

Hazing and Right of Passages

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## Introduction to Hazing and Rite of Passages

Humans joining any established group or moving into different parts in their life does not come without an external force acting to facilitate that change. In more practical terms, imagine a eighteen year old college freshman doing pushups while being yelled at, building a sandcastle right next to the waves at the beach and eating a lot of sardines with chocolate sauce. These are the images conjured up when the average person in America hears the word “hazing”. The public’s and the media’s disgust with the bizarre scenarios the nations youth have to go through in order to join a sport team or college Greek organization, prompts an immense amount of outcry. Whether or not any or all of these initiation events fit the description for hazing, which is not uniform, hazing exists very prominently throughout not only these youth organizations but also very heavily among the workforce and the military. The idea that an organized group of people with an established cause and history want to instill its values into a newcomer is a natural human behavior, and is exemplified in every culture around the world. These initiations are not only limited to people joining organizations, but any separate group such as a youth’s transformation into adult hood. Being an important element in human development and transition, as well as in cultural and organizational tradition, initiation rites, sometimes called hazing or rites of passages, carry abundant positive results, which far outweigh the potential negative or harmful results. The growth aspect of hazing is what this paper is revealing, that hazing is not meant to just keep tradition alive but to cause the newcomer, pledge, initiate or youth to surpass his/her unpleasantness and immaturity to grow into an established member of the community as a brother, soldier, employee or adult.

## Negative Aspects, Criticisms and General Outlook on Hazing

As the definition of hazing is subjective, most of the public attributes violence, dangerous drinking and exploitation to be the general foundation to what hazing is. Dr. Michelle A Finkel, explains that the “Hazing can be defined as committing acts against an individual or forcing an individual to commit an act in order for the individual to be initiated into or affiliated with an organization (Finkel, 2004, p. 12). Forty-Three states have hazing laws passed, which label it as a misdemeanor. In California law, the term hazing revolves around anything that is likely to cause damage or death when a person joins an organization. Throughout hazing history, there have been few prosecutions of abuse during hazing, and usually occur during high profile hazing scandals. Generally, the United States has upheld hazing to be a part of joining any organization, except in universities and youth sport teams. In the case of *Dennis D. Vaughn vs. Pool Offshore Company*, a new employee of the oil rigging company sued because of hazing, in which his genitals were covered in grease, cold water poured on him when he showered and other pranks. The district court found the decision in favor of the oil company, saying that his experiences are a “seeming right of passage” and resulted from an exposure to an atmosphere replete with instances of humiliating acts shared by all.” (Davis, 1997, P. 111) In the Russian military, hazing is coined “dedvochina” and is extreme and very violent. About 200 soldiers escape every year, and an unknown more are killed. The ritual involves nightly beatings from drill sergeants, and is approved by the top generals. Recently however, a high profile incident in which a private was forced to sit on a block of ice for four hours, ending with the amputation of his leg, prompted a national outcry on the matter, and many top generals accepting responsibility. The Groupthink theory,

proposed by Irving Janis, explains that highly cohesive groups are highly susceptible toward making very dangerous decisions, on the basis of their illusion of invulnerability, pressure toward uniformity and the blind belief of inherent morality of the group. This theory is used to explain why fraternities sometimes make bad decisions in Hank Nuwer's The Hazing Reader, (2004 p. 19-26) The important part to understand, especially in terms of fraternity hazing, is that though it is portrayed as a serious problem in America by the media and by mother-against-hazing type organizations, statistics, even from anti hazing authors journals like The Hazing Reader (2007), show that there is only one death per year through hazing activities in the United States, and it is almost always limited to non-established "situational" activities (Davis, 2007, p. 39). Being as hazing is so widespread and ingrained in one way or another in so many cultures, groups and organizations throughout the world, there are going to be instances of physical or mental injury, or even death.

