

INCAPACITATED SEXUAL ASSAULT AMONG YOUTHS: BEYOND THE PERPETRATOR TACTICS FRAMEWORK

Abstract

The issue of incapacitated sexual assault (ISA) among youths has received increased attention among researchers. Still our understanding of the phenomenon is so far limited. Most research to date departs from an underlying “perpetrator tactics” framework in which ISA is understood as acts of deliberate exploitation of vulnerable victims. Our analysis suggests that this framework represents an overly narrow understanding of how ISA happens among youths. Based on analyses of short written descriptions of ISA experiences from a nationally representative survey among 18- and 19-year-olds in Norway, we propose that ISA unfolds through two distinctly different interactional dynamics; either stemming from tumultuous and confusing sexual interactions that defy a clear allocation of culpability or from an assailant’s more or less deliberate tactics. Girls are more at risk and experience both types of ISA assaults, while boys mostly experience tumultuous “drunk sex” situations and more often redefine the situation in a way that masks their victimhood. The separation of the two situational dynamics furthers the understanding of in how ISA unfolds and of gendered vulnerabilities for sexual violence linked to youth drinking.

Keywords

Sexual violence, rape, intoxication, alcohol, gender

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Introduction

Sexual assaults among young people often happen while either the victim, the assailant or both are under the influence of alcohol or drugs (Lorenz and Ullman 2016). Our understanding of the nuances of situations that involve incapacitated sexual assault (ISA) is still limited. According to Lorenz and Ullman (2016), a large body of research exists on such assaults, but “the facets of this complex phenomenon remain rather convoluted” (p. 90). According to Pape (2014), “situations in which unconsented sex occurs in relation to drinking may be more complex and ambiguous than one is given the impression of in the survey-based research literature on sexual assault victimization, but few studies have addressed the issue” (p. 7). Pape hence alerts us to the tendency in survey research of understanding ISA as involving intent, or deliberate perpetrator tactics – what Khan et al. (2020: 141) refer to as “the sociopathy model” of sexual assault. The analysis we will present in this paper, which is based on both prevalence data and youths’ qualitative descriptions of ISA situations, complicates this picture. The general aim of our study is to contribute to what Alcoff (2018) and others have called for – that is, “a more complex understanding of the experience of sexual violence [and the] sometimes complicated nature of culpability” (pp. 1–2) – focusing on ISA victimisation among youths in Norway.

We see ISA – and sexual violence in general – as embedded within a broader context of gendered sexual inequalities. Results from prevalence studies underlines this point. It is a consistent finding that all forms of physical sexual violence affect young and adult women to a much larger extent than young and adult men (Hamby 2014). Research however also point to male exclusive forms of sexual violence; ‘forced-to-penetrate’ assaults (Weare 2018), that most often are not surveyed in studies on sexual assault and may lead to an overly polarised picture of gendered risk (Author). The overall image here is however of a strikingly gendered

landscape of sexual assault that needs to be taken into account when interpreting ISA experiences.

To understand how ISA unfolds and relates to gender, we believe it is important to address the dual issue of gendered risk for ISA, and its interactional dynamics. We have therefore included both girls' and boys' ISA experiences in our analysis. We have looked at girls' and boys' relative risk for ISA victimisation and, importantly, addressed how they become victims of ISA. The latter involved zooming in on the specifics of situations in which ISA victimisation occurs for girls and boys alike. We believe this strategy allows for grasping how ISA victimisation is linked to cultural ideas about gender, sexuality and power without taking for granted how they come into play in specific situations.

Theoretically, we take the cue from feminist scholarship on sexual assault, and in particular Kelly's (1988) model of the continuum of sexual violence that highlights how different forms of sexual violence can have common roots in cultural ideas and practices. The continuum idea also highlights how an act of sexual violence may be difficult to categorize, as it may slide from the legitimate to the illegitimate. From the feminist tradition we also take the idea that sexual transgressions have ramifications beyond the individual level. The pervasiveness of "minor" sexual transgressions, such as the fondling on the dance floor, contributes to what Cahill (2001: 143) has called a gendered "phenomenology of fear", a deep knowledge all girls and women embody of their heightened vulnerability compared to boys and men. Sexual transgressions against individual girls and women can in this sense be understood as both 'a personal and systemic attack' (Munro 2010; Author). The implication is that similar attacks on boys and men do not accumulate to this form of vulnerability.

