Hegemonic Masculinity, Male Peer Support and Sexual Aggression: Future Research Directions

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> *Youth*: They all can't wait until the next time we hop in bed. They love hearing about that shit. I mean, that's where I get half my ideas.
> *Interviewer*: Your ideas?
> *Youth*: Yeah. The fake-raping shit. My buddies told me about that. And spanking. I mean, we rent S&M pornos sometimes. They show pretty much everything - group sex, leather, chains, violence, but you can always tell that those bitches love it and beg for more. So I guess you could say that my friends are cheering me on.
> *Interviewer*: Cheering you on?
> *Youth*: Yeah. Sometimes I think they like it more than I do. They want me to film a fake-rape sometime...
> *Interviewer*: How does it make you feel, telling your friends about your sex life?
> *Youth*:(Silence) Pretty good I guess. They think I've got balls (silence).
> *Interviewer*: Is that a good feeling for a guy or a not so good feeling?
> *Youth*: Good, I guess. I think they look up to me for that shit.
> (Totten, 1996:108)

The context of the above conversation was a study investigating marginal male youth[1] and girlfriend abuse[2]. The excerpt illustrates many of the themes that will be discussed in the following paper, including achieving masculinity through the sexual exploitation of women, the importance of heterosexuality to masculinity, and male peer-support of sexually aggressive behavior.

The sociology of masculinities has recently emerged as an avenue to examine how gender is "accomplished" in social life, introducing the existence of various conceptions of masculinities. Ths paper explores how belief in "hegemonic masculinitY'[3] can lead to the development of sexually coercive masculinities. Taking the male college group as an example of a "hypererotic" subculture [4], it will be shown that some men demonstrate their commitment to hegemonic masculinity through heterosexual conquest. In some circumstances this can lead to sexual violence against women.

Sexual assault is multidimensional in nature: the victims of sexual assault include people who are married, single, widowed, and dating (e.g., Allison and Wrightsman, 1993; Stets and Straus, 1989); definitions of sexually coercive acts are broad ranging (e.g., DeKeseredy and Hinch, 1991; Schwartz, 1997); the effects of sexual assault (Arata and Burkhart, 1996; Koss, 1985) vary as much as the characteristics of the perpetrators (e.g., Malamuth and Dean, 1991; Rapaport and Posey, 1991). Due to these factors, sexual assault theory and empirical research remains to be underdeveloped. This is not meant to suggest that sexual assault has not been the focus of several investigations, but rather that completed research suggests certain trends: rates of sexual assault (e.g., DeKeseredy and Kelly, 1993); police/societal reaction to victim (e.g., Koss, 1988; Schwartz and Pitts, 1997); and offender characteristics (e.g., Scully, 1990). The development of an integrated theoretical approach that considers the importance of social factors in the encouragement and legitimization of woman abuse is needed.

An emerging theoretical area in the area of sexually aggressive behaviours is the study of male peer support[5]. Central to this theory is the concept that a rape-prone[6] society supports the abuse of women through upholding the hegemonic masculinity ideology of female subordination. Male peer support research, which has primarily concentrated on college students, has shown that there is a connection between male peer support, hegemonic masculinity and sexual assault [7]. This body of research suggests that the pro-abusive ideology supported by some male peers exists prior to college entrance, therefore indicating a need to study adolescents.

In the following paper, the connection between hegemonic masculinity, male peer support and sexual assault will be briefly presented. Draw-

ing upon research conducted on college students, the critique of existing studies indicate a research gap in the area of Canadian adolescents and sexual assault. The primary goal of this paper is namely to encourage studies that theoretically and empirically investigate how hegemonic masculinity, male peer support and sexual aggression interconnect among adolescents. Theory needs to be developed that takes into consideration the life situations of adolescents. Directions for future research include the development and testing of a theoretical model that integrates routine activities and male peer support theories. The suggested model incorporates familial influence, primarily parental supervision, and male peer support theory in the study of sexually aggressive behaviour among adolescents. The final section of this paper provides some suggestions on how to conduct such research.

Rates of Sexual Assault: The Canadian College Experience

It is difficult to estimate the number of women sexually assaulted on Canadian college campuses per year. This problem is not unique to college populations but rather is characteristic of sexual assault rates in general (e.g., Koss, 1993). Listed below are just a few of the difficulties that can arise when attempting to estimate how many women are sexually assaulted.

