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Masculinity in Fraternities: Impact on Campus Sexual Violence

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Abstract

The literature on fraternities and sexual violence has suggested that some fraternity members are more likely to adopt and maintain the values found in hegemonic masculinity (Sanday, 2007). This is significant as it can aid our understanding of how fraternities and hegemonic masculinity play a part in promoting and engaging in sexual violence. This paper investigates existing literature on masculinity and how hegemonic masculinity is enforced through fraternity participation. The literature review explores condoned behaviors and beliefs that endorse negative masculine values, which are fostered in the social fraternity lifestyle between brothers. Those values paired with the strong male social bonds created within the concentrated environment may surface negative and inappropriate behaviors towards women and sex. Implications include a need for ongoing discussion of the relationship between hegemonic masculinity among fraternity members and sexual violence and the importance of identifying strategies to engage with fraternity men about sexuality and sexual violence in more constructive ways. Future research regarding alumni fraternity members and their lived experiences as well as more qualitative research to gain more understanding of fraternity members views on sex, gender, and sexual violence is necessary.

Masculinity in Fraternities: Impact on Campus Sexual Violence

Introduction

Attention gravitates towards campus sexual violence only for as long as media circulates it. Very few cases are covered by media due to the low rates of sexual violence reporting (Cullen, Fisher & Turner, 2000). It is important to note that the rate of reporting does not accurately reflect the actual prevalence of sexual assault. It is estimated that one out of four college women has experienced sexual violence after the age of 14 (Foubert & Perry, 2007; Corprew & Mitchell, 2018). For those who fall victim to campus sexual violence, about 90% of them do not report the incidence (Cullen, Fisher & Turner, 2000). When high profile cases of sexual violence do receive media coverage, there's often increased backlash rather than support towards the victim. As media moves on to the next story, the public's attention follows, all while the victims are battling against the effects of sexual violence for the rest of their lives. In addition, victim-blaming is a typical response when individuals share about their traumatic experiences. Victim-blaming is when the victim is placed at fault for the violent incident. For example, someone who is victim-blaming may say, "the way she dressed looked like she was asking for sex," instead of understanding that the absence of consent determines the situation as rape. Comments and overall attitudes like this are used to blame the victim and release the perpetrator from accountability. This disregard and disinterest for the violent actions occurring in our communities daily are only promoting this type of behavior. Sexual violence is a complicated issue with much of the problem being the normalization of violent behaviors (Sanday, 2007). This allows for society to dismiss the severity of sexual violence cases and instead justify it with information extracted from rape culture and toxic masculinity.

When looking for solutions to sexual violence, much of the response has focused on how to support women in avoiding these situations (Hong, 2000), such as suggesting to women to beware of their drink to ensure no one drugs it or to not walk at night alone. This is problematic for many reasons. One is that women are not the only victims of sexual violence. Sexual assault affects people of all genders.¹ Second being that perpetrators are not being addressed nor held accountable for their actions. Rape culture and myths around rape and sexual violence, in general, allow for sexual violence to continue without consequences for perpetrators. This response to sexual violence simply does not grasp the complexity of the issue at hand. The solutions and strategies for addressing sexual violence ultimately need to be more in depth and understanding of the causal roots.

Sexual violence is a widespread social problem. The occurrence of sexual assaults on college campuses has been one to gather attention due to the severity and high frequency of assaults over the course of many years (Shwartz & Nogrady, 1996). Of the whole student population, 11.2% of students encounter sexual assault (RAINN, 2018). A study from the American Association of Universities found that 23% of undergraduate women specifically reported some kind of experience with sexual violence (Cantor, Fisher, Chibnall, Townsend, Lee, Bruce & Thomas, 2015). College women between the ages of 18-24 are 3 times more likely to be at risk of sexual violence than other women (RAINN, 2018). A critical point to address is how the amount of male perpetrators significantly outweighs female perpetrators (Brown & Messman-Moore, 2010; Shwartz & Nogrady, 1996; Hong, 2000). This is an important avenue to

¹ While sexual assault affects people of all genders, this paper will specifically focus on male violence against women.

investigate further as understanding what differentiates male perpetrators has the potential to assist in creating change. An extensive amount of research has been conducted on male perpetrators who have committed various forms of sexual violence (Sanday, 2007; Martin & Hummer, 1989; Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Carr & VanDeusen, 2004; Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004).

In our society, human beings are categorized into a binary system of gender immediately. This binary system refers to the two categories of gender that are assigned to a human being at birth based on genitalia. This traditional gender binary also has a specified social/cultural script attached, which men and women are expected to follow. Society has set up many reinforcements in to control the narrow constructions of gender from expanding by stigmatizing any behavior that is outside the script (Yeung, Stompler, & Wharton, 2006). Someone who is categorized as male learns about which roles and behaviors are appropriate for them to hold. For example, men in American society are expected to disguise every emotion except anger. When a man expresses sadness by crying they are displaying behaviors outside of their scripts and there are ways this behavior get redirected to fit the appropriate roles of a man (Boswell & Spade, 1996). For example, this could be other people ridiculing the individual for crying and questioning their manhood by telling them “men don’t cry” and to “man up.”