Empirically, our inspiration has been other researchers' attempts to develop more holistic or ecological understandings of why sexual assaults happen (Hirsch et al. 2019; Khan et al. 2020). We share with these researchers the idea that this question is best addressed by a

careful patterning of how, where and when sexual assaults happen: what Hirsch and colleagues (2019) refer to as *sexual geographies*, which are embedded within *social temporalities*. Briefly, the idea of sexual geographies refers to how time and place shape sexual expectations and ensuing interactions that may lead to assaults.

Collins's (2009) micro-sociological approach to violence has guided our analyses. Collins argues that to understand the dynamics of violence, the perspective must be shifted from violent individuals to "the contours of situations, which shape the emotions and acts of individuals who step inside them" (p. 1). Central to such analyses are "patterns of confrontation, tension, and emotional flow, which are at the heart of the situation where violence is carried out" (2009: 2). In the following we will illustrate how this micro-sociological lens can elicit important nuances to the phenomenon of ISA victimisation among youths related to gender and the complicated issues of agency and culpability.

The analysis of girls' and boys' relative risk of ISA exposure we also present provides an important general context to the analysis of which interactions lead to ISA experiences for girls and boys, respectively. Few studies to date have included teenagers (here teens who live at home and are enrolled in upper secondary school) in research on the occurrence of ISA. Some notable exceptions do exist, however. McCauley and colleagues (2009) surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,763 US girls between the ages of 12 and 17; the authors studied ISA victimisation measured as either penetration or the unwanted touching of genitals due to incapacitation. A lifetime prevalence rate of 2.1% of ISA was found in the total sample, but the rate was higher for girls between 15 and 17 years old (3.6%). In a Norwegian study conducted among girls between 15 and 18 years old, Pape (2014) found a victimisation rate for the past 12 months of 5.3%. Finally, Carey and colleagues (2015) retrospectively surveyed the occurrence of ISA victimisation prior to entering university among a

convenience sample of female first-year university students in the United States and found a victimisation rate of 9.0%.

No studies to date have presented estimates of the occurrence of ISA among teenage boys. Our study contributes to filling this gap in the existing research and also provides important information about the types of situations boys and girls report when asked about ISA experiences in surveys.

Approaches to ISA

One strand of research on ISA has focussed on risk factors. Studies have documented that ISA is related to previous sexual assault experiences (Krebs et al. 2009) and to drinking habits and sexuality (Mellins et al. 2017). Situational and relational risk factors have also been examined. Of special importance are social-drinking situations such as bars and parties, where heavy alcohol intoxication is combined with the presence of potential perpetrators (Lorenz and Ullman 2016). A key finding is further that the perpetrator is more likely to be an acquaintance than a romantic partner or stranger (Gilbert et al. 2019).

Another strand of literature has focussed on alcohol as a strategy for committing assaults, i.e. as a *perpetrator* tactic in rapes against both young women (Cleveland, Koss and Lyons 1999) and young men (Warkentin and Gidycz 2007). *Drugging* has also been investigated (Hamby 2018), although the line between the voluntary overconsumption and the involuntary intake of alcohol and drugs is often unclear, which makes this a complex phenomenon to investigate.

As Freeman (2018) has rightly commented, scholars in this field of study have paid little attention to the social dynamics of ISA. One exception is Armstrong and colleagues' (2006) ethnographic study from a "party dorm" at a university campus in the United States. They describe party rapes as a predictable outcome of intersecting processes at different levels: strict university policies on alcohol consumption, combined with a gendered peer

culture organised around gaining and securing erotic status, together produce risky partying conditions for college women. At the level of interaction, the authors link party rapes to college men's deliberate "low-level coercion" tactics to involve a drunk woman in sex, such as by combining liquor and persuasion, and the manipulation of situations so that she is unable to leave. According to the authors, little risk is involved for college men in engaging in such behaviour, because it is seldom seen as constituting assault. But while Armstrong and colleagues' research (2006) foregrounds the social situation of ISA, it also reproduces the perpetrator tactics model as the main explanation of ISA incidents.

