Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community

Our Brotherhood and Your Sister: Building Anti-Rape Community in the Fraternity

Ross A. Wantland [a]
[a] University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,

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Ross A. Wantland

University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign

SUMMARY. Research shows that male peer influence is a significant predictor of violent sexual behavior. However, men challenging sexual violence within their male peer communities may exert a counter-influence, shifting community norms and behaviors. Using the Fraternity Peer Rape Education Program as a case study, this article examines the ways that fraternity men in a peer rape education program make sense of and interact within their communities. Through coded interviews, this article examines participants' perceptions of change within themselves, within their interactions with fraternity brothers, and within their fraternities. Learning about sexual violence altered participants' worldview and created a communal sense of partnership and responsibility, while simultaneously limiting the traditional ways that fraternal communities are maintained. This experience provides lessons for how we may begin creating communities of

doi: 10.1080/10852350802022316   *57*

men against sexual violence, as well as what support may be required for such messy, nonlinear change processes.

KEYWORDS. Community, education, fraternity, men, rape

A few years ago, a student of mine told me about challenging rape-supportive ideas in his fraternity. He had previously completed a course to become a peer rape educator, and during the current year, he was teaching that same class. As a senior, he was divorced from the day-to-day operations of the chapter and only showed up for specific events. He arrived one night at a "bar crawl" to find that his fraternity had printed t-shirts that everyone was expected to wear. On the front, the shirts had a picture of an adult male holding the hand of a little girl with a caption on back that read, "Our brotherhood is tighter than your little sister." He decided to himself that if his fraternity brothers wore the shirts that night, he could no longer be a member of that group and would deactivate from his fraternity. He rallied several of the other senior members, and after much arguing, the fraternity decided not to wear these shirts that they had purchased. When I heard this story, first I was angry and frustrated that many of these fraternity members would have worn this t-shirt. Yet at the same time, because several members spoke out, a dialogue was started.

I teach a university class called the Fraternity Peer Rape Education Program (FPREP). In this class, interested fraternity men—like the student in this story—receive training to become peer rape educators to their own fraternity chapters. As the aforementioned story illustrates, however, the men in the class are not simply delivering this information in workshops, it invades many aspects of their lives. This experience is a beautiful metaphor for processes of anti-rape community change; the brotherhood defined in opposition to women may become fractured as alternate, more equitable ways of building community are created.

Many researchers have explored the ways in which all-male culture is linked to sexual aggression (against women and men), alcohol abuse, and sexist attitudes (e.g., Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997). More recent data has suggested that rape-supportive male peer groups, not fraternity membership per se, are correlated with college men's dating violence (Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2000). Traditional efforts to address

sexual violence on the college campus have focused on teaching women to avoid sexual violence. Clearly, however, rape prevention must directly affect the lives of men as both potential perpetrators and, more importantly, the male peer social group of perpetrating men.

In this project, the experiences of fraternity men enrolled in the FPREP course are studied. Through coded interviews, written reflections, and observations, this article examines the learning processes of the students, while also illuminating the lived experiences of the men within the class and their intricate change process. Is there a change, and if so, what forms does this change take upon their selves and relationships? How does this change impact their surrounding communities or their perceptions of community? By following the peer educators, this project seeks to complicate and guide discussions of sexual violence prevention education.

MEN AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Research on sexual violence prevalence shows that sexual violence is a pervasive problem in the United States. According to the Uniform Crime Report (2004), 98.7% of the forcible sexual assaults were perpetrated by men. In Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski's groundbreaking study (1987), they found that one in twelve college men admitted to behaviors that constituted sexual violence. The majority of men, then, do not perpetrate legally defined sexual violence; however, this statistic still points to high rate of perpetration among men, and an even higher rate of men who have peers that may be committing sexual assault. As Katz (2000) suggests, this *should* lead us to examining men as a gender for the causes and solutions to sexual violence. However, reframing sexual violence as a problem that men have some responsibility to change would force men "as a dominant sex-class . . . to diminish their own power" (p. 284).

Many studies have sought characteristics of men (i.e., group membership, self-esteem, history of abuse, etc.) that might correlate with their perpetration of sexual violence. Several studies have asserted that rapists are not different from "normal" men (Berkowitz, Burkhart, & Bourg, 1994; Herman, 1995); rather, "normal" men perpetrate sexual violence. At the same time, there is a growing body of literature that correlates men's group membership, specifically in all-male groups, to sexual perpetration (Fritner & Rubinson, 1993).

