literature suggesting hazing in male athletics is far more common. One article about Glenbrook North demonstrated this theme when an attorney for one of the hazers explained that not only did adults know that similar hazing had occurred at the Powderpuff game in years prior and did nothing to stop it, but that his client had previously been one of the victims. He stated, “It was what she would have anticipated would have occurred in 2003,” (Fuller, 2003, p. 6). By implication, **anyone** should have known what would occur in the forest. Likewise, the article that described the Web site where students can purchase bumper stickers, t-shirts and the like commemorating the hazing said the site also listed the various materials that had been mixed together and thrown on the younger girls in previous years, again suggesting that those involved should have known what they were likely to face at the game (Smith, 2003). Another article stated, “One junior expected to be doused with ketchup” (Kelly, 2003, p. 44). While she got more than she bargained for, such language indicates the younger girls knew they would endure some type of hazing.

Conversely, the male victims were criticized for **telling** about their victimization, but were not seen as complicit. The problem with victims telling about their victimization is taken up in greater detail later.

Sexual Emphasis

The coverage of the Mephram incident often stressed the sexual nature of the hazing, describing in vivid detail the sodomy inflicted on the younger boys. Perhaps the best example of this focus on the sexual nature of the football hazing is the scene that played out in October. Eight family members from a Topeka, Kansas church gathered on the sidewalks in front of the school to place the blame for the incident on the school’s teaching of tolerance. The Phelps family is well known for their anti-gay protests at inappropriate locations and times. In Florida, for instance, legislation was recently passed banning protests at funeral services. This legislation emanated from the Phelps’ and followers activities at services for deceased soldiers. One held a sign saying God Hates Fags, while member Margie Phelps stated, “When you teach children that it’s okay to indulge in any kind of sex act that they like...that it’s okay to be gay, it is inevitable that they will end up being violent and doing things that they shouldn’t” (Weir, 2003b, p.9). Approximately 400 counter-demonstrators met the protesters, four adults and four children.

Another article cited Harvard Graduate School of Education professor Mike Nakkila as not being surprised that the victims and witnesses at Mephram were hesitant to come forward. He said, “For anyone, especially teenage boys, admitting involvement in anything of a sexual nature is both embarrassing and humiliating” (Eltman, 2003b, para. 16). Students from other schools taunted the boys from Mephram, which was discussed in several articles.

Others have mocked the Mephram kids as Butt Pirates, playing on their team name of Pirates (Edelman, 2003, p.011). A *Sports Illustrated* article described in great detail the sodomy and other sex-related acts. It also highlighted the taunting the assailants faced when their identity became known at Mephram. "The cruel taunts and nicknames-football fag, broomstick boy, butt pirate-came shortly thereafter" (Wahl & Wertheim, 2003, p.68). Further, the same article attempted to explain the sexual nature of the attacks, comparing it to prison rape and explaining that it was about power. Of course, the hazing at Glenbrook North was indeed less sexual, as none of the girls were penetrated. Nonetheless, the decision to focus on the erotic element of the incident between boys reflects the public titillation with homoeroticism. It is especially scandalous when it occurs in the context of a masculine sport.

What Should Be Done

In addition to the ways the incidents were described, coverage also differed in regard to the suggested consequences. Whereas there were numerous articles detailing community members' desire for the girls to be counseled and rehabilitated, no mention was made for such an approach with the male perpetrators. Most articles that described the Glenbrook incident explained that the perpetrators had to undergo community service and counseling after their conviction. The only articles expressing the desire for the girls to be punished more harshly were editorials (Greeley, 2003). Articles about Mephram were far more likely to quote those recommending the harshest, zero-tolerance style punishments, despite the fact that the boys actually received more lenient treatment in juvenile court. Editorials also stressed the desire to punish the boys as severely as possible. One column by Rick Wolff, chairman of the Center for Sports Parenting, stressed that, "The only way to seriously stop this nonsense is to empower the school districts, athletic directors and coaches with the law of zero tolerance" (Wolff, 2003, p. A43). David Woycik, an attorney for one of the victims, stated that an immediate concern was that the perpetrators of the crime be brought to justice for their heinous crime and advocated the harshest punishment possible (Eltman, 2003b). Wayne County District Attorney Mark Zimmer advocated trying the boys as adults (Bergstrom, 2003). One Bellmore resident was quoted saying, "These kids are criminals! They should go to prison!" (Givens, 2003, p. A04).

