

# The Effects of Fun and Perceived Congruence on Group Cohesion: Modeling College Hazing

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### Abstract

Research on college initiations has mainly explored how painful hazing activities promote group cohesion among the initiates. However, we propose that fun and perceived congruence can also lead to higher group cohesion. In a 2 (fun, no-fun) x 2 (congruence, incongruence) design, we empirically investigated the effects of fun activities and perceived congruence on group cohesion. The total of 88 undergraduate students (33 males, 55 females) were randomly allocated into each of the four conditions. In groups of 4 to 6 members, they participated in group activities before completing a questionnaire on group cohesion. Specifically, two aspects of group cohesion were measured: member attraction and group attraction. A MANOVA analysis revealed a positive effect of fun on group cohesion. However, no effects of perceived congruence nor interaction were found. Subsequent follow-up tests indicated that fun increased only member attraction, but not group attraction. This suggests that fun activities can lead to higher group cohesion by increasing inter-member attraction, but not by inducing individuals' identification to the group. Given that the major aim of initiation ceremonies is to promote friendship among newcomers, our results imply that fun activities can replace painful hazing to achieve the same bonding purpose.

Field of Study: Psychological Science      Student's Signature.....

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## Chapter 1

### The Effects of Fun and Perceived Congruence on Group Cohesion: Modeling College Hazing

Hazing has been broadly defined as “any activity, required implicitly or explicitly as a condition of initiation or continued membership in an organization, that may negatively impact the physical or psychological well-being of the individual...” (Campo, Poulos, & Sipple, 2005, p. 137). Although instances of hazing have been extensively documented in university athletes, fraternities, and sororities, research has found that hazing is also widely practiced by more than half the students across various college groups (Allan & Madden, 2012). Furthermore, in several countries, hazing is not only used to gain admission into groups, but is incorporated as a part of initiation ceremonies that constitute the “rite of passage” for freshmen. The examples of such countries include the Netherlands (Lodewijkx & Syroit, 1997; Lodewijkx & Syroit, 2001), Portugal (Dias & José Sá, 2014a; Dias & José Sá, 2014b), and Thailand (Grubbs, 2012; Grubbs, 2013). The general practices used in hazing include alcohol abuse, humiliating activities, sexual acts, isolation, and sleep-deprivation (Allan & Madden, 2012). These activities, when taken too far, can lead to physical and mental injuries, or even death (Campo, Poulos, & Sipple, 2005).

Given its detrimental effects, there have been suggestions to limit the use of hazing in initiation rituals (e.g., Campo et al., 2005; Grubbs, 2013). However, the practice remains pervasive (Keating et al., 2005). Its persistence points to the possibility that hazing may serve an important function in integrating newcomers and promoting group cohesion. In fact, several field studies reveal that hazing participants do believe that the activity is designed to strengthen group cohesion through the formation of friendship among freshmen as well as with the upperclassmen (Dias & José Sá, 2014b; Grubbs, 2012; Grubbs, 2013). This perception is consistent with the research suggesting that attraction to other group members is

an important component of group cohesion (Carron & Chelladurai, 1981; Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2007; Wiltermuth & Heath, 2009).

### **Group Cohesion**

Group cohesion has long been a popular topic in small group research and other applied disciplines (Greer, 2012). Due to its widespread investigation across various domains, there have been issues of inconsistent definitions as well as unsystematic measurements of group cohesion (Drescher, Burlingame, & Fuhrman, 1985). However, despite the confusion, there is a general agreement that group cohesion is a multi-dimensional construct that can be broadly defined as a group's tendency to "remain united in pursuit of its goals" (Mansour-Cole, 2008, p. 3). Cohesive groups are those whose members are "bonded to one another and to the group as a whole" (Mudrack, 1989, p. 39), suggesting that two major aspects of group cohesion are its members' interpersonal attraction and attraction to the group itself (Drescher, Burlingame, & Fuhrman, 1985). Therefore, any variable that can induce such attractions may also strengthen group cohesion (Levine & Moreland, 1990). According to Friedkin (2004), the interaction between group members is one factor that can produce the effect. Hence, college initiations may be designed to build cohesion among initiates through the promotion of interactions in various activities (e.g., Grubbs, 2012). However, the question remains whether every kind of interaction can serve to strengthen group cohesion to the same degree. Indeed, the fact that initiation activities usually include a certain form of pain (i.e., hazing) implies that interacting under degrading situations may be a unique form of experience that is especially beneficial to group cohesion.

### **Theoretical Background**

Empirical research has long suggested that group cohesion can be effectively established by interacting under painful situations (e.g., Bastian, Jetten, & Ferris, 2014). Although this effect was originally explained using the cognitive dissonance theory (Aronson

& Mills, 1959; Gerard & Mathewson, 1966), some researchers argue that the link between severity and attraction is better explained by social dependency (Schopler & Bateson, 1962; Keating et al., 2005), whereby severe initiations can increase participants' dependence and their desire for affiliation with other group members (Dias & José Sá, 2014a; Van Duuren & Di Giacomo, 1997). Hence, affiliative tendency may mediate the positive effects of initiation severity on group cohesion (Lodewijkx et al., 2005).

