

The Disparity College Rape Victims Face From Institutionalized Sexism and the Systematic Injustices Against Them Beyond Being Raped

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Abstract

This paper analyzes and articulates seven scholarly journals that report on the topic of sexual assault/rape, sexual harassment cases on college and university campuses. The articles provide supporting evidence and context to the claims that critique the unjust system within the academic institutions in regards to rape on their campuses. This paper examines the urgency and importance of resolution for this matter and potential ways this can happen. This paper also analyzes and critiques the details on how the systematic failures on the institutions end regarding the lack of action taken against the rapists and rather, against the victims. This paper also shares personal experiences to further support the argument of the dehumanizing injustices rape victims face on college and university campuses.

Keywords: Disparity, College, Rape

1. Body of Paper

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The injustice against sexual assault and sexual harassment cases on college campuses are only increasingly getting worse; according to The National Sexual Violence Resource Center, more than 90% of sexual assault victims on college campuses do **not** report the assault. The victim blaming against female students and other marginalized groups have continuously been silenced and shunned by university officials across the United States. In this essay I will be specifically focusing on rape against (cis) female women and analyzing the systematic issue of sexual assault among university and college campuses in the United States and the rhetoric that is used by these powerful institutions that continue to put their reputations and revenue before the well-being and care of their students; furthermore, I will also analyze and explain the importance of this serious issue, why it is so crucial to see the disparity within this issue, and how and why we should take action *now*.

I was raped my freshman year of college. I had my life changed forever because somebody else could not control their inner demons. *My* academics suffered, *my* social life suffered, *I* suffered- not him. I knew that my trauma would be either not cared for or used against me, thus I took no action. I did not give myself the chance of the micro-level justice that coming forward could have given me for the very reason that I knew it would not happen, and **that** is the very problem. The topic and discussion in regards to college rape seems to be in the spotlight when and only when a huge case is in the media, then there is a large outcry for justice and people vent on social media platforms how change needs to happen now. However, the bandwagon always ends and people go back to sweeping the daily atrocities under the rug.

I am merely a statistic and excuse for people to falsely outcry for justice. My specific experience is even more looked over because it was under the context of me being manipulated, pressured, and harassed until I said yes for it was my only way of escaping the situation safely. I never took legal action or went to campus officials for this matter, I knew it would only make my situation worse. It should not be my responsibility to make my school a safe space for me. I,

nor anyone, should not have to prevent this from happening. I should not have to fight for my chance to be heard and believed. Our society and institutions have come to the point where victims coming forward causes them more pain and suffering than if they weren't, and **that** is horrifying and absolutely inhumane. Even though I never came forward, others on my campus did and they suffered the very hostile responses *so many* too many face.

University and college campuses should be able to be a safe space for students. Why is it that it always ends up being the very opposite? A **massive** trend is of school officials protecting rapists on campuses. There has been continuous evidence to link predatory behavior and influence among the fraternity and athletic subcultures, "Heavy drinking and sexual assault are prevalent among college students who attend parties hosted by fraternities and athletic teams, and accusations often produce victim blaming and disbelief" (Boyle 2016). Furthermore, these *influential* subcultures on campuses hold extensive power in their positions both in the student social life realm and in the context of university officials. The pressure from the dominant normative ordeals causes further corruption within these groups as well, "it also is possible that a climate that is supportive of rape, or that neutralizes negative definitions of rape [like fraternities and athletic teams], may create a rape-fertile environment for not only rape-supportive men but also men who normally do not hold rape-supportive beliefs" (Boeringer 1999). These institutions merely only care about how they can continue to bring their numbers up because that equals to increased revenue. Their reputation is a part of that increasing revenue, thus if anything can risk that it must be stopped immediately. Athletics and fraternities bring revenue and reputation, therefore negative light shed on them mirrors onto the school. Protecting the predators within these subcultures means protecting their image, which in turn protects their cash flow.

Predatory behaviors within heteronormative and (cis)male sub-culture groups is just one of the many components to the issue of rape on college/university campuses; victim blaming is of course, one of the biggest factors as well. The rhetoric in which these institutions use in regards to the topic of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment has systematically gotten more dangerous. School officials in many cases continue to follow this generic narrative that rape and harassment cases are under the scenario of a stranger forcefully approaching a woman, "This cognitive framing of rape as something that happens only between strangers prevents individuals from classifying sexual assault within the context of an existing relationship as rape. This framing also presupposes that resistance or escape is always possible and neglects the very real possibility that the victim may be too intoxicated or otherwise incapacitated to do so" (Maurer 2015). The continuous usage of these types of rhetoric continue to allow these institutions to justify what they officially classify as rape and sexual harassment. If college and university campuses to continue the dehumanization and rejection of sexual assault and harassment victims, then the institutions of academia themselves will eventually evolve **completely** out of what it is **supposed** to be entirely.

