



Brotherhood, Male-Sexual Assault, and Homophobia

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Abstract

This paper investigates the extent to which fraternity brotherhood culture can promote male-sexual assault and homophobia on college campuses through a meta-analysis of literary analyses on Greek life, university sexual scripts, and homophobic rhetoric. Examination of over ten journal articles and literary reviews of male-sexual assault, homophobia, and/or brotherhood sexual scripts reveal the underlying social and evolutionary scripts present in male-sexual assault cases, intersecting with fraternity homophobia and brotherhood sex schemas on college fraternity rows.

Keywords: Fraternity Brotherhood, Homophobia, Male-Sexual Assault, Sexual Behavior

Introduction

College and university sex culture is often regarded as a sexual phenomenon. With the numerous intersections between gender identities, sexual fluidity, and psychosocial influences, researchers develop greater knowledge of the various components that influence sexual scripts within these populations. Often overlooked are the areas of male-sexual assault and homophobia, and their relations with fraternity brotherhood culture and whether this relationship exists.

Background

Demonstrated by the limited literature reviews and analyses exploring an in-depth understanding of brotherhood culture, alongside the additional investigations that oversimplify those behaviors, this paper will emphasize the extent to which fraternity brotherhood culture can promote male-sexual assault and homophobia on college campuses through a meta-analysis of literary analyses on Greek-life, university sexual scripts, and homophobic rhetoric. As dissected throughout the paper, it is essential to note that sexual assault (SA) and homophobia may operate independently, but both are connected to the consequences of fraternity brotherhood.

Brotherhood is evaluated throughout distinct facets of human interaction, commonly evidenced through college Greek-life communities. Literature reviews have examined the various cultures and outlets provided by fraternity brotherhood (Foubert, Brosi, & Bannon, 2011; Franklin, Bouffard, & Pratt, 2012; Hall & La France, 2007; Harris III & Harper, 2014; Sanday, 1990). While interpretations and analyses fluctuate, the facts remain indifferent: (1) brotherhood develops in-group culture, and (2) brotherhood is inclusive of community, commitment, and social bonding (Sanday, 1990). Exploring the sexual subculture of fraternities outspread within college campuses will allow understanding of the extent to which in-group mentality equates to sexual crimes and hatred.

Consequently, aspects of sexual assault are operationalized per the aims of research and investigations. Thus, this paper will recognize sexual assault as any undesired sexual acts in which a perpetrator exerts on an individual without consent (Light & Monk-Turner, 2009). This allows for a broader interpretation of sexual assault in fraternity and college culture regardless of gender, sexual, racial, or ethnic identities. SA is prevalent on college campuses and remains to be a thoroughly investigated topic due to increasingly high rates within the United States (Humphrey & Kahn, 2000). Literature heavily emphasizes high-risk factors among heterosexual cases of sexual assault throughout various populations, but minimal scope is applied to cases of sexual assault among men (Light & Monk-Turner, 2009). More importantly, the lack of substantial research concerning male-sexual assault, as attempted by this paper, has led to narrow accountability initiatives on college campuses (Franklin, Bouffard, & Pratt, 2012; Sanday, 1990).

Hatred as expressed through sexual indecency does not only present itself through sexual assault, but it aligns itself with concepts of homophobia. Homophobia, throughout this investigation, will refer to negative displays of behavior toward persons who identify with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and more (LGBTQIA+) community (Hall & La France, 2007). Homophobic discourse and behaviors are typical in atmospheres subject to heteronormativity, a concept that refers to heterosexuality as a norm. The connections between homophobia and brotherhood have been superficially inspected, prompting limited understanding and acknowledgement of negative sexual and educational behaviors (Almond, McManus, & Ward, 2013; Harris III & Harper, 2014). The primary conditions in

which homophobia thrives include fraternity brotherhoods that attempt to maintain a heterosexual group identity (Hesp & Brooks, 2008).

Development of an understanding of brotherhood, male-sexual assault, and homophobia are pillars in acknowledging the intersections and implications of the sexual subculture. The investigation, alongside proposing evolutionary concepts of sexual assault and fraternal privileges whilst encouraging a holistic understanding of brotherhood sex scripts, also hypothesizes that fraternity brotherhood propagates cultures of male-sexual assault and homophobia.