### Strangers

The idea of welcoming a stranger is very important in human interaction. Different societies take different approaches toward strangers. "In the existence of a group, individuals are seen as either part of the "in-group" or part of the "out-group." (Davis, 1997, p14) Josefowitz and Gadon write that "in traditional societies, wariness of strangers must also have contributed to survival, perhaps by keeping the group's integrity or protecting the women and children." (1998 p. 39) In other societies, the stranger is seen as benevolent and one who is deserving of special treatment. During fraternity rush, special attention is given to socializing with the rushes, so as to give them a good

impression of the house. But when it comes from transitioning the person from the out-group to the in-group, Arnold van Gennep writes that it is accompanied by special acts. (1960) In her dissertation about hazing in the workplace, Lisa Davis writes that “Hazing in the modern workplace of new employees, who may be viewed as “strangers”, generally fall in between extremes of severe mistreatment and awe and often resemble practical jokes. (1997, P. 15) She further explains that in the electrical worker world where she comes from, veteran electrical employees who join a new company are fully accepted into the in-group, and are only taken out for a night of drinking, which is a slight initiation event in itself. Should a person ever convert into a Western religion, they have to go through a formal and rigorous conversion which is not required for members born into these religions. Rabbi Lewis of the Jewish Awareness Movement states that “in process of conversion, a person must learn the religion for several years before converting, as well as accept responsibility to fulfill the commandments.”

### Stages of Rites of Passages

There are many types of initiation rites, both in broad terms, such as puberty into adulthood, and in more specific terms such as the process of an elaborate ceremony. (Cohen, 1964, pp. 47-60) In broad stages, Van Gennep, author of Rites of Passages in his anthropological study on initiation rites, breaks the system down into three stages: separation, transition and incorporation. Davis describes separation as “taking away from affiliation with a community, an identity, or social role, and competence.” (1997, P. 22) Stripping the person of those three things aims towards establishing a new identity and a new life. Davis continues with “the separation moves the initiate back still further, to

experience the psychosocial test of the infant. In terms of fraternity initiation, the standard first step process is to inform the “pledge” that he is about to go through a grueling process which will redefine him, then ascribe to him “pledge name”, usually one of comic or sexual nature. A change in mind equals a change in identity, thus the reason for a new name being given to a young man during his rite of passage.” (Raphael, 1988, P. 6)

By taking away the newcomer’s old identity, and severing his ties with his old life, usually done in fraternities by making the pledges live in the house for a week, the initiation can begin. The Symbolic Interaction Theory by Herbert Blumer, one of the most widely accepted theories on human communication and thought process, states plainly that humans act as they are treated, and that humans constantly interpret how they are being treated. It asserts that people are not born any type of personality or character trait, but develop into those traits by how the world acts upon the person. “These initiation rituals, during the transition phase redefine the physical, social, and spiritual existence of its participants” (Davis, 1997, P. 22) During the transition phase, the soon to be initiate must act humbly towards the members of the community and obey their commands, as well as accept arbitrary punishment. This is exemplified by individual brothers in a fraternity forcing a pledge to participate in unofficial and usually worse hazing.

The transition phase can be compared to a rebirth. When a child is born, he goes through a distressing situation in which it is brought from a safe place, the womb, into an unsafe place, the world. “The symbolic separation from the mother arouses anxiety that motivates the initiate to think about the society as a new body with which to identify.

Simultaneously, the metaphorical rebirth offers a way of dealing with trauma, reminding the initiate that he overcame the trauma and that he should, by implication, also succeed at this time” (Davis, 1997, P. 23). In Papua New Guinea, the Bimin-Kuskusmin tribe’s initiation rites for the males are described in The Ritual Forging of Identity by one of its veteran members: “Boys receive a “female name”. The umbilical cord is buried in the taro garden. A seed is planted. In the initiation cycle the seed is growing and changing. It has strong roots and a new body. The soft parts rot away...The body becomes hard and strong.” (Poole, P. 101)

The end of the transition phase follows incorporation, which is adorning the initiate with his new identity. In fraternities, it is marked by a celebration among the brotherhood, granting the newly admitted brothers simple privileges that were denied in the past, such as the use of furniture, a warm attitude from established members, the use of formerly restricted entrances and adornment of the letters of the fraternity. In sororities, uniform clothing, such as all white dresses are customary at initiation ceremonies, to mark that the newly initiated sisters are equal status with the sisterhood. At this stage, the Social Identity Theory states that the initiate, through adopting an in-group identity, will view other in-group members much higher than out-group members. The initiate will then very strongly identify with this group. Ray Raphael, author of The Men From The Boys- Rites of Passage in Male America, writes that “an effective initiation ritual... would strip the neophyte of his past identity and expose him to the unmediated power of the community, all initiation rituals are considered successfully completed” (1988, P. 12)