- high unreported rate (Bohmer and Parrot, 1993; DeKeseredy and Hinch, 1991)
- only those reports that are termed "founded" by police are included in official statistics (Kanin, 1984)
- the use of inconsistent definitions in sexual assault research (DeKeseredy and Hinch, 1991; Ward et al., 1991)
- women are often asked if they have been a victim which assumes that they label their experience as rape which some do not (Koss, 1988)

Regardless of these obstacles, it is important to strive to obtain an accurate rate of sexual assault on the Canadian college campus.

Table 1 (reprinted from DeKeseredy 1997) summarizes Canadian university/college sexual abuse dating surveys. The discrepancies in the

rates reported in DeKeseredy (1988) and Barnes et al. (1991) in comparison to the other three studies can be partially attributed to a methodological difference: both studies relied on single-item measures (see the "Measures of Abuse" category on Table 1). As DeKeseredy states "[s]uch an approach exacerbates the problem of under-reporting because one question cannot cover the full range of unwanted, demeaning, and brutal sexual acts" (1997:47). The latter three studies employ the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) (Koss et al., 1987) resulting in higher levels of incidence and prevalence rates partly because of their broad definition of sexual abuse and their use of multiple measures (more questions). The studies noted in Table 1 are local, small-scale surveys and therefore do not provide us with a national estimate of sexual assault on the university/college campus[8].

The Canadian National Survey (1992) sought to fill this gap by gathering information on 3,142 university/college students across Canada. Results indicated that 28% of the females stated they had been sexually assaulted in the past year, and 11% of males indicate that they had sexually victimized a female dating partner in the past year (DeKeseredy and Kelly, 1993). Although only limited Canadian studies have been completed on the rate of sexual assault on university/college campuses, there have been significant studies completed on sexual assault in general. These findings, as well as preliminary studies focusing on campus assault, combine to indicate that sexual assault on the university/college campus exists and, just as important, is an area in need of further research. After having established that sexual assault is a reality on Canadian university/college campuses, the following section illustrates potential linkages between hegemonic masculinity, male peer support, and sexual assault.

The Sociology of Masculinities

Theories discussing the role norms inherent in masculinity and femininty have, historically, relied on the biological differences between men and women. However, this dichotomous ideology created through primary reliance on biology does not allow for the study of differences that exist among men. Challenges to the presuppositions of traditional political and social theories by feminists have lead to a discussion of masculinity as a research topic (Morgan, 1992).

Table 1: Sexual Abuse in Canadian University/College Dating Surveys (reprinted from DeKeseredy, 1997)

Survey	Survey Location	Sample Description	Interview Mode	Measure(s) of Abuse	Incidence Rates(s)[a]	Prevalence Rates(s)[b]
DeKeseredy (1988)	Southern Ontario	308 male university students	self-administered questionnaires	2 questions	2.6% reported having been sexually abusive	not examined
Barnes (1991)	Manitoba	245 male university students	self-administered questionnaires	Students were asked if they had physically forced a woman to have sex	Not examined	0.5% said they did it once, whereas 1% said they did it more than once
DeKeseredy (1992)	Eastern Ontario	179 female and 106 male university/college student	self-administered questionnaires	Modified SES	8% of the men stated that they were sexually abusive and 2% of the women stated they were abused	12% of the men stated they were sexually abusive and 40% of the women stated they were abused
Elliot (1992)	University of Alberta	1,016 male and female undergraduate students	self-administered questionnaires	Modified SES	Not examined	44% of the students who reported an unwanted sexual experience while registered at U. of A. stated that the offender was a romantic acquaintance and 18% said that the perpetrator was a casual first date
Finkelman (1992)	University of New Brunswick and St. Thomas University	447 undergraduate students (men and women)	self-administered questionnaires	Modified SES	Approximately 34.4% of the 127 respondents who reported one or more unwanted sexual experiences were victimized by a boy friend/girlfriend or date	Not examined

[a]Incidence refers to the amount of abuse that took place in the past 12 months.

