

Is Campus Rape Primarily a Serial or One-Time Problem? Evidence From a Multicampus Study

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Abstract

We examined the prevalence and repeat offenses of college men, including fraternity men and student athletes, taking advantage of someone sexually while under the influence of alcohol. Preexisting data from the Core Alcohol and Other Drug Survey included a sample of 12,624 college men at 49 community and 4-year colleges. Results provide further evidence that the problem of campus rape is largely one of serial perpetration. More than 87% of alcohol-involved sexual assault was committed by serial perpetrators. Fraternity men and student athletes were significantly more likely to commit alcohol-involved sexual assault than other men on campus.

Keywords

rape, sexual assault, serial, repeat rapists, perpetrator

Over a dozen meta-analyses support the contention that alcohol and violence are strongly connected (Duke, Smith, Oberleitner, Westphal, & McKee, 2018). Alcohol use plays a role in all major types of aggression. The greatest risk of violence comes when an individual engages in high-risk drinking behaviors, such as consuming high quantities of alcohol in a relatively short time (Shorey, Brasfield, Zapor, Febres, & Stuart, 2015). One of the many kinds of alcohol-involved violence is alcohol-involved sexual assault. This particular issue plagues college campuses in particular, with little

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sign of abatement (Abbey, Wegner, Woerner, Pegram, & Pierce, 2014). Such alcohol-involved sexual assaults constitute the majority of campus-based sexual assault incidents (Lorenz & Ullman, 2016). The rate of sexual assault on campus in national anonymous surveys has remained steady for three decades, with approximately one in four college women experiencing rape or attempted rape at some point in their lifetime (Carey, Durney, Shepardson, & Carey, 2015; Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2006; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). Although many studies point to selected attitudinal, social, and environmental factors that predict men's perpetration of sexual assault (Testa & Cleveland, 2017), the literature lacks a recent, clear understanding of the number of college men who commit sexual assault, the number of sexual assaults each perpetrator commits, and the relationship to traditional all-male campus groups such as fraternities and athletic teams. While the majority of men are not perpetrators, between 6 and 11% of men report committing or attempting rape (Abbey, 2005; Lisak & Miller, 2002; Swartout et al., 2015). Similarly correlated are incidents of sexual assault with alcohol use, particularly among college students (Abbey et al., 2014). The goal of this study was to describe the number of instances of taking advantage of someone sexually while under the influence of alcohol reported by college men in relation to their participation in fraternities and athletics. In addition, an active disagreement has appeared in the field of sexual assault prevention as to whether most campus rapes are committed by serial or one-time perpetrators. This lack of clarity comes from a 2002 study conducted at one northeastern university, which found that the majority of rapes were committed by serial perpetrators (Lisak & Miller, 2002) and a more recent study at two southeastern universities that suggested one-time perpetration to be the more likely scenario (Swartout et al., 2015). Given the lack of diversity in samples and lack of clarity in findings regarding the portion of campus rapes committed by serial perpetrators, we sought to shed light on this issue by measuring rapes committed by one-time and serial offenders at 49 institutions.

Profile of a Sexual Assault Perpetrator

Men who perpetrate sexual assault have been shown to be more hypermasculine, have a higher desire for impersonal sexual encounters, and have higher rates of substance abuse (Casey et al., 2017; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2014; Jacques-Tiura et al., 2015; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2012). Perpetrators are also more likely to be sexually abused as children among other childhood traumas (Casey et al., 2017). In an attempt to bring clarity to the issue of normal versus pathological, a recent study found that men who are narcissistic and psychopathological are twice as likely to engage in perpetration behaviors. Yet, willingness to engage in frequent casual sexual encounters mediated the relationship between these two psychological variables and perpetration (Mouilso & Calhoun, 2012). Further research confirmed that the more maladaptive narcissistic traits a man has, the more likely he is to commit sexual violence (Mouilso & Calhoun, 2016). This does not fully answer the question about whether men who perpetrate are in the normal range of pathology. However, it does suggest that they can be defined by some of their personality traits and behaviors.