Despite the evidence that sharing painful experiences can strengthen group cohesion, many studies have not found support for this hypothesis (e.g., Chapanis & Chapanis, 1964; Hautaluoma and Spungin, 1980; Kamau, 2013; Lodewijkx & Syroit, 1997; Lodewijkx & Syroit, 2001). Some even argue that such painful practices can lead to negative psychological impacts in the initiates, including feelings of frustration, loneliness, and depressive moods, all of which can result in decreased liking for group (Lodewijkx & Syroit, 1997). Hautaluoma and Spungin (1974) also found that severely initiated subjects showed decreased interests to join the group, whereas those receiving only mild initiation increased their interest in joining.

In addition, some researchers argue that severe initiations are not necessary for the affiliation-attraction process to occur (Lodewijkx & Syroit, 1997; Lodewijkx & Syroit, 2001). Similarly, other researchers have suggested that the increased group attraction observed in many field studies may not result from the painfulness of hazing, but rather from some other factor in the initiations (Campo et al., 2005). This notion is further supported by Dias and José Sá (2014b) and Grubbs (2012), who conducted field research and found that most initiations comprise of two main aspects—pain and fun. Consistently, Keating et al. (2005) have demonstrated that pain and fun serve as two independent predictors of group identity in college hazing. Hence, based on these arguments, we hypothesize that sharing fun experiences in hazing may lead to affiliation through positive interactions, which serves to increase group cohesion.

## **Fun and Group Cohesion**

According to McManus and Furnham (2010, p. 159), “fun” can be defined as the aspect of an activity that is a source of enjoyment, pleasure, amusement, or excitement. Although some field studies suggest the evidence of fun in hazing, to date, there is no research that attempts to study fun in initiations in a laboratory setting. However, there are some findings outside the initiation literature which indirectly suggest that activities of enjoyment can foster group cohesion. For example, research conducted in sports settings shows that enjoyment in sports participation can lead to increased feelings of group bonding among the team members (Carron & Chelladurai, 1981; Williams & Hacker, 1982). In addition, Anshel and Kipper (1988) demonstrated that involvement in group singing promotes trust and cooperation, both of which are components of group cohesion. Similarly, Wiltermuth and Heath (2009) found that synchronic interactions such as marching and dancing promoted feelings of trust and cooperation among participants through the formation of social attachment. Since activities like group singing and dancing are likely to be enjoyable or fun, we argue that these studies may provide an indirect support that doing enjoyable things together can increase group cohesion.

In addition, a more direct link between fun and cohesion can be implied from research on the effect of humor in relationships. Specifically, Fraley and Aron (2004) found that when pairs of strangers engage in joint activities that are humorous, they experience more positive emotions that led them to feel closer with their interaction partner than when the activities were not humorous (Fraley & Aron, 2004). The authors propose several explanations for the effect of humor on initial encounters between strangers. One reason is that humor can alleviate the discomfort of the initial interaction by promoting ease and interconnectedness. Another reason is that humor can decrease the seriousness of situations and also reduce

hostile and “poisonous” feelings that people may have towards each other (Fraley & Aron, 2004).

Although the results from Fraley and Aron (2004) demonstrate that humor can foster interpersonal closeness, we argue that their findings may also reflect the effect of fun on group cohesion. As humor does not necessarily involve ‘laughter’ and can refer to any interaction that is playful or silly (Lewandoski & Le, 2009), we argue that humor is closely related to fun because fun also includes a component of playfulness (Dictionary.com). Additionally, interpersonal closeness has been defined similarly to cohesion as a “subjective experience of interconnectedness or desired interconnectedness between self and other” (Fraley & Aron, 2004). Therefore, research on humor may suggest that fun can increase group cohesion through the promotion of members’ relationship with each other.

Furthermore, the association between fun and cohesion can be theoretically explained by Aron’s Self-Expansion Model, which has been developed to explain why fun enhances attraction between romantic couples (Fraley & Aron, 2004). The model proposes that fun activities and the sense of interpersonal closeness resulting from fun interactions expand one’s capabilities by providing a greater range of knowledge (Lewandoski & Le, 2009; Reis & Sprecher, 2009). This positive experience of this expansion fosters attraction between relationship partners and enhances their desire to engage in future interactions, thereby promoting cohesion between them (Fraley & Aron, 2004; Lewandoski & Le, 2009). Therefore, this Self-Expansion Model can be used to further explain how fun can increase bonding among group members, suggesting that engaging in fun activities during initiation ceremonies can strengthen newcomers’ group cohesion.

### **Perceived Congruence**

As research suggests that both pain and fun can lead to group cohesion, perhaps there is an element in these emotions that drives their effects: the perceived congruence of shared

experience. Perceived congruence may promote group cohesion because congruence of opinions can foster a sense of belonging and psychological closeness, whereas incongruence of opinions may indicate interpersonal differences and induce feelings of alienation (Raghunathan & Corfman, 2006). In fact, there is empirical research from the field of marketing that supports this notion. Among other things, the researchers investigated whether congruence between one's opinion and that of one's interaction partner would promote feelings of psychological closeness with the partner (Raghunathan & Corfman, 2006). The congruence of opinions was manipulated by having a confederate act as the interaction partner who made verbal comments about a stimulus that were either congruent or incongruent with the participant's expected reaction. As predicted, perceived congruence of opinions was associated with greater feelings of bonding, compared to conditions of incongruent opinions. Therefore, preliminary evidence suggests that perceived congruence promotes cohesion between pairs of individuals.