Schwartz and DeKeseredy (1997; 2000) posit that it may not be membership in these groups, per se, that correlates to sexual violence, but the peer support within those groups for intimate partner violence. This suggests a complex connection between male peer group support, social norms, community, and sexual violence.

MEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Men are rarely approached as potential agents of change to address men's violence; certainly many men, historically and presently, are very reluctant to get involved in anti-rape efforts. Yet, this may also belie an assumption that (some) men will always be violent and would never want to change. This unwillingness to involve men in ending violence against women is also a convenient excuse for men to remain absent from this sexual violence prevention work.

However, men may have a variety of positive motivations for questioning the "rape culture." Some men may be motivated to be involved because their relationship with a loved one has led them to believe that the negative ways women are treated in society directly affects them. Other men have been involved in related social movements, and have grown to see the connections between their other political work and struggles to end sexism. Yet other men become involved through direct experience with sexual violence, either their own experience of that violence or supporting a loved one who has experienced sexual violence (Stoltenberg, 1989). Finally, some men are motivated because of the radical change in men's relationships with other men that must occur when sexual violence is examined. Therefore, many men commit to anti-rape work because they understand that their self and community will be dramatically improved if men's violence is addressed and eliminated (Greig, 2001).

CONTEXTUALIZING SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION EDUCATION

Sexual Violence Education

Numerous researchers have made suggestions about the future of sexual violence prevention education programs. Several meta-analyses have recommended that educational interventions should

be intensive (longer than one workshop), feminist-based, single-sex, and interactive/engaging (Brecklin & Forde, 2001; Breitenbecher, 2000; Berkowitz, 2004; Frazier, Valtinson, & Candell, 1994; Lonsway, 1996). As Frazier et al. (1994) warn, "It may simply be unrealistic to expect that long-held, deeply ingrained attitudes and beliefs will be changed in any lasting way as the result of a 1- or 2-hour program. The danger of such programs is that they can make us think we are doing something, even if we are not" (p. 157). Berkowitz (2004) adds that rape prevention education with men requires that male participants must be viewed as potential partners for addressing the issue of men's violence and that men learn best within small, all-male learning groups that allow men to honestly explore their experiences as men. Other literature has also called for this "bystander" approach as a way to involve men in sexual violence prevention and sidestep some of the defensiveness commonly encountered in these workshops[1] (Banyard, Plante & Moynihan, 2004). On the other hand, Flood (2001) suggests that organizing men together can have the adverse affect of "drawing on their shared interests" and "inadvertently entrench[ing] gender privilege" (p. 45). Finding this balance should be a focus of critical examination for sexual violence prevention education programs.

At the same time, few studies have examined the change process for participants within rape prevention education interventions. As Lonsway (1996) states, "A completely new area for future research pertains to the process of *how* rape education leads to desirable outcomes" (p. 259). For example, Klaw et al. (2005), studying a college peer rape education course, assert that students in these courses experience emotional and cognitive challenges that are part of feminist identity development. Having a contextual understanding is critical to understand the multiple ways sexual violence prevention may be experienced and addressed by participants. As Bond states, sexual violence prevention research must tell "new stories" that are "less linear and incorporate an understanding of how context shapes behavior" (as quoted in Banyard et al., 2004, p. 66). In the current research, this complex understanding of change processes is lacking.

Social Justice Education Pedagogy

Much of the literature on sexual violence prevention education examines attitude change from longitudinal, outcome studies; few

of these studies use a pedagogical approach or framework for examining the process as educational change. Literature in social justice/change education provides some information that may fill in these gaps. Bell (1997) defines the goal of social justice education as ''full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet all their needs'' (p. 14). This goal is consistent with many goals of sexual violence prevention. Hardiman and Jackson (1997) go beyond this to suggest a model for how people may learn within classrooms that focus on social justice using a version of the social identity development model. In this model, students experience developmental shifts in views of social justice issues and their role in them as they, for example, move from denial to confusion to redefining themselves and internalizing this change. By anticipating these stages, the educational environments can be structured toward supporting students through these phases (Adams, 1997). Sexual violence prevention education often draws on feminist and social justice pedagogies, yet rarely is this process researched or made explicit thus little is known about how it is enacted in prevention programming and with what result in the lives of participants.