[b]Prevalence refers to the amount of abuse that took place over a longer period (e.g., since leaving high school)

As Connell has indicated, role norms are social facts shaped by agents of socialization (1995:23). Therefore the role that social relations and interactions play in the development of masculinity and femininty must be acknowledged. The sociology of masculinities attempts to understand the construction of masculinity in everyday life, acknowledging both the importance of economic and institutional structures, and the significance of different masculinities (Connell, 1995:35).

The theoretical starting point of the sociology of masculinities is that gender is not fixed but is ever changing. Gender is constructed in interaction and continues to be reconstructed in social practice, hence "[t]hese relationships are constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate, exploit, and so on" (Connell, 1995:37). The sociology of masculinities recognizes that men are positioned differently in society and that they share the construction of masculinities peculiar to their position in society (Messerschmidt, 1993). Therefore, masculinity is a way of 'doing gender' in a culturally specific way.

To illustrate, Totten (1996) contends that marginal male youth with limited opportunities attempt to declare their masculinity through the degradation of homosexuality, including physical violence — "gay bashing." Messerschmidt refers to this as situated accomplishment: "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions, attitudes, and activities appropriate to one's sex category" (1993:79).

In light of this, we 'do' gender in situational ways. Our actions are constructed in relation to how they might be interpreted by others in particular social situations. It is of utmost importance that others attribute the correct sex category to us as this is an indication of how successful we are in demonstrating our masculinity or femininity.

In this sense, masculinity (as the focus of this paper) is never static but is ever changing, continually being constructed and reconstructed. Men take an active role in this process as they monitor and adapt their own gendered conduct. However, these self-regulation practices do not play themselves out in isolation but rather are influenced by ideals that society has deemed 'normal' by social structural constraints. The dominant form of masculinity in North America has been coined the "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 1995). Hegemonic masculinity is the idealized form of masculinity in a given historical setting. It "embodies a culturally accepted strategy" (Connell, 1995:77), therefore "[t]he interplay between different forms of masculinity are often defined through

participation in the paid labour market, the subordination of women, and normative heterosexuality" (Messerschmidt, 1993). Further, hegemonic masculinity often encourages the sexual domination of women by men, supports the objectification of women as sexual beings, and supports mens uncontrollable [h]eterosexuality. It is according to these relations that hierarchies of masculinities are constructed and reconstructed. In North American society, marital-reproductive heterosexuals are at the top of the masculinities hierarchy followed by others such as gay men, lesbians, prostitutes, and the like. Heterosexuality is deemed normative and therefore becomes a fundamental indication of one's maleness.

The "normative heterosexuality" that is deemed appropriate by society is carefully defined. In North American society, it is commonly characterized by an unsatiable and uncontrollable sexual appetite for women. According to the ideology of normative heterosexuality, men are expected to be "ready" to perform sexually at any given time, and are to experience high levels of sexual activity. The dominant masculine ideology holds heterosexual performance as a strong indicator of one's identity as a man. This can, in some cases, lead to sexually aggressive behaviour as men try to achieve the often unattainable standards of sexuality dictated as their "right." This will be further explored in the following section.

Hegemonic Masculinity, Male Peer Support, and the "Crime of Sex"
As discussed previously, men "do" masculinity according to the social structure in which they define themselves. Young men experience their everyday world from a specific position in society and construct their ideals of hegemonic masculinity in accordance to this position. Male university/college students often construct their masculinity according to their peer groups, therefore the role that male peer groups play in a young man's development is very important. Similar to adult men, young men use the resources at their disposal to communicate gender to others. Men apply the ideals of hegemonic masculinity to situations that face them and pursue a strategy of action. In some instances the primary resource available to accomplish gender (masculinity) is crime [9].

University/college males often do not have many resources available to prove their position in the hierarchy of masculinities. For example, many are not active participants of the labor force, nor are many the "breadwinners" in their respective families. One option available to them

is to prove their manhood through heterosexuality and the subordination of women. And as Schwartz and DeKeseredy's (1997) work illustrates, this resource can be presented to them before entering university/college and may be legitimized by male peer groups.

