

A COMPARISON OF GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS

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The experiences of 44 group sexual assault victims (multiple offenders, one victim) were compared with 44 individual sexual assault victims (one offender, one victim). Sexual assaults included various degrees of sexual victimization ranging from verbal coercion to rape. Participants were located from among a national sample of 3,187 college women. Group sexual assaults, compared to individual sexual assaults, were in general more violent, involved greater resistance from the victims, and were more likely to be perpetrated by strangers or relatives and to involve an experience which met the legal definition of rape. Group sexual assaults were less likely to involve multiple episodes by the same offender(s). Group sexual assault victims were more likely than individual sexual assault victims to seek police and crisis services, to have contemplated suicide, and to have sought therapy postassault. Despite these differences, the two groups were similar in the amount of drinking and drug use during the assault and their scores on standardized measures of psychological symptoms.

A growing awareness exists of sexual assaults which involve more than one offender. Rozee-Koker and Polk (1986) reviewed the literature on group

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rape and suggested that approximately one-third of rapes reported to the police were perpetrated by multiple offenders on one victim. Despite the high percentages of group rapes, it is virtually absent as a separate phenomenon in the empirical literature. Most treatments of group sexual assaults consist of theoretical propositions about the men who participate in them. Warshaw (1988), for example, postulated that men who rape in groups might never commit rape alone. Warshaw (1988) and others (e.g., Geiss, 1971; Holmstrom & Burgess, 1980) suggested that men who sexually assault women in groups are attempting to prove their sexuality to other group members, using the victim as a vehicle. "As they participate in group rape, they experience a special bonding with each other, a unity of purpose that comes from the pride they feel in reducing their victim to nothing more than a collective vessel for their masculinity" (Warshaw, 1988, p. 101). Further, the group dynamics of the rape may allow the rapists to minimize individual feelings of responsibility, and the dynamics of the group may facilitate the development of a sense of masculinity and power which leads to a reduction of the inhibitions of each individual member (Erhart & Sandler, 1985, 1986).

Following from this conceptualization, it is not surprising that a number of the group rapes that have been reported have involved men in some type of organized group. For example, the *Project on the Status and Education of Women*, conducted by Erhart and Sandler (1985), found 50 incidents of group rape occurring at a wide range of institutions of higher education in 1985. Although they stated that the great majority of the reported incidents on college campuses occurred at fraternity parties, group rape was also noted to occur in residence halls and to often involve college athletes. The researchers noted that they were told on some campuses that "it happens every week" and that their reports from some colleges indicated that at least some of these fraternities had actually planned these group rapes as part of their weekend activities. They further stressed that in almost all of these reported cases the men do not conceptualize the assault as group rape. Instead of labeling the experience as rape, these men see themselves as having engaged in group sex with a "willing partner."

Although there is limited information about the men who participate in group rapes, there appears to be even less research and theoretical writing about the characteristics of and the impact of group rape from the victim's perspective. Erhart and Sandler (1985, 1986) discussed the situational characteristics of the assaults and reported that in many (but not all) instances the woman had had too much to drink or had used drugs. She was often unaware that the pressure applied by the fraternity brothers was part of a planned sexual assault. By the time she realized that an assault was about to take place, her confusion changed to panic, and she could not escape. At times, a victim may be unable to protest, or if she does attempt to protest, she is often ignored. During the assault, forced vaginal intercourse is the most common act in both individual and group sexual as-

saults, but fellatio and touching victims' breasts are approximately twice as likely to occur in group sexual assaults compared with individual sexual assaults (Holmstrom & Burgess, 1980). It appears that in group sexual assaults, the amount of aggression and degradation may increase as each man takes his turn. Therefore, these group sexual assaults are likely to be more humiliating for the victims than individual sexual assaults (Rozee-Koker & Polk, 1986; Warshaw, 1988). Finally, following the assault, it has been suggested that the victims often do not report the rape until much later; college administrators often hear about the assaults through informal rather than formal channels. Victims may often leave school, and the assault can be devastating for their self-esteem.