Three of the most important behaviors that distinguish men who engage in sexual assault perpetration from men who choose not to are (a) consuming alcohol 2 or more times a week, (b) having peer support for behaving in an emotionally violent manner toward women, and (c) having peer support for being physically and sexually violent toward women. Interestingly, a man having all three behavioral features is 9 times more likely to engage in sexually assaultive behavior than a man who does not (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2014). Further research showed that men who perpetrate rape receive more pressure from friends to have sex by any means, reject egalitarian statements their friends make about women, and use more objectifying language about women (Jacques-Tiura et al., 2015).

These alcohol and peer behaviors are all linked to hypermasculine spaces on college campuses. Hypermasculinity encourages men to participate in exaggerated stereotypical behavior that links aggression and strength with male sexuality. These spaces often include participation in all-male fraternal or athletic groups (Boyle, 2015; McCray, 2015). In this study, we seek to provide insight into the role of alcohol and all-male social environments in repeat sexual assault perpetration. One way college men are encouraged to rape is through their consumption of pornography (Foubert, 2017). Today's pornography, accessed by four of five fraternity men each year, consists of videos that encourage violence against women. In fact, one of five fraternity men view porn showing a rape at least once a year (Foubert, Brosi, & Bannon, 2011). It is no wonder that some of these viewers act on what they see.

Men who commit sexual violence also have cognitive distortions that reinforce their behavior. For example, perpetrators are more likely to justify their activity with self-serving arguments. Men who use these justifications also have higher levels of rape-supportive attitudes, expectations for having sex, misperceptions of sexual intent, more aggressively pursue victims who have consumed alcohol, make more attempts to be alone with her, and have a higher number of consensual sexual activities prior to unwanted sex. As use of justifications increases, men become even more likely to rape again in the future (Wegner, Abbey, Pierce, Pegram, & Woerner, 2015).

Not surprisingly, if men have committed sexual assault before, they are more likely than other men to do so again. Other predictors of perpetration include aggressive and impulsive personality characteristics, rape myth acceptance, and the expectation that if a woman is drinking it is a sign that she wants to have sex (Davis, Danube, Stappenbeck, Norris, & George, 2015).

A 4-year longitudinal study found that of those who commit an act of sexual coercion and assault, 68% did so more than once during their college career. Interestingly, one-time offenders were more likely to have had a difficult childhood, while serial perpetrators scored higher on antisocial personality traits (Zinzow & Thompson, 2015).

The Role of Alcohol in Sexual Assault Perpetration

The consumption of alcohol plays a critical role in campus sexual assault. A study of college men who were consuming alcohol at the time of the study found that they were

much more aggressive toward women when they were drunk than when they were sober (Crane, Godleski, Przybyla, Schlauch, & Testa, 2016). A main way that alcohol and sexual violence intersect is that a perpetrator will use alcohol to deliberately lower the defenses of a potential victim—whether by administering the alcohol himself or by selecting a target based on who is the most intoxicated in a particular social scene (Lisak & Miller, 2002). Consuming alcohol, particularly at parties, increases the risk of a woman to be sexually victimized (Azimi & Daigle, 2017). Men who commit sexual assault while they are drinking differ from sober men who engage in acts of sexual perpetration in two important ways. First, they drink more than sober men who perpetrate in sexual situations, and they have higher alcohol expectations regarding alcohol's effects on resulting sexual behavior (Abbey, 2011).