Youth groups allow for the construction of various masculinities that in turn are associated with various forms of crime, one form being sexual assault. In some all-male peer groups, the goal of achieving hegemonic masculinity is shared and heterosexuality determines the 'succes' of the young man's masculinity. Sexual aggression allows for male youth to prove their power and dominance over women as well as to 'satisfy' their 'natural' insatiable sexual appetite. Through the crime of gang rape and individual sexual coercion, males humiliate and devalue females while simultaneously strengthening their image of masculine power within their peer group. By adhering to the hegemonic masculinity promoted by society, heterosexual intercourse is the dominant measure of one's identity as a male; by not partaking in this activity they are severely threatening their masculinity. In this sense, gang rape can serve as a resource for those males who do not have other resources through which to demonstrate their maleness. One's own self-worth is strengthened through the degradation of another, in this case a woman/women. The experience of group rape becomes a resource for accomplishing gender and for constructing a particular type of masculinity publicly.

The influence of the male peer group, however, often goes beyond providing a forum in which to accomplish their masculinity. In many cases, all-male peer groups legitimize and justify sexual aggression. One of the first sociologists to examine the effect of reference groups on sexual aggression was Eugene Kanin (1957). Sporadic research since then has established that there is a relationship between male peer support and sexually aggressive behaviour[10]. The findings from this body of research have generated an interest in the study of university/college fraternities as an example of an all-male peer group.

A number of such studies, primarily American, have suggested that fraternity members are more apt to be sexually aggressive than non-members (e.g., Boeringer, 1996; Sanday, 1990). However, when other factors, such as alcohol use, are brought into the equation, the statistical significance between fraternity membership and sexual assault is often weakened, if not eliminated[11]. It has been suggested that fraternities

should not be the sole focus but rather should be regarded as one example of an all-male peer group similar to other male groups such as athletic teams (Sanday, 1990; Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 1997). The link to sexual assault may lie in the ideals that these all-male groups provide, such as a narrow conception of masculinity (belief in the hegemonic masculinity), the concept of group secrecy (support and secrecy of the sexually assaultive behaviour), and the sexual objectification of women (Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 1997).

Future research needs to examine other male peer groups to determine the role they play in the support of abusive behaviour. Researchers must be hesitant to focus on fraternities and/or organized sports teams. Male peer groups can take many forms and can include a wide variety of situations. For example, men living together in a boarding house atmosphere would more than qualify as an example of an 'unorganized' male peer group. These types of male peer groups may prove to be more damaging than 'organized' male groups as they are not tied to the university/ college like many fraternities/sports teams are. Therefore formal control, via university/college administration, over these groups would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Future research needs to address existing unorganized male groups and determine the dynamics of these types of groups in terms of pro-abuse beliefs. This will help researchers to better understand how these groups work, which is necessary in order to understand better how to combat their pro-abuse beliefs.

Important in the study of male peer-support and sexual aggression is the role that this support can play in the justification of sexual violence. The process of disavowing one's deviant behavior and presenting it as normal encompasses a vocabulary of motive (Mills, 1940) that, in this case, allows the rapist to view his aggressive behavior as "normal." This system helps men to identify women as legitimate objects of abuse. Once these beliefs have become internalized, rapists do not believe that their behavior is deviant, as the behavior is acceptable to the group. In a study of convicted male adult rapists, Scully (1990) found that common justifications were: women mean yes when they say no, women eventually relax and enjoy it, and "nice girls" don"t get raped. In Kanin (1985), 86 percent of the rapists believed that rape could be justified under certain circumstances, compared to only 19 percent of the control group. The rapists qualified their sexually aggressive behavior by blaming the victim, for example , "although it was probably rape in the legal sense,

the fault for the incident resided with the female because of her sexual conduct" (1984:96). An example of how some male peer groups justify their abusive behaviour is provided by Sanday (1990). In her research, fraternity brothers discuss women who have the reputation of being 'sleazy' as 'scantily' dressed, wears lots of make-up, and looks like she is 'ready for action' (31). These women are further labeled as sluts, cheap, or as fair game. By appearing sexually receptive (through dress and physical appearance) she "wants it, is asking for it, is setting herself up, is looking to get fucked, and is sending off signals" (Sanday, 1990:31). The brothers feel justified in the use of sexual aggression with these 'types' of women as the blame lies in the woman's behaviour as dictated through "the rules"of their particular all-male peer group. However, how this process of justification takes place (whether it is verbalized, or simply "understood") and whether the "group" is responsible for instilling this attitude has yet to be adequately researched.