Working with Fraternity Men

Some research on college-based groups focused on addressing sexual violence have offered solutions and raised questions about the goals, focus, outcome, and process within these organizations (DeKeseredy, Schwartz, & Alvi, 2000; Hong, 2000; Stoltenberg, 2001) However, Mahlstedt's (1998) Fraternity Violence Education Project (FVEP) has been consistently cited as a promising program innovatively working with men toward social change (Berkowitz, 2004; Kilmartin, 2001; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997). In FVEP, men in fraternities are trained through a year-long service learning course to be peer dating violence educators to their own fraternity chapters (Mahlstedt, 1998). Utilizing peer education and a bystander approach, they create a ''minority influence,'' where the trained educators affect attitudes of fellow members through everyday interactions (Mahlstedt & Corcoran, 1999). Additionally, this program allows men in fraternities, who commonly feel targeted and scapegoated by sexual violence prevention education, to be empowered as agents of change.

This article will examine the impact of FPREP upon its students, as well as upon their communities. Additionally, this study addresses

the ways that their change processes may cause an interruption into sexist and rape-supportive practices in their communities. Specifically, how does the community membership of FPREP members affect their lives and communities, and what insights does this give us for community-level social change and rape prevention?

METHODS

Participants

Thirteen students from eight fraternities completed the 2004–2005 year of the Fraternity Peer Rape Education Program course. Of this, 10 men (7 fraternities) completed consent forms to participate in the research. Men joined the class for a variety of reasons, including an "easy A," leadership opportunities, curiosity, and personal experiences. For this study, four participants (Alex, James, Phil, and Sam) were specifically examined, and each participant was given a pseudonym to provide confidentiality. The 4 men were members of fraternities that ranged from 3 to 150 members and included one culturally based fraternity, one engineering fraternity, and two more "well-known" fraternities. For all except one of these men, this was the first time any member of their fraternity had been involved in FPREP.

Procedure

The Fraternity Peer Rape Education Program began in fall 2002, based on the Fraternity Violence Education Program (Mahlstedt, 1998). Using this model, fraternity men sign up for a credited course that trains them to become peer rape educators to their own fraternity chapters. The course is instructed by the author and a teaching assistant, who is a fraternity member and FPREP educator from the previous year. In the first semester of the course, students dialogued about issues relating to sexual violence and facilitation skills. During the second semester of the course, students developed and facilitated sexual assault prevention workshops to their own fraternity chapter. At the end of the second semester, students wrote a final reflection paper on their experiences inside and outside of the class. Participants' assignments, which included reflection journals and needs assessments, were maintained, and a field log was kept by the researcher/teacher to chart observations. Following the end of

the semester, ten students and the teaching assistant completed guided interviews. Participants were asked an informal series of questions designed to uncover their experiences of the course. Questions focused on feelings, experiences, and thoughts before, during, and after the course (i.e., ''What did your friends think about you going through this class?'').

Data Analysis

Due to cost and time restrictions, four participant interviews were purposefully selected for transcription based on interview quality, diversity of backgrounds, and wide variety of actual experiences while in the course. Utilizing grounded theory (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), participants' final projects ($n = 10$) and the transcribed interviews ($n = 4$) were examined for common themes. A particular focus was examination of changes in the spheres of self, relationship/role, and fraternity. A trained research assistant and I collaboratively developed a coding scheme after examining the transcripts and final projects for emerging themes. These themes describe multifaceted, multiple experiences of change occurring during the year-long course, including changes to self, interpersonal relationships, and community. Additionally, all categories are analytical and not necessarily separate. For the purposes of this article, I will focus on the ways that participation in FPREP affected the fraternity community.