Fraternity Subculture

Research on fraternity men has continuously found that they are much more likely to commit sexual violence than men not in fraternities. In 2005, a study found that fraternity men were over 3 times more likely to commit sexual violence than men not in fraternities (Loh, Gidycz, Lobo, & Luthra, 2005). Two years later, Foubert and his colleagues found an identical figure in their study, wherein fraternity men were 3 times more likely to commit sexual violence than men not in fraternities. An interesting facet of the latter study is that men who joined fraternities were just as likely to have committed sexual violence prior to college as men who did not join. Thus, it was not men who had a prior history of sexual violence who gravitated toward fraternities. Rather, it appeared to be the fraternity culture itself that was responsible for a threefold increase in rape among fraternity men (Foubert, Newberry, & Tatum, 2007). That same year, a review of 15 studies involving approximately 5,000 participants found that being in a fraternity was significantly associated with committing sexual assault (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007). These studies left little doubt that fraternity men are more likely to commit rape. Still, not all fraternity men rape and not all fraternities themselves permit such behavior. Evidence suggests there are some fraternities that have particularly dangerous cultures. Current research suggests that some men are drawn to certain fraternities where they believe they will be better able to commit sexual violence. Evidence suggests that these fraternities reinforce hostility toward and violence against women (Boyle, 2015).

But why are fraternities and rape so strongly associated? Part of the answer may involve the pressure fraternity men experience to conform. For example, fraternity men are pressured to conform to masculine norms, to uphold those norms, and to accept the objectification of women. These three characteristics are found to be the conduit between being in a fraternity and accepting sexual violence (Seabrook, Ward, & Giaccardi, 2018).

One such norm that some fraternity men support is the belief that women offer token resistance to men's sexual advances. Believing in token resistance plays a significant role in fraternity men's greater likelihood of committing sexual violence. This dangerous belief system some men hold leads them to think that a woman's "no" is

actually a sign that the man just needs to be persistent enough to hear the word “yes.” In studies of men and women, in and outside the Greek system, fraternity men score higher than any group on believing that women offer token resistance. This toxic viewpoint can help a potential rapist justify his coercive actions (Canan, Jozkowski, & Crawford, 2018).

In addition to pressures to conform and belief in token resistance, other aspects of fraternity culture have been identified as contributing to a culture that is permissive toward rape. For example, when fraternity men treat women as objects of sexual conquest rather than as a human being with agency, consent is undermined. Examples of ways fraternity men and the members of their chapters treat women are plentiful in media accounts. One example comes from the University of Southern California where in a weekly “Gullet Report” the fraternal author noted that women they identify as “targets” are not real people. According to the author, only men are people (Rosenfeld, 2014). Thus, it appears that fraternities are particularly dangerous places for women. The present study sought to determine whether a sample including several dozen campuses would achieve results similar to single-campus studies done previously.

Male Student Athletes

Although student athletes are a less studied population when it comes to campus rape, they have been consistently found to be at heightened risk of perpetration. A comprehensive review of research on student athletes found that men on intercollegiate athletic teams are disproportionately represented as perpetrators of campus sexual assault (McCray, 2015). One of the first studies of athletes and sexual violence found 19% of college sexual assaults were committed by men in athletics. This number is staggering considering that only 3% of college students participate in collegiate athletics (Crosset, Benedict, & MacDonald, 1995). Subsequent research supports this finding. For example, a recent study found that male college athletes have higher rape myth acceptance, more restricted gender-role attitudes, and higher rates of sexually coercive behavior than students who do not participate in intercollegiate athletics. Specifically, athletes were 77% more likely to commit an act of sexual coercion than nonathletes. Most of these coercive acts involved force or threats of harm (Young, Desmarais, Baldwin, & Chandler, 2016).

Theories of Sexual Assault Perpetration

Some theorists identify the organization as the catalyst for sexual aggression (Sanday, 2007). Although individual risk factors related to the perpetration of sexual assault have received considerably more research focus (Mouilso & Calhoun, 2016), an increasing number of studies have focused on the influence all-male institutions impress on members’ morals, values, beliefs, attitudes, behavior, and dynamics that lead to a rape-prone environment (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2014). Male support theories suggest that legitimization of violence toward women is prompted by male peer

attachments and conformity to subculture norms. In accordance with male support theories, one explanation for such a disproportionate representation is the development of a culture that encourages sexually aggressive behavior through the promotion of views that support female subordination, male dominance, and overt displays of hypermasculinity (Goldfarb & Eberly, 2011; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007). Despite theories used to explain male sexual assault perpetration, more research is needed to better understand the relationship between alcohol-involved sexual assault perpetration by college men and all-male institutions such as fraternities and athletics.