Methods

To accurately convey the relations between these concepts, this review of literature and studies with relevance to either brotherhood, male-sexual assault, or homophobia within fraternities and college campuses, is critically valuable. The aims, findings, and backgrounds of all material are thoroughly reviewed to identify commonalities in behavioral trends. All available literature was found using key terms, such as *brotherhood*, *male-sexual assault*, *fraternity*, *sexual scripts*, *homophobia*, and so forth. As aforementioned, literary analyses have minimally focused on brotherhood and male-sexually assault, which further prevents discussion of sexual aggression and hostility on fraternity row. The available literature provides evidence of these intersections and analyses that are hypothesized throughout this paper. From studies that examine fraternity brotherhood sexual schemas, researchers discuss concepts of Social Adjustment Function, in-and-out group establishment, cultures of silence, and the theories of Social Dominance and Control to better recognize behaviors that stipulate homophobia and sexual assault (Almond, McManus, & Ward, 2013; Light & Monk-Turner, 2009; Seabrook & Ward, 2018). Building on theoretical foundations of anthropological studies and psychological analyses, this investigation pursues a more holistic analysis of college sexual scripts. Analysis of Peggy Reeves Sanday's *Fraternity Gang Rape* permits acknowledgement of brotherhood privilege encouraging negative sexual actions. Dissection of various sexual-culture studies and literature hyper-focused on the numerous ideas proclaimed allowed me to formulate the research question, "Whether—and to what extent—fraternity [brotherhood] culture promotes male-sexual assault and homophobia?" Prompted by the knowledge shared through the literature, the investigation will provide a comprehensive outlook on the implications of fraternity culture on

male-sexual assault and homophobia on college-campuses. This will be applied to more robust sexual education initiatives and should increase the development of accountability systems.

Literature Review

Sexual scripts developed by fraternity brotherhood culture offer positive and negative insight into their associations with varying populations on college campuses. Social trends exhibited by brotherhood culture inherently reflect the sexual behaviors that are widely accepted and permitted throughout universities. Suggestive evidence can include, but is not limited to, defective accountability systems, scarce curation of effective resolutions, and exposure to high-risk factors (i.e., alcohol and drug consumption) (Seabrook & Ward, 2018). Although considerable publications consider fraternities as hubs for sexual assault and hatred-related behaviors, arguments proposed by Harris III & Harper (2014) examine the productive atmospheres of these brotherhoods. After examining fifty participants from Alpha Beta Fraternity chapters, the assumption is that brotherhood serves as an integral concept in promoting sociality and accountability within the fraternity (Harris III & Harper, 2014). Mentioning responsibility, pledgeship, and face-to-face demonstrations of accountability (i.e., when race-related comments are made) indicate potential positive aspects of brotherhood. Despite the study being conducted in an overt setting leading to potential alteration of human behavior, references to the importance of in-groups, groups of like-minded people with similar goals and interests, represent social scripts of conformity (Hall & La France, 2007; Harris III & Harper, 2014). This brings into question the extent to which the brotherhood mentality equates to the normalization of hatred and homophobia.

The normalization of behaviors that occur within group settings is evaluated by literary exploration of social fraternal contributions to rape culture. Gathering opinions from 408 undergraduate students, Seabrook and Ward (2018) found that the rating of sexual assault victims was much more negative when the assault was perpetrated by a fraternity member, as specified by a podcast with variable conditions to understand human perception of sexual-assault culture. In-group behaviors are directly related to the interpretation of actions, as exemplified by the study's interpretation of how sexual violence is perceived between distinct genders. Of course, the study contained limited intersectionality, which allows for little application to communities that are not white and heterosexual; however, the investigation offers an

understanding of in-group behaviors of fraternities (Seabrook & Ward, 2018). Ratings of SA victims distinctly differed when the aggressors were revealed as fraternity members. Further denotation indicates that in-group behaviors within fraternities perpetuate cultures that tolerate sexual assault. It is important to note that this commonality is not exclusive to fraternity brotherhoods.