Moreover, the notion that perceived congruence may increase group cohesion is supported by research regarding shared reality. Shared reality is the belief that one's inner state about a target, such as a task or event, corresponds to the inner state of others regarding that target (Echterhoff, Higgins, & Levine, 2009). Specifically, shared reality refers to one's subjective perception of agreement, regardless of actual or objective congruence. In the context of initiation, shared reality would occur when initiates perceive that their private thoughts and feelings toward the hazing experience are congruent with the other initiates' subjective perceptions. According to the shared reality theory, interpersonal relationships are strengthened when individuals have more agreement, consensus, or shared perspective regarding a target (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Research by Conley, Rabinowitz, and Hardin (2010) supported this notion, in which they found that pairs of individuals who shared reality reported greater liking of each other, compared to those who did not share reality. Thus, the

body of research regarding shared reality provides further evidence that perceived congruence of experience fosters positive interpersonal relations in the dyadic context.

Besides shared reality, research on I-sharing also suggests that perceived congruence can promote group cohesion. I-sharing occurs when one shares an identical subjective reaction about a target with another person (Pinel, Long, Landau, Alexander, & Pyszczynski, 2006). I-sharing can be regarded as a specific form of shared reality because it involves the belief that one has responded identically and simultaneously to a target (Pinel, Long, & Crimin, 2010). The pioneer study on I-sharing showed that I-sharing promotes interpersonal liking between pairs of strangers (Pinel et al., 2006). In the study, participants read a scenario involving a second person who either shared or didn't share their own reactions toward a third person. As predicted, those who believe they I-shared with a person reported more liking for that person, compared to those who believe they didn't I-share with the person.

Similarly, van Bel et al. (2009) found converging findings in the field of technology and engineering sciences. The researchers predicted that I-sharing would promote social connectedness, which was defined as the subjective short-term experience of belonging and relatedness. In the experiment, I-sharing was manipulated by having a virtual game partner's answers toward multiple-choice questions match or not match the participant's answers. As predicted, the researchers found that compared to those who didn't perceive answer congruence, those who believed they had I-shared reported higher levels of social connectedness and feelings of closeness with their game partner. Therefore, converging evidence regarding I-sharing suggests that perceived congruence may increase group cohesion by promoting liking and social connectedness.

### **The Current Study**

Even though the effect of pain on group cohesion has been strongly established in the initiation literature, the direct effect of fun on group cohesion has never been tested in a

controlled, experimental setting. Moreover, the available evidence for this hypothesized effect has only been shown in dyadic relationships, i.e., by testing pairs of individuals rather than groups of people. Therefore, we sought to fill this literature gap by manipulating the effect of fun on group cohesion in the present study. If a positive effect of fun on group cohesion is found, an important implication is that painful hazing activities should be replaced with fun ones so that the initiates develop group cohesion without the detriments associated with painful hazing.

Similarly, the effect of perceived congruence on group cohesion has never been tested in an empirical setting. In addition, perceived congruence has only been tested in the dyadic context, most of which involved online interaction with a computer-simulated partner. Therefore, we sought to fill this literature gap by directly investigating the effect of perceived congruence on group cohesion, in addition to the fun variable. Our study adapted the manipulation of perceived congruence from the study by Raghunathan and Corfman (2006) by having the experimenter act as a confederate who made verbal comments signaling either congruence or incongruence of opinion in each experimental group. If a positive effect of congruence on group cohesion is found, it can indicate that sharing a congruent perception of the hazing experience is an important antecedent in developing group cohesion among the initiates.

Furthermore, the interplay between fun and perceived congruence have never been studied before. Observational studies on real initiations suggest that these two factors may be interrelated. Specifically, research has found that on the one hand, the majority of initiates who voluntarily participate in initiations experience the hazing activities as fun (Dias & José Sá, 2014b). Subsequently, these individuals may perceive that other initiates congruently share this perception, which can further promote feelings of group cohesion. On the other hand, the minority of initiates who are forced to attend the initiations tend to experience the



hazing as distressing (Dias & José Sá, 2014b). Afterwards, these individuals may realize that their subjective experience is incongruent with the majority, which can undermine their feelings of group cohesion. Thus, if we find this predicted interaction effect between fun and perceived congruence, we can propose that hazing activities should be modified such that all initiates will congruently perceive the activities as fun.

Therefore, the present study aimed to explore the effects of fun and perceived congruence on group cohesion, particularly on the aspects of member attraction and group attraction (see Figure 1). Although group cohesion comprises of many aspects, we chose to measure member attraction and group attraction because researchers have identified them as the two key elements of group cohesion (Drescher, Burlingame, & Fuhriman, 1985). No specific hypotheses regarding these components were made. Thus, the general hypotheses of the current study were as follows.

1. Fun activities will have a significant positive effect on participants' rating of group cohesion.
2. Perceived congruence of shared experience will have a significant positive effect on participants' rating of group cohesion.
3. Fun activities will have a significantly greater positive effect on participants' rating of group cohesion when their perceptions of the shared experience are congruent than incongruent.

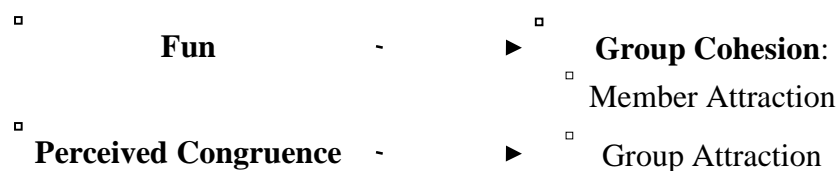


Figure 1. The conceptual framework of this study.