Theoretical Perspective and Research Questions

This study of alcohol-involved sexual assault perpetration is grounded in social cognitive theory related to health behaviors as articulated by Bandura (2004). Application of this health behavior theory operates on the basis of the interaction between an individual's self-efficacy, outcome expectations, perceived environmental impediments and facilitators, and behaviors. Bandura (2004) emphasizes the idea of reciprocal determinism, whereby the environment influences the individual, and the individual influences the environment. It is of particular relevance that, according to Bandura, the environment influences behavior even when a person is not specifically acting in the environment; stated another way, passive observation of the social scene may influence alcohol behavior. Therefore, social cognitive theory provides the basis, in this study, for considering the environment's effect on the attitudes and behavior of students within the college institutional context.

The research questions guiding this study were developed within the context of this theoretical framework. They are as follows:

Research Question 1: What portion of college men commit alcohol-involved sexual assault?

Research Question 2: What portion of assault perpetrators commit one versus more than one incident of alcohol-involved sexual assault?

Research Question 3: What portion of the total number of alcohol-involved sexual assaults are committed by men who commit two or more sexual assaults?

Research Question 4: To what extent do men involved in fraternities commit alcohol-involved sexual assault? Does this differ from other men?

Research Question 5: To what extent do men involved in athletics commit sexual assault? Does this differ from other men?

Methods

The target population for this study was male students ($N = 12,624$) at 49 community and 4-year colleges in one Midwestern state. The data were obtained from the state-wide coordinating organization for alcohol and other drug prevention in higher education and drawn from the Core Alcohol and Other Drug (CORE) Survey developed by the Core Institute at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. The surveys used to

collect the data employed in this secondary analysis were administered 5 times between 2000 and 2010 (2000, 2002, 2003, 2008, and 2010). Following guidelines suggested by the Core Institute, survey administration for all institutions in the study employed either individual or clustered random sampling at the campus level so as to be generalizable to the college campus population.

Overall, the Core Survey had 36,596 participants and 90 variables related to alcohol and drug consumption, student behavior, academic performance, and campus environment. In all, 9,946 (27.2%) student participants attended institutions with less than 2,500 students, 2,887 (7.9%) attended institutions with 2,500-4,999 students, 3,868 (10.6) attended institutions with 5,000-9,999 students, 14,117 (38.6%) attended institutions with 10,000-19,999 students, and 5,778 (15.8%) attended institutions with more than 20,000 students. Of the student participants 12,624 (34.5%) were male, 22,206 (60.7%) were female, and 1,766 (4.8%) did not answer. Of the participants, 149 (0.4%) were American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1,645 (4.5%) were Hispanic, 1,745 (4.8%) were Asian or Pacific Islander, 29,166 (79.7%) were White, 2,174 (5.9%) were Black, 951 (2.6%) identified as other, and for 766 (2.1%) this information was missing. Of the students who participated in the survey, 16,071 (43.9%) lived on campus and 17,889 (48.9%) lived off campus, with 2,636 (7.2%) missing. Finally, 10,394 (28.4%) survey participants were freshmen, 9,340 (25.5%) sophomores, 7,650 (20.9%) juniors, 7,235 (19.8%) seniors, and 1,997 (5.4%) other or missing. In all, 7.4 % of the men in the survey were an active member in a fraternity, with 5.2% in a leadership position; 16.4% of the men in the survey were an active member in athletics, with 4.6% in a leadership position. The sample comes close to representing the national average of male students and students of color in higher education.

Quantitative tools were used to describe and analyze the data. We analyzed the relationships between variables, including social fraternities and men who are involved in intermural and club athletics or team sports as it related to the variable "having taken advantage of someone sexually while under the influence of alcohol." We used a chi-square test for independence and used standard residuals to determine significance.

Results

For Research Question 1, we found that 5.1% of college men in our study committed alcohol-involved sexual assault (see Table 1). This finding fits with other studies that assessed a broader range of sexual assault (including incidents not involving alcohol) and found rates in the 6-11% range (Abbey, 2005; Lisak & Miller, 2002; Swartout et al., 2015). In response to Research Question 2 (Table 2), we found that more men who committed alcohol-involved sexual assault did so more than once (2.9%) than did so only one time (2.2%).