Tutenges, Sandberg and Pedersen's (2018) study on experiences of sexual assault among young partygoers offers a different perspective through the concept of *sexually violent effervescence*. The concept is inspired by Durkheim's (1995) description of effervescence as emotionally charged collective atmospheres in which people feel that they are "free from restraints, that they can do what is ordinarily impossible for them to do and that they are part of a vast and powerful whole" (Tutenges et al. 2018, p. 4). The authors describe how ISA is often related to festive events that young people are drawn to and take pleasure from, such as parties, clubs, and bars. Part of the attraction of these settings is precisely the energised permissiveness and playful transgressions they allow for: acts that would normally be disapproved of or even prohibited in other settings are legitimate there. The theoretical point is that this atmosphere also increases the risk for assaults to occur. In such situations, intoxicated, tumultuous sexual interactions may develop into a destructive flow of events characterised by a loss of agency and control – where someone becomes violated. This phenomenon is what the authors call sexually violent effervescence.

We have used the idea of sexually violent effervescence as a sensitising concept in our analysis. We expand Tutenges and colleagues' (2018) analysis by attending explicitly to the

issue of gender as it relates to sexually violent effervescence and the question of culpability in situations that produce sexual assaults.

Methods

Our analyses are based on data drawn from a nationally representative sample of students in the final year of upper secondary school in Norway: the [xxxx] study. The students answered a comprehensive electronic questionnaire during two consecutive school hours about their experiences with violence, including ISA. The study was a follow-up of a study from 2007 for which Statistics Norway provided a nationally representative sample of 67 schools [author]. The same schools were invited to participate in the present study. Of the original sample, 41 participated. Eight replacement schools were added to the sample, for a total of 49 schools. A total of 4,530 students participated (response rate 66.2%). The normal age when attending the final year of upper secondary school in Norway is 18 to 19 years. Students older than 19 years old were excluded from the analyses here, yielding a sample of 4,198 participants (59.9% female).

Extensive procedures for ensuring informed and voluntary participation were followed in the study. Because all participants were over the age of 18, parental consent was not necessary. The schools were instructed to treat the survey situation as an exam to protect the confidentiality of the participants. How schools ensured this may have varied somewhat, but all students were supervised by their teachers while completing the survey in their classroom or a computer lab.

Survey studies in school settings can be sensitive to students engaging in over- and under-reporting of behaviours and experiences to fit a certain self-image. The survey at hand has been checked for apparent inconsistencies. As for the particular instruments we analyse here we see few signs of false reports which could be a concern for the validity of the analysis presented – a point we return to later.

ISA-related questions were asked as part of two different survey instruments, one mapping a range of sexual victimisation experiences – including unwanted touching, attempted rape and rape (before and after the age of 13) – and one mapping alcohol-related problems and experiences.

The first instrument was administered to half the sample (chosen randomly) in order to facilitate a survey experiment in which the prevalence of rape would be compared by using two different sets of questions (Author). The main heading of the instrument was “**Before/after** you turned 13, were you exposed to any of these experiences **against your will?**” The instrument contained nine items about different sexual victimisation experiences before and after the age of 13. The final item of the instrument mapped ISA experiences. The respondents were asked whether “someone had sex with you against your will when you were asleep or too drunk to resist,” with response options of *no*, *never*, *yes*, *once*, and *yes, more than once*.

The second instrument was administered to the whole sample. This instrument comprised 16 items on alcohol-related problems and incidents and was inspired by the Rutgers Alcohol Problem Index (White and Labouvie 1989). The respondents were asked the following question: “How many times have you done or experienced any of the following in relation to drinking alcohol the previous year (the last 12 months)?” The response options were *never*, *once*, *2–4 times*, *5–10 times*, and *more than 10 times*. One of the items covered ISA experiences. This question asked if respondents had “been taken advantage of sexually without being able to resist because [they] were severely drunk.” It was originally included in a previous Norwegian study (Pape 2014).

Both instruments were followed by open-ended questions in which respondents could describe their ISA experiences in more detail. For the first instrument, all respondents who had answered yes to at least one of the sexual victimisation questions were asked to provide a

short written description of both their first and most recent experiences with the following question: “Can you describe what happened, and who was involved (without mentioning names)?” For the second instrument, respondents who had reported at least one ISA experience were asked to provide a written description of their experience with the following question: “You answered that you’ve been taken advantage of sexually without being able to resist because you were severely drunk. Can you describe what happened and who did this to you (without mentioning names)?”.