## Chapter 2

### Method

#### Design

This study employed a 2x2 between-subjects factorial design, with fun (fun, no-fun) and perceived congruence (congruent, incongruent) as the independent variables and with group cohesion as the dependent variable. Specifically, two aspects of group cohesion were investigated: member attraction and group attraction. There were 4 experimental conditions: Fun-Congruent (F-C), and Fun-Incongruent (F-I), No Fun-Congruent (NF-C), and No Fun-Incongruent (NF-I).

#### Participants

A total of 88 undergraduate students ( $M$  age = 19.97;  $SD$  = 1.47), comprising of 55 female and 33 male students, were recruited through convenience sampling. Each experimental condition consisted of twenty-two participants, randomly divided into groups of 4 to 6.

#### Manipulation

**Fun.** In the fun condition, each group was instructed to stand in a circle. Next, they were told: “Now we are going to play a game. Please pass this paper ball around the circle, without throwing, until the music stops. If you are the person holding the ball when the music stops, you lose the game and you will be asked to do something.” This activity was adapted from a game called Hot Potato. The music lasted for 20 s and participant who lost the game did not actually have to do anything.

In the no-fun condition, each group was instructed to stand in a circle. Next, they were told: “Now we are going to do an activity. Please pass this paper ball around the circle, without throwing, until I tell you to stop.” This activity was designed to resemble the game in the Fun condition but minimizing its fun aspects to make the activity as neutral as possible.

The experimenter then started the timer when the activity began and told the participants to stop the activity after 20 s had passed.

**Perceived congruence.** After participants completed the questionnaire asking how fun the activity was (i.e., manipulation check of fun), the experimenter collected them from every group member, flipped through them, and casually exclaimed, “Oh! Your answers are very similar!” to manipulate congruence and “Oh! Your answers are very different!” to manipulate incongruence.

### **Materials and Measures**

Upbeat music trimmed to a length of 20 s (for fun conditions only) and paper balls (for all conditions) were used in the experiment. Additionally, cell phones were used as a timer and to play the music. The experimenters recorded data with a pen and paper. Additionally, the following instruments were used to measure the independent and dependent variables.

**Manipulation check.** Three items were given to validate our manipulations of fun and perceived congruence, respectively.

**Fun.** Perception of fun was measured using two items: “How fun was the activity you experienced?” (0 = *not at all*, 10 = *extremely fun*) and “How enjoyable was the activity you experienced?” (0 = *not at all*, 10 = *extremely enjoyable*). The reliability was found to be good ( $r = .94$ ).

**Perceived congruence.** Perceived congruence was measured using one item: “Consider how fun/unfun the activity was: do you think your group members also felt the same?” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

**Group cohesion.** Group cohesion was measured using 8 items, with seven items pertaining to member attraction and one item regarding group attraction.

**Member attraction.** The measure of member attraction was taken and adapted from the study by Bastian, Jetten, and Ferris (2014), which comprises of these seven statements: “I feel a sense of solidarity with my group members,” “I feel connected to my group members,” “I feel part of this group of participants,” “I feel a sense of loyalty to my group members,” “I feel I can trust my group members,” “I feel that my group members have a lot in common”, “I feel like there is unity between my group members.” The items were rated using a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The reliability of the scale for our sample was good ( $\alpha = .79$ ).

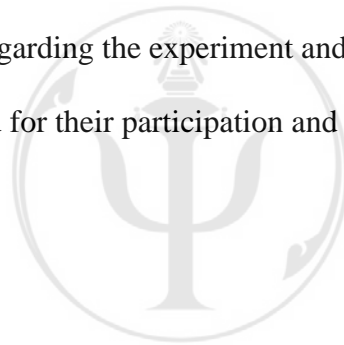
**Group attraction.** Group attraction was measured using the Inclusion of Ingroup in the Self (IIS) scale (Tropp & Wright, 2001). This one-item measure presents a selection of seven Venn diagrams representing different levels of identification between the self and the group. The IIS is a well-established measure that has high validity and high test-retest reliability ( $r = .76$ ). It has also been used in previous initiation studies to measure degrees of group attraction in participants (e.g., Kamau, 2013).

### **Procedure**

In each session, participants were randomly divided into groups and assigned to an experimental condition. All participants were given a consent form (Appendix D) informing them about the experiment and the rights to which they are entitled. If the participants agreed to participate, they were asked to sign the form. Next, each group of participants were taken to separate activity rooms, where they were given 5 minutes to introduce themselves to their group by telling their name, say one interesting fact about themselves, and come up with a group name. Since having only the experimental activity can make the study’s aim more obvious to the participants, we included this brief introduction activity to disguise the true purpose of our study.

After the introduction activity, the game/experimental activity proceeded respective to the condition to which participants belonged. After the game/activity ended, participants were asked to complete the manipulation check of fun and instructed not to talk to each other while they filled out the questionnaire. Then, perceived congruence was manipulated as previously described. Next, participants were asked to complete the measures on group cohesion and the manipulation check of perceived congruence.

Afterwards, each group in every condition was given a debriefing sheet that informed them about the true purpose of our experiment and provided them with contact information for further inquiry (Appendix E). Participants were then offered a selection of candies as a token of appreciation for their participation. The experimenters also asked whether the participants had any questions regarding the experiment and answered them accordingly. Lastly, participants were thanked for their participation and dismissed.