## Rites of Passages around the World

The transition for a human being from one phase of life into another is important in every society. “Throughout human history, cultures from around the world have contrived various rituals to facilitate and celebrate the coming of age.” (Baum, 1988, p. 3)

In the Jewish religion, a child accepts full religious responsibility when pre-teen years of 13/14 are reached, and a B’nei Mitzvah ceremony is taken place to mark this transition. Rabbi Lewis states that this is a time in a person’s life when they are no longer an adolescent, but a full adult in the religious sense. Many months to several years of preparation are taken place, and a much feared and sometimes embarrassing Bible reading takes place in front of the entire community. The film Keeping the Faith (2000, Norton), shows a scene where a crackled voice Bar Mitzvah boy going through puberty is tortuously trying to sing a religious song. Also in Judaism, and much more early on for a male, the circumcision takes place on the eighth day of the boy’s life. Though this practice is widely adopted by the secular American world for health purposes, in Judaism it is a way to “symbolize the covenant between G-d and Abraham” (Rabbi Lewis), as well as fulfill a commandment. This is an extremely important step in the life of a Jewish male, and a required one for one that is converting.

Many African countries practice a much known and much looked down upon practice of female circumcision. So important is this ritual for them that they believed death will be brought upon the community if she does not get circumcised. “Genital mutilations are an important part of the rite of passage since they produce visible and lasting results.” (Davis, 1998, P. 17)

## Psychology of Initiation

Stephen Sweet, author of “Understanding Fraternity Hazing” writes that “Greek organizations manipulate the material selves of their members by constructing new identity kits for their recruits.” (1999, pp. 6) The pledges are made to wear special pins, which they are not allowed to take off. Once they are initiated, they are surrounded by objects with their Greek letters; sweatshirts, composites, paddles, beer mugs etc. Sweet explains that “it enhances the degree to which the fraternity becomes apart of them.”

When students attend rush, they are hoping to make lifelong friends and attain this mysterious term “brotherhood/sisterhood”, that they hear passed around. “Fraternity initiation rites are designed to terminate or curtail many of the associations that pledges previously held outside of that organization. However, the Social Identity theory by Henri Tajifel and John Turner explains that there are strong in-group and out-group biases, especially when there is such a strong in-group affiliation. A fraternity brother or sorority sister, will view members of their own house, or even of any house, as a much better person than those that are not in houses. Bonding within the fraternity itself become very easy and according to the Uncertainty Reduction Theory, which states that people are always looking for ways to reduce uncertainty about other people, and trust them (Davis, 1997), a very large house with hundreds of brothers or sisters will have a very deep relationship between every member. Now, let’s take a look at exactly what happens to the human when he is taken out of his normal society, and morphed in a short period of time to become a new initiate, for any society.

Stephen Sweet, through use of the Symbolic Interaction Theory concludes that “the self is highly malleable and is constantly being shaped and reshaped. The person is a

process and not an object.” (1999, P.6) In her study on workplace hazing, Lisa Davis finds that strategies are employed to “humble the employee and alter his expectations and self-image in dramatic ways.” (1997, p. 39) These techniques revolve around the idea of making the new employee, especially one who is very confident in his ability, accomplish a task that is impossible. Davis concludes that at this point, the organization has a better position to exert influence on the person, once they are caught off guard.

Probably the most important explanatory theory for why hazing is effective in the initiation process is the Cognitive Dissonance Theory, by Leon Festinger. In application to what we are trying to understand in this paper, the theory states that when a person does something that does not fit with his attitude, then that person will feel dissonance. The theory further shows that that person will then try different things to remove dissonance: change his/her attitude or change her action. In terms of “changing action”, exiting the group the soon to be initiate is trying for is impossible, especially when it is a right of passage in your society. In a fraternity or sorority, where there no such extreme familial pressures to follow through with the process, hazing does no usually begin until half way through the process, thereby causing the pledge to think of “exit costs”. Stephen Sweet explains that “exit costs increase because pledges literally lose a major part of themselves by withdrawing through de-pledging.” (1999, p. 7) So with quitting out of the options, all that is left is a change in attitude. Once the initiation process is complete, the initiate will reflect back on the experience and judge their meaning and their power. The cognitive dissonance theory states, that at this point, as a change in attitude occurs, the initiate will value his experience no matter how seemingly useless and degrading it seems from the out-group perspective, which is usually the case with fraternities and very

traditional tribes. What is even more interesting is that “This theory states that the degree to which individuals have suffered during an experience is directly related to the value they place on that experience.” (Davis, 1997, P. 97) An anonymous fraternity member told me that “The system of pledging makes the newly initiated brothers appreciate the fact that they have joined the fraternity.”