For the qualitative analysis we have included all written descriptions that clearly mentioned drinking alcohol, a party setting, intoxication or sleep. From the first instrument, 8 written descriptions from boys and 31 descriptions from girls were included, while descriptions from 19 boys and 46 girls were included from the second instrument. In total, the qualitative material contains 104 descriptions: 27 from boys and 77 from girls. Because the descriptions almost exclusively portray sexual interactions between a boy and a girl who were part of the same youth milieu or party scene, our analysis is limited to heterosexual ISA situations within peer groups.

Prevalence: Lifetime and Previous-Year ISA Experiences

The majority of our participants had no experiences with ISA; our results thus suggest that ISA experiences affect a minority of the youth population. As Table 1 shows, 5.5% of the respondents reported experiencing one or more instances of ISA over their lifetimes when the question was asked in relation to other forms of sexual victimisation. Four out of five of the victims reported only one experience, which suggests that repeated ISA victimisation is a rare occurrence. Total lifetime exposure among girls was 7.9%, compared to 2.3% among boys, for a difference of 5.6 percentage points. When the prevalence of ISA experiences over the past year was surveyed in relation to alcohol-related problems and experiences, boys reported the same prevalence rate (of 2.2%) as they had for their lifetimes. Girls reported a somewhat

lower 12-month prevalence rate of 5.1%, compared to 7.8% for lifetime prevalence. The gender difference was 2.9 percentage points, which was lower than the 5.6 percentage points observed for lifetime prevalence. As for lifetime prevalence, the vast majority of the respondents reported only one ISA experience over the past year.

Based on the prevalence rates, ISA came across as a clearly gendered phenomenon, with girls being significantly more at risk than boys. The similar rates for previous-year and lifetime exposure among boys, however, indicate that boys may be more unwilling than girls to report their experiences as assaults as time passes. The analysis of the written responses presented below provides some clues into the dynamics that may be at play.

Table 1

ISA Experiences: Lifetime Exposure and Previous 12-Month Exposure by Gender (Percentages).

	Lifetime			Previous 12 months		
	Boys (<i>n</i> = 898)	Girls (<i>n</i> = 1,305)	Total (<i>n</i> = 2,203)	Boys (<i>n</i> = 1,709)	Girls (<i>n</i> = 2,549)	Total (<i>n</i> = 4,258)
No, never	97.8	92.2	94.5	97.8	94.9	96.1
Once	1.6	6.4	4.4	1.8	4.2	3.2
More than once	0.7	1.5	1.1	0.4	0.9	0.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

ISA Scenarios

Our qualitative analysis has drawn on the logic of abductive analysis (Timmermans and Tavory 2012) and was initiated in two steps. In both steps, the analysis took the form of a circular process of moving between the written responses, theoretical constructs and possible interpretations. In the first step, we sorted the descriptions according to the level of

intoxication respondents described, as well as other variables they included to explain what had happened, mindful of the fact that what people leave out of such responses may also provide important insights. In the next step, we looked for similarities and differences between boys and girls in the situations they described – through the lenses of gendered sexual inequalities and sexually violent effervescence.

We should also note that not all written responses contained enough information to be analysed; for example, some descriptions only stated that the participant had been “too drunk.” The scenarios we describe below are based on those responses that contained some information about the situation of the assault. We will focus on the main scenarios we identified: (1) *boundary situations*, which illustrate the difficulty of delineating between assaults and bad or confusing sex; (2) *opportunistic transgressions*, where the victim is too drunk to really comprehend what is happening; and (3) *force-induced situations*, which involve manipulation or the use of force or violence to obtain sex. All three categories involve violations of the victim’s right to control intimate contact – what Kelly (1988) defines as acts of sexual violence. Still, we argue that it makes sense to think about these categories as representing a continuum of ISA scenarios – that range from chaotic sexual interactions, where one or both of the participants end up feeling violated, to transgressions facilitated by manipulation or brute force.

Scenario 1: Boundary Situations¹

Boundary situations are found in the descriptions from both boys and girls, although they were more common among boys’ descriptions. While these situations take different forms, they all have a distinct blurriness. In that respect, they illustrate what researchers have described as a porous boundary between the wanted and unwanted in sexual situations (Hirsch

¹ Quotes are translated from Norwegian to English and have been edited for clarity in English.

et al. 2019; Stefansen 2019). Boundary situations are differentiated from the other ISA scenarios by what we perceive to be an element of either a will to participate from both parties in what is going on (which is evident despite the drunkenness) or a feeling of mutual destiny: that both parties are caught up in the unwanted event.