Those who identify as male are usually assumed to express themselves as masculine, which means their gender identity is aligned with their gender expression. Those who have been assigned male at birth, but may express themselves as otherwise are typically looked at as outcasts and are marginalized because of this. For example, expected masculine expression may include having short hair, playing sports, and drinking excessive amounts of alcohol. However,

masculinity is a social construction created by society (Jackson, 1991; Kilmartin, 2010; Martin & Hummer, 1989). This means masculinity is ever changing depending on the time in history, culture, country, and age of men. It's dependent on many factors and is a fluid concept. When masculinity is discussed, it can be difficult to understand which type of masculinity is being referred to. In this discussion, masculinity is defined as the ideas in the United States, traditionally, that is dominant over all other definitions of masculinity. It is founded on the stereotypical gender roles of a man (Anderson, 2008) and most often refers to white, middle-class, heterosexual expressions of masculinity. This is called hegemonic masculinity.

Masculinity

Masculinity is a complex sense of self-expressed through the possession of certain qualities, beliefs, and behaviors. It is a gender expression and therefore comprises of specific scripts and roles that may not be explicitly stated, but are socially accepted and reproduced. There can be many different forms of masculinity because it is a social construction (Martin & Hummer, 1989; Kilmartin, 2010). This means the way masculinity looks and takes root in individuals varies depending on factors like culture or time period (Jackson, 1991; Kimmel, 1997). American culture's ideas of what masculinity is can be seen all around from the men's clothing sections in retail stores to the commercials on television. These ideas that are seen often are more likely than not representative of hegemonic masculinity.

Men who adopt this form of masculinity as their own are more likely to be socially accepted and given certain privileges throughout their lives. These privileges differ based on the other social identities the man holds. A man may meet the expectations of hegemonic masculinity that he can control, like being the head of the household. His race, for example, is

something uncontrollable and this influences the extent to which he is privileged. A white man is more privileged when compared to a black man. Although their male identities grant them more privileges than women, the difference in race provides different experiences of privilege for the white man compared to the black man.

The “act-like-a-man box” describes this concept of hegemonic masculinity and how it is enforced quite well. Imagine a box with all the different qualities men are supposed to possess. This can include things like being aggressive, emotionless, heterosexual, competitive, and sexually driven (Kivel, 2007). These ideas are what's contained inside the box. If a man was to step outside that box, meaning if they were to cry, be passive, caring, or identify as gay then society has set up a way to push these men back into that box. From a young age, it's common to hear boys pushing each other back into their boxes with comments like "you're a baby" if someone is crying or fathers telling their sons to "man up" when they're expressing pain. These comments are found around the box, explaining that when men step outside their roles they will be subjected to these comments as well as violent physical behavior. Barriers are created for those who do not comply with the dominant culture's ideas on what a man is and how they are to behave (Kivel, 2007). In order to maintain power and control men need to be in the box and distancing themselves from groups that will jeopardize their masculinity; women and gay men (Anderson, 2008; Perry & Zernechel, 2017).

Another way to think of masculinity is as a "structural and cultural consequence resulting in the negotiations and interactions within and between genders" (Yeung, Strombler, Wharton, 2006, p. 8). Masculinity in this sense determines how the relationships between men and women are to be. There are some key components to what hegemonic masculinity is including the

disguising of emotions with the full exception of expressing anger and aggression, homophobia, and anti-femininity (Sanday, 2007). Women and gay men are subordinate groups that have been subjected to incredible amounts of discrimination and hate (Kimmel, 1997). The patriarchal society has constructed women and gay men in negative connotations creating a culture where injustices follow these populations throughout their lives (Kaufman, 1999). Typically, dominant culture believes that women and gay men are feminine. Some of the qualities associated with femininity are being weak, submissive, passive, and dependent (Huffine, 2007). These are qualities that men are shamed for possessing because it's nearly the opposite of what's socially acceptable and expected of them. However, these qualities are quite normal and natural for every human being to experience and hold. The rejection of femininity is crucial to upholding one's masculinity. The underlying tones of sexism, patriarchy, and discrimination is present in the interactions between genders when adopting this form of masculinity (Sanday, 2007; Kaufman, 1999).