Further, responses to the punishments varied greatly, according to what was reported. While parents at Glenbrook North were concerned that the suspensions of their daughters might adversely affect their college chances as well as their enjoyment of the remainder of their schooling (i.e., prom and their graduation ceremony), no one at Mephram expressed this concern. Instead, the only problem expressed in the articles about Mephram is that the cancellation of the football season would reduce their sons' chances to obtain football scholarships. These reactions reflect, in part, gender assumptions and demonstrate underlying social class assumptions. It seems to be assumed that girls, especially affluent ones, will care about missing prom and graduation ceremonies. Boys are not expected to care about such things, but being upset at missing a sport season is supposedly in their nature. Interestingly, although the boys at Mephram were being punished far more severely by the legal system than the girls at Glenbrook, many of the articles did not comment on the harshness of those penalties.

Similarly, several articles, especially locally written editorials, called for the end of Powderpuff football in general while others reported on schools that had cancelled their Powderpuff games (Prohibit powderpuff, 2003). While Mephram High chose to cancel the entire football season because of the hazing incident at camp, this was clearly a temporary

move (the team was to resume play the following year) and none of the articles advocated ending football **elsewhere** as a response. Although it may not be entirely fair to compare a one-time event with a sporting season, what is interesting is that, even though hazing has never been a documented problem in Powderpuff before, the response was to end the event. In contrast, many of the most severe examples of hazing have occurred during full-season sports, yet no one suggested they are too broken to be fixed.

Several articles highlighted the fact that community members were disappointed with the decision to cancel the season. Todd Frenchman, whose son was on the Mephram team, criticized the cancellation, arguing it was no more than guilt by association (Eltman, 2003b). Another article described a walkout organized by Mephram football players and cheerleaders to protest the cancellation (Schuster, 2003b). The same article quoted Jim Scollo, whose stepson was on the varsity team. "These kids have been practicing since July. We spent money for camp and for equipment and now what happens? All they want to do is play" (Schuster, 2003, p. A03).

Parents of the Glenbrook North students received the bulk of the blame for the hazing, while at Mephram the school received much more of the blame. This is likely related to both gender and social class. If some level of violence is expected of males, then their parents cannot be blamed for failing to teach them aggressive behavior is wrong. In contrast, the girls' families must have done something wrong, since girls are expected to exemplify the adage, Sugar and spice and everything nice. Further, as already noted, the tone of several articles blamed the girls' affluence, implying they should have known better. Thus, by implication, working class kids are **not** expected to know better.

Many of the articles about Glenbrook stressed the fact that parents knew what was happening and that several even purchased alcohol for the students involved. One article cites Assistant State Attorney Steve Goebel in regard to the admission by mother Marcy Spiwak that she allowed teenagers to drink in her home prior to the Powderpuff game. He said, "Parents have to be responsible and not allow minors drinking in their home. They can't just look the other way and give a wink and a nod" (Golab, 2003, p. 26). Another explained that authorities have reserved their harshest words for the adults, rather than the girls. We should ask, according to this article, "How any parent could allow a girl's scalp to be bashed open or a girl's ankle to be broken or a girl to be strangled with pig intestines or forced to eat excrement or splashed with animal blood. Lest we forget: Grown-ups stood by and cheered all of this on" (Russo, 2003, p. A29). Those parents who defended their daughters or advocated lessened punishments were subject to much criticism. "Without a shred of chagrin, apology or remorse, the parents hired high-priced, high-profile lawyers to have their daughters reinstated without consequences. One parent insisted that her daughter be allowed to leave the state to go to Paris because, well, it was something she did every year and she would miss out" (Steiny, 2003, H01).

In coverage of Mephram, on the other hand, articles expressed reservations about blaming the parents. One maintained people in the U.S. are too quick to judge parents, as no parent can monitor their child all the time (DeFranco, 2003). In the same article a student expressed concern about repercussions on the families, saying the parents have to be embarrassed by their sons' actions (DeFranco, 2003).