### Reasons for a Rite of Passage

Arnold van Gennep, in one of the first anthropological studies on initiation rites, found that hazing helps maintain integration of the social groups. Basically, in order for a group to survive, it has to be cohesive. Van Gannep writes that in a transition from one identity to the next, two questions are answered by the rite of passage: when the initiate ceases to hold the previous identity and how can the initiate accept this new identity. The first question can be exemplified with the rite of passage of marriage. Before marriage, a person, particularly in American society, is free to be sexually promiscuous. But after marriage, he/she is transformed into having sexual relations with his/her spouse.

A Freudian traditional look at the existence of rite of passage for males says that “The initial rebellion of adolescent males which is fueled by the fires of the oedipal competition with their fathers... the function of initiation rites, from this point of view, is to reaffirm the authority of the older generation.” (Raphael, 1988 p. 9) Keeping a traditional rite of passage maintains a certain order and value to that particular process. If certain things are removed or the entire process is overhauled all together, there becomes a “lack of consensus among the members. This is why initiation is required for all boys in

a community” (Davis, 1997, P. 29) Another anonymous brother of a fraternity states that “My pledge class was allowed to get away with not doing a lot of long established pledging events in the house, and the entire class is now looked upon as weak, even though we aren’t at all.”

In order to function effectively, humans gather into groups, something that will be discussed later for hazing activities in the workforce. But at the primitive level, males gather to hunt, and this is an economic and survival technique. The bonding and gathering of males is a biological factor, as so are initiations, says researcher Lionel Tiger in his research article Male in Groups (1969).

Basically, the point for initiation in males is to take away the weakness of childhood, and instill a confident adult. “These rites of passage and ceremonies may seem bizarre, but they seem to accomplish the all-important and difficult task of making a boy into a man. (Raphael, 1988, p. 13) “One of the major functions of a classical initiation is gaining the knowledge that if the initiate can tackle the worst, they know they can handle the rest.”

### Rite of Passage in Western Culture

“If peace is present and laissez-faire attitude is widespread, male solidarity may not be what is once was, and initiation practices may fade from their serious role in that society”. (Davis, 1997, p 28) The western society, such as America, does not have any particular rite of passage for its youth, to transition them into adulthood. When a boy becomes a man is subjective, and it is usually reliant upon to an internal event than an external one. The different major stages in American life, for men and women, are

reaching the age of sixteen, eighteen or twenty one, getting the first full time job, going to college, getting married, or having children. In terms of age, compared to most cultures that rely upon initiations to transfer the male into adulthood, the average American age for becoming a man is much greater, by ten or so years. "In situations with an absence of assumed ritual, the delineation between boyhood and manhood becomes obscured. A youth is condemned to an indefinite state of insecurity unless he can find alternate means of repudiating the weakness and dependency of childhood. He is therefore likely to experience the normal, every day uncertainties of adult life as especially problematic since he can easily interpret them as threats to his masculinity." (Raphael, 1988, p. 15) The Symbolic Interaction Theory states that human beings constantly interpret what is being acted upon them, such as non verbal behaviors and daily occurrences. This interpretation is from the outside in, and can either be correct or incorrect, but it always depends on the person's perspective and how he/she is taught to understand these situations. A rite of passage or initiation, gives males confidence and validation that they are in fact adult men, strong and confident as they have surpassed the challenging initiation process. The lack of understanding of adulthood is not a dormant psychological issue, but one that plays an important role in a person's life. "It would appear the situations such as this contribute to many social problems in society in the United States and elsewhere, including unemployment, long-term financial dependency on parents during adulthood, divorce and other unfortunate situations." (Raphael, 1988, p. 16) But the western culture is not without proxy initiations and rites of passages, for smaller societies within our society; the military and fraternities.