Well, I wouldn't say that I was exploited; we both regretted it. But I was too drunk, so I couldn't resist. (Boy)

I was helping a [female] friend who wanted to go to bed, so I took her to her room. Then I was too drunk to say no. We had sex. (Boy)

We were both so drunk that we had no control over what we were doing. He couldn't even remember it the next day, and neither could I, really. I only remember that I said that I didn't want to [have sex] just then, and that I had to go home again. (Girl)

We were both very drunk, but I do think I was a bit more drunk than he was. I was too drunk to really register what had happened until the next day. (Girl)

These descriptions include a "we" that both produces and experiences the transgression, but they also include an "I," and hence a mix of actively taking part *in* something and being exposed *to* something.

We also found situations that were blurry in another sense among the boys' descriptions. We interpret these situations as being linked to the boys' difficulties in identifying with the victim position. Consider the description below:

I was sleeping, and then she came into the room and undressed me, and then I had sex with her. (Boy)

In this description, the active agent in the situation shifts midsentence, from the girl in the first part (who surprises the sleeping boy and undresses him) to the boy in the second part, where he has sex with the girl. Given that this extract is all the information we have about the situation, drawing any conclusions is difficult. On the one hand we could read this description as a situation that involves a phenomenological shift: initially it is an assault, but then it progresses to something more mutual, thus illustrating the unstableness of sexual situations (cf. Demant and Heinskou 2011; Stefansen 2019). The situation could also be an illustration of the fact that sexual situations may be fundamentally ambiguous, since they might be wanted and unwanted at the same time, and hence are difficult to designate as either sexual violence or simply “drunk sex.”

On the other hand, the situation could be seen as an incident of ISA but narrated through the culturally dominant “male sex-drive discourse” (Hollway 1998), which facilitates the redefinition of an assault to an incident of wanted and consensual sex. This discourse presents men as always being eager and willing and essentially lacking in choice in sexual situations (Gavey 2013): when the opportunity arises, they must engage in sex. Alcohol also contributes by hampering one’s ability for self-control. Therefore, especially when drunk, boys become easy prey and may end up having sex they do not want or have even consented to having. In a sense, they then become victims of their own deep drives, rather than of an assault from a girl. This logic makes it more difficult to recognise the incidents as involving victimisation, as exemplified below.

When I cheated [on my girlfriend], the alcohol had taken over. (Boy)

In this description, the victim status is invisible, and the boy portrays himself as being trapped by his own desire and intoxication. This logic was most pronounced in those descriptions that mentioned the girl's undesirable looks, sometimes using the derogatory "beer goggles" expression. In these descriptions, the girl is characterised as fat and ugly and as someone who is below the boy's normal standards.

A female friend invited me to her house when I was completely wasted. I regretted it, because she's ugly and disgusting. (Boy)

I got beer goggles, and an ugly whore seduced me in my unknowing state into having sex. She isn't worthy of a place on my trophy shelf. (Boy)

Such incidents are understood as being produced by an error of judgement: alcohol lowers the bar, and, combined with his strong sex drive, he lets a girl take advantage of him.

Two interpretations are possible here. On the one hand we could treat them as false reports: These incidents are not really a matter of sexual assault but of regretting having had consensual sex. On the other hand, we could take them seriously as descriptions of assaults (given that the boys in question first answered yes to the fixed-response items) and understand them as cases of *masked victimhood*. Doing so means reading them as assaults that people have described as something else: something has happened without their consent, but the boys avoid the passive victim status by describing themselves as highly potent males: a role that is underlined by their degrading characterisations of the girls, for instance as not being worthy of a place on their erotic "trophy shelves." The sexual violations become transformed into violations of the boys' status in the socio-sexual hierarchy: as boys who deserve a better girl.

The driving tool in this interpretative shift is the cultural motif of the male sex drive, combined with male entitlement to female bodies and beauty. By activating these motifs, the situations they were caught in may shift from possible assaults to merely sexual interactions, even if the sex itself was non-consensual. The fact that similar dynamics are not to be found among the girls' descriptions supports this interpretation.