What we found more elucidating were the results of Research Question 3. We used a chi-square test for independence and descriptive statistics to analyze repeat sexual assault offenses by college men while under the influence of alcohol. When looking at the number of assaults committed, repeat offenders commit significantly more assaults.

Table 1. Background and Institution Variables, Along With Taken Advantage of Another Sexually and 2-Week Drinking Level.

Variable	Number of responses	% of responses	% of those who reported having taken advantage of another sexually during the past year	% of those who reported consuming five or more drinks in one sitting in the past 2 weeks
Total (49 institutions)	12,624			
Race				
White	9,985	79.1	5.1	59.9
Native American	61	.5	13.6	68.3
Hispanic	575	4.6	3.3	58.1
Asian American	715	5.8	4.0	35.3
African American	672	5.3	6.2	24.6
Other	369	3	5.2	45.0
Unknown	247	2		
Class				
Freshman	3,539	28.3	5.1	52.5
Sophomore	3,195	25.4	5.3	57
Junior	2,574	20.5	5.2	62.2
Senior	2,596	20.7	4.9	61.7
Other	664	5.2	5.8	50.4
Age				
≥ 18	1,257	4.3		50
19-20	4,987	5.2		45.9
21-22	3,279	5.5		67.7
23-24	778	5.6		59.2
25-30	708	3.5		46.7
31-40	333	3.5		30.1
>41	210	4.1		21.6
Institutional type				
Public	6,950	55.1		
Private	5,674	44.9		
Institution type				
Community college	2,854	22.8	5.9	50.5
Four-year institution	9,632	77.2	4.8	48.8
Campus size				
>2,500	3,314	27.3	6.3	59.7
2,500-4,999	882	7.3	4.4	50.9
5,000-9,999	1,390	11.5	5.6	47.7
10,000-19,999	4,424	35.6	4.6	57.3
>20,000	2,257	18.3	4.0	59.2

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Variable	Number of responses	% of responses	% of those who reported having taken advantage of another sexually during the past year	% of those who reported consuming five or more drinks in one sitting in the past 2 weeks
Location				
Urban, inner city	1,598	13	4.4	51
Urban, other	4,926	40.1	3.7	57.2
Suburban	2,956	24.3	6.3	58.8
Rural	2,515	20.4	6.4	57.6
Other	272	2.2	7.0	56.3

Table 2. Men Having Taken Advantage of Someone Sexually Under the Influence of Alcohol ($N = 12,267$).

Reported occurrences	Number of participants	Percentage of participants
Never	11,646	94.9
Once	266	2.2
Two or More	355	2.9

Serial perpetrators commit significantly more alcohol-related sexual assaults on college campuses than do one-time offenders, $\chi^2(2, n = 35,641) = 196.451, p < .0001$. To calculate repeat offenses (see Table 3), we used a counting procedure whereby we coded responses of 3-5 times as an average of 4, 6-9 times as an average of 7.5, and 10+ times as 10. In our study, 266 incidents were committed by one-time offenders. In stark contrast, those who committed two or more incidents committed 1,805 acts of taking advantage of someone sexually under the influence of alcohol. Importantly, our study found that more than 87% of alcohol-involved sexual assault incidents were committed by serial perpetrators, who committed an average of at least five incidents each.

Fraternity Results

We found that men in fraternities were more likely to commit alcohol-involved sexual assault than other men. We used a chi-square test to investigate the relationships between variables, including having taken advantage of someone sexually while under the influence of alcohol and active participation in a fraternity. Using a chi-square test for independence, we found a significant relationship between having taken advantage of someone sexually while under the influence of alcohol and participation in a fraternity, $\chi^2(10, n = 12,021) = 53.162, p < .0001$.

Table 3. Number of Occurrences of Men Taking Advantage of Someone Under the Influence of Alcohol.