Anti-femininity and homophobia interact together within masculinity to ensure that men achieve power and control (Kimmel, 1997). Women and gay men lack social mobility and power due to societal oppression and barriers that have a significant impact on individual lives. Men, on the other hand, possess great power and privilege in American culture. While men as a social group do maintain power and privilege based on gender, it is also important to note that the intersections of other identities such as race and class also impact how men experience their identities and social power. In the U.S., white, heterosexual, men have the most power and privilege. This power and privilege are systematically maintained while minority groups like people of color, those who identify within the LGBTQ community, and women experience less

power and privilege and often experience discrimination and violence. Disassociation from subordinate groups is vital to the existence of hegemonic masculinity because that is how social power is obtained (Kilmartin, 2010).

In Anderson's (2008) study of inclusive masculinity, he notes that those who belong to a fraternity may exhibit hypermasculinity which includes incredible amounts of negative language around women and gay men to ensure that their masculinity is never questioned. In the beginning, men may be expressing negative language towards these groups to maintain their “man-card,” but to truly present as masculine means to have the beliefs and behaviors to support it (Iwamoto, Cheng, Lee, Takamatsu, & Gordon, 2011). When a man is put in a position where his masculinity is called into question, it can often be perceived as acting outside of his “man box” or acting more feminine. To compensate for their display of femininity, men may exhibit hypermasculinity and/or excessive aggression by, for example, using negative language to distance themselves from femininity. The need to continuously prove one's masculinity creates an environment where women and gay men are looked at as targets and marginalized through the beliefs created and/or enforced in masculinity (Kimmel, 1997). This is how anti-femininity and homophobia become essential aspects of what hegemonic masculinity is.

Male competition, which is typical within masculinity, can also increase this marginalization of women and gay men. Masculinity follows a hierarchy and competition amongst other males on who is more masculine occurs in order to determine who has more power and control (Iwamoto, Cheng, Lee, Takamatsu, & Gordon, 2011). To prove one's masculinity, men may engage in risky behavior including; “getting into physical fights, vandalizing property, lying about having sex with girlfriends, [and] consuming alcohol...” (Perry

& Zernechel, 2017, p. 3). To continue holding this power and acceptance by society, men will distance themselves from the subordinate populations by targeting and discriminating against them. Association with these populations risks losing these privileges granted to men.

Appearing more masculine means shutting down any speck of femininity inside, resulting in the potential disconnection from one's true self. Resistance to the natural development of one's personality causes the individual to lose who they are at the core, but it seems to be essential in surviving manhood in America (Perry & Zernechel, 2017). The way dominant ideas around masculinity is set up shows how toxic it is, punishing men with words or actions when they present in any way as feminine. Unfortunately, suppressing one's true self for so long can have damaging effects on the health (Kivel, 2007). When a majority of emotions are unacceptable for a man to possess, violence, anger, and aggression are used because a man can express their frustrations or pain without judgment this way. This is seen as a completely normal way for men to deal with issues in their lives. This enforces an idea in which violence is perceived as an appropriate response to complicated situations, which doesn't solve the problem but pulls men through a higher emotional toll (Kivel, 2007). Dr. Chris Huffine explains that one quality of masculinity is continuously protecting the self from any threats (2007). Men will typically suppress any feelings or qualities associated with femininity in order to preserve their masculinity, avoid negative consequences, and protect themselves. This is due to the patriarchal system that devalues femininity and promotes sexist views (Kaufman, 1999).

Fraternity Culture

Social fraternities, which will be referred to as fraternities in general as they are the most traditional type, serve as a hub for the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity (Boeringer,

Shehan & Akers, 1991). Fraternities have a selective process for the men who enter into their bonds and brotherhood. Typically, new recruits will be similar in looks, beliefs, behaviors and more to the existing fraternity population. Social fraternities have most often been overrepresented by white males who follow a very narrow idea of what masculinity is to be (Anderson, 2008, p. 605). Those who exhibit the dominant idea of masculinity, including being white and athletic, will be accepted into the group more easily than someone who has stepped out of the box. Members then are able to maintain the status and power that comes with hegemonic masculinity (Yeung, Strombler, Wharton, 2006). This is not to say that all fraternities consist of only white heteronormative males. There are social fraternities that include people of color as well as fraternities that are focused on diverse groups specifically. However, the status and privilege that comes with being a white male assists in integrating into traditional fraternities more easily because there is a specific form of masculinity and identity that these groups may seek out implicitly or explicitly.

With new members entering college and fraternities, the desire to conform and fit in can be high. This can place members in a very vulnerable position when they are searching for connection and community (Sanday, 2007). A sense of belonging is a natural desire and need and may be heightened in this developmental stage of entering college. For new members, pledging into a fraternity, going through the hazing process, blindly walking into the arms of their brothers can bring that sense of community, but at certain costs (Perry & Zernehel, 2017, p. 3). Perry and Zernehel (2007) explain the “blind trust” that new recruits and other members put into their brothers who have achieved high status (p. 3). This simplifies the process of reproducing hegemonic masculinity more so since new recruits may be more susceptible to what

they are told in order to be fully accepted instead of challenging the beliefs and fearing rejection (Sanday, 2007). Fraternities and sororities, in general, have a great sense of loyalty to one another and secrecy from other college campus groups. Members who feel they need to do something that puts themselves or others in harm's way, such as excessive drinking, to prove their loyalty describes the vulnerability that is being taken advantage of (Sanday, 2007).

