To study The Call for Values Congruence (Franklin Square, 2008), herein referred to as The Call, is a study in wasted opportunity. Wasted in that if you really read the document, you realize it has done little more than shape 10 years of rhetorical bluster for those of us involved in the “fraternal movement.” Some campuses have adopted published standards for their fraternities and sororities, yet many chapters continue to fall short of those standards. Campuses have adopted new and improved alcohol policies and have developed new alcohol education programs, yet high-risk underage drinking continues to rise (Leinwand, 2007). Fraternity/sorority advisors talk about values congruence a great deal, yet a large number of fraternities and sororities continue to operate in ways inconsistent with their stated values. The Call, however well-intentioned, can only be described as a missed opportunity. Very little has changed in the last eight years. What was intended to be a catalyst for significant change has instead become an oversused talking point.

Why is this the case? Why has a document that had support from the highest levels of our higher education, one that called for significant cultural change, failed to produce that change? The answer surely lies in the fact that we have seen little innovation in our field during those years. As a profession, we continue to attack the same problems with the same tired approaches, and we continue to expect different results. In the meantime, hazing persists (Allan & Madden, 2008), alcohol use continues to rise (Leinwand, 2007), and we continue to provide fodder for critics who call for the end of fraternities and sororities. As a field, it is time for new approaches in the battle to align behavior with values. As we consider approaches to combat our issues, we must consult the literature to examine what, if any, empirically-validated approaches are available.

Anyone who has ever heard me talk about hazing has heard me use the ‘bad apples/bad barrel’ analogy used by Phil Zimbardo (2007) to describe the behavior of the guards in his now-famous Stanford Prison Experiment. Zimbardo argues that instead of dealing with “bad apples,” what he created with his simulated prison was a ‘bad barrel,’ in which normal, decent people committed extraordinary atrocities. I have long argued that hazing in fraternities happens in much the same way – otherwise good, decent students are placed in a novel setting where they have complete power and authority over new members. Throw in some of the other cultural norms typically associated with fraternity membership (alcohol, hyper-masculinity, conformity, and a desire for social status, to name a few), and now a situation arises that is ripe for decent, upstanding young men – men who are rarely, if ever, violent outside of this context – to commit some rather atrocious acts, all in the name of brotherhood.

While I would argue that the best tools in the fight to prevent hazing lie in fixing the “bad barrel” in which the behavior takes place, research has shown at least one effective tool that we, as a profession, can utilize to make the “apples” more resistant to the “bad barrel” and to help students align their behaviors with their values: the construct of moral development.

Any student affairs professional that has earned a graduate degree in higher education or student affairs, and has taken a course in student development theory in the last 20 years, is likely familiar with Kohlberg’s theory of moral judgment (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Kohlberg’s original theory has been altered somewhat over time, but the basic premise of his theory remains intact under what current researchers call a “neo-Kohlbergian” approach to moral development (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999). The neo-Kohlbergian approach to moral judgment differs only slightly from Kohlberg’s original theory. Instead of Kohlberg’s rigid stages, neo-Kohlbergian theorists suggest a theory that consists of three primary schema: personal interest, maintaining norms, and post-conventional. In the “personal interest” schema (akin to Kohlberg’s stages 2 and 3) where individuals do not presume the concept of an organized society, but make decisions based on the personal stake they may have in the consequences of an action. In the “maintaining norms” schema (derived from Kohlberg’s stage 4), individuals make moral decisions based
on a need for norms, a society-wide scope, and a need to conform to the norms of a group and maintain the established social order. It is worth noting that most fraternity and sorority members find themselves in the maintaining norms schema (Derryberry & Thoma, 2000; Pike, 2006). Finally, in the post-conventional schema (derived, but different, from Kohlberg's stages 5 and 6), decisions are made with regard to moral criteria (as opposed to de facto norms), an idealized way that humans interrelate, and a notion of full reciprocity (uniform application of social norms in an unbiased manner). The instrument developed to measure moral judgment along with this approach, the Defining Issues Test (and the subsequent DIT-2), is among the most empirically validated measures of moral development (Rest, Thoma, & Edwards, 1997).

So why is moral development and the more specific construct of moral judgment (the mechanism by which one makes a decision regarding a moral dilemma) a useful construct for those involved in fraternity/sorority advising? Research has consistently shown two things: increased levels of moral development are strongly related to pro-social behavior, and college students are amenable to interventions aimed at increasing their moral judgment.

