Boswell & Spade’s “Fraternities and Collegiate Rape Culture”

Rape culture is “a set of values and beliefs that provide an environment conductive to rape.” “Rape culture is based on the assumptions that men are aggressive and dominant whereas women are passive and acquiescent.” This article focuses more narrowly on “specific settings where rape is likely to occur.” The study compares high-risk fraternities to low-risk ones.

Parties at low-risk houses: balanced gender ratio, cross-gender socialization, women are treated with respect.

Parties at high-risk houses: skewed gender ratio, little cross-gender socialization, men treated women with little respect, people were more hostile, loud music prevented communication, men discussed sexual exploits at next morning’s breakfast, dating relationships were discouraged in favor of “hooking up,” members were pressured to treat women negatively (especially when they were with other men), the double standard was institutionalized in practices like the “walk of shame.”

Since group norms are different between contexts, people’s behavior changes from one situation (e.g., fraternity party or bar) to another. Men and women who didn’t support the rape culture participated in behaviors that supported it. For instance, women continued to “hook up” because they didn’t feel there was another means of socializing with men.

Pelka’s “Raped: A Male Survivor Breaks His Silence”

Pelka describes his being raped in Ohio while he was hitchhiking. The police didn’t believe him even though six other men had told similar stories.

“The distinction is that while many women, and some men, are victimized by rape, all women are oppressed by it, and any victimization of women occurs in a context of oppression most men simply do not understand. Rape for men is usually a bizarre, outrageous tear in the fabric of reality. For women, rape is often a confirmation of relative powerlessness, of men’s contempt for women, and its trauma is reinforced every day in a thousand obvious and subtle ways.”