Unfortunately, the secrecy and loyalty paired with the strong identification with traditional masculine ideas create an environment where actions are not held accountable and aggressive/violent behavior may go "unnoticed" (Perry & Zernechel, 2017, p. 3). This is not just about fitting in anywhere, but belonging to the group with social power and control. Peer pressure has also been a factor to consider within male social bonds. Those who experience or even perceive peer pressure to conform to the group's masculine ideals may do so by displaying sexual aggression (Hong, 2000).

This type of reproduction within fraternities is quite harmful because it promotes what hegemonic masculinity stands for; specifically, sexism, homophobia, and racial exclusion (Anderson, 2008). When fraternities adopt these violent and exclusive beliefs they are learning to exclude and discriminate against those who are different and/or have less power. Fraternity membership has been associated with less exposure to diversity. Thus, fraternity men have a lower likelihood of being open-minded to people and groups that are different from them. This only strengthens their violent beliefs because they don't encounter people who will challenge them or their worldview (Perry & Zernechel, 2017). Although hegemonic masculinity is not something that is only found in fraternities, it can be intensified by the group dynamics (Sanday, 2007). When entering a fraternity it's important to start behaving as a group, as a brotherhood.

Being initiated into an exclusive group comes with a price. The feeling of being isolated from the group through hazing helps the initiate look at the brotherhood as a sense of belonging (Sanday, 2007). To be in the brotherhood is to be homogenous with the group. As Sanday (2007) puts it, the initiate's identity is stripped “so that he is ready to accept the group-defined identity (p. 148).

This narrow-minded approach to the idea of masculinity works with incredible power because the system almost guards their men against exposure to other types of masculinity, particularly models of masculinity that may differ from hegemonic masculinity (Perry & Zernehel, 2017; Shwartz & Nogrady, 1996). This limitation makes it much easier to control the ideas and scripts that are embedded within the brotherhood. Masculinity has many different forms and the isolation of one form that is accepted by the whole group can read as the truth of what masculinity is. Member's ideas of what manhood and masculinity are isn't being challenged. When this is the only definition of masculinity that fraternity men are exposed to it instead of understanding the fluidity of masculinity, they may only see their ideas of masculinity to be "right" and may reject other ways to be a man. Members may not be as open to the diversity of masculinities and understanding differences. At this expense, they continue holding the power that is hegemonic masculinity.

American social fraternities are built on the foundation of hegemonic masculinity. Stereotypes and traditional gender roles of “male dominance and female submissiveness” are typical beliefs to be found among fraternity members who adopt hegemonic masculinity (Anderson, 2008, p. 608). In Anderson's (2008) study of inclusive masculinity, he notes that those who belong to a fraternity may exhibit hypermasculinity which includes incredible amounts of negative attitudes, beliefs, and language around women and gay men to ensure that

their masculinity is never questioned. Universities, society, and other men who acknowledge fraternities have become tolerant of the behavior exhibited by some of these men (Perry & Zernehel, 2017; Boeringer, Shehan & Akers, 1991). Fraternities work with the intention to “produce men who are not-women and not-feminine” and this initiates the process of “stigmatizing homosexuality and constructing a particular ideology toward women and femininity” (Yeung, Strombler, Wharton, 2006, p. 5). Not only are men pushing other men into their boxes, but women into their boxes as well.

Beliefs Encouraging Sexually Violent Behavior

Men have been socially conditioned on how to be a man in American society throughout their lives and even more so when they enter a fraternity (Kaufman, 1999). The experience of being provided with social rewards and punishments only strengthens the specific behavior desired. With every situation in which the reward seems to outweigh the cost, the behavior is more cemented into the individual (Boeringer, Shehan & Akers, 1991). In fraternities, masculine behavior is desired, for example having multiple female sex partners. If the individual's peers perceive that they do not have multiple sex partners then the punishment could be the group making fun of the individual. Whereas if it is true, then the reward is social acceptance and positive reactions. The individual is learning and being conditioned to understand what the group expectations are and how he can be accepted, so he may think it a good idea to continue this type of behavior (Boeringer, Shehan & Akers, 1991).