RESULTS[2]

Effects on Self

Shifts in Worldview

As the participants spoke about their perceptions of the impact of the class, the vast majority of changes—ranging from attitude to emotional to behavioral—were internal to their selves. Primarily, learning about sexual violence created a shift in their worldview. Indeed, many students held the view that bad things only happened to bad people, which was necessarily threatened in this class. Therefore, participants had a lot of their assumptions and everyday behaviors challenged. Reflecting on this, Phil stated, ''I guess progressively I'd be like, 'This is kind of like what they're saying

[in class]. That is kind of objectifying women, that is kind of like ridiculous.'" Many of the men then began to see rape- supportive behaviors being performed by the men around them. As a participant said, "I love the guys in my house, I know the way they are.... But I don't know.... I definitely do not like the way a lot of the guys treat women in the house." This led to disillusionment with Greek life and their fraternity in particular. As Phil said, "How the whole system works. It doesn't promote it [rape], but other things, like increasing the likelihood, after-hour parties, going to the bars, exchanges, where you're going to the bars, hoping to get laid, you know?" James said, "I won't say I lost respect, but like I saw a lot of things that go on, and I was just like, wow! You know, it was like a shock." This process of realization was upsetting, and many of the FPREP participants experienced anger. Alex recalled, "I remember feeling angry. I was first angry at women; then angry at men. I remember feeling like there was no hope, depressed." In addition, other participants reported feeling despair, believing that there was nothing they could do to stop rape. Eventually, several became hopeful when they perceived that they could affect change. As Alex mused, "What you learn as you go through the class is well, yeah, they might act this way, but is that really who they are? Is it really better to just abandon ship? Or, you know, should you stick around and try to help?" Moreover, some men in the course felt compelled to use their new understanding to affect change.

Recognition of Rape-Supportive Behaviors

Men in FPREP were faced with an overwhelming recognition of the reality of sexual violence and the complex web of rape- supportive behaviors that keep rape viable, many of which were occurring in their own peer groups. They identified a connection between the reality of the perpetration of sexual violence and the almost-mundane occurrences around them. Phil spoke about a member of his chapter who would have sex with a woman then lock her, naked, outside of his fraternity room. Phil used to laugh about this with his fraternity brothers, but later began to question his brother's motives and perceive his action as "ridiculous." Following this experience, his approach to other men's similar behaviors also shifted. Putting meaning upon media images, language, and behaviors removed some of the humor, as well as the allure, for participants.

Interpersonal Effects

Becoming Responders

As participants began to think seriously about challenging these systems, they also internalized the role of a responder. James proclaimed, "I now like assume the role in my fraternity to kind of like call people on their bullshit." The need to respond seemed to come out of a complex relationship between a sense of helplessness, a new awareness of a rape culture, and sometimes a masculine need to "protect" women. Initially, participants responded by becoming hyper-vigilant for women's well-being in social situations, or "watchdogs." As James stated, "I started actually watching out at the bars, you know, not only for myself, but for, you know, all my friends. . . . So throughout the night, even though I was drinking, I was the one to get a sense of 'Where did this person—where did they go?'" In addition, many participants limited their alcohol intake because they linked it to their own abusive behaviors, but also to police the behaviors of their male peers. Later, some of the men recognized a patronizing attitude toward women in their "watchdog" approach, and—perhaps problematically—"gave back" women's control. As an all-male class, FPREP participants struggled to become allies with, rather than protectors of, women.

Speaking Out

When they witnessed their fraternity brothers behaving in sexually coercive ways, participants had to choose whether or not they would challenge these behaviors. James described an interaction with a fraternity brother at a party. When he saw a fraternity brother buying a woman drinks, he said, "'You know if she's drunk and you have sex with her, that's rape.' He's like, 'No, it's not. It's just me buying her drinks.' And I'm like, 'Yeah, but she can't consent, 'cause she'll be unconscious.'" Most FPREP men had stories about times when they recognized some sexually coercive behaviors from their own fraternity brothers and attempted to address them in some way. There was a range of ways that FPREP men intervened or did not intervene, depending on the situation and their relationship to that particular brother. James spoke about his reaction to his brothers calling him names like "fag" or "woman" when he challenged them. He said, "I laugh about it because I realize what they're doing. . . . If they

wanna act like this certain way, [I'll] just be like, 'Well, why are you acting that way?' Just things that will shut them up and kind of embarrass them." At times, participants responded to rape-supportive actions by treating the behavior as absurd. When Phil's friends made inappropriate jokes, he would say "Why do you need to do that, man? We're friends. You don't have to like impress me." Conversely, Alex attempted to teach his friends a lesson in empathy by saying,

> How would you like it if someone sat over there and...they were like, "Yeah, look at that scrawny piece of—I bet he's a horrible lay." And I was like, "Come on. You know, you don't wanna sit here and make fun of some people and talk about other people like they're pieces of meat, you know. Let's get the cards out and play a game."