While the quotes from girls lack the derogatory language and trophy motifs found in boys' quotes, we should perhaps be wary of interpreting them as descriptions of simply drunken tumultuous sex. Embodied fear of what *could* happen (Cahill 2001) if one does not play along, may work as a situational form of coercion that is grounded in what we referred to as the gendered landscape of sexual assault. Situational compliance affect young men as well, as Ford (2018) has showed using Goffman's dramaturgical perspective. For the young men she interviewed, the fear involved was of a different kind; they feared losing face to the girl who they thought wanted them and cause embarrassment on her part. In theory, both these gendered dynamics may be at play in concrete boundary situations of ISA.

Scenario 2: Opportunistic Transgression

Around half the descriptions from boys and girls alike related to incidents involving a heavily intoxicated victim who was taken advantage of by another youth. These descriptions indicate the presence of both an active assailant (who initiates the sexual interaction and is more in control of what happens) and a passive victim, who is led along and is more or less unable to understand what is happening. While the assailant takes advantage of the situation, and in a sense exploits the victim, the common portrayal is that he or she is not a predator who uses any particular tactics to obtain sex. The descriptions below are apt examples.

A friend ... didn't rape me, but I was unable to say either yes or no. (Girl)

I was too drunk to think about what happened. I was led to a room and woke up afterwards, and I heard what had happened. (Boy)

I've been so intoxicated [in the past] that I've been unable to make decisions for myself. I think about [these situations] as me being exploited. (Girl)

In the above descriptions, the victim has experienced a severe loss of ability to process what the assailant wants and is doing – and to react. In some descriptions, we get a glimpse of the duality that may characterise this form of ISA victimisation: that the victim may be both present and physically participating in the assault that is happening, as well as non-present and unable to articulate what he or she wants or to resist.

This happened when I was excessively drunk. And I'd gone home with a girl without being mentally present to make that decision. Later I found out that we'd had sex, which had happened without me really being able to choose to want it or not want it. My feeling the next day was that I'd been exploited by this girl. (Boy)

I got too drunk at a party and was close to unconscious. Then a big, fat girl that I didn't know that well came and had sex with me without my consent, but I was too drunk to understand what was happening before halfway through, and then I was unable to say stop. (Boy)

In these situations, the body seems to have a form of presence in response to a socially scripted sexual situation, but the mind is fully or partially absent. The victim's presence could

be described as a “zombie presence.” This dynamic is not one of shifting between the wanted and the unwanted but of these two states being simultaneously present.

Given that the assailant in these cases most often will also be intoxicated, he or she may not understand the situation as representing an intrusion because of the physical participation of the other, which normally signals want. In this sense, these situations are also tumultuous and blurry and are possibly facilitated by the sexual expectations and permissive atmosphere that drinking and partying often create. These features are captured in the notion of sexually violent effervescence (Tutenges et al. 2018), which foregrounds the general lack of premeditation behind many instances of ISA.

From the perspective of the victim, such situations represent an assault, an attack on what Dahl (1994) refers to as *gender freedom* and sexual autonomy. If we take the assailants’ perspective into consideration, however, then the situations can be seen as incidents of what Cahill (2014, 2016) calls unethical sex but that nevertheless do not cross the line into rape. In Cahill’s understanding, cases of rape are acts of unethical sex where the assailant shows no regard for the victim’s interest in the situation and through his or her actions completely nullifies the victim’s agency and possibility to affect the situation. This may happen through low-level coercion, such as simply not giving up, and pushing the situation forward when the victim is in a more vulnerable state. But they may happen as well because the assailant reads willingness and want into the victim’s physical acts. Such readings of a situation can be supported by the socio-temporal context of the interaction (cf. Hirsch et al. 2019): taking place late at night, either at a party or after a party.

This is a challenging terrain to interpret, and it would be problematic to read the situations only from the assailants’ perspective. To infer consent from the context of the interaction and of the victim’s automatized behaviours (such as walking towards a bed when led there and then moving the body “normally” during sex) is morally wrong and emblematic

of the sexual entitlement involved in producing assaults. As shown by Hirsch and Khan (2020) in their study on college students in the USA, this type of confusion or mythology around consent is more often found among young men than young women. Still, there is a difference between ISA situations that come about through distorted interpretations and ISA situations where the victim's behaviour cannot be taken to signal want or consent.