Male-Sexual Assault

This also raises inquiries concerning victims of sexual assault, as many studies evaluate SA in heterosexual cultures. Commitment of sexual violence is correlated with irregular consumption of alcohol and homosocial bonding rituals (Seabrook & Ward, 2018). Similar explanations are offered when delving into male-sexual assault and rape, defined as “any non-consensual sexual acts perpetrated against a man, 16 years or older, by a male or female” (Light & Monk-Turner, 2009). Observing the 1994 to 1996 Violence and Threats Against Women and Men Survey, researchers concluded that most men would be assaulted with the presence of a weapon and that substance use was not a direct predictor of sexual assault (Light & Monk-Turner, 2009). Not only are men less likely to seek help when victimized due to sociocultural norms, but this may also be preserved by the interplay of dominance and aggressive hierarchies.

High prevalence of sexual assault victimization of men is elucidated by evolutionary and structural notions of emasculation and toxic masculinity. As seen in male heterosexual and homosexual sexual assault cases, dominance and power are primary culprits in establishing sexual victims. This, alongside in-and-out group development, can demonstrate evidence of homophobia and sexual assault. Through the comparative analysis of fraternities and athletic teams, drugs and drinking intensity were indicators of sexual aggression and group membership (Humphrey & Kahn, 2000). Although this may not be a consistent relationship between sexual assault and fraternities, fraternity groups that function as homogeneous groups can endorse high-risk situations fostering cases of sexual assault or harassment (Humphrey & Kahn, 2000). Using questionnaires of over fifty upper-level students, the researchers assume that sexual aggression and hostility are consequences of unruly student-level conduct. This can be reflected amongst populations that identify as women or men, as little-to-no research observes the intersex community. Male-on-male attacks are often motivated by unresolved sexuality, homophobia, and differences in sexual identities (Almond, McManus, & Ward, 2013). When examining 305 male-

on-male sexual assault cases from 1998 to 2011, it found that assault cases attempted to elicit a response from the victim. Additionally, this provides that sexual assaults committed by homosexual offenders are motivated by gratification (Almond, McManus, & Ward, 2013). These studies, in conjunction, provide information and a basis for ingratiating behaviors displayed by fraternity brotherhood members.

Homophobia

Exploring brotherhood sexual subcultures with a sole focus on sexual assault can be reductionist. Hence, an analysis of homophobia is also necessary for the development of the arguments in which brotherhood intersects with the penetrating cultures of homophobia on college campuses. After investigating the fraternity cultures at Southeastern State University, Hesp and Brooks (2008), found that homophobia generally pervades social and academic cultures. The questioning revealed that the fraternity chapters do not have any education on sexual orientation and can be generalized to fraternity houses that are excluded from the Title IX of the Higher Education Acts (Hesp & Brooks, 2008). As demonstrated by the authentic behavior produced throughout the interview questioning, minority tolerance results from personal contact but is not produced by effective programming or education efforts. However, there was no argument against the idea that heteronormativity is a fundamental arch in understanding fraternity brotherhood culture. This is historically depicted as fraternity brotherhoods developed spaces in which brothers, excluding men of color and those that belong to the LGBTQIA+ community, function to maintain cohesion (Hesp & Brooks, 2008).

The exertion of homophobia is also portrayed through processes of initiation and recruitment; heterosexual men that contained more flamboyant characteristics were more likely to receive membership within fraternity houses than more masculine and openly gay men. Although the characteristics and judgement are not operationalized, we can assume that this process is nationalized across all fraternity brotherhoods. It is also important to note that many of the literature focuses on majority-white brotherhoods that commonly perpetuate behaviors of homophobia and sexual assault that are violently tolerated on college-campuses. Additionally, displays of dominance and power are clarified through processes of initiation and recruitment, as insinuated by Sanday's *Fraternity Gang Rape*, the legitimization of male social dominance is followed by acts of homophobia and sexual assault associated with negative behaviors. Exhibited

through pledge initiations, new frat members had to be cleansed with mixtures of feces and water (Sanday, 1990). Anthropologists can assume that this permissible behavior within the in-group coincides with horrendous treatment of non-members and those that do not conform with the sexual identities presented by the fraternity (Almond, McManus, & Ward, 2013; Luetke, Giroux, Herbenick, Ludema, & Rosenberg, 2020).