It is imperative that we start taking appropriate action for this matter- that starts with acknowledging that there *is* a problem, and it is a serious and urgent one at that. The rejection of rape victims is not only dehumanizing but it is falsifying their struggles and trauma in the present and how it will continuously affect them in the future. Scrutinizing women for the emotional and physical trauma they have unwillingly endured is a disgusting and malicious tactic that is the normative in relation to this situation, "Given the increasing centrality of college completion to lifetime success and financial security, understanding the impact of sexual violence on physical and mental health is an important addition to the developing knowledge base regarding future health and economic wellbeing of college sexual assault survivors" (Potters 2018). Those who are in privileged positions of power utilize their authority in discriminative and heteronormative matters and create a hegemonic narrative that favors the denial and refusal of rape victims traumas, "experiences of sexual trauma are associated with negative mental health outcomes and impairment in physical health, interpersonal relationships, and occupational and academic pursuits" (Neilson 2015). The urgency for bringing justice to this matter is overlooked severely. This has been a problem for decades, though it has been silenced instead of solved. Women **deserve to be safe** on university and college campuses. Women **deserve to be protected** by their schools. Women **deserve to have justice** when they are raped.

I find it surreal, in the worst way, that there even needs to be a 'call to action' and 'plan' in regards to this issue. The manifestation of hypermasculinity in our society is so far deep that there is no sense of moral outside of it. The change begins by stopping the finger pointing at women and rather take a look at the (usual) perpetrators, men, "despite a strong emphasis on how men are socialized into specific gender roles (i.e. masculinities) in the sexual assault perpetration literature, researchers and clinicians may be lacking critical information about the psychology of men" (McDermott 2015). There is an evident stigma that women 'ask for it' when they are raped; whether it is from them drinking at a party or wearing whatever clothing choice they want. Though, there is never the argument to look at the one who did the crime, "In an effort to explain men's callous attitudes toward women and sexual assault, some researchers have posited that certain social constructions of masculinity may be a driving force. For example, Mosher and Anderson (1986) found that college men with a "macho" personality consisting of extremely hostile, sexist beliefs about women were more likely to have been sexually aggressive in the past and reported less negative emotions when

thinking about rape” (McDermott 2015). It is finally time that campus officials and law enforcement stop defending rapists for the sake of their own agenda and having their students as collateral damage in the process.

University and college campuses have a duty to serve their students with their best interest. It baffles me that we have to ask, beg even, these institutions to care about us and hear our voices. Why do they exist if they do not care? The obsession of money and greed has come to the point where people are letting rape get away on campus because its less costly for them to keep it quiet rather than to deal with it. We have no right and no power. To see how miniscule and weak we are compared to the system that is *supposed* to be protecting is, is unorthodox. The lack of empathy is human right is clear. The creation of the Title IX seemed like it would be a good first step in the right direction, right? I personally feel that it is a slap in the face, especially the way it is implemented at my university specifically. A ‘busy work’ type of assignment for students to just rush through just so they don’t get a hold on their account, and even within the activity there is a huge disparity in what rape situations are *actually* like versus the stereotypical narrative these institutions use. **If these institutions cared so much about money, they should care about their students well-being.**

Janet Napolitano, the 20th president of the University of California (UC) system, published an article titled, “Only Yes Means Yes: An Essay on University Policies Regarding Sexual Violence and Sexual Assault”. I found her essay to be the first one I have read that had some sense of empathy and respect. She came from a position of power and leveled herself to show she was not coming in an authoritative manner, and explained the conflicts that arise on ‘her end’ when rape and sexual harassment cases arise. However, she comes down and emphasizes that the importance of this issue is real and action must be taken and she intends to help take flight on that, “I am certain that no college president in America is ambivalent to these issues. For those of us who lead our country’s higher education institutions, the goal is to do what is needed to support survivors, conduct investigations, and ensure a fair process cognizant of the rights of all involved” (Napolitano 2015). The initiative of acknowledging the issue and the **cause** of the issue is the crucial first step in bringing the resolution to this; enforcing policies and consequences is a given in the next step. I believe that the biggest obstacle that needs to be overturn is the **rhetoric against women** and other marginalized groups who are victims of rape and that they are at fault for their own suffering.

In conclusion, the problem of the hypermasculinity that is embedded into every aspect of our society and institutions has created a dominant narrative that is bigger than we could have imagined. University and college campuses find more virtue by protecting rapists for the sake of their reputations to the public and how their revenue flow will be affected. The hegemony of masculine ideals has pushed for women to be suffering not only their trauma from being raped, but being at fault for it. The atrocities against rape victims specifically on university and college campuses needs to be tamed and put to an end, for the deviance is getting beyond inhumane. As someone who has faced the injustices of our society I feel so passionately that enough is enough. I was raped and I let my voice stay silent because I knew the **very system that was supposed to be protecting me would be the one to hurt me the most.** I was raped and I let my rapist ‘go free’ because I knew **those in power would be in favor of him and not me. I was raped and I will no longer stay silent** for my story mirrors the same of so many- justice is *beyond* overdue, change must happen *now*.

2. Annotated Bibliography

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