However, one troubling aspect of the distorted interpretations we have described is that a non-moving body can be seen as a participating body, which suggests that young people can have a very low threshold for reading willingness into a given situation. The opportunistic situations also illustrate the "If A, then B logic" that can come into play during sexual situations and that works against a processual notion of consent as something that can be withdrawn at any point in the interaction: for instance by falling asleep or passing out during sex. As commented above, this logic may put girls more at risk than boys for being taken advantage of when they are heavily intoxicated.

Scenario 3: Force-Induced Situations

A third ISA scenario relates to incidents that involve a clear manipulation of a victim's vulnerable state, or the use of persistent pressure, coercion or violence: in short, forced assaults. In some cases, the assaults cause physical injury. Only girls described situations in which they had been exploited while in a state of amplified vulnerability. In these situations, they had been drunk to the point of serious alcohol poisoning and had displayed clear signs of drunkenness, either as the assault happened or immediately before. They had been unable to walk or to take care of themselves, or they had become sick.

I was drunk, and an acquaintance was helping me vomit behind the house where the party was. The next thing I remember was that he was taking me from behind, but I was too intoxicated to remember any details or to resist. (Girl)

I was hammered and almost couldn't talk; in addition, I'd just been sick. He then began to fuck me. I was in my underwear and in my friend's bed, since I'd gone to bed. He locked the door when others tried to enter. I remember very little; this is just what I've been told. (Girl)

I drank a lot at a party with colleagues. One of them had intercourse with me in the shower (I'd had to shower because I'd vomited all over myself). I'd had intercourse with this person on an earlier occasion. (Girl)

These situations are not characterised by the zombie-presence dynamic that we introduced above. The girls described how they had lost control of themselves completely. Hence, these situations lacked an apparent opening for the boys to read want or compliance into them. Such situations are examples of assaults where the assailant takes over and completely ignores and nullifies the victim's interest in the situation. In agreement with Cahill (2014, 2016), we can therefore understand them as a particular form of sexual transgression, what she designates as rapes. Another striking aspect was that the situations were staged in such a way that the girls were unable to leave. She may have been in the shower or had little or no clothes on, or he may have locked the door. It is important to note that it is not force or strong coercion itself that demarcates rapes in Cahill's theorization, but the apparent disregard of the other person. In our material this was most pronounced for the descriptions of force-induced scenarios.

Very few boys described incidents related to the use of force, but we did note a few examples, as illustrated below.

I was forced to have intercourse at this person's house. (Boy)

Someone pulled me into a dark room when I was really drunk. I don't remember much. (Boy)

The girls' descriptions of coerced or forced assaults spanned a range from facing persistent pressure throughout the evening to the use of severe physical violence, with the latter being the unusual extreme.

[The assailant] was only a friend of my friend's boyfriend. He was really keen on having sex the whole evening, and I didn't dare say no. He was extremely persistent. (Girl)

An older boy pinned me down and undressed me against my will. I was intoxicated, while he was sober. (Girl)

It was New Years, and my boyfriend was very drunk. I wished my friends happy New Year on Facebook, and he became angry. We started to argue, and he took me downstairs to his room. He locked me in and beat me up, threw me against the wall, and hit me with his fist while he said that he loved me and cried. I screamed and wanted the people upstairs to hear me, but the music was too loud. He wanted to have sex. I refused but was forced to anyway. I woke up the next day, limping and hurting all over (...). (Girl)

Some of the responses described girls being plied with alcohol or drugs to the point of incapacitation, which also seems reasonable to consider as a form of force. The descriptions

below are illustrative of such incidents. Both clearly indicate incidents that are closer to intentional drugging than to voluntary overconsumption (Colyer and Weiss 2018).

A good friend whom I considered a brother liquored me up and had sex with me against my will, even when I said no. (Girl)

They gave me drinks, and I became very drunk. Then I lay down to sleep, and two older boys engaged in a sexual act [against me]. I was unable to say no and went along with the act, against my will. At the time I chose not to report the incident, but since then I've seriously regretted that decision. (Girl)

No similar descriptions were to be found among the boys' written responses, thus implying that drugging and deliberately causing intoxication as a means of obtaining sex is likely a male-specific tactic.