When it was announced that five football coaches would not be re-signed for the following year, sentiments illustrating the blame-the-school attitude were demonstrated. Said

one of the lawyers for two of the victims, “It’s an important first step in admitting fault and recognizing that the coaches were responsible for what happened. These kids were on their watch” (Wald, 2003). Later in the same article the victims’ attorney stated, “They knew this kind of hazing went on and they allowed it to go on for years. For them to say they didn’t know about it is a bold-faced lie” (Wald, 2003, para. 5). John Rullo, a friend of one of the victim’s families, read a statement by that mother at a board meeting where the fate of the coaches was discussed, “My son is just as upset with the coaches as with the perpetrators.” Quoting the son, “I kept thinking they were coming to help me, but they never came” (Schuster & Rhone, 2003, p. A04). One former player came forward after the attacks and claimed he was hazed in the locker room and the coaches did nothing when he told them (O’Reilly, 2003).

Mepham High Principal John Didden was also castigated for his alleged failure to prevent the incidents. A junior varsity (JV) parent had complained to Didden prior to the trip that a player, who turned out to be one of the attackers, had threatened her son. Didden and Head Coach McElroy met with the player prior to the camp who agreed to stop any harassment of the JV player. A different JV player’s parent was quoted yelling at Didden as he left a courthouse, “You let those kids down, principal. You let those kids down” (Schuster, Lam & Morris, 2003, p. A03).

Some did, however, rally around the coaches, while no one involved in the Glenbrook North case was reported to have rallied around the parents who were under attack. For instance, many students, especially players on the football team, described the coaches as caring role models who should not be stripped of their coaching duties (Wald, 2003). Said a former player, “Your son or daughter will be a better person for having been taught or coached by Coach McElroy” (Schuster & Rhone, 2003, p.A04). Unlike at Glenbrook North, those who spoke out about the incident at Mepham were subject to harassment themselves. In fact, one article explained that the victims were treated as “the bad guys” when they first made public the assaults (Eltman, 2004). It seems that it was inappropriate to break the code of silence surrounding male hazing, but no such problem existed for whistle-blowers regarding the female incident. Two parents who spoke out received threatening letters warning them to keep their mouths shut and nothing would happen to their families. One parent who received a threatening letter, John Rullo, found his letter in the mail four days after he had criticized the high school administration and coaches (Police: Threatening letters sent to parents, 2003).

CONCLUSIONS

This content analysis demonstrated that the lens of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity framed coverage of these two incidents of male and female sport-related hazing. Because males in general and male athletes in particular are expected to exhibit some degree of aggressive behavior in order to be seen as masculine and athletic, coverage of the incident at Mepham did not attempt to contextualize the violence perpetrated by the older football players. In opposition, the Glenbrook North incident was described with dismay and even shock because girls are not expected to behave in that way. These girls were defying the stereotype that females are submissive and passive. Many of the articles attempted to emphasize the domestic interests of the girls, like their preparation for prom, as described by Benedict (1992), Coakley (2003), Jones, Morrell, and Jackson (1999), Lenskyj (2003), and Messner, Dunbar and Hunt (2000). It is likely that, even though these boys took it too far, some type of aggressive behavior in the form of hazing is considered merely part of

sport for boys where it absolutely is not for girls. It is simply part of the male sport ethic and thus no contextualization is required.

The focus on good girls gone bad may suggest to readers that girls do not belong in and cannot handle the masculine world of football. The language about the boys failing to demonstrate team leadership reinforces this notion, as they were castigated for their failure, while the girls were not ever expected to be sport leaders. As many have documented, the language of football is already a language of violence, rife with military metaphor (Jensen & Sabo, 1994; Segrave, 1997). Thus it is disturbing but not surprising to find that heinous hazing incidents occur in this context. Some coverage discussed the criminal nature of the incidents, generally focusing on the punishments the offenders received or would receive in the criminal justice system. These pieces tended to emphasize harsh punishments for the boys and lesser punishments for the girls. While certainly that could be due to the more serious criminal nature of the boys' offenses, it may also be partly attributed to gender role definitions. Boys are supposed to take it like a man when they mess up, whereas girls are to be protected.