Interconnectedness of Male Sexual Assault and Homophobia

On the college campus, sexual assault can result from social patriarchies and hierarchies that make abuse excusable. Regardless of sex or gender, the concepts of abuse founded on social hierarchy and dominance are pertinent to understanding sexual deviance (Franklin, Bouffard, & Pratt, 2012). Male-SA and homophobia are also extended through understandings of entitlement, as legally evidenced by the exclusion of brotherhoods following Title IX demands (Franklin, Bouffard, & Pratt, 2012; Hesp & Brooks, 2008). In fact, high rates of SA victimization among fraternity men are accompanied by sexual coercion. This is evidenced by fraternity hazing, parties, and heavy drinking (Luetke et al., 2020). A crucial perspective to examine is that of male-sexual assault within fraternity brotherhoods. According to Luetke et al. (2020), fraternity men are subjected to higher risks of homophobia and SA, as demonstrated by a study of 102 men, in which 27.5% of men reported having any experiences of sexual assault victimization (Luetke et al., 2020). Causes remain stratified, but fraternity exposure to overtly homophobic and sadomasochist ideals has led to greater intentions to commit rape (Foubert, Brosi, & Bannon, 2011).

Discussion

Male-sexual assault and homophobia remain ubiquitous in college campuses nationwide, perpetuated by social groups and sexual subcultures that both tolerate and amplify these negative behaviors. Although research accounts for the potential positive behaviors preserved by fraternity brotherhood, including leadership and intra-group accountability, a comprehensive understanding of brotherhood cultures leads to examination of its negative reverberations. Through the development of fraternal silence and inter-group protection, male-sexual assault and homophobia run rampant in college fraternity rows (Seabrook & Ward, 2018). Lack of distinction between fraternity culture and individual sexual aggression has led to consequential

advancements by universities that contain slender systems of transparency and accountability, fostering cultures of assault and hatred (Sanday, 1990).

Regardless of gender or sexual identity, sexual assault is highly present in fraternity brotherhood cultures. With phallocentric sexual gratification domineering the sexual scripts of fraternity brothers, an exhibition of sexual assault is very likely (Sanday, 1990). Moreover, this ideology is promoted by deleterious behaviors of aggression, dominance, hierarchies, and power imbalances.

Social dominance and control used to establish hierarchies through sexual assault can be explained through evolutionary and psychosexual concepts that interpret male aggression and display behaviors. Commonly evaluated in primates, intra-sexual competition can be inclusive of sexual assault behaviors, as well as theoretical explications of sexual assault within the same gender (Almond, McManus, & Ward, 2013). Through the evolutionary perspectives of sexual assault, anthropologists can assume that male aggression against other men comes from positions of power and exertion of hierarchal standards (Almond, McManus, & Ward, 2013; Franklin, Bouffard, & Pratt, 2012; Sanday, 1990). As demonstrated by Sanday's vivid portrayal of brotherhood imitation processes, fraternity brotherhoods do not only feel entitled to the development of a harmful atmosphere, but further this perception through victimization of fraternity and non-fraternity men (Luetke et al., 2020; Sanday, 1990). It is critical to state that the brotherhood approval of sexual assault cultures is pervasive of individuals that are both involved and non-involved in fraternity culture. However, this does not lessen the presumptions that in-group behavior facilitates unwanted sexual acts.

In-group behaviors refer to group or community actions that reflect the overall goals and consensus described by said in-group. Brotherhoods aim to curate communities of leadership and reinforce narratives surrounding fraternal communities, as determined by social adjustment function, to maintain a group identity (Hall & France, 2007; Harris III & Harper, 2014). Perspectives of sexual assault and homophobia can be interpreted through various lenses due to characteristics of certain brotherhoods; however, the idea that homosexuality ultimately hinders fraternal bonding is a structural issue that predates the development of brotherhoods (Hall & France, 2007). In-and-out group establishment prompts social scripts of conformity, regardless of morality, to be "...accepted by these men" (Harris III & Harper, 2014). The portrayal of said

groups is consequential to understanding how brotherhood mentalities and groupings are evident alongside crimes of sexual violence, fueled with hatred and homophobia.

This behavior extension can also be applied to homophobic communication and hostility towards individuals who identify as a part of the LGBTQIA+ community. Seen through recruitment studies at Southeastern State University, biases against men that are openly communicative about their sexual identity are viewed as hindrances to the growth of the fraternal brotherhood (Hesp & Brooks, 2009). Although future efforts of fraternities demonstrate increased minority contact to resist cultures of homophobia, the practice alludes to the regularization of these behaviors across college campuses. Social deviance that supports social learning and support of homophobic behaviors are not only tied to in-and-out group social theories but are prevalent in the development of sexual aggression and hostility among males. Seen through male-on-male sexual assaults, most aggressors display ingratiating and curious behaviors accompanied by social dominance and control factors (Almond, McManus, & Ward, 2013).