The perception of other men has an influence on behavior. For example, in Brown and Messman-Moore's study (2010), they assert that men are more likely to engage in intervention in sexually violent scenarios if they understand that other men are doing this as well. Specifically,

in their work they found that "men's perceptions of their close friends' willingness to prevent rape predicted their own willingness to prevent rape" (Brown & Messman-Moore, 2010, p. 504). From this same study, it was found that the perception of peers attitudes took precedence over personal beliefs. A man who perceives his brothers will approve of a behavior or even commit the same behavior has a higher likelihood of going through with it (Shwartz & Nogrady, 1996). Using the perception of others beliefs to validate personal beliefs can be harmful when discussing the impact it has on sexually aggressive behavior. Sexist, racist and homophobic beliefs are adopted through various mediums like families, media, and social groups. These beliefs can influence behavior and, even if it doesn't, it ensures that men are kept silent because they understand this behavior to be supported as a norm (Brown & Messman-Moore, 2010).

Social groups hold a great amount of power. Fraternities may be some of the strongest social groups when considering the social bonds created within these systems, bringing a wealth of influential power namely through male social bonding and peer support. A study from Shwartz and Nogrady (1996) found that "male peer support for victimization of women" existed amongst fraternity members (p. 148). The reinforcement from brothers and other men only increases the difficulty in changing this mindset. This creates concrete ideas about what is and isn't okay with respect to the treatment of women. With more social reinforcement for the harmful treatment of women comes the higher likelihood of exhibiting such behavior (Boeringer, Shehan & Akers, 1991). The endorsement of sexual violence through beliefs and attitudes an individual holds in common with others creates an environment where violent behavior is promoted as well (Foubert & Perry, 2007). Exposure to supportive beliefs about sexual violence and sexually violent behaviors in the fraternity setting that are downplayed regularly is

dangerous. These beliefs and behaviors are normalized, making it harder to understand what makes it wrong and to effectively navigate sexual violence cases.

The sexual violation of women is a part of hegemonic masculinity and the interaction between the two can be seen in American fraternity culture (Boswell & Spade, 1996). When these dominant attitudes are present so frequently in fraternity settings it can progress into the deeper dehumanization of the marginalized populations, allowing for certain violence to occur against the victims, like sexual violence. The sexual degradation and objectification of women to demonstrate one's masculinity and power can encourage men to see women as "less than," making it much easier to detach from and instead subject them to violence (Bleecker & Murnen, 2005). The strong beliefs extracted from hegemonic masculinity can be used as justification for the abuse of women's bodies (Anderson, 2008). Some of the misconstrued ideas of male behavior that has formulated out of hegemonic masculinity is the phrase "boys will be boys" and that men are so sexually driven that they have no self-restraint. Beliefs like this are used to dismiss the issue and lessen the severity of situations where fraternity members are committing crimes (Boswell & Spade, 1996).

Sexual Violence & Fraternities

Sexual violence and aggression have become an acceptable way for some fraternity men to pose their masculinity and gain status and power (Sanday, 2007). The hegemonic beliefs around women and sex, that is promoted in masculinity, creates a very narrow conception of what sexual violence is and how it's perceived and handled (Shwartz & Nograd, 1996). These beliefs drive a specific attitude and type of behavior around women, homosexuality, sex, relationships and gender (Kilmartin, 2007). The masculine ideals that have been formed intend to disassociate men

to discourage any empathy or understanding towards cases of sexual violence (Foubert & Perry, 2007). This promotes an overall desensitization to the violence and lack of awareness on the subject matter. It becomes much simpler to come to the conclusion that some forms of sexual violence are okay to commit, although they may not be framed as so (Foubert & Perry, 2007). This specific construction of masculinity that comes with fraternity membership has been associated with “elevated incidents of sexual assault and aggression” (Perry & Zernechel, 2017, p. 3). Undergraduate fraternity men account for about a quarter of the general male population on college campuses. Unfortunately, that number is almost doubled when looking at fraternity men who are committing sexual violence at 46% (Perry & Zernechel, 2017, p. 7). There is a possible link that is described to be between toxic masculinity and the "exploitation of women and homophobia" (Perry & Zernechel, 2017, p. 1). Hegemonic masculinity is not just a set of beliefs or script for men to follow, it is a key factor in the culture that has been created where sexual violence somehow loses its severity and the perpetrators walk away more often than being held accountable in any capacity (Martinez, Wiersma-Mosley, Jozkowski & Becnel, 2018; Cullen, Fisher & Turner, 2000).

