

# Rape on campus and the impact on sexual autonomy



*The principles of human rights give a central place to the values of autonomy and dignity. Critically discuss the meaning and significance of autonomy and/or dignity with reference to a specific problem dealt with in the course.*

Sexual assault is a reoccurring problem which does not seem to be resolved no matter the amount of research or restrictions towards it. Sexual assault on campus is a problematic issue which is harder to tackle mainly due to students not reporting the assault or harasser. This issue has received an increase of recognition from the media and the public. This public attention can be due to cases such as the 2007 case involving the lacrosse player's trial and the stories of the inequalities and injustices experienced by victims of sexual violence (Krakauer, 2015). According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey was found that victims of sexual violence were more likely to develop psychological health outcomes and mental health issues such as chronic pain, diabetes and PTSD compared with their non-victimised counterparts (Karjane, Fisher & Cullen, 2005).

Furthermore, sexual violence against people also caused a financial burden to the victims at an average of \$151, 423 per rape (DeLisi, Kosloski, Sween, et al., 2010). This essay will begin by discussing the significance of sexual assault on campus and how prevalent it has become over the years. As well as this, this essay will highlight historical events from the past which has increased the recognition and altered people's understandings of rape and how it is a serious issue on campus. Next, this essay will focus on how women are more likely to be sexually assault on campus than men and how their sexual autonomy can be negated if there is no consent. Lastly, this

essay will argue how men are not recognised as victims of victims of rape as there are gender norms which indicate that men are not capable of being raped. Overall, sexual assault on campus is an issue which is yet to be resolved and this paper will try to address this issue and how to resolve the inequalities students face.

### Rape Culture on Campus: Historical Background

Rape on campus have been happening for generations and people think it seems to be happening because it is a crime of passion. However, it is in fact due to the problematic upbringing of individuals in our society which is entrenched with socialised gender norms which encourage perpetrators to continue this tradition. Sexual assault on campus is a very serious issue and unfortunately have become too normalised for it to stop occurring. Rape culture is the understanding of rape as widespread but is exempt by people and the media within certain cultures which agree it is acceptable (Greensite, 2003). This can result in the blame being put on the victim rather than the perpetrator which results in victims becoming not only physically harmed, but emotionally harmed. According to Fisher, Cullen and Turner, approximately every 35 out of 1, 000 women are victims of rape in college (2000). Even though colleges spend millions of dollars and resources resolving this issue of sexual assault on campus, more than 90 percent do not report the crime (Fisher, Cullen and Turner, 2000). Rape on campus started getting recognised during the second-wave feminist movement which involved raising consciousness activities (Bevacqua, 2000). During this movement, women gathered together and shared their stories to gain recognition whilst learning their stories were widespread. As this movement

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was recognised by others it ultimately resulted in the creation of organisations and rape crisis hotlines which respond to rape culture persisting on campus in the 1970s (Wasserman, 1973). Following this, the publication of anti-rape messages in Brownmiller's piece *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* in 1973 which highlighted an indication of psychology, politics, anthropology and history of rape. Shortly after, Brownmiller's book encouraged the public to have a different perception of rape as an act of violence rather than satisfaction and generated anti-rape activists in 1978 to organise a Take Back the Night march in San Francisco which rejected rape against women which still occurs on campuses today (Greensite, 2003). By the late 1970s, anti-rape activism gained power on some college campuses as well as facilities to survivors. These services joined with community-based rape crisis centre and a campus women's centre to help victims on campus (Kaplan, Hindus, Mejia, Olsen, & La Due, 2002). This resulted in many campus-based rape crisis centres being created across many colleges by 1990s. By the second-wave feminist and sexual assault movement, the awareness of intersectionality was failing to be recognised which is defined as how maltreatment related to gender, race, class, ability, age and sexual orientation shape measurements of an individual's experiences (Crenshaw, 1991). Even though intersectionality was absent during the rape crisis movement, their voices were still heard on the boundaries of the movement. In 1978, a group of Black feminists presented the Combahee River Collective statement which highlighted connections of sexual, racial, class oppression and heterosexual (Smith, 1983).