Discussion and Conclusion

We found that teenaged girls are significantly more at risk of ISA victimisation than teenaged boys. Our results for girls are consistent with Pape's (2014) findings in her study conducted among slightly younger girls in Norway. Our qualitative analysis indicates that the experiences behind these numbers are varied and that a majority should not be interpreted as intentional transgressions by perpetrators for obtaining sex from an intoxicated victim. In many cases ISA is better described as chaotic sexual interactions that somehow go wrong, as captured by the concept of sexually violent effervescence (Tutenges et al. 2018). We have described two different scenarios that point to such a dynamic. The first scenario includes boundary situations, which also display a sense of agency on the part of the victim and of shared responsibility for what ended up happening. Boys' descriptions of boundary situations

are particularly interesting. When understood as descriptions of violations, they illustrate how ideas of male sexuality and entitlement prompt an immediate redefinition of the situation. According to these ideas, because boys are always ready for sex, they will seize any opportunity, even if it presents itself in the form of a girl whom they do not like. The male sex drive then becomes the culprit, rather than the girl. While we can understand this redefinition as a productive protection strategy against the problematic victim position, these descriptions also hint at how boys may reason when they are the initiator of an interaction that becomes an ISA incident.

The second scenario involves opportunistic transgressions, which differ from boundary situations in that the assailant clearly takes the lead. The victim is more passive but apparently goes along with whatever happens. We suggest that assailants (who are also drunk) are spurred on by the permissiveness of the situation and the zombie presence of their victims, who may act as if they are partaking in the situation while actually being mentally disconnected. Hence, he or she may be unaware that the sexual interaction is progressing into an assault. These situations illustrate the difficulties in untangling questions of sexual agency and culpability during sexual situations (cf. Alcoff 2018, p. 5), particularly when alcohol is involved.

While we have described boundary and opportunistic ISA situations separately, our interpretation is that the two are brought about by the same underlying dynamic, captured by the idea of sexually violent effervescence. The party context produces sexual expectations among participants that, through chaotic sexual interactions, come to be forced upon someone else. One question that arises is how we can differentiate such situations from those that involve more or less intentional transgressions. Alcoff's (2018) definition of an act of sexual violation is helpful: "To violate is to infringe upon someone, to transgress, and it can also mean to rupture or break. Violations can happen with stealth, with manipulation, with soft

words and a gentle touch to a child, or an employee, or anyone who is significantly vulnerable to the offences of others” (p. 12).

The situations we have described as being opportunistic could be interpreted as sexual violations according to Alcoff’s definition: clearly the victims are drunk to the point of being “significantly vulnerable to the offences of others” (2018, p. 12). What separates these situations from those force-induced situations that involve the most serious levels of intoxication is that the latter do not follow directly from a sexually charged atmosphere that both parties are caught up in. In these situations, the assailant knowingly takes advantage of the victim’s significant vulnerability and treats her as an object. No signs can be misread in such situations; rather, the assailant exhibits a complete disregard of the victim’s will and interest in the situation, which suggests that something very different is going on than effervescence getting out of control. The same is the case for the other force-induced situations, which might involve persistent stalking, coercion or physical violence. A clearer sense of the assailant’s culpability and intent to harm is visible in these situations compared to boundary situations and situations of opportunistic transgression.

In conclusion, we suggest that ISA experiences are produced by two key interactional dynamics: either by tumultuous or confusing interactions or by more or less intentional tactics by the assailant. The use of intentional and sometimes brutal tactics to get one’s will with another person is an almost exclusively male behaviour. This pattern points to the cultural persistence of ideas of male sexual entitlement. Such entitlement puts girls more at risk than boys of being victimised and puts boys more at risk than girls of committing sexual assault during drinking situations.

In contrast, both boys and girls may infringe on the other and may possibly cause harm during tumultuous and confusing interactions. In these situations, the assault is more of an accident that has resulted from sexual interactions that transgress normal boundaries because

of the permissiveness of the situation and because of the difficulties involved in engaging in drunk sex. While we have painted a picture of these tumultuous interactions as being risky for boys and girls alike, we think that certain gendered nuances might be at play that our analyses, based on victims' descriptions of the situations, have not fully brought out. More research is clearly necessary on both male and female assailants' reasoning about these situations, and particularly on what they read from their partners' responses in a given situation.

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