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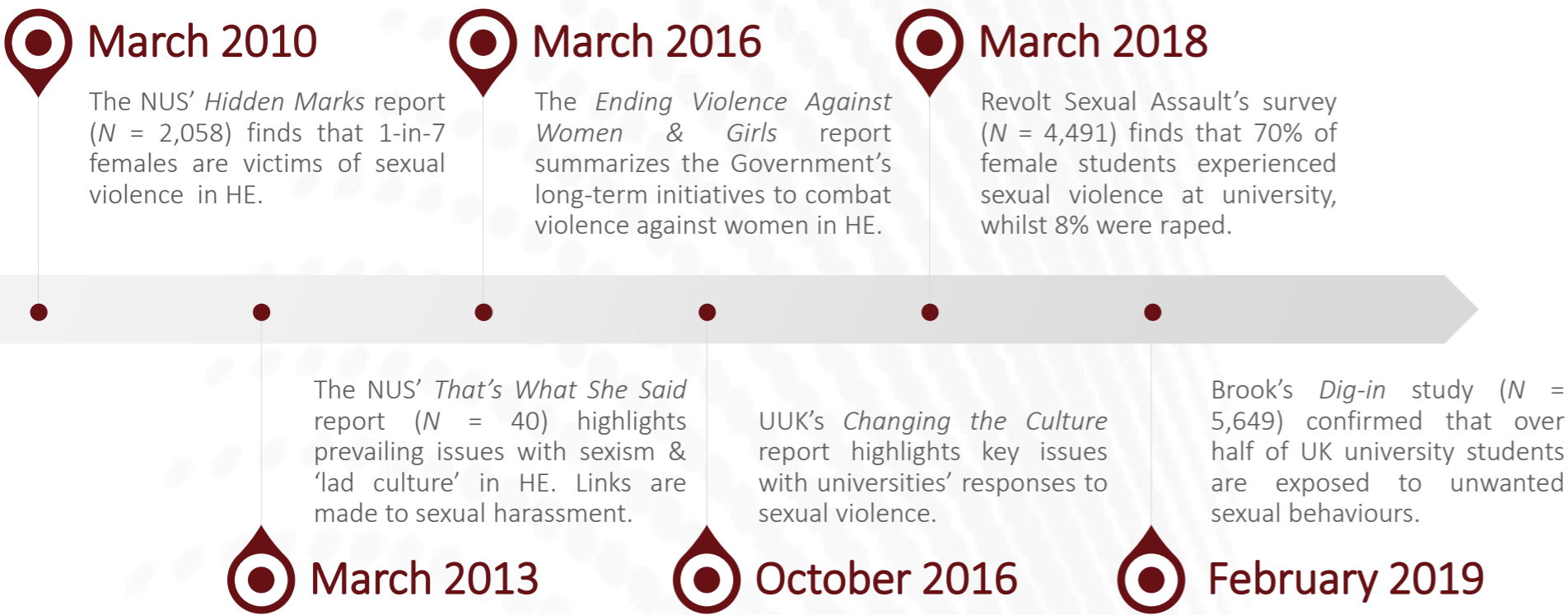
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Sexual Aggression in UK Higher Education: A Treatment Needs Analysis of Male Students

Samuel T. Hales & Prof. Theresa A. Gannon



ABSTRACT

Compared to national averages, sexual offending occurs at alarming rates on university campuses across developed countries [1-2]. Most of this offending occurs between students and is perpetrated by males against females [3-4]. However, to date, there has been little research assessing university-based sexual offending in the UK and there are no established interventions designed to reduce offending amongst students [5]. This is very surprising given our knowledge of incarcerated sexual offenders and the treatment programmes available for them worldwide [6-7]. This empirical study is the first in a series that explore the psychological factors behind why male students sexually offend and whether clinically-informed interventions can be useful in reducing their proclivity to do so. Initial findings are positive and warrant further research.

HYPOTHESES

- The prevalence rate of sexual aggression will be higher amongst male university students compared to non-university males.
- Scores on psychological measures will differ between male university students who have recently sexually offended, compared to those who have not.
- Exploratory.** A logistic regression model constructed using the psychological scores from both sexual aggressors and non-sexual aggressors will
 - highlight the variables that most reliably predict sexual aggression amongst male university students, and
 - discriminate between both groups at greater-than-chance level.

METHODOLOGY

- N = 259 heterosexual male students from one university.
- Criterion.** Dichotomised scores from the Short-Form Sexual Experiences Survey: Perpetration (SES-SFP), a measure of sexual aggression
 - Emphatic rejection of items led to the classification of non-sexual aggressor (NSA).
 - Any non-zero responses led to the classification of sexual aggressor (SA).
- Predictors.** Established self-report measures assessing trait behaviours pertinent to sexual offending.
 - Measures of aggression, alcohol consumption, assertiveness, athleticism, atypical sexual fantasies, emotion regulation, hostility toward women, loneliness, rape myth acceptance, self-efficacy in romantic relationships, and self-esteem (negative and positive).



- Confounding variables.** Impression management and demographic variables (age, ethnicity, education).
- Participants completed all measures anonymously online as a battery. Four attention checks were included.