Furthermore, the statement illustrated the difficulties of partnering with black men in recognising racism as well as the complexity of working with <https://assignbuster.com/rape-on-campus-and-the-impact-on-sexual-autonomy/>

the same people to recognise sexism. The author of the statement addressed the obligation for a united movement towards the elimination of all maltreatment and illustrated that intersecting oppressions required them to recognise sexism and racism in the movement. As well as this, these women worked with projects to create workshops and educational demonstrations which informed people of Black feminism, assaulted women and most importantly, rape on college campuses (Smith, 1983). Legislations addressing sexual violence on college campuses partnered with the enforcement of Title IX and the Clery Act, advised colleges to immediately respond to sexual violence. However, regardless of these acts, colleges have trusted that their campuses are invulnerable to the occurrence of sexual violence (Jaschik & Lederman, 2015). Conversely, as there is a rise in the public determining if college campuses are decreasing the occurrence of sexual assault on campus as well as the increase of colleges being investigated by the Office for Civil Rights, institutions need to address this issue. This has resulted in colleges recognising rape culture on campus and relying on institutions to address sexual violence and potentially eliminating it. Due to these historical events overtime due to advocates, activists, administrators and researchers, the problem of sexual violence on campus have become, to some extent, recognised. Now it is the responsibility of campuses to engage with educators, faculty and administrators to employ original, impartial and communally fair resolutions to recognise sexual violence on campus

(Jessup-Anger, Lopez & Koss, 2018).

[Consent as a passage to sexual autonomy](https://assignbuster.com/rape-on-campus-and-the-impact-on-sexual-autonomy/)

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One of the most significant influences on legal culture is the perception of how rape is understood in the society. Some people question that there is nothing wrong with women getting raped or what the injury is caused when women are raped and why this issue is not protected by the law. Feminists answer these inquiries by illustrating that the social norm of rape is designed so that there is a stereotype of males controlling a female's sexual autonomy, rather than protecting a women's body and sexuality (Brownmiller, 1975; Medea & Thompson, 1974; Russell, 1975). As the definition of rape is influenced by rape myths, it can lead to female victims blaming themselves or not believing that the rape is not aligned with the definition of rape which results in underreporting of the crime (Iconis, 2008; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004). Schulhofer proposes that the protection of rape law from freedom of violence should be broadened to sexual autonomy as a form of an individual's basic right of freedom (Schulhofer, 1992). This idea of sexual autonomy according to Schulhofer, is the ability of an individual to freely act without the influence of constraint of what their body is sexually capable for and it should not be up to another individual on how and when they should participate in sexual activities (Schulhofer, 1992). This concept challenges the traditional ideology of unwanted sex or non-consent as it focuses on the requirements of a women's decision in sexual activity. Overall, Schulhofer makes a compelling argument to say that the basic principle of sexual autonomy will need to be taken to an institutional level and make the core basic human right of freedom an explicit role of the criminal law principles of allowable conduct and acknowledging that violations of this principle can constitute to serious penalties. A study conducted by Koss et al. (1987), highlights the sexual coercive behaviours <https://assignbuster.com/rape-on-campus-and-the-impact-on-sexual-autonomy/>

present in sororities such as women being forced to participate in sexual activities due to continual pressures by a male or the presence of threats or force. These issues should not be present in a college environment, as colleges can punish those who engage in these activities and encourage education on how to resolve this issue from occurring. However, many colleges fail to exercise this power which results in the continuation of inappropriate sexual behaviour in sororities. The use of force and threats by a man also diminishes a woman's human dignity and their human right to safety, consent and choice as they are forced to participate in unwanted sex in order to conform to sorority practices. As stereotypes of male-defined sexual culture in sororities are growing, the most effective method of sex education would be to highlight the importance of verbal consent. Remick (1992) comparably argues that a man who does not acquire consent should be aware of the punishment if it turns out she did not consent. She proposes that a woman's sexual autonomy is more important than a man's interest in participating in non-consensual sexual activity. Overall, it should be understood by students that the simplest way of acquiring any form of consent is obtaining it verbally. There is a common misconception that if a woman does not resist sexual assault, then they are consenting to the crime. Women are less likely to resist if there is presence of threat and they are limiting struggles to potentially save their life. This misunderstanding degrades a woman's sexual autonomy and needs to be resolved in order for their basic human right of freedom to be restored. Through proper education, students, especially males, can understand under what conditions consent is negated which can ultimately refurbish a woman's sexual autonomy.

