Fun & Games: Educate or Intimidate?

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Thresher Report

Although the freshman orientation programs at Rice differ markedly in many respects, some of them have a common program of semihumiliating and semibeing wear, for want of an official term, may be called freshman initia-

lion (FI).

Freshman initiation as defined is any

durably Institution which has as its ob-

jective and main effect the physical

denial of freshmen. There are two types of FI at Rice that by virtue of

Jock Godinance

According to a reliable member of

one of them, all athletic teams have a

rigorous program of baring during their

seasons. The usual program consists of

requiring the freshmen in each college to

present a shift for upperclassmen, to
do miscellaneous personal errands for them,
to submit to regular baring, and to participate in the Olympic Games.

Errands include polishing shoes and cars,.fetching food (shack runs), and
anything else with an upperclassman might decree.

The shift is held in the training rooms and is invariably followed by a round
of baring, the severity of which depends
on the quality of the performance.
It is desirable for freshmen to please their elders, for the effects of a
vigorous beating can last for several weeks. The Olympic Games, which are
held in the room of an upperclassman,
consist of a variety of activities, the most
notorious of which are the elephant
walk and (for lack of a better name) the
ball drop. In both games, players are

Ball Drop

Elephant walkers march around mimicking elephants (who walk holding
each other's tail with their trunks). Ball dropers must sit on a golf ball, pick
it up, and drop it into a cup.

Most athletic baring is done by sopho-

mores, although juniors and seniors fre-

quently take part. It is defended on the

grounds that new players need to be

humiliated in order to co-operate as a team, one has complained very much
about it.

The Rally Club has variations of the same program. Of course, they do
not involve freshmen. The Rally Club initiates must drag dead fish behind
them, and they are supposedly made to

consume unusual concoctions of tobacco
and various mixtures of alcohol.

Lack of Unanimity

FI occurs at all three colleges, and

Baker Colleges. Only resident students

are subject to FI; of-campus students are

an isolated from the colleges in this

respect as in all others. All three colleges provided freshmen

with beanie and a uniform to be worn

on Fridays. However, Baker did not re-

quire freshmen to wear uniforms at

times on Fridays.

Wiesen's program this year consisted of

a broom race, an ice cube race, a rope

game, and the goose pole contest.

No Hard Feelings

In the broom race, freshmen were

spun around a broom and then made to
dodge pies and assorted goof while
running down a field with their legs

tied together. In the ice cube race they

had to push ice cubes with their noses

on a floor covered with salt and sugar.

Bear polar contestants, clad only in

underwear, race down a corridor sitting

on blocks of ice.

One Wiesen sophomore section leader,
disappointed in this year's fun and
games, thinks Dr. Talmadge has misre-
calculated the program by imposing numer-
ous restrictions (e.g., no polar bear race)
in his efforts to avoid "hurting any-

one's feelings." The program should

either be allowed to be of some sub-

stance, he says, or abolished.

He feels the vast majority of fresh-
mens support fun and games, but are

unenthusiastic about them. Although

is under direct physical coercion to take

part, he added, but he doesn't think

very high of anyone who refuses and

neither do most people.

Couldn't Care Less

Curiously enough, he opposes beanie

because they physically distinguish freshmen from other members of the

college.

Another sophomore section leader

said he couldn't care less whether or not

his charges participate. This respondent
did note a decrease in spirit among

this year's freshmen (this seems to be
ture every year), and he thinks that

prize will not bring the deaths of FI.

He suggested that the colleges could

infuse new life in the program by

abolishing those aspects which are put

on only for the amusement of sopho-
mores and by substituting for them a
series of cultural outings.

Hate Object

This person (he stated that FI was

of little value in helping people to get

acquainted.

Several freshmen seemed to be in

favor of FI, although some Hanssen

men were rather uneasy about the polar

bear race, and a few thought the wear-
ing of name-tags after the second week
ridiculous. Praising the unifying aspects

of FI, especially fun and games, one

said, "We all have a common object of

hate--our sophomore section leader."

This illustrates well the fact that FI

concerns essentially only three groups

of people: the resident freshmen, the

sophomore section leaders, and to

lesser extent, the senior advisors, who

assume the superior role of overseers.

Tension Valve

All other people seem genuinely in-
different. Typical among them is the

Wiesen SE who eloquently replied to a

question about FI with "Do away! I have
to study!

These freshmen who considered fun

and games a valuable method of re-

leasing tensions caused by studying, felt

they represented the majority. One per-

son stated that 17 of the 21 people in

his section showed up for fun and
games.

No participating freshman thought

there was an overwhelming amount of

pressure to participate in FI, and most
did not find anyone's non-participation

against him. In general, these people

seemed eager to co-operate with the

authorities in expectation of the day

when "power" would be theirs.

Right to Dissent

Two Hanssen freshmen spoke out in

definite opposition to FI, especially fun

and games, because they considered it

an intolerable infringement on their

right to spend their time as they saw
fit. They also found personally distaste-
ful such features of the program as the

shack race and the polar bear race.

Although under little pressure now,

they were definitely uneasy about the

future. One of them fled the campus

the night of the polar bear race in order
to study. These people have also re-

fused to wear their beannes and name-
tags, but have had no trouble in getting

acquainted.

"Entirely Optional"

Neither said he wanted to be about FI,

although both vowed militant opposition to the program in a spring election

which will be held to decide whether or not to continue fun and games at Han-

sen.

Neither could name anyone whom he

felt was more militant than he, although

both thought the majority agreed with

them. They stated that less than one-

half of the people in their sections

showed up for the polar bear race.