Participants did not respond directly every time; in fact, Sam stated in his interview that he chose not to respond to rape-supportive behaviors. Speaking about his hesitations, he was worried about being "the loner," that his challenge could alienate him from his brothers. Instead, Sam chose to address his brothers' behaviors indirectly by changing the topic or suggesting alternate activities.

Connections and Tensions

As FPREP participants felt compelled to challenge their friends and fraternity brothers, their relationship with their fraternity was sometimes strained. A few participants discussed a distance in their relationships with their brothers. In fact, two members of the 04–05 FPREP class deactivated their fraternities during or following the course. Alex said, "I wouldn't say FPREP was the straw that broke the camel's back...[but] the lack of participation and reception from my fraternity helped lower them in my eyes probably enough to make something like leaving the fraternity actually seem like a viable option." However, this was a more extreme reaction. For most men, they stopped hanging out with certain men, or they limited their interactions, but they did not completely leave the community.

For many of the men in FPREP, speaking out made them vulnerable to public attacks (usually without much public support), but helped them identify and develop closer relationships with some

men. Additionally, several participants spoke about having positive conversations with their fraternity brothers about sexual violence and rape-supportive attitudes. Phil was approached by a fraternity brother whose girlfriend was a survivor of sexual violence. He offered his brother his support, which changed the nature of their relationship. As he said, "We talk more now. It was kind of like I guess it brought us, it was kind of like a bonding experience." Sam had an open discussion with a fraternity brother who had a "one-night stand" with a woman and was subsequently ignoring her. After a discussion in which he shared some vulnerable feelings about sexual intimacy, he realized, "I've never had that serious of a conversation. So it was very—it was a new experience, but it was a good feeling to think that maybe I did something." As FPREP students spoke out publicly about sexual violence, fraternity brothers trusted them as resources, which led to deeper relationships between the FPREP members and some of their brothers. The compassion that these men showed to other fraternity men was in stark contrast to the masculine pose that men in their fraternity were expected to wear around each other.

Effects on Fraternity

Men in FPREP reported many changes in their relationships with their fraternity brothers, but many of these changes also impacted their communities. During the spring semester, each FPREP participant facilitated two workshops to their own fraternity chapter. At this point, they were "outed" to their chapter as peer rape educators. When asked if they saw their fraternity change while they were in FPREP, most of the participants talked about changes directly related to these workshops. Indeed, the question was unfair; how can one measure complex community change? Nonetheless, some participants witnessed changes in language and a general respect for the duties of a FPREP facilitator. Thinking about changes in his fraternity brothers' use of sexist language, Sam said, "I think people knew that I actually cared about it now, that I wasn't just taking the course to take it anymore." Some participants believed that brothers' attendance at the workshops was a positive sign. Other men became despondent when they felt their fraternity and its leadership ignored the importance of FPREP. Consequently, this shifting sense of community, along with the lost promise of brotherhood, forced the participants to reexamine how they viewed their community.

There were also specific fraternity actions that men in the group saw stop or change. For instance, some members of Alex's fraternity would rate women who walked by, making use of a system of giant numbers they had taped on the sidewalk outside their fraternity. Alex initially saw the numbers as harmless, but as he continued through the class, he became concerned and raised questions with his fraternity. When his chapter did not take action, he brought his concerns to his pledge son, who was an officer in the chapter. Later, he heard that the numbers had been removed. He went on to say, "I just think it's something no one's ever thought about before. And now I know for sure there are some people that are thinking about it." Through speaking with their fraternity brothers, both formally (facilitations) and informally (social outings, conversations, etc.), an alternate discourse about sexual violence, gender roles, and masculinity began. Ultimately, the specific direction and outcomes of this dialogue was difficult to ascertain, but for many of these men, the very fact that these conversations were occurring was in itself a notable change.