Evidenced by fraternal brotherhood recruitment, homosexuality is viewed as an inferior characteristic that proceeds sexual aggression and hostility towards those within the community (Harris III & Harper, 2014). This can then lead to the assumption that acts of sexual desire towards men reinforce harmful stereotypes on various communities. In turn, this can curate cultures of toxic aggression, which then perpetuates male-sexual assault rooted in curiosity, desire, and high-risk behaviors (i.e., heavy drinking, drug use, and so on) (Luetke et al., 2020). Through unresolved acts of sexuality, also identified by pornographic consumption and sadomasochism, fraternal bonding experiences inevitably increase the desire for same-sex relations, reflected through homophobia and sexual aggression towards the same sex for sexual gratification (Foubert, Brosi, & Bannon, 2011; Franklin, Bouffard, & Pratt, 2012; Sanday, 1990). Essentially, the connections between fraternity brotherhood can be established when analyzing the agencies of homophobia. Anthropologists are able to deduce that the perceptions around homophobia and behavior-adjustments conveyed through viewing of sadomasochistic pornography and potential same-sex curiosity, alongside fundamental traits of hierarchy and social dominance, serve as a basis for male-sexual assault within fraternities.

Research conveys that brotherhood advances homophobia and male-sexual assault practices, but limitations in efforts to develop comprehensive conclusions serve as hindrances to this investigation. An underwhelming number of literary analyses on male-sexual assault, concurring with little findings and reports of male-sexual assault, equate to scarce holistic syntheses of sexual behavior. The limited explorations of male-sexual assault in fraternity cultures have also prompted the greater development of analytical assumptions based on peer-reviewed sources to discuss the broader impacts of fraternity culture on college campuses. However, the potential researcher biases and limitations present within each study can also cause lesser validity in the arguments and conclusions postulated throughout the investigation. Similarly, inquisitions on homophobic communications present within fraternity are seemingly limited. Nonetheless, the presumptions and inferences generated within the research are supported by peer-reviewed journals that target various aspects of the hypotheses presented. **Future Implications**

Future research must explore fraternity cultures throughout various college campuses, while providing integrated conclusions to minimize several confounding variables. More importantly, research must focus on bridging the knowledge gaps, as presented through this investigation, by establishing behavioral assumptions supported by peer-reviewed sources. Further investigations can focus on survivors of male-sexual assault on college campuses and case studies in relation to LGBTQIA+ members in fraternity brotherhoods. Future research in this field should retain more inclusive approach to studies through the involvement of multicultural brotherhood subcultures.

Moreover, without proper applications future research may be redundant. Through its thorough examination, all research should be met with systems of accountability and transparency regarding sexual behavior. Although much research has yet to be done concerning sexual behaviors and fraternities, the theoretical groundwork will provide relative solutions to combatting sexual violence and discrimination on campuses nationwide.

Conclusion

Analysis of fraternal brotherhood behaviors through cases of male-sexual assault and homophobia are vital to the articulation of sexual behavioral inquiries. The question, “*whether—and to what extent—fraternity [brotherhood] culture promotes male-sexual assault and homophobia?*” comprises numerous arguments and inferences concerning sexual scripts and

subcultures portrayed by fraternity brotherhoods. Through a thorough investigation, it can be concluded that fraternity brotherhood, to a greater extent, can promote male-sexual assault and homophobia. The initial recruitment processes reveal that internal communications and in-group philosophy are significant in fostering homophobic rhetoric. Followed by fraternal bonding, media usage, and normalization of sexual assault, developed by fraternity protection and cultures of silence, college-campus function as hubs for male-sexual assault and hate-induced behaviors. Evolutionary understandings of sexual assault alongside developed stipulations of psychosocial-sexual cultures contribute to the intersections between brotherhood, male-sexual assault, and homophobia. Increasing efforts to prevent sexual and sexuality-related violence on campuses must be met with systems of accountability that do not excuse sycophantic brotherhood behaviors.

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