The faculty officials of the colleges

took cautiously conservative attitudes.

Views varied from favoring the activi-
ties at Hanssen to opposing them at

Wiesen.

Dr. Roy V. Talmadge, Master of

Wiesen, with the most nearly middle of

the road attitude, pointed out that he

was totally against baring, but he none-
theless favored such activities as are

currently undertaken. He added, though, "Everything should be entirely op-

tional."

"Silly and Childish"

Professor C. R. Wiehmeyer, Master of

Baker, stated that he seemed to be

little success in the realms of FI. He

felt that more was gained through

intrusiveness simply by freshening. When

asked about Baker's policy, Wiehmeyer

stated that he felt it was maturing as it

in-

cluded much less FI.

James K. Van Houten, new resident

associate at Baker, stated that he con-

sidered most of FI activities silly and

childish. However, he saw nothing wrong with things like beannes, red shits,

shirts, and shacks, of which he happened

even considered them fun. He thought such activities were okay as long as there

were no greater risk of physical injury.

Dr. John Parrish, resident associate

of Wiesen, thinks that college sponsor-

ship of FI should not be interpreted as

an unqualified endorsement of H, but

as a means of controlling it to prevent a scandal. He refused to state that fun

and games is distasteful to him, although he said he does not like to admit it.

De-Emphasis at WRC

Insisting that all participation in fun

and games be absolutely voluntary, he

noted that this has not always been the
case. Sophomore section leaders should be chosen on the basis of their

maturity and interest in helping people, rather than their zeal for persecuting

freshmen. Dr. Parrish added, noting this has not always been the case.

Rick Herr, president of Will Rice, disapproved of the "whole mess ... It

is stupid to force these activities on the freshmen."

"He felt FI defeats the purpose

of the university, which is educa-

tion, not intimidation." Herr stated that

he did not consider FI a "good culture,"

as "guidance is a good word."

Following this policy well, Will Rice's

only FI activities were upperclass-

men-inspired water fights (which fell flat) and a tug of war with Baker (organized

by Will Rice's secretaries).

Build Class Feeling

The attitude at Wiesen was somewhat

different. FI was not termed "dreadful,

but rather "Freshman Orientation."

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Will apathy end guidance?
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"Guidance" concerned principally scholastic aid. At Wiess, no FI activities were carried out during Freshman week, as was the Will Rice water fight. However, shortly thereafter FI activities became weekly.

Don Lamb, president of Wiess, expressed opinions similar to those of Dr. Talmadge. He pointed out that the section leaders at Wiess were chosen for their leadership and counseling qualities rather than for their sadism. In fact, one section leader was even discouraging attendance at FI activities. Lamb felt that the purpose of FI was to bring up class feeling and (only through the observance of tradition) college feeling.

Lamb stated that Wiess is trying to move away from hazing-type activities toward a better type of competition without the harmful elements. He felt that this trend was definitely in the right direction.

Mochabocha?
Kim Hill, Freshman Orientation Coordinator for Wiess, stated that, in the past, "orientation" activities had been outright hazing. This year's activities were less organized and consequently less severe. Also, there seemed to be less enthusiasm for such barbarism this year. Hill, though, felt the greased pole climb should be retained, as it is a tradition in itself.

Opinions at Baker were at times hard to get. President Jim Scott called indifference. Chuck Young, head mentor of Baker, when asked about FI, said "Mochabocha huenahwana." He later explained that this summarized his views quite well.

It was obvious that FI has shockingly degenerated over the years. In 1916, it was usual for freshmen to be strapped with leather belts (although "severe hazing" was strictly prohibited). In 1945, they were only squirted with silver nitrate.

Un-Christian Brooming
In 1949, there was a big scandal involving the president of the Honor Council, who broke a broom over the posterior of some naughty freshman.

The editor of the Thresher at the time called for all freshmen to fight back. He felt that any action by the Student Senate (apparently important in those days, also) or by the Board of Governors would be useless in abolishing that "un-Christian" practice.

In the 1950's brooming was prohibited, and in 1965 the Slime Parade was abolished.

It is apparent that in this decadel era, few people feel very strongly about FI one way or the other, thinking apathy will eventually settle the question. There seems to be a general low-key pressure on freshmen to participate, and most of it comes from the sophomore's exploitation of college sponsorship. In some situations, the pressure was felt to be more than low-key.

Class Unity Needed?
Proponents of FI advanced the ancient arguments that it helps the cause of (a) class unity, (b) making friends, (c) releasing tensions. Non-participants either dislike various features of the program or dislike the overtones of sophomore regulation of the actions.

At Rice, however, class unity has become of dubious value, as the official party line is the college system. Most people who want to make friends are original enough to devise their own schemes for doing so. Few freshmen are too dull or immature to think of ways to divert themselves from their studies (if they want to).

Furthermore, some people are unhappy with the present system, either because they do not wish to socialize or because they are too individualistic.

The Noble Slime
The essence of FI philosophy, even when the program has degenerated so much, remains concisely stated by the editor of the Thresher, Jack Glenn, in the September 18, 1924, issue:

"...the good old days of hazing gave birth to some rip-snortin' traditions about this campus that must be carried on and on. Any freshman who dares to buck these traditions, who lacks the good-fellowship necessary to endure any embarrassment and inconvenience, may better pack up and move over to Texas, or A & M, or somewhere else right now.

"The good Slime will take the hard stuff in friendly spirit. The revoler will be isolated and above."