Moral development has been linked to pro-social behavior in a variety of ways. Carroll (2009) found strong linkages between moral judgment, moral disengagement, and rape-supportive attitudes of fraternity members. McCreary (2012) found linkages between moral judgment, moral disengagement, and in a meta-analysis of moral judgment research done with college students, King and Mayhew (2002) found that students are amenable to moral interventions as a means to increase levels of moral judgment. Their study found that the most effective means of increasing moral judgment appeared to be semester-long classroom experiences that emphasized on social justice or out-of-class experiences with service learning.

These two findings, taken in combination with the consistent finding that fraternity members exhibit lower levels of moral development than their non-affiliated counterparts (Carroll, 2009; Derryberry & Thoma, 2000; McCreary, 2012; Pike, 2006) highlight the importance of focusing attention and resources on promoting the moral development of college students, particularly fraternity and sorority members. Such studies suggest that those involved in values alignment efforts with fraternity and sorority members may be successful at reducing negative behaviors, thereby helping students live in a manner more congruent with their values. To borrow Zimbardo's (2007) analogy, by increasing moral development, we can make the apples more resistant to the bad barrel in which they may exist.

Derryberry and Thoma (2000) also suggested that the low-density friendship networks of fraternity members are a likely cause of the lower levels of moral judgment displayed by fraternity members. Fraternity members are likely to identify closely with those in their group, limit their interactions with "outsiders," and have an "us versus them" attitude. Pike (2006) has suggested that these attitudes lead to pressure for fraternity members to conform to group norms, leading to a lag in moral development. Practitioners should intentionally design programs and interventions to assist fraternity and sorority members in broadening their friendship networks and engaging in more depth with those outside of their organizations. This may be accomplished through delaying the time in which first-

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pro-social bystander behavior and hazing-supportive attitudes. Another study found strong negative correlations between moral development and cheating and academic misconduct (Cummings, Dyas, Maddux, & Kochman, 2001). The student affairs literature is teeming with studies showing linkages between moral development and pro-social behavior.

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Year students are able to join fraternities. By creating programs specifically designed to increase the moral development of students that indicate an interest in joining fraternities before they are able to do so or by creating programs specifically designed to engage fraternity members with a broader cross-section of students, broader friendship networks can be developed outside of the fraternity.

King and Mayhew (2002) found that social justice training and service learning shows promising gains in moral development, the development of an ongoing (one semester or longer) common learning experience that emphasizes social justice and service learning could significantly boost the moral development fraternity and sorority members and serve as a means to reduce anti-social behaviors within these organizations. Some in the fraternity/sorority advising field already place an increased emphasis on service-learning.

The number of experiential service opportunities provided by campuses and inter/national organizations in recent years has grown exponentially. Expanding those “one-shot” programs into ongoing conversations about social justice should be viewed as a priority for our field.

Campus culture also plays a key role in strategies related to values alignment. A study by the author found that campus climate towards hazing was the strongest predictor of individual students’ hazing-supportive attitudes, regardless of their moral development (McCready, 2012). Studies have consistently shown that a majority of fraternity members are in the “maintaining norms” schema (Derryberry & Thoma, 2000; McCready, 2012). As noted by Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, and Thoma (1999), individuals in the “maintaining norms” schema define morality through adherence to the established social order. These students abide by a duty orientation, in which they cling to a perceived “chain of command.” Decisions are made not out of respect for authority, but out of respect for the established social system (Rest et al., 1999). In an organization or on a campus where hazing, high risk drinking, drug use, or other anti-social behaviors are part of the accepted system, students in a “maintaining norms” schema are likely to be quite beholden to that system and have little inclination to act in a way that runs contrary to widely held views. Thus, the overall culture at a particular college or university is of particular importance as it relates to the practicalities of preventing high risk behaviors and helping students live in alignment with their values. Practitioners must work with stakeholders, particularly inter/national organization staff and officers, to develop campus-wide approaches (as opposed to isolated, chapter-by-chapter approaches) of culture change aimed at changing social norms and increasing moral development.

As a field we must begin to pay more attention to the moral development of our students. Everything that fraternities and sororities stand for — the notion of making better men and women — naturally lends itself to conversations about moral development. Leadership development has always had a tremendous amount of time, energy and resources are devoted to it by both campuses and organizations. What if, as a field, we spent as much time, energy, and effort on moral development as we currently spend on leadership development? In our battle to align behavior with values, moral development may be the best weapon we have at our disposal.

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REFERENCES