Men in FPREP defined community in multiple fluid ways. For some of them, their community was made up of their fraternity brothers. For others, their non-fraternity friends, family, and intimate partners made up their community. For all of the men, as their worldviews and sense of responsibility began to shift, they started to see their "community" as including women in social situations (bars, parties, etc.). Their learning seemed to cause an opening up of worldview and a communal sense of partnership and responsibility, while simultaneously reflecting on the traditional ways that fraternal communities get formed. So while the men began to accept a proactive role, they also struggled against their previous ways of interacting. While this required empathy for women's experiences, seeing themselves as potential agents of change required the FPREP participants to develop hope for their fraternity brothers as well. James concluded, "So I guess I kind of felt like I can actually do something now because I know all this stuff, and I see how easy it can be. It's not as hard as people make it out to seem. You just got to actually go at it."

CONCLUSION

Men in FPREP entered, sometimes unwittingly, into a complex series of personal, interpersonal, and community changes. The stories

of these men point to the variety of costs and benefits that challenging rape-supportive behavior in communities may hold (Wantland, 2005). Additionally, this provides practitioners and researchers with a challenge: how can we help men begin community change without excommunicating them from their communities? As shown, several men experienced disruptions in their relationship with their chapter. After realizing the ways that male peers may be supporting sexual violence through attitudes or direct coercive behaviors, what will help them maintain the belief that change is possible, and (realistically) have faith in their peer group to change?

Simultaneously, men in FPREP spoke of some radical changes in the ways they interacted with their male peers. Several participants developed new, complex, and intimate relationships from dialogues with their brothers. Others spoke out when they saw their brothers mistreating women, or when they heard sexist discussions. Their presence in their chapters became an interruption to traditional masculine relationships. As James stated in his final project, women have a particular role in ending sexual violence, but "I am the one doing the work that needs to be done behind closed doors where they can not reach, such as a frat house." Along with this, men in FPREP believed they could be agents of change, and that they could affect rape. Despite the frustration, isolation, and marginalization these men felt, they ultimately concluded that this journey was "worth it" (DeKeseredy et al. 2000). Educators must provide support to their students as they suffer losses within their own communities. Additionally, they need to empower their students to broaden their sense of community to access additional support, while finding ways to stay connected to their fraternity.

There are several limitations to this research. Methodologically, only four interviews were transcribed and analyzed for this article. Additionally, as the researcher and instructor, participants most likely biased what kind of stories they chose to tell. However, a contextual analysis of sexual violence prevention, one that pays close attention to the change process for the individual involved and recognizes that these stories are always different, also has much to add to our understanding of the process of change that will move individuals and communities toward ending sexual violence. These four interviews provide us with four distinct stories of men struggling to understand their world. Moreover, they are stories that fit within the developmental framework of social justice pedagogy. For example, Alex describes how he moved from anger to depression to hope,

closely following the denial-confusion-reintegration model asserted by Adams (1997). At the same time, the connections and disruptions within their communities, described here by Alex, Phil, and Sam, have been identified as a common experience of social justice education (Adams, 1997).

This research raises many larger questions for future research. For instance, if there were to be a pedagogy of sexual violence prevention, what would it be? How can sexual violence educators create classroom contexts that support participants enough to go create change in their own communities? What does it look like when we move the question from *what* to *how* sexual violence prevention should look? Future research on FPREP will examine participants' assignments and all ten interviews to examine not only the impacts upon the fraternity community, but also the ways that FPREP participants changed their interactions with themselves, their classmates, and their intimate partners. Additionally, this research may provide further nontraditional insight into creating community-level prevention programs that "work" (Wandersman & Florin, 2003).

In spite of painful experiences and difficult realizations, many men in FPREP chose change; challenged themselves, their peers and environments; deepened their relationships; and risked their community. Change, as Alex stated, is "something you have to do on your own, I guess. You can have guiding forces, but in the end, it's up to you." As individuals concerned with sexual violence, we must struggle to understand and create space for these processes if we are to help men assume responsibility in the struggle to end sexual violence.

NOTES

1. It is important to note that Banyard et al. (2004) advocate that bystander education should approach everyone, not just men, and they are critical of the all-male education advocated by Berkowitz (2004).

2. I have chosen to use verbatim quotes as opposed to cleaning up messy language. Although this preserves the honesty and emotion of the statement, it may also mislead the reader into further stereotyping of fraternity men. The reader is asked to remember that these men are incredibly complex individuals.

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