It's been recognized that traditional fraternity culture can at times facilitate sexual violence. In fact, about 55% of gang rapes that happen on college campuses are committed by fraternity members. (Shwartz & Nograd, 1996). Gang rapes by fraternity members have been a way to bond with one another, a seemingly normal activity for them to commit. These crimes are seen as a way to show the "power of the Brotherhood to control and dominate women" (Sanday, 2007, p. 40). The lack of empathy and exposure to the victim's trauma and stories helps the occurrence of these violent behaviors (Foubert & Perry, 2007). In a study discussing social learning and sexual

aggression amongst fraternity men it was found that overall fraternity men had a "reduction in sensitivity towards rape victims (and women, in general)" (Boeringer, Shehan & Akers, 1991, p. 62). Full integration into fraternity culture has a powerful influence on some of the behaviors exhibited by their members. Fraternity men are not more likely to commit sexual violence just because of membership, it's more so about the concentration of male-normative beliefs that affect behavior (Boeringer, Shehan & Akers, 1991). For example, the desire for male bonding and other factors, like alcohol, can result in coercive sexual behavior (Shwartz & Nogrady, 1996). Beliefs drive behavior and that can be seen in one example of fraternity men and rape myth acceptance. Fraternity men who admitted to raping women scored higher on Burt's rape myth acceptance scale when compared to "non-aggressive" men (Shwartz & Nogrady, 1996, p. 150). Social groups and clubs on campuses, such as fraternities, are meant to serve as safe spaces for individual and community development--as spaces in where students can build connections and skills. However, it is notable, that involvement in a fraternity increases the likelihood of committing sexual violence by three (Perry & Zernehel, 2017).

The devaluation of women within masculine ideals, objectification of women's bodies, and acceptance of rape myths are taken to another level when it's used as justification to sexually violate them (Boeringer, Shehan & Akers, 1991). Fraternity members compared to non-affiliated members showed higher rates of sexual aggression in multiple situations. In a study of sexual coercion amongst fraternity members, it was found that using drugs or alcohol to engage in sex, being positively reinforced for sexually aggressive behavior, and approval of engaging in sex with multiple partners was more likely than when compared to non-affiliated members (Boeringer, Shehan & Akers, 1991). Given these rates and the importance of fraternities in

fostering hegemonic masculinity, fraternities have proven to be important groups to look into when gearing towards sexual violence prevention. There is much work that can be done to encourage these men to be preventionists rather than absorbing supportive beliefs and attitudes on violence against women.

Reconstructing Ideas of Masculinity & Sexual Violence

Challenging masculinity and sexual violence and engaging in the reconstruction of these ideas is difficult because much of society believes in and supports these ideologies. A call for the reconstruction of these ideas is a call for a societal and cultural shift, which is why the issue of sexual violence has no simple solution. Much of the population, including those who experience toxic masculinity, doesn't recognize the matter as an issue at all because of how normalized it's become. Bringing awareness to this issue and acknowledging it as gendered violence is a very hard task (Hong, 2000).

Male-only groups, like fraternities, are working examples that reflect the toxic values of the larger society at hand. However, it is possible that creating some cultural shifts within these groups may contribute to a larger societal change. The men against violence model is geared towards the prevention of violence that is expected and normalized of and for men on college campuses. This model, which started at Louisiana State University, focuses on prevention work with groups of men rather than working only with individuals. The group holds weekly meetings throughout the year that are open to members and the university. There is an emphasis on peer education as there is more impact on men who learn about masculinity from other men. This model mentions the importance of dissecting hegemonic masculinity and creating a community among men where peers are encouraging and accepting of broader ideas of masculinity (Hong,

2000). The goal is to change the “cultural and peer reference group norms” (Hong, 2000, p. 270).

The men against violence model is guided in their discussions by advisors and also includes socializing time that helps build the “close-knit community” (Hong, 2000, p. 270). As the community strengthens and members are able to find comfortability with being vulnerable and intimate during the heavy discussions they can begin to overcome hegemonic masculinity together.

Working to transform the violent masculine culture found in fraternities to one that is more open-minded and accepting of a diverse range of masculinities will help to deconstruct the current culture around sexual violence on campuses. Conversations about the toxicity of masculinity and how it contributes to the attitudes and beliefs that support sexual violence can begin the process of awareness. Violence against women is something that men learn from the social construction of masculinity and society. This behavior is reinforced throughout their lives, like when entering fraternities. Therefore, these attitudes and behaviors can be “unlearned” (Hong, 2000 p. 284). There is potential for changing these traditional views into more positive images and attitudes of women and masculinity. Men have the possibility of changing their mindset by engaging in discussions that unpack the ideas of sexual violence and masculinity. Although, it is more difficult to have these discussions with the people who may need it the most. College men can be an effective population, to begin with, but the availability of this information to those who are outside of the university culture may be a barrier in prevention work. Along with this, it may be difficult to develop an approach that would help other populations understand why it may be in their interest to partake or gather more information on sexual violence and masculinity. The reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity is deeply

embedded in all aspects of our society. As such, it will take work on multiple levels to change our societal norms and values to support safety and self-determination of all.