Future research must determine what role the group plays in the justification and legitimization of woman abuse. The above excerpts taken from Sanday (1990) suggest that in some fraternities these justifications and 'deserving victims' ideologies are discussed quite openly by the fraternity 'brothers.' The following questions need to be addressed in future research: Does the same process occur in unorganized groups of men? Are the justifications verbalized to group members in some way, or are they unstated yet understood assertions?

Kanin's (1967) finding indicating that aggressive respondents tend to associate with friends that encourage them to become sexually involved has been supported by other studies (e.g., Alder, 1985; Kanin, 1985). However, it has not yet been determined whether men who are already sexually aggressive seek membership in groups that promote pro-abuse ideals, or whether group membership itself initiates this ideology. The groups may provide an outlet for the *already* abusive men to exercise their "right" to abuse women. It is important to understand whether the group or the abusive behaviour comes first, as this relationship will shape policy implications and methods to deal with this problem. For example, if it is the groups that are instilling these behaviours, education programs and harsher penalties may be focused on these groups. If the group serves as a forum within which this behaviour is exerted, then the members of such groups must be reached earlier and educated on the consequences of woman abuse.

Several studies have found that the rapist's sexually aggressive behaviour was not acquired in university/college, suggesting that these males manifested sexual aggressiveness in high school (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 1994[12]; Kanin 1967, 1985). Kanin's theory (1967) asserts that by the time men reach university/college they may have already been trained in high school to treat women as sexual objects to be used to satisfy their needs. Therefore men may simply choose groups with similar beliefs and training. For example, those men who join fraternities that support the sexual exploitation of women may already believe in their 'right' to exploit females. However, these same men may not join an official fraternity, but may alternatively seek to associate with a group of men who share similar beliefs. "The orientation to sexually exploit was acquired at a previous period - high school or perhaps earlier - and the choice of sympathetic membership groups at university/college largely represents a *selective* attempt to *sustain* and receive *support* for the earlier acquired values" (Kanin, 1967:501, original emphasis). This indicates that sexually aggressive males may gravitate to groups whose values are compatible with their own. New groups were also formed to "serve to embellish old values, provide new vocabularies of motive, modify old norms, and provide new norms" (Kanin, 1967:501).

The brief review of existing research on male peer support presented in this paper demonstrates that a relationship between sexual aggression and male peer support does exist. Findings also suggest that the ideals supportive of sexually aggressive behaviour may be in place prior to university/college entry. These findings raise some questions that need to be answered in future research.

The next phase of research must focus on high school students in an attempt to discern how pro-abuse beliefs are formed and how male peer support dynamics play themselves out in adolescents' lives. Research needs to address the following questions: Does the male peer group play a similar role in adolescents as it does in university/college students? Are there other factors that are more apt to be tied to the development of adolescent pro-abusive personalities, such as familial experience? and, Are these beliefs being formed during the adolescent phase, or do the peer groups at this age play an ancillary role whereby they merely reinforce already instilled abusive ideologies?

Future Research Directions

Limited Canadian research addressing the role of the male peer group in high school students and sexual assault has been completed. As sexual coercion researchers interested in the dynamics of male youth and sexual assault, the research agenda is twofold: i) to determine the extent of adolescents victimized by male sexual aggression, and ii) theoretical developments must be made in order to better reflect adolescent experience with sexual aggression.

(i) Rates of Sexual Assault Among Canadian High School Students

Acknowledging that sexual assault among adolescents does not begin in university/college, some small-scale surveys with high school students have been conducted in Canada. Table 2, reprinted from DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1994), provides a summary of the findings from these studies.

Although these studies offer valuable insight into adolescent dating and woman abuse, the usefulness of their data is limited. In Mercer's (1988) study, the three forms of abuse investigated (sexual, physical, and verbal) were not mutually exclusive. Therefore, in terms of the amount of sexual violence that adolescents use/experience, this study does not offer many concrete findings. Forty-seven percent of the sample reported that they had been involved in a date rape or knew of someone who had been. This is an interesting finding, but without knowing what percent actually *experienced* date rape, it offers little tangible information. A limitation of both the Jaffe et al. (1992) study and Sudermann and Jaffe (1993) study stems from the restriction that the researchers were not allowed to directly ask whether the respondent had been a victim or a perpetrator in the incident[13]. Respondents were asked only to state whether they had "experienced" abuse. The second limitation, shared by all three studies, is that they are local, small-scale surveys, therefore they do not address the national rate of sexual assault among adolescents