Occurrences reported	Number of participants	Percentage of participants	Number of occurrences
Once	266	2.2	266
Twice	133	1.1	266
3-5 times	104	0.8	416
6-9 times	23	0.2	173
10+ times	95	0.8	950

Note. For variables 3-5 times and 6-9 times, the average numbers (4 and 7.5) were used to calculate the number of occurrences. For 10+ times, 10 was used to calculate the number of occurrences.

The standard residuals show there is a correlation between not participating in fraternities and not participating in sexual assault perpetration. These residuals increased for multiple accounts of sexual assault perpetration, highlighting that multiple sexual assault perpetration is less likely for males not involved with fraternities. For fraternities, the standard residuals show that sexual assault perpetration, especially repeat sexual assault perpetration, is more likely with attending fraternity parties and being a member of a fraternity. At the levels of 6-9 and 10+ sexual assault perpetrations, active nonleaders in fraternities had a higher likelihood of perpetrating repeat sexual assaults.

Athletes

We used a chi-square test to investigate the relationships between having taken advantage of someone sexually while under the influence of alcohol and active participation in athletics. We found there was a significant relationship between having taken advantage of someone sexually while under the influence of alcohol and participation in campus athletics: $\chi^2(15, n = 12,056) = 100.029, p < .0001$. The standard residuals show there is a correlation between not participating in athletics and not participating in sexual assault perpetration. These residuals increased for multiple accounts of sexual assault perpetration, highlighting that multiple sexual assault perpetration is less likely for males not involved with athletics. For athletics (including intercollegiate, intermural, and club sports), the standard residuals show that sexual assault perpetration, especially repeat sexual assault perpetration, is more likely with participating in collegiate athletics. At the levels of 6-9 and 10+ sexual assault perpetrations, active leaders in athletics had a higher likelihood of perpetrating repeat sexual assaults.

Discussion

Several of our findings shed light on the current research literature on campus sexual violence. First, we found that just over 5% of college men have committed sexual assault. This figure fits with prior literature (Lisak & Miller, 2002; Swartout et al.,

2015) in that the 5% we found is restricted to alcohol-related sexual violence, whereas the 6-11% found in previous studies included a much wider range of behaviors. We also found that there are more men who have committed multiple alcohol-involved sexual assaults. With an average of at least five infractions per perpetrator, chances are if a perpetrator is caught, he has committed sexual assault before and will likely do it again.

Research Implications

The finding that is perhaps the greatest contribution from this study is that 87% of alcohol-involved campus rapes are committed by serial perpetrators. While no single study can end a disagreement in prior research, it is noteworthy that the present study examined data from 49 instead of one to two campuses, including well over 10,000 men. Thus, it seems plausible to conclude that the greater problem with campus rape is with the serial perpetrator. One possible advantage of this finding is that with fewer investigations and expulsions, a greater impact might well be had than if sexual assault perpetration was more widespread.

Our finding that fraternity membership is associated with a higher likelihood of alcohol-involved sexual assault is not surprising given prior research indicating the same (Foubert et al., 2007). The finding that at the highest levels of repeat perpetration (6-9 or 10+) the fraternity offender is most likely to be an active nonleader has a tremendous practical application. What this tells us is that if there are men in the fraternity who are committing multiple rapes, odds are they are not an officer but that they are active in the chapter. Knowing this can help practitioners target prevention education to active members. Of course, this finding does not mean that officers are immune to repeated acts of sexual assault, just that they are less likely than active, nonofficers to be in this high offending group.

Athletes are similar to fraternity men in that they are more likely than men in the general university population to commit alcohol-involved sexual assault, particularly multiple times. By contrast to fraternities, the most dangerous men on athletic teams tend to be the leaders. Thus, a high-profile athlete may be at particular risk of committing sexual violence. Anecdotal evidence for this possibility is ample in the news media. The present finding adds quantitative support to that assertion.