RESULTS: Group Comparison

- Three psychological variables and one demographic variable were able to differentiate between the NSA and SA groups:
 - Hostility toward women.** 24.91 [NSA] vs. 29.47 [SA], $M = 0.19$, 95% CI [0.03 to 0.51], $t(46.52) = 3.18$, $p = .003$.
 - Rape myth acceptance.** 44.09 [NSA] vs. 37.32 [SA], $M = 6.77$, 95% CI [2.48 to 11.06], $t(39.31) = 3.19$, $p = .003$, $d = .15$.
 - Sexual fantasies.** 4.83 [NSA] vs. 8.52 [SA], $M = 0.63$, 95% CI [0.30 to 1.05], $t(56.57) = 4.30$, $p < .001$.
 - Ethnicity.** Multinomial probability distributions were not equal across groups, $p = .048$.
- A hierarchical logistic regression model constructed using these variables and SES-SFP scores to predict sexual aggression was significant overall.
 - The model could explain between 9.7% (Cox & Snell R^2) and 19.3% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in sexual aggression, Omnibus $\chi^2(4) = 25.82$, $p < .005$.
 - The model correctly classified 89.8% of all cases (specificity: 99.6%, sensitivity: 10.7%).
 - The model discriminated well; area under the curve = .77, $p < .005$, 95% CI [.68, .85].

Variables	B	SE	Wald	df	p	ORs	95% CI for ORs	
							Lower	Upper
Ethnicity	0.27	0.44	0.36	1	0.55	1.31	0.55	3.10
Hostility toward women	0.01	0.03	0.06	1	0.81	1.01	0.95	1.07
Rape myth acceptance	0.08	0.03	8.48	1	0.00	1.08	1.03	1.14 ***
Sexual fantasies	0.07	0.03	6.07	1	0.01	1.08	1.02	1.14 ***
Constant	-6.32	1.07	34.73	1	0.00	0.00	-	-

Table 1. Logistic regression model predicting the likelihood of being a sexual aggressor.

“Of the four variables that differentiated SAs from NSAs, logistic regression modelling highlighted rape myth acceptance and atypical sexual fantasies as best predicting sexual aggression.”

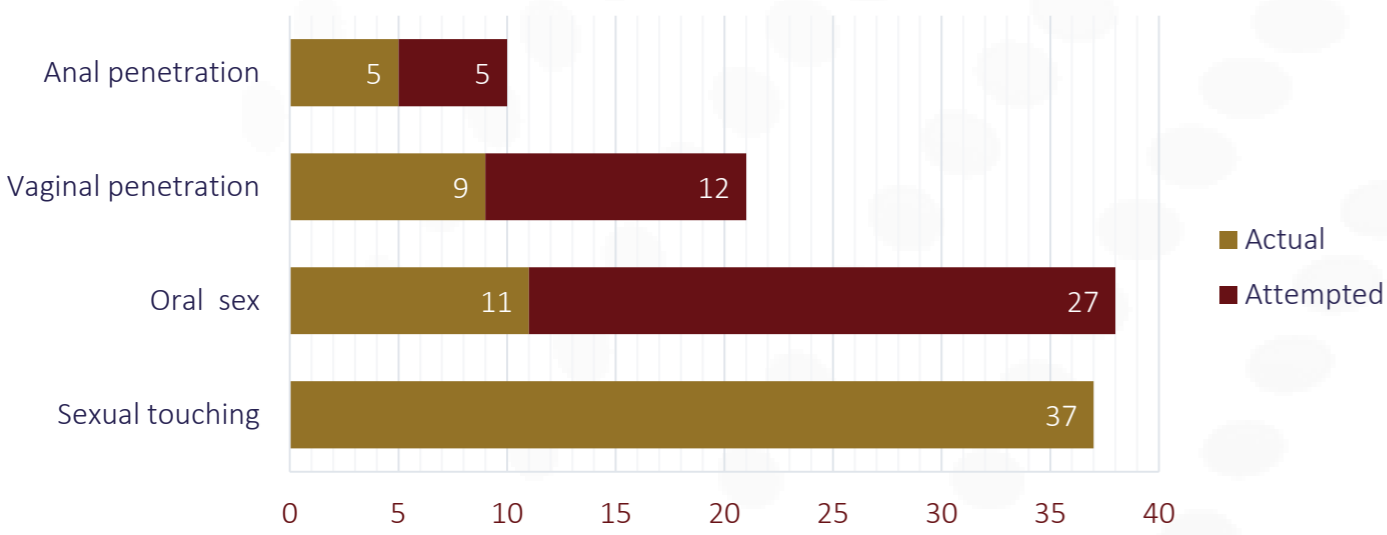
DISCUSSION

- Results support previous findings that sexual offence perpetration occurs at alarming rates in UK universities, and at higher rates than in the general community.
- Rape myth acceptance and atypical sexual fantasies may provide two explanations as to why university males possess an increased propensity towards sexually offending.
- Any interventions designed to lower proclivity toward sexual aggression should incorporate empirical research.
- What's next?** 1) To investigate whether these results replicate across to a larger national sample of university males. 2) To assess whether sexually aggressive university males form a homogenous population with shared treatment needs. 3) To design, implement and evaluate an evidence-based self-help intervention to reduce sexual aggression amongst university males.

Questions?

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RESULTS: Sexual Aggression



“In total, 33 participants reported that they had committed or tried to commit 106 sexually aggressive acts in the last two years.”