In sexual assault prevention work, reconstructing masculinity and the way that society sees men and gender norms is crucial. It's been said that not all men are rapists, but all rapists are men. Although this uses absolute language, it is speaking of the fact that a majority of rapists and sexual violators identify as male, but that shouldn't conclude that every man is a violator. In order to enact change, it's important to engage men as preventionists in the fight against sexual violence. Prevention programs need to understand how men perceive themselves and work from there. It's unlikely that a man will see themselves as a "potential rapist," so to approach the situation as such could spark defensiveness and push progress out the door (Foubert & Perry, 2007). Approaching men as if they've already committed a crime or done something wrong will not promote change, because most men believe they've done nothing wrong. In Foubert and Perry's (2007) study, one of the major themes from the interviews emphasized the importance of viewing men as helpers instead of violators and using a "non-blaming tone" when approaching men (p. 82). Seeing men as helpers means guiding men to see how they can assist in situations of sexual assault by, for example, supporting the victim and ensuring they are not treating them as helpless beings that encourage the damsel in distress scenario also founded in hegemonic masculinity (Foubert & Perry, 2007). This framework instead places men on the preventative side of sexual violence and can encourage empathy among men towards the issue.

Peer support is influential in defining what masculinity and a man is, which is why it can be a useful tool for sexual assault prevention. Fraternities who perpetuate values and behaviors of hegemonic masculinity have group shared norms and those norms are what needs to be

targeted for change (Hong, 2000). When men perceive other men in their lives as standing against sexual violence, more men will also take this stance. Hong's (2000) study found that if these small, exclusively male groups, like fraternities, engage in educational prevention, like the men against violence model, they will experience a change in "attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors" around violence, including sexual (p.284). If a supportive male peer culture is created and other men are encouraging each other to dismantle violent culture, more are likely to follow (Hong, 2000).

Changing the way sexual violence is handled and perceived on college campuses requires effort from many. Institutions need to hold the perpetrators accountable and issue appropriate consequences by adjusting policies and practices (Anderson, 2008). This includes the universities, fraternity chapter on campus, and the whole fraternal organization (Boeringer, Shehan & Akers, 1991). The student population as a whole would benefit from conversations speaking of what constitutes as sexual assault as much of the problem lies in the ambiguity of sexual violence, but all male groups on college campuses like fraternities and athletes should be a priority to present the information to (Boeringer, Shehan & Akers, 1991; Moynihan & Banyard, 2008).

Implications

Hegemonic masculinity consists of some major ideas that contribute to a violent culture including the rejection of femininity, homophobia, and the acceptance of aggression and anger as appropriate means to express emotions (Kilmartin, 2010). This is a very small and narrow idea of masculinity out of the many other forms that men possess around the world, but it is widely accepted by the dominant culture in America (Jackson, 1991). Dominant culture maintains

power, control, and high status through ensuring these beliefs are kept by the majority of the population and are working to oppress other populations. Fraternities are one example of a population that has adopted this toxic form of masculinity and enjoys the privileges that come with it.

Sexual violence on college campuses is widespread and present in groups like fraternities. One of the privileges that come with being a man and in a fraternity is being able to dodge serious consequences and instead receive positive responses when being sexually violent or aggressive. This is alarming for the general safety of students on college campuses because not only are these behaviors going under the radar, but they are also being promoted and encouraged. College campuses should serve as safe spaces for growth and learning for all students. Students shouldn't have to worry about falling victim to sexual violence when attending any type of function on college campuses, including fraternity parties. The goal is not to imply that fraternity men are going to be sexual predators, it's to bring awareness to the fact that something is happening in American fraternities that are encouraging violent behavior rather than preventing it. The reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity, which shows supportive beliefs and attitudes towards rape, is something to take into consideration when looking at the statistics on fraternities and sexual violence. Because the beliefs of toxic masculinity are so normalized, they may have a stronger impact on the attitudes and behaviors that promote sexual violence overall.

Despite greater awareness and resources regarding sexual violence in university settings, sexual violence still isn't being adequately addressed on college campuses. While there has been an increase in awareness of the issue and supports for victims, more work needs to be done that is focused on all-male groups like fraternities. It's important to target the male populations

instead of only assisting women in avoiding male perpetrators because only then is the root of the problem being addressed. The violent and aggressive behaviors that fraternity men may display comes from an ideology based in hegemonic masculinity and the social conditioning they experience throughout their lifetimes. Creating an open dialogue by and between men that speak of the harmful outcomes of toxic masculinity and how to dismantle it will have a greater impact on the prevention of sexual violence. This can be done by holding spaces in the fraternity to have conversations like so or creating another group that brings campus-wide awareness to masculine culture. The whole institution, every part of it, from the university president to the students, needs to engage in the dialogue. Conversations and awareness on these topics can help change the campus climate on masculinity and sexual violence. Students have many other social circles as well where they can implement what they've learned, hence assisting in the larger cultural shift.