The need to establish a nayional estimate of Canaidan high school sexual aggression in dating relationships was heeded by DeKeseredy and Shwartz (1994). These researchers could address this gap by drawing on information obtained in the Canadian National Survey (1992). In this survey, respondents were questioned about their experiences with violence in their high school dating relationships. In respect to sexual viole-

Table 2: *Woman Abuse in Canadian High School Dating Surveys (reprinted from DeKeseredy and Shwartz, 1994)

Survey	Survey Location	Sample Description	Interview Mode	Prevalence Rate
Mercer (1988)	4 Metro Toronto high schools	217 female and 87 male high school students	Self-administered questionnaires	Of the total number female respondents, 11% stated they were physically abused, 18% reported having been verbally abused and 20% disclosed having been physically abused
Jaffe et al. (1992)	4 Lod Ontario high schools	359 and 379 male high school students	Self-administered questionnaires	23.6% and 16.4% of males experienced verbal abuse*
Sudermann and Jaffe (1993)	2 London Ontario high schools	790 female and 757 male high-school students	Self-administered questionnaires	Of the female respondents, 44.5% stated that they experienced verbal abuse, 13.5 disclosed experiencing physical abuse and 14.2% indicated having experienced sexual abuse. 25.2% of the males reported having experienced verbal abuse. 4.4% disclosed experiencing physical abuse and 3.7% stated that they experienced sexual abuse*

* There is no way to determine the number of these respondents who were victims or offenders because they were not asked to provide such information. Rather, they were only asked to disclose having "experienced" abuse.

nce 3.3 percent of men stated that they had used physical force to make their partners engage in sexual activities. As would be expected, the women estimated a higher percent of sexual violence (22.8%). However, these findings are based on retrospective responses and are, therefore, susceptible to the common memory problems that characterize social science research, such as selective memory, loss of memory and manipulation of memory.

The above studies are also limited as they lack a qualitative component. In-depth interviews with respondents on sensitive issues (such as sexual assault) are invaluable when attempting to obtain representative estimates. Open-ended questions in an interview setting allows the researcher to probe and helps to limit any concerns with definitions that arise.

To reiterate, there continues to be a need to conduct studies that attempt to discern the rate of adolescent sexual violence. The first step in theorizing and confronting sexual violence among adolescents is the determination of how many adolescent males are sexually aggressive. The rate of adolescent sexual violence can be obtained through the use of both small-scale and national surveys that ask high school students direct questions about their experiences with sexual assault, both as victims and as perpetrators. National surveys will enhance the understanding of class and ethnic experiences which can be misrepresented in small surveys. These surveys, complimented with in-depth interviews, will provide more accurate rates of sexual assault among adolescents.

Thereafter, research can be conducted to allow us to better understand the dynamics of male peer support and sexually abusive adolescents. The findings suggested from research on university/college students and sexual assault provide validation for this research; there is substantial evidence that suggests that sexually abusive university/college males arrive at university/college with their pro-abuse ideologies intact. It must be determined if and how these ideologies are adopted in adolescence.

(ii) Theoretical Development

Men who sexually assault do not operate in a vacuum: indeed many of the values and beliefs they express are micro social expressions of broader social forces. The male peer support model was first proposed by Shwartz and DeKeseredy (1997) as an attempt to investigate how social interactions with male peers are associated with various forms of

female victimization in dating relationships. The model, which focused primarily on individual factors, was expanded by DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1993) to include broader societal forces. The original model, however, has only been tested on university/college students and the modified model has not been tested in its entirety. As the noted research gap pertains to adolescent experiences with sexual aggression, the male peer support model must be modified to better reflect an adolescent's world.