## Chapter 3

### Results

#### Manipulation Check

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare participants' perception of fun in the fun and no-fun conditions. Results revealed a significant difference such that participants perceived the activities to be more fun and enjoyable when they were in the fun condition ( $M = 6.09, SD = 2.05$ ) than when they were in the no-fun condition ( $M = 4.47, SD = 2.44$ ),  $t(74) = 3.15, p = .002$ . Another independent-samples t-test was also conducted to compare participants' perception of congruence in the congruent and incongruent conditions. Results revealed a significant difference such that participants in the congruent condition ( $M = 3.68, SD = 1.27$ ) perceived higher congruence among group members than those in the incongruent condition ( $M = 3.18, SD = 0.87$ ),  $t(76) = 2.15, p = .035$ . Therefore, results suggest that both fun and perceived congruence have been manipulated successfully.

#### Tests of Focal DVs

A two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine the effects of fun and perceived congruence on the two aspects of group cohesion (i.e., member attraction and group attraction). The homogeneity of variance-covariance matrix assumption was supported through a non-significant Box's  $M$  test. No univariate or multivariate outliers were detected and MANOVA was considered to be an appropriate analysis.

Table 1

*Multivariate Effects on Group Cohesion*

Source	$\Lambda$	$F$	$df 1$	$df 2$	$p$	$\eta_p^2$
Fun	.04	9.02	2	71	.000*	.20
Perceived Congruence	.93	2.51	2	71	.088	.67
Fun x Perceived Congruence	.98	0.70	2	71	.502	.02

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

As illustrated in Table 1, there was a significant multivariate main effect of fun on group cohesion,  $F(2, 71) = 9.02, p < .05$ ; Wilks'  $\Lambda = .80, \eta_p^2 = .20$ , confirming hypothesis 1. However, contrary to hypotheses 2, there was no significant multivariate main effect of perceived congruence on group cohesion,  $F(2, 71) = 2.51, p = .088$ ; Wilks'  $\Lambda = .93, \eta_p^2 = .07$ . Similarly, the interaction between fun and perceived congruence was not significant,  $F(2, 71) = 0.70, p < .05$ ; Wilks'  $\Lambda = .98, \eta_p^2 = .02$ , disconfirming hypothesis 3.

Table 2

*Univariate Effects on Member Attraction*

Source	SS	$df$	MS	$F$	$p$	$\eta_p^2$
Fun	317.56	1	317.56	16.94	.000*	.19
Perceived Congruence	18.98	1	18.98	1.01	.318	.01
Fun x Perceived Congruence	19.64	1	19.64	1.05	.309	.01
Error	1349.65	72	18.75			

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) for each dependent variable were conducted to follow up the significant multivariate effect of fun. Using the Bonferroni correction to control for Type I error rates, each ANOVA was tested at the .025 level. As illustrated in Table 2, the ANOVA of the member attraction scores was significant,  $F(1, 72) = 16.94, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .20$ . This suggests that participants engaging in the fun activity ( $M =$

23.02,  $SD = 4.53$ ) were more attracted to group members than those participating in the no-fun activity ( $M = 18.69$ ,  $SD = 4.08$ ).

Table 3

*Univariate Effects on Group Attraction*

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta_p^2$
Fun	5.64	1	5.64	2.81	.098	.04
Perceived Congruence	9.75	1	9.75	4.86	.031	.06
Fun x Perceived Congruence	.059	1	.059	.03	.864	.00
Error	144.46	72	2.01			

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

However, the ANOVA based on the group attraction scores was not significant,  $F(1, 72) = 2.81$ ,  $p = .098$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$  (See Table 3). This suggests that there was no difference in group attraction between participants in the fun ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ) and no-fun conditions ( $M = 3.28$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ). Specific means and standard deviations of each variable are present in Table 4 below.

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics of Member Attraction and Group Attraction as a Function of Fun and Perceived Congruence*

Independent Variables	Level	Member Attraction	Group Attraction
		$M (SD)$	$M (SD)$
Fun	Fun	23.02 (4.53)	3.73 (1.42)
	No-fun	18.69 (4.08)	3.28 (1.49)
Perceived Congruence	Congruent	21.39 (5.04)	3.82 (1.59)
	Incongruent	20.94 (4.59)	3.16 (1.17)



## Chapter 4

### Discussion

This study aimed to test whether fun interactions and perceived congruence could promote group cohesion in the form of member attraction and group attraction. Consistent with the first hypothesis, the results indicated that fun activities increased overall group cohesion. Specifically, fun interactions effectively increased member attraction, promoting cohesion between members. Our findings therefore demonstrated that fun interactions could promote group cohesion by strengthening relationships and supporting bonding between individuals. This is supported by previous research regarding fun and interpersonal cohesion. As Fraley and Aron (2004) noted, partners felt closer and more bonded after engaging in playful interactions as discomfort of initial interactions was minimized. We can conclude that similar effects of interpersonal attraction and member bonding were produced in our experiment from participation in a fun activity, compared to the no-fun activity. Furthermore, research in sports and recreational settings has also proposed that member interaction in activities can foster cohesion between groups through the building of trust and cooperation (Anshel & Kipper, 1988; Carron & Chelladurai, 1981; Williams & Hacker, 1982; Wiltermuth & Heath, 2009). This therefore suggests that interaction between members is a precursor for group cohesion, which signifies the importance of positive member interaction in our study in order to create group cohesion.