When a military recruit attends a six or seven our orientation, they are placed in line, their hair is shaved and they are given new identical clothes. This symbolizes the death of adolescence, and the transition from one world (home) to a new one (military). “They are leveled into a homogenous group in an effort to suppress individuality, thus encouraging an investment in the group.” (Winslow, 2004, P. 148) At this point, the military creates a “blank slate”, and is free to make its “stamp”. (Raphael, 1988, p. 29) The extreme boot camp experience then begins, with an array of strenuous hazing and exercise activities which embody a lot of ritual pertinent to the particular branch of the military. This is very reminiscent of tribal life and initiation, as myths about the drill sergeant spread, ranks and symbols start to appear to the new recruits, and a lot of their ceremonial activities involve learning specialized languages and argot. (Davis, 1997, p. 37) A Canadian Air Force Soldier, on the topic of hazing in the Airborne Indoctrination Course, says that “For the young guy, it’s a question of gaining confidence and showing the others that they can do it. For the older guys, it’s like they check out the younger guys to see who they feel they can trust. You have to be able to trust the guys you’re jumping with.” (Winslow, P. 152) Winslow writes that “Bonding occurs as a lasting form of group identity brought about through an experience of shared suffering. Comrades are closer than friends are, closer than brothers. Their relationship is different from that of lovers. Their trust in, and knowledge of, each other is total.” (2004, p. 165)

### American Workplace Hazing

Josefowitz and Gadon call hazing “One of the best kept secrets of the workplace” (1989, p.22). When a new employee joins a company, Uncertainty Reduction Theory

states that the established employees seek to “test” this person. This test meant to first show the new employee that the older employees are more dominant, makes sure that the company culture is respected and followed, and socializes the newcomer into the group. (Josefowitz and Gadon, 1988, p. 30) Cognitive Dissonance Theory comes into play in terms of appreciation for the organization you are a part of. “This theory could apply to workplace hazing by suggesting that after being hazed, new employees would have further appreciation of their work positions. The more exclusive the group, the better the members feel about being apart of it.” (Davis, 1997, p. 87)

Lisa Davis, author of Hazing in the Workplace, describes the different taxonomies and hazing situations. “Wild Good Chase” hazing or “Snipe-Hunting” hazing revolves around the new employees being sent to pick up or do something non existent or useless. In the United States National Guard, new recruits are made to fetch the key to the flag pole, which does not exist. “Shaggy-dog-story hazing” is used to tell a new employee a ridiculous story, and then provide evidence to support it. Davis recounts paramedics, who explain to their new colleagues that not only are they responsible for disposing of body parts, but they keep and even eat some of them, then showing the colleague a cow’s leg. The reaction of the subject is then very important, since if they laugh at it, they will be accepted but if they don’t they will be ostracized, until they can prove themselves at a later time. “If socialization is effective, the new employee will have change some basic attitudes and beliefs and is internally committed to the organization rather than only in compliance with organizational policies” (Davis, 1997, p 64, 65, 96).

A more grueling example of hazing in the workplace is that of medical school students. Beyond the very difficult task of going through the first two years of medical

school, students become interns on their third year in hospitals. Then students, who are called doctor by the patients, are forced to do the dirty work and often tested on the spot. This practice is called “pimping” by the medical community. According to American Medical Student Association 2006 Graduate Questionnaire, seventy percent of interns claim to being hazed. “While ‘unpleasant’ perhaps, pimping is typically harmless, and is recognized by students as an important element of pedagogy and of “the socialization process into the medical community,” according to researchers in the department of behavioral sciences at Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine.” (Blunt, 2007) In the article “The Art of Pimping” from the journal of American Medical Association Dr. Frederick L. Brancati wrote: “On the surface, the aim of pimping appears to be Socratic instruction. The deeper motivation, however, is political. Proper pimping inculcates the intern with a profound and abiding respect for his attending physician while ridding the intern of needless self-esteem.... Pimping welds the hierarchy of academics in place, so the edifice of medicine may be erected securely, generation upon generation.” (1989)

### Fraternities

“It’s amazing seeing the things you do when you are in a fraternity, I cannot describe to you the feeling and the sight of being surrounded by almost a hundred men, a band of brothers,” recalls an anonymous fraternity member. Fraternities are created to act as a tribal band of men, even though, in their world, one is not needed for survival or economic purposes. “Although these rituals are not necessary for collective survival, they do provide a way for young men to carve out a well defined and distinctly masculine niche in a loose and amorphous culture.” (Raphael, 1988, p. 79)