As illustrated previously, adolescent rates of sexual abuse are lower than university/college student rates. This does not merely suggest that fewer males have sexually aggressive beliefs, but rather, may reflect limited opportunities to act out their pro-abusive beliefs. I suggest the need to integrate the routines activities theory with male peer support theory. Routine activities theory suggests that the amount and location of crime are affected by three factors: the presence of likely offenders, the absence of capable guardians, and the availability of suitable targets (Cohen and Felson, 1979). As Schwartz and Pitts (1995) discuss, the first condition, presence of likely offenders, has been established in light of the rates of sexual assault among adolescents. The second condition, absence of capable guardians, can be related to adolescent sexual assault in the following manner. If there is high parental supervision there may be less time for group affiliation and for dating. If a youth does not date a lot, then he may be less likely to engage in sexual coercion. Also group affiliation may be lower as they may have less time to associate with peers due to high parental supervision. If there is minimal parental supervision, the adolescent may date more and have more time to "hang out" with friends. This could indicate increased opportunity to engage in sexual assault. The third condition, the availability of suitable targets concerns the way in which certain types of women are seen as legitimate targets (e.g., fair game, deserving victims, etc.) of sexually aggressive behaviour. Integration of this theory will enhance our understanding of adolescent sexual assault.

Totten's (1996) research on adolescents suggests the need to determine the role of the family of origin in the socialization of male youth. The rationale for integrating familial experience is obvious, as the familial influence is apt to be greater among adolescents than among university/college students. Many adolescents still live at home and are possibly dependent on the support of their respective families. Important

to future research is the amount of parental supervision a family offers a male youth.

Current feminist literature states that there are different types of patriarchy that influence masculinities[14]. Familial patriarchy refers to male dominance at the domestic level (DeKeseredy and Kelly, 1993). Research by Smith (1990) has shown that "men who espouse the ideology of familial patriarchy are more likely to beat their wives than men who do not adhere to such an ideology" (DeKeseredy and Kelly, 1993:27). Future research must seek to determine if a similar connection between adherence to traditional stereotypes (familial patriarchy) and sexual violence exists between male youths and their female intimates.

Preliminary evidence for the association of familial patriarchy has been provided by Totten (1996). His research suggests that the adherence to familial patriarchal beliefs by the participants were grounded in their families of origin, which were characterized by rigid gender roles. Mercer states:

> Adolescence is clearly not a period when young people reject the traditional gender roles for which they have been groomed. It is characteristically a time when they act them out - sometimes to their worst extremes (1988:16).

Also integrated into the theoretical model must be how belief in hegemonic masculinity intersects with sexually aggressive behavior, male peer support and adolescent males. Several authors have suggested that many of the ideals stressed by hegemonic masculinity lead to the development of rape-prone societies[15]. Hegemonic masculinity stresses heterosexuality, the sexual subordination of women, and the sexual objectification of women. Research has suggested that university/college students who adhere to these beliefs are more apt to be sexually aggressive (e.g., Sanday, 1990). We must investigate how the ideals of hegemonic masculinity play themselves out in adolescent males. Of interest must be the way in which adolescent's seek to achieve hegemonic masculinity.

Several research studies have established that membership in all-male groups provide abusive men with support for their abusive behaviour. DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1997) state that men who receive

encouragement and support for pro-abusive behavior from their peer groups are more apt to abuse women. Research needs to study the effect that such membership has on the development of sexually coercive attitudes and behaviours at the adolescent level.

The following suggestions are presented as potential target areas for future research within the area of hegemonic masculinity, male peer support and sexual aggression:

- ▸ research energies must be focused on adolescent males in an attempt to test a theoretical model that includes the above mentioned dynamics;
- ▸ rich empirical interview data must be conducted to compliment national surveys on young people's experiences of male sexual aggression;
- ▸ there is a need to broaden our focus by including respondents of various ethnic race backgrounds as the university/college based research completed thus far concentrates on a select group of individuals who have the opportunity to attend university/college; and,
- ▸ longitudinal studies with a variety of youth, at both the national and the local level, will provide rich data on the development of peer groups, the rates of sexual violence, and the role these peer groups play in the development of sexually aggressive behaviours.

Conclusion

This paper provided a brief summary of the literature on hegemonic masculinity, male peer support and sexual aggression. It is quite evident that sexual aggression among university/college students and high school students is a reality in Canada. Future research needs to focus on understanding how the adolescent experience shapes or relates to the university/college experience. The link between hegemonic masculinity, male peer support, and sexual assault has thus far been discussed in respect to university/college samples. The majority of the studies completed in this area of research (focusing on samples of university/college students) conclude that association with pro-abuse male peer groups

encourages and legitimize already existing sexually aggressive ideolo-
gies. This has resulted in a call for a research focus on adolescents. First,
an accurate estimate of sexual aggression among adolescents must be
determined, and second, theoretical advances must be made through the
integration of routine activities theory and male peer support theory.