Additionally, fun activities may promote member attraction because they provide several rewards for the individual members. For example, Levine and Moreland (1990) suggested that individuals may find enjoying group activities rewarding, leading them to develop stronger group cohesion (Ruder & Gill, 1982; Stokes, 1983). Specifically, rewards gained from participating in fun activities can be in the form of 'self-expansion' (Lewandoski & Le, 2009). Aron's Self-Expansion Model states that a challenging, enjoyable, or humorous

interaction allows people to expand their capabilities and achieve greater goals in life with the greater knowledge they may acquire through close relationships (Fraley & Aron, 2004; Lewandoski & Le, 2009; Reis & Sprecher, 2009). This reward encourages the desire in a member to engage in further interactions with others, thereby cultivating increased cohesion. Therefore, this literature supports our results by clarifying how member attraction could be created through the acquisition of rewards in fun interactions.

Although fun activities increased the member attraction aspect of group cohesion, it did not affect the group attraction aspect. One possible explanation for this result is that in the present study, group members engaged in interaction for only a short period of time. It is speculated that group attraction or identification may take longer to develop than member attraction. This is supported by past research which suggests that group cohesion is a fluid construct that changes over time (Drescher et al., 1985) and that the longer members spend time together, the stronger group cohesion they develop (Manning & Fullerton, 1988). Thus, the effect of fun on group attraction may manifest if group cohesion is measured at different time points, not just after group formation and a brief interaction.

The second hypothesis predicted that group cohesion will be rated higher when there is perceived congruence of opinions, compared to incongruence. However, the effect of perceived congruence was not found in this study. One possible explanation for this null finding is that the effect of perceived congruence is evident in pairs but not groups of people because more assumptions have to be made regarding the congruence of opinions. In the dyadic context, the only assumption required is that one's thoughts and feelings are congruent with one other person, i.e., the interaction partner. In the group context, however, a group member must make several assumptions about the congruence of his or her experience with the experience of each of the other members. Thus, perceived congruence may promote cohesion between two persons but not in a group of people.

Lastly, the third hypothesis predicted an interaction between the effects of fun and perceived congruence on group cohesion, such that the effect of fun on group cohesion will be enhanced when group members perceive congruence of feelings towards the activity. However, the results did not support this hypothesis. Therefore, our studies highlight that only fun seems to be efficacious in producing group cohesion, such that perceived congruence neither affects group cohesion directly nor does it moderate the effect of fun on group cohesion.

### **Implications**

The present study found that fun could effectively increase group cohesion. An important implication is that fun activities could replace painful hazing in initiation ceremonies. This is because fun activities would fulfill the purpose of initiations to foster cohesion among college students without the negative consequences evident in traditional hazing. Furthermore, as initiations are designed with the main intention to promote friendships among newcomers, with less emphasis on the promotion of group pride (Grubbs, 2013), participating in enjoyable activities can serve as an ideal strategy to achieve the objective because fun may function primarily to increase member attraction and not group attraction.

In addition, research has found that young people have the tendency to perceive violent practices as enjoyable experiences (Kerbs & Jolley, 2007). This is supported by field studies which revealed that initiates often recalled their hazing experiences as fun (Dias & José Sá, 2014a). Therefore, it is possible that the observed effect of pain in initiations may really reflect the perception of such activities as fun and enjoyable. Such an inaccurate perception can be detrimental as these youths may see no reason to abolish the violent hazing and replace it with a more positive practice.

### **Strengths, Limitations, and Future Study**

Previous research has mostly investigated fun-related variables in pairs of individuals, some of which involved a virtual interaction partner. The present study contributed to the literature by directly testing the effect of fun on group cohesion. Additionally, this study used real groups of individuals rather than virtual pairs, which enhances the ecological validity of this study. Moreover, this study used a sample of undergraduate university students, which is directly relevant to the topic of initiation and hazing. Therefore, the results and implications of this study are directly applicable to the population of undergraduate college students.

Despite the strengths, the present study had some limitations. Firstly, this study demonstrated that fun can also be effective in promoting group cohesion, but it did not establish whether fun was more effective than pain in developing group cohesion. Thus, future research should directly compare the effects of pain versus fun on group cohesion. Secondly, the no-fun condition may have not adequately represented a control condition because some individuals may have perceived the absence of fun as boring, which has negative valence. Hence, to avoid this problem, future research should employ three conditions of fun, i.e., fun, neutral (control), and boring. Lastly, a potential criticism could be that the length of the experimental activity (20 s) was much shorter than the length of the introduction activity (5 min). Future research should therefore conduct a pilot study prior to actual data collection to determine a more appropriate balance in the length of the activities.

### **Conclusion**

Classic studies on initiation and hazing have mostly focused on the role of pain in successfully developing cohesiveness among the initiates. The present study aimed to model contemporary college hazing by empirically investigating the effect of fun and perceived congruence on group cohesion, which includes member attraction and group attraction. Results from the experiment indicated that compared to neutral activities, fun activities

promoted perceptions of group cohesion, particularly increasing attraction among the group members. However, neither perceived congruence nor the interplay between fun and perceived congruence affected group cohesion. Therefore, the findings from this study suggest that besides the established effect of pain, fun interactions may also effectively promote group bonding among initiates.



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Appendix A  
Scripts

**Condition: Fun-Congruent**

“This is a 5-minute introduction activity. Please share one interesting fact about yourself and come up with a group name.”

(AFTER 5 MINUTES)

“Please give me your group name now.” (WRITE IT DOWN ON SHEET)

**“Now, we are going to play a game. Please stand in a circle. You are required to pass this paper ball around the circle, without throwing, until the music stops. If you’re the person holding the ball when the music stops, you lose the game and you will be asked to do something.”**

(START MUSIC & GAME)

(MUSIC ENDS)

“Stop now please.”