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### Rape as a gendered harm

It is a common understanding in the society that females are the victims of rape and males are perpetrators of rape. This construction of male and female victimisation of rape is misleading and results in the underrepresentation of male victims. In news and fiction, it is the social norm that women are portrayed as victims rather than perpetrators which has resulted in the media creating a focus on their victimisation rather than deviancy and reinforces gender discourses and can degrade a man's human dignity (Chesney-Lind, 1999; Madriz, 1997). This can be due to the fact that a female criminal disrupts gender norms and challenges patriarchal ideologies which can confuse the general public which is why the concept of a male victim of rape is ignored. It is evident through a number of studies show that there is an over-representation of male offending and female victimisation on the news and news articles (Roshier, 1973; Smith, 1984; Entman, 1992). As media and education has embedded the idea of masculinity and gender notions into the society, it has affected people's understandings and moulded their perceptions of male rape. Through this, there has been limited research as well as the rise of under recognition of male rape victims due to the adherence of rape myths which are false ideologies that contribute to the normalisation of sexual violence by offenders (Burt, 1980). Such rape myths have conceptualised sexual assault to involve female victims and male offenders rather than male victims and female offender, thus slowing the development of the representation of male rape victims (Fisher & Pina, 2013; Fuchs, 2004; Graham, 2006). Studies have shown that it is seen as a loss of dignity and male pride when a man is raped



and it can leave them feeling powerless (Walker, Archer & Davies, 2005). Fraternity men often feel a sense of worthiness due to their belief that they have the influence of control and power in many circumstances, especially over women, which is correlated to the society's traditional male gender roles which are highly embellished in all male groups (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007). So, when this value is taken away through sexual assault, men will be less likely to report as their masculinity has been diminished and with this, their sense of human dignity (Pino & Meier, 1999). As sexual assault is an underreported crime in general on college campuses, it is not surprise that male sexual assault is even more under-reported. It is a common belief among college campuses that "it can't happen to men" or "men are able to handle such a situation" which is a result of prejudices the society has embedded when a male victim reports such a crime (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992). Furthermore, Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson have stated that men will have the belief that being raped will result in weakness and a degradation of their masculinity and be neglected by officials when they report the incident which produces a "cycle of silence" (1992, p. 98). Similarly, Scarce (1997) found that men are less likely to report being sexually assaulted the women as there are gender disparities in reporting due to the socialisation of this concept. Also, as campus cultures have moved to establishing women-based centres which increases the unwillingness of men to report the rape or seek treatment as they view these centres to only help women (Scarce, 1997, p. 172). This dilemma as well as these rape crisis centres that focus their mission on improving college environments for women should be altered in order for recognition for men to increase (Scarce, 1997). A study conducted by Javaid (2016) observes the <https://assignbuster.com/rape-on-campus-and-the-impact-on-sexual-autonomy/>

role gender plays in the discourse of male sexual victimisation and highlights ideas such as 'men cannot be raped', the issue of fighting back against the attacker and police disbelieving a woman would rape a man. He determines that society has branded male rape victims as undeserving victims which results in the public and police having the perceptions that 'men cannot be raped' and believe males rape as trivial which encourages male victims to not report the crime which diminishes their dignity. This can be solved by empowering fraternity male victims and prevent gender-based rape crisis centres to remedy the issue of men not being raped and gender equality. It is essential to form an understanding of male rape through theories to produce an accurate understanding of male rape, its issues and the pattern of male rape.

In conclusion, this essay has highlighted the issues of rape culture and gender norms and how this can negatively affect students on college campuses, both physically and mentally. This paper has provided an overview of rape on college campuses and how it has changed overtime. It has also argued how women's sexual autonomy can be violated due to gang rape on campus and men needing to sexually assault them due to fraternity rituals. Similarly, this essay discussed the lack of recognition for male rape victims on campus due to masculine stereotypes which make it hard to believe that men are raped. Overall, this essay has tried to address the issue of rape on campus which needs immediate attention.

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