Future research must strive to understand the connection between
hegemonic masculinity, male peer support and sexual assault. This sug-
gests a need to focus on society as a rape-supportive one and the need to
look closely at the messages provided to young men in terms of sexual-
ity and power. If the messages we are providing support the dominant
form of masculinity (heterosexuality, subordination of women, and the
sexual objectification of women) then perhaps young men are not guilty
of rape, but rather, guilty of sex as we have defined it according to our
present definition of hegemonic masculinity.

Notes

1. Totten defines *marginal male youth* as the following :

> These youth have poor relations with their families, have been
> abused by care givers and have witnessed abuse in their homes.
> These youth receive little or no financial support from their fami-
> lies. Many live away from home in young offender facilities,
> group homes, rooming houses/apartments, and shelters. Those
> who live at home spend little time there; thus parental control is
> minimal. Almost all have come from lower income neighbor-
> hoods and have dropped out or are failing school. Their parents
> receive social assistance, unemployment insurance, disability pen-
> sions, or work in low-paying service sector jobs (Totten, 1996:10).

2. *Girlfriend abuse* included male-to-female physical, sexual, and psychologi-
cal assaults in dating relationships.

3. Bob Connell (1995) is noted for setting the vocabulary for the study of mas-
culinities and suggests that there is usually one dominant form of masculinity,
referred to as the *hegemonic masculinity*, in a given society. In North American
societies, the dominant form of masculinity is one that stresses dominance,
aggression, financial success, physical and sexual prowess, etc.. Subordinated
or oppositional masculinities arise when men do not/cannot live up to the ideals

promoted by hegemonic masculinity. He defines *hegemonic masculinity* as the ascendancy of a certain form of masculinity over others. It should be noted that hegemonic masculinity is also defined as being above all forms of femininity.

4. Kanin (1984, 1985) defines a *hypererotic subculture* as one that adheres to exaggerated levels of sexual aspiration, emphasizes high levels of sexual activity, and values sexual prowess.

5. *Male peer support* refers to attachment to male peers and the resources that those males provide that encourage and legitimate the abuse of women.

6. Buchwald, Flethcher and Roth define 'a rape-prone society' as one that accepts sexual violence and the fear of violence *as the norm*. A society that, knowingly or not, perpetuates models of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality that foster aggression, violence, and fear (1993:v, original emphasis).

7. See DeKeseredy (1988); Kanin (1967, 1985); Sanday (1990); Schwartz and DeKeseredy (1997); and Totten (1996).

8. For a detailed examination of the methodological limitations of these studies see DeKeseredy (1997).

9. Crime is one form of social practice that can be invoked as a resource for accomplishing masculinity when other resources are not available. For further discussion on crime as a resource, see Messerschmidt (1993).

10. See Ageton (1983); Alder (1985); DeKeseredy (1988); and DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1994).

11. See Koss and Cleveland III (1996) and Schwartz and Nogrady (1996). For a detailed discussion on the importance of alcohol use/abuse as an intervening factor in fraternity members and sexual assault see Schwartz and DeKeseredy (1997).

12. Kanin (1967) found that 62% of the self-reported sexually aggressive university/college males engaged in such activities in high school, whereas only 15.7% of the non-aggressive university/college males reported engaging in sexually aggressive activities in high school. DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1994) found that 22.8% female university/college students stated they had experienced male sexual aggression at the high school level, and 3.3% of the males reported engaging in sexually aggressive behavior at the highs school level.

13. This restriction was placed on the researchers by school board officials. Restrictions such as these and the general lack of co-operation researchers are met with when attempting to study sexual aggression in high school populations indicate potential reasons as to why this area continues to be under-researched. Restraints such as these have caused researchers to alter their methodologies, resulting in somewhat problematic findings, as discussed in this section .

14. See DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1993); Miller (1994); and Smith (1990).

15. See Sanday (1990); Schwartz and DeKeseredy (1997); and Scully (1983).

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