(HAND THEM THE **FUN MEASURE**)

“Please complete this questionnaire. I request that you do not talk to others and keep your eyes on your own papers.”

(COLLECT THE SHEETS AND FLIP THROUGH THEM CASUALLY. THEN EXCLAIM...)

**“Oh! Your answers are very similar!**

Please complete this questionnaire now.”

(GIVE THEM THE **COHESION AND PERCEPTION MEASURE**)

(COLLECT IT BACK)

“Our experiment is now over. Thank you for participating in this experiment. Here is a debriefing sheet that will tell you what the purpose of our study was and why we are interested in this. Feel free to grab a candy of your choice on your way out. Thank you once again.”

(GIVE THEM THE DEBRIEFING SHEET AND CANDY BAG)

**Condition: Fun-Incongruent**

“This is a 5-minute introduction activity. Please share one interesting fact about yourself and come up with a group name.”

(AFTER 5 MINUTES)

“Please give me your group name now.” (WRITE IT DOWN ON SHEET)

**“Now, we are going to play a game. Please stand in a circle. You are required to pass this paper ball around the circle, without throwing, until the music stops. If you’re the person holding the ball when the music stops, you lose the game and you will be asked to do something.”**

(START MUSIC & GAME)

(MUSIC ENDS)

“Stop now please.”

(HAND THEM THE **FUN MEASURE**)

“Please complete this questionnaire. I request that you do not talk to others and keep your eyes on your own papers.”

(COLLECT THE SHEETS AND FLIP THROUGH THEM CASUALLY. THEN EXCLAIM...)

**“Oh! Your answers are very different!”**

Please complete this questionnaire now.”

(GIVE THEM THE **COHESION AND PERCEPTION MEASURE**)

(COLLECT IT BACK)

“Our experiment is now over. Thank you for participating in this experiment. Here is a debriefing sheet that will tell you what the purpose of our study was and why we are interested in this. Feel free to grab a candy of your choice on your way out. Thank you once again.”

(GIVE THEM THE DEBRIEFING SHEET AND CANDY BAG)

**Condition: No Fun-Congruent**

“This is a 5-minute introduction activity. Please share one interesting fact about yourself and come up with a group name.”

(AFTER 5 MINUTES)

“Please give me your group name now.” (WRITE IT DOWN ON SHEET)

**“Now, we are going to do an activity. Please stand in a circle. You are required to pass this paper ball around the circle, without throwing, until I tell you to stop.”**

(START ACTIVITY & TIMER)

(AFTER 20 s)

“Stop now please.”

(HAND THEM THE **FUN MEASURE**)

“Please complete this questionnaire. I request that you do not talk to others and keep your eyes on your own papers.”

(COLLECT THE SHEETS AND FLIP THROUGH THEM CASUALLY. THEN EXCLAIM...)

**“Oh! Your answers are very similar!**

Please complete this questionnaire now.”

(GIVE THEM THE **COHESION AND PERCEPTION MEASURE**)

(COLLECT IT BACK)

“Our experiment is now over. Thank you for participating in this experiment. Here is a debriefing sheet that will tell you what the purpose of our study was and why we are interested in this. Feel free to grab a candy of your choice on your way out. Thank you once again.”

(GIVE THEM THE DEBRIEFING SHEET AND CANDY BAG)

**Condition: No Fun-Incongruent**

“This is a 5-minute introduction activity. Please share one interesting fact about yourself and come up with a group name.”

(AFTER 5 MINUTES)

“Please give me your group name now.” (WRITE IT DOWN ON SHEET)

**“Now, we are going to do an activity. Please stand in a circle. You are required to pass this paper ball around the circle, without throwing, until I tell you to stop.”**

(START ACTIVITY & TIMER)

(AFTER 20 s)

“Stop now please.”

(HAND THEM THE **FUN MEASURE**)

“Please complete this questionnaire. I request that you do not talk to others and keep your eyes on your own papers.”

(COLLECT THE SHEETS AND FLIP THROUGH THEM CASUALLY. THEN EXCLAIM...)

**“Oh! Your answers are very different!”**

Please complete this questionnaire now.”

(GIVE THEM THE **COHESION AND PERCEPTION MEASURE**)

(COLLECT IT BACK)

“Our experiment is now over. Thank you for participating in this experiment. Here is a debriefing sheet that will tell you what the purpose of our study was and why we are interested in this. Feel free to grab a candy of your choice on your way out. Thank you once again.”

(GIVE THEM THE DEBRIEFING SHEET AND CANDY BAG)

Appendix B  
Measure of Perception of Fun

Participant # \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete the following questions by circling your response.

1. How fun was the activity you experienced?

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

Not at all

Extremely

2. How enjoyable was the activity you experienced?

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

Not at all

Extremely



Appendix C  
Measure of Cohesion and Perception of Congruency

Participant # \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete the following questions by circling your response.