In order for lasting change to occur, other groups and organizations on campus need to offer appropriate and knowledgeable support as well. College campuses need to revisit their policies on sexual violence cases and ensure that they're directed towards appropriate consequences for the perpetrator. For those who are involved in handling these cases, I propose that each go through an extensive training program on the relationship between masculinity and sexual violence and how to promote a healthier model of masculinity. This would also include university counselors, professors, and Greek life as a whole. Every individual partakes what society has defined as masculinity whether they are living it, reinforcing it or observing it. This means every individual has some responsibility to acknowledge the harm in toxic masculinity, discouraging it to remove its power, and showing acceptance for other forms of masculinity.

As more people start to adopt more expansive views of masculinity and men, fraternity men may feel comfortable enough to express more feminine qualities that are true to who they are as a human being. They could then potentially foster more supportive, accepting, and safe relationships with each other. The devaluing of femininity may start to dissipate when these feminine qualities are encouraged and respected. More members understanding this concept can assist in viewing women more as equal beings that shouldn't be subjected to any form of violence and specifically not sexual violence. This would help to create a safer environment for students to learn and grow in, without fear of being sexually assaulted or harassed.

Simply providing men with information on toxic masculinity and its relation to sexual violence is not enough to create substantial change. The information and conversations provided need to be extensive and deep. They need to help men explore their role in sexual assault prevention and understand how it's relative to them (Brown & Messman-Moore, 2010). Hegemonic masculinity is deeply rooted in society as a result of years of the patriarchy. Men who have lived their lives identifying with the roles and scripts within hegemonic masculinity view it as a truth and that is challenging in itself to change and assist them in understanding. Because hegemonic masculinity is systemically upheld and normalized in American culture a multi-dimensional and multi-level approach must be taken to enact change. This means, for example, addressing the issue on a micro, mezzo, and macro level, ensuring that the individual populations, communities, and institutions are heavily involved in dismantling the patriarchal society.

Sexual violence is all too common on college campuses and it affects many lives worldwide. The treatment that many victims experience is unjust due to the commonly held

beliefs about the issue that disregards the severity and victim as well. Dismantling the oppressive beliefs that uphold sexual violence requires effort from every individual as it's become normalized for society to think and see sexual violence as something that is a woman's issue. The issue must be reframed so male violators can be rightfully prosecuted and victims can seek proper resources and justice.

Social fraternities have many positive aspects as it can be a place for finding support, building community and connections, leadership development, and philanthropy service. These positive aspects can also help young men gain skills that can translate into life outside of college. However, the endorsement of stereotypical gender beliefs, the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity, and supportive beliefs of rape and sexual assault is where the issue lies in fraternities that need to be addressed extensively.

Future Research

After reviewing and analyzing literature on masculinity and the ways in which it impacts and contributes to sexual violence, it is evident that there is a continued need for future research in this area. First, there is a limited amount of research on fraternity alumni which is a population that could provide a new and influential perspective to the research. The comparison between how much fraternity alumni identify with hegemonic beliefs around sex, gender, and relationships during their collegiate years and afterward may help us in understanding how much of an impact the fraternity truly has on the individual beliefs over time. Research on fraternity members ideas on topics like gender, sexual violence, and masculinity extracted from focus groups and individual interviews and comparing the two may serve as a way of understanding how powerful the brotherhood is in the beliefs individuals hold. The comparison of experiences

based on different demographic information is also needed to understand how individuals from different racial backgrounds or with different sexual orientations, for example, experience the traditional fraternity. Research looking at undergraduate college men and fraternity members views on masculinity can also assist in comprehending how much of an impact the fraternity organization itself has on male students. As well as women's or more specifically sorority women's perceptions of masculinity, fraternity culture, and the atmosphere of fraternity parties would show what kind of impact interactions with fraternity members has on their ideas of sexual violence, gender, and more. This research focused specifically on social fraternities as does much of the literature in this area. A study comparing fraternities that are geared specifically towards communities of color, academic achievements, and professional development to social fraternities would help to understand what differentiates social fraternities from others. Lastly, there needs to be more research on prevention programs that use the dismantling of masculinity as the main objective to prevent sexual violence to understand how effective it is and the impact a change in masculine views can have. This may help universities, Greek life, and preventionists in understanding how they can better address the root causes of sexual violence and enact long-term changes. Universities and Greek life may also benefit from research that compares universities that have a strong fraternity presence to those that have no existence of Greek life on the rate of sexual violence. Eliminating the gaps in research and literature on fraternity members, sexual violence, and masculinity will assist prevention program developers, universities, male groups, and more comprehend campus sexual violence holistically, aiding in the better treatment of victims and women.

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