Limitations

This study has a number of limitations. First, the data came from 49 colleges in a Midwestern state. This represents less than half of the total number of colleges in the state. It is therefore important to recognize the limitations of generalizing the findings to all the colleges in the state, as well as to colleges nationwide. In addition, because this is a secondary analysis of an extant data set, the data are presumed to be nested or hierarchal and multilevel modeling was not advisable as variables are nonlinear or categorical (Nezlek, 2008). Another limitation of this study is the overrepresentation of traditional-age college students (those who are

17-24 years of age) and Caucasian students without comparison groups. In addition, the survey is a cross-sectional analysis of self-reported alcohol use with the variable “taking advantage of someone sexually while under the influence of alcohol” as the sole signifier of sexual assault perpetration. This survey items used to determine male perpetration has unknown validity, and the survey relied upon participants’ own operational definition of “taking advantage of another sexually” to determine perpetrating behavior. Although this approach is frequently employed in studies of sexual assault and alcohol use by college students, self-reports are limited by factors that include the pressure for socially acceptable responses as well as shortcomings in the personal recollections of individuals and in their ability to accurately report behavior. Cross-sectional analyses are also limited in that their findings apply to specific timeframes and cannot necessarily be generalized across time; this should be kept in mind because college student alcohol use has been reported to vary throughout an academic year.

Implications

Male sexual assault perpetration on college campuses remains a concern for numerous stakeholders in our society. This study set out to better understand the circumstances that might influence this behavior, leading to the support of prevention efforts. There were 5.1% of participants in this study who acknowledged taking advantage of another person sexually. An overwhelming majority of campus alcohol-involved sexual assaults (87%) were committed by serial offenders. Also, of those who report committing alcohol-involved sexual assault, a comparatively large number came from fraternity and collegiate athletics who reported perpetrating multiple offenses. Fraternity and collegiate athletics members’ high rate of perpetration behavior may suggest that they do not see taking advantage of another sexually as wrong or do not believe there will be consequences to their actions.

In addition, consistent with Bandura’s (2004) theory of individuals and environments, these findings suggest a subculture-specific lens through which fraternity members and college athletes base a set of values and beliefs that then influence how they view themselves, others, and themselves in relation to others. This set of core beliefs (consciously or not) influences their choices and resulting behaviors. In addition, a subculture often contains, like any system, both explicit and implicit rules about socially acceptable conduct. Conformity to perceived expectations of behavior, rule breaking/following, being male, and coercive sexual conduct may serve to normalize or justify acts of sexual assault perpetration.

Another noteworthy finding includes the link between leadership roles in fraternity and college athletics and repeat sexual assault perpetration. Currently, there is little research on the role of leadership and male perpetration of sexual assault. Future studies should include additional inquiry into leadership roles in traditionally male-dominated college activities.

A systemic approach to managing perpetration behavior on campus is essential. When we reflect on our findings through Bandura’s (2004) social cognitive theory,

it becomes clear that we must address both individual attitudes and culture norms to decrease and eradicate rape. College administrators, campus leaders, and health professionals should have a clear sense of the subculture of their schools, including trends in drug and alcohol use. Knowledge about the sociocultural climate of the campus can empower institutional leaders, administrators, faculty, staff, and students to collaboratively and intentionally create policy and procedure designed to counter the risks of sexual assaults on campus. In addition, prevention education efforts must be evidence-based and continuous throughout students' college experience. Working to create these types of systemic change requires time, energy, commitment, and resources across campus stakeholders.

Conclusion

Given the prevalence and also the significance of sexual assault on campus climate and individual functioning, this study sought to contribute to the understanding of the number of college men who commit sexual assault, the number of sexual assaults each perpetrator commits, the portion of assaults committed by serial offenders, and relationship to traditional all-male campus groups such as fraternities and athletics. Our study was guided by questions surrounding incidents of self-reported perpetration and then examining background, environment, attitudinal, and health behavior in relation to perpetration. The underlying goal of the research was to better understand male perpetration behavior to better inform preventive approaches designed specifically for college campuses. Our findings are promising in providing guidance that more fully explains key attitudinal and health-related behaviors that are essential to a meaningful model to guide prevention practice.

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