The pledging system for a fraternity varies for each but is complex for all. Fraternity initiation process goes through the universal three step process: separation, transition and incorporation which were discussed and applied to fraternities above. Hazing in fraternities usually strives to fuse learning the fraternity's history, information about the brotherhood with mentally and sometimes physically strenuous events. Active brothers also have access to pledges, in what Lisa Davis calls "situational hazing", hazing made up by established members on the spot. These are especially useful in fraternities because it offers fellow pledges the opportunity to take certain punishments for their pledge brothers. "By volunteering, pledges could become heroes to others. (Davis, 1997, P. 39) "When somebody does something wrong, gets a brothers name wrong or something like that, he can be told to do ten pushups. If he does ten pushups, everyone does ten pushups right along with him, to show him their support. This is an incredible feeling and really adds to the bonding. You work like a chain," recalls an anonymous fraternity member.

The week of "hell week", the most intense phase of fraternity initiation, is a week where the pledges live in the house, and can only leave to run errands or to go to classes. Among ritual events set for them at night, during the day they have a list of almost impossible duties to carry out, and at a certain time a certain amount of pledges have to be performing them. This is a time when the pledges work together to build their pledge class gift, and anything else the house instructs them to do. Two types of bonding are achieved by hazing; the bonding between pledges and between pledges and the house. Bonding to the house becomes particularly strong due to the onset of the Stockholm syndrome. The syndrome states that when a human being is captured, he begins to feel a

strong connection to his captors. Though there are no legitimate research studies finding this to be true within a large group of people, or even any that attempted to do so, there it is theoretically true. The Stockholm Syndrome is almost always used in kidnapping situations, and never for any positive advancement in life or in relationships, however, because of these rituals, which stand apart from traditional tribal ones or modern workplace ones, the syndrome can be used to explain the bond that occurs between the pledges and the house. “The members sing together, sleep together, eat together, and suffer together as they learn the significance of being a man among men.” (Raphael, 1988, p.90) True initiation in its classical form is offered, and under all of that intensity, a tightness of bond and kinship develops. (Davis, 1997, p. 40) Pledges are encouraged by the brotherhood to not give up, and to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The final integration stage of the initiation is one of great pride and joy for the pledges, as they have completed and passed. The ritual of initiation is a dark and mysterious one, filled with symbols and deep rooted ritual and meaning. It is here where all of the secrets of the fraternity are revealed to the now inducted brothers, and the lessons of their challenges are also revealed. One of the most important and interesting parts in the initiation ceremony, is the explanation that they are and have always been equal human beings, and that enduring the challenges were not necessary to continue living. What is never explained, but is always understood, is that those challenges, which the older brothers and the brothers before them have gone through, have brought them to this glorious moment. “It is second to my wedding, it is my official bonding to these men” explains a newly inducted brother of an anonymous fraternity. “By becoming a man, a youth takes his place alongside his father and forefathers. By discovering his tribal

heritage, he becomes connected with the continuing flow of life. He is transformed into a spiritual being by joining his ancestors in a universal brotherhood that transcends time. Fraternities, in their own inimical manner, manage to simulate this function. (Raphael, 1988, p. 90)

### Conclusion

Ultimately, thanks to media frenzy of hazing deaths, it is easy to see an initiation process an abuse by veteran members, breaking the law and degrading their new employees for personal benefit. However, as I have shown in this paper, most hazing and initiation practices achieve the betterment of not only the newcomers in their transition, but of the entire organizations cohesiveness as a whole. The western culture does not have a rite of passage for males, and this can send them into a confusing abyss for most of their teen and young adult lives. Initiation and hazing, acts to fulfill the natural human need for a strong bond between men, and socializes very quickly and effectively newcomers into a group. “The process, as bizarre and possibly degrading as it is, in reality does seem to accomplish the desired goals: integration and socialization of new members and solidarity of the group.” (Raphael, 1988, p. 91) The future of hazing has followed a pattern on increasing, not only in universities but also in the workplace. Many Japanese upper management trainees are subjected to boot camp type experiences during training. Management consulting and training companies in America are also employing such “classes”, where the emphasis is on teamwork, overcoming harsh challenges, and building strong and confident leaders who appreciate their accomplishments.

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