- |   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|---|
|   | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> |   |   | <b>Strongly Agree</b> |   |
| 1. I feel a sense of solidarity with my group members.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |
| 2. I feel connected to my group members.                | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |
| 3. I feel part of this group of participants.           | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |
| 4. I feel a sense of loyalty to my group members.       | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |
| 5. I feel I can trust my group members.                 | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |
| 6. I feel that my group members have a lot in common.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |
| 7. I feel like there is unity between my group members. | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4                     | 5 |

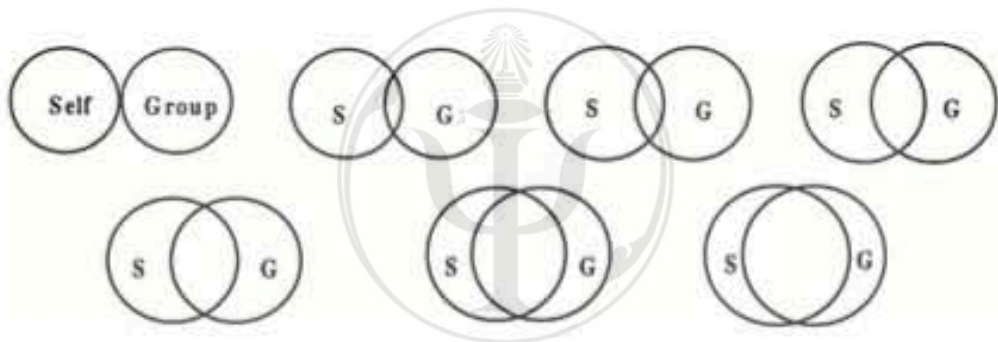


1                      2                      3                      4                      5

8. Consider how fun/unfun the activity was: do you think your group members also felt the same?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

9. Please circle the pair of circles that you feel best represents your own level of identification with your group. (*S = self, G = group*)



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## Appendix D

## Informed Consent Form

RESEARCH TITLE: Experiment on Group Processes

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR: Sameeksha Agrawal, Natnicha Boonyanant, Suphasiree Chantavarin

CONTACT INFO: JIPP program. The faculty of psychology, Chulalongkorn University.

TEL. 02-218-1189

STUDY PROCEDURE:

It will take you approximately 20 minutes to complete this study. In this study, you will be required to do simple group activities and later complete questionnaires, relating to the measures of our interest.

RISK AND BENEFITS:

This activity will place you in no risks. For benefits, there are no monetary rewards for participating. However, you will be contributing to science and research. To thank you for your contribution, at the end of the study, you will be allowed to choose from a bag of candies.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

It is up to you to decide whether to take part in this study. If you decide to take part but later change your mind, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Refusal to participate or the decision to withdraw from this research will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your data will be kept confidential. Any information that you provide during your participation will be recorded and employed for research purposes only. This information will be stored anonymously and kept confidential. A code number will identify your data, and no one will be able to link your responses with your name at the conclusion of our study.

PERSON TO CONTACT

If you have questions, complaints or concerns about this study, or feel that you have been harmed as a result of participation, please call Dr. Watcharaporn Boonyasiriwat at 02-218-1187 who may be reached during 9 A.M.-5 P.M.

CONSENT

By signing this consent form, I confirm I have read the information in this consent form and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I will be given a signed copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Signature .....Date ..... Signature .....Date .....

(.....)

Researcher

(.....)

Participant

## Debriefing Sheet

This study is about the effect of fun and perceived congruence on group cohesion. Initiation ceremonies often have the aim of building group cohesion among the initiates. Previous studies have found that pain has a positive effect on cohesion in initiation settings, i.e., that the collective experience of painful activities in initiations lead to greater bonding among those who participate. For the current study, we aim to see whether the experience of fun and the perception of congruent experience can also produce group cohesion.

In this study, you were led to believe that your perception of fun was similar/different to your group members, regardless of actual similarity/difference. This deception was necessary in order to manipulate the perception of congruent/incongruent experience between you and your group members in our study to see its effect on group cohesion.

If you are interested in learning more, feel free to email us at:  
agrawalsameeksha@hotmail.com Thank you for your participation. ☺

## Biography

### Natnicha Boonyanath

Natnicha Boonyanath was a student from Joint International Psychology Program which is a collaboration between Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, and the University of Queensland, Australia. Motivated to conduct research that can be applied to real problems in Thai society, she chose to study the initiation practice among Thai undergraduates (i.e., Rubnong) for her senior project. This research also corresponds to her passion in the field of social/organizational psychology as she explored the role of social mechanisms in fostering group dynamics such as cohesion. Additionally, her study was selected for an oral presentation at the 14th National Conference in Thailand. Her academic excellence has also earned her the Gold medal and the first-class honor upon graduating. Moreover, she has participated in various activities and volunteering projects throughout her time in the universities. These experiences have equipped her with the skills and qualifications highly valuable both in academic and work domains.

### Sameeksha Agrawal

Sameeksha Agrawal graduated from the School of Psychology, with a Bachelors of Arts in Psychology, from the University of Queensland, Australia. She is currently an undergraduate student at the Joint International Program in Psychology at the Faculty of Psychology, in Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. She will be graduating in October 2015 and obtaining a Bachelors of Science in Psychological Science from the Chulalongkorn University. Throughout this degree, she developed an interest in applying her acquired knowledge to a counseling setting and aspires to pursue this career path in the near future. She also wishes to further her studies and obtain a Masters in Counseling Psychology.

## Suphasiree Chantavarin

Suphasiree Chantavarin is student who will soon graduate from the Joint International Psychology Program at Chulalongkorn University with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. She is one of the two selected students from her cohort who was granted a scholarship for academic excellence. She was also granted the opportunity to participate in the oral presentation of her senior project at the 13<sup>th</sup> National Psychology Conference in Thailand. Previously in 2014, she graduated from the University of Queensland (UQ) with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology as part of the joint program. At UQ, she was also awarded with the Dean's Commendation for Academic Excellence for all three semesters. In the near future, Suphasiree plans to pursue further studies in the field of Cognitive Psychology.



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