It was also clear that gender expectations interacted with race and class assumptions in the coverage of these two incidents. The repeated description of Northglenn as an affluent suburb implied that this type of female-aggression is surprising. Girls of this social class should know better; conversely, then, girls of lower socioeconomic status must not be expected to know how to behave. Further, white girls are assumed not to be violent. By implication, it is not surprising when girls from other racial or ethnic groups act violently.

In the case of the Glenbrook North victims, we did not see complete adherence to the virgin/vamp dichotomy described by Benedict (1992). One element of the just world ideology was observed, however, that did not occur with the Mephram victims. Recall that the just world ideology explains that bad things do not happen to good people. Consequently, when bad things happen, the victim must somehow also be at fault. Although sympathy was expressed for the victims, it seemed somewhat tempered by the fact that they should have known what was likely to occur and thus were somehow complicit. This was likely due to gender stereotypes as well as race and class assumptions. In the coverage of Mephram no such blame the victim mentality was revealed, despite the fact that there had been previous hazing incidents at Mephram and even some prior threats from the assailants.

The focus on the sexual nature of the Mephram attacks was consistent with the literature in that, because these boys played the hyper-masculine sport of football, they were not expected to suffer from the image problem. That they displayed characteristics that could prompt some to question their heterosexuality, then, required both coverage and explanation. Pronger (1990) explained the "the athletic world is organized under the ironic assumption that everyone is heterosexual" (p. 33). Yet, as he also noted, "It is ironic that while sport is traditionally a sign of orthodox masculinity for men, emphasizing the conventional masculine values of power, muscular strength, competition, and so on, it is also a world that celebrates affinity among men, and therefore, paradoxical experience" (p. 177). Thus, he claimed, lurking below the surface of masculine sport is "a covert world of homoeroticism" (p. 178). This hidden eroticism is "terrifying for some men. Homophobia in sport is the fear of the inherent slippage between orthodoxy and paradox in sporting scenes" (Pronger, 1990, p. 182). The paradox Pronger describes helps explain the sexual emphasis in the Mephram coverage.

In addition, the fact that the boys who spoke out about their victimization were ostracized, as were the families who criticized the school's response, demonstrated the code of silence about deviance involved in men's sports. It is bad enough that such an event occurred, but it is even worse to talk about it and to threaten the livelihood of the coaches, the future of the players, and even the integrity of the institution of football. As Katz (1996) maintains, "football functions as a rite of passage into manhood analogous to military service...It also functions as a proving ground for further masculine development" (p. 104). To rat out a teammate for a homoerotic violent incident violated the implicit agreement that the sport is a masculine enterprise, as Messner (2002) explained. This same code of silence was not clear in coverage of the female hazing.

In sum, greater attention to the media coverage of hazing can aid in our understanding of sport deviance. Hazing is currently receiving great amounts of coverage in both sport specific and national media outlets, with one source dubbing it "the major issue involving college athletes in the news right now" (Media, n.d.). According to the Web site insidehazing.com, between May 10 and May 26, 2006, 24 national news articles covered hazing incidents at Northwestern University, Bridgewater State University, the University of New York at Albany, and others. In addition, ten network news programs featured coverage of these and other hazing incidents. Thus, it is even more critical that researchers examine the ways media covers this specific form of deviance. Since this coverage shapes the public's understanding of the issue, it is imperative that researchers address the ways that it reifies hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity.

Media coverage may also impact high school and collegiate sport-related policies and punishments. Nuwer (n.d.) has called for colleges and universities to develop specific anti-hazing policies and to hold hazers accountable for their actions. To support these efforts, he recommended public statements denouncing hazing by high-status athletes, as well as even-handed, rather than sensationalistic, media coverage. To the extent that coverage holds to gender stereotypes, it may also impact policy regarding sport experiences for males and females. If people believe that girls involved in sport-related activities are more masculine and more violent, that assumption may serve to justify repression of girls' sporting opportunity. Schools were relatively quick to cancel an opportunity for girls in light of the Glenbrook North hazing. Additionally, if people believe violence by male athletes both in and out of sport is normal, it may persist and even escalate as boys try to prove their masculinity.

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