These few studies which have been conducted have focused on reported cases of group sexual assaults or assaults which have come to the attention of college administrators. Almost all of these cases involved fraternities. Since prior research has shown that as few as 5% of individual sexual assaults ever get reported to authorities or rape crisis centers, it is not known whether these group sexual assaults which have come to the attention of authorities are representative of group sexual assaults in general. This present investigation, therefore, was undertaken to study the characteristics and impact of group sexual assaults among a national sample of college women. Notable features of this design included recruitment methods that avoided exclusive use of help-seeking participants; inclusion of a range of sexual assault experiences, ranging from forced sexual contact to the most serious offense of rape; and the use of a national sample of respondents to enhance generalizability.

METHOD

A self-report questionnaire was administered to a sample of 6,159 students, including 3,187 women and 2,972 men at 32 U.S. institutions of higher education. Although men were asked about their involvement in group sexual assaults, it was beyond the scope of this article to analyze their responses. A related article that details the differences between stranger and acquaintance rape victims is presented elsewhere (Koss, Dinero, Seibel, & Cox, 1988).

Sampling Procedures

On the basis of data on enrollment characteristics maintained by the U.S. Department of Education (Office of Civil Rights, 1980), the nation's 3,269 higher education institutions were sorted by location into one of the eight regions of the continental United States (i.e., New England, Mideast, Great Lakes, Plains States, Southeast, Southwest, Rocky Mountain, and West). Within each region, institutions were placed into homogeneous clusters according to five criteria:

1. location in or outside of a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) of certain sizes (i.e., SMSA > 1,000,000; SMSA < 1,000,000; or location outside an SMSA);
2. enrollment of minority students above or below the national mean percentage;
3. control of the institution by private secular, private religious, or public authority;
4. type of institution, including university, other 4-year college, and 2-year institutions;
5. total enrollment within three levels of approximately equal numbers of students (i.e., 1,000–2,499; 2,500–9,999; > 10,000).

Using these criteria, the institutions of the entire nation were divided into homogeneous clusters. Clusters were sampled in proportion to enrollment. In the case of refusals by the original target, replacements were obtained from the same cluster. The process of obtaining institutional cooperation began by identifying the responsible individual in the central administration. Due to the nature of institutional decision-making and to the controversial subject matter of the study, the amount of time required to obtain a sample was extensive; some schools required 15 months to arrive at a decision. In all, 19 of the original 32 schools contacted agreed to participate. Of an additional 60 schools that were contacted, 13 agreed to participate. The institutions were guaranteed anonymity. A random-selection process, based on each institution's catalog of course offerings, was used to choose target classes and alternates. The only limitations on class selection were that classes under 30 students, and large lecture sections were eliminated. The questionnaire was administered in classroom settings by 1 of 8 postmaster's level psychology graduate students. The 32 institutions were divided by region among the 8-member team of survey administrators such that only 1 administrator went to each school. The 2 men and 6 women used a prepared script and were trained to handle potential untoward effects of participation. The anonymous questionnaire was accompanied by a cover sheet that contained all the elements of informed consent. The rate of refusal to complete the survey was negligible; only 91 persons (1.5%) did not wish to participate.

It might be argued that the resulting sample would be biased toward schools with a liberal administration. However, some schools with the most liberal reputations in the nation refused. The rationales given for nonparticipation by the 60 administrations included religious objections (11 schools); concerns about subject anonymity (2); concerns about sensationalization of the results (3); human subject concerns or human subject's disapproval (10); lack of interest (8); lack of administrative time (6); no research allowed in classes (6); doing their own survey (3); and no reasons (11).

Participants

The 3,187 female participants were characterized as follows: Mean age = 21.4 years; 85% single, 11% married, and 4% divorced; 86% white, 7% black, 3% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 1% Native American; 39% Catholic, 38% Protestant, 4% Jewish, and 20% other or none.

Variable Scoring and Data Reduction

Identification of sexual assault victims. Victims were defined by their responses on the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) (Koss & Gidycz, 1985; Koss & Oros, 1982). The SES is a 10-item self-report instrument which was designed to reflect various degrees of sexual victimization. The internal consistency for women is .74, and the test-retest agreement rate between administrations 1 week apart was 93% (Koss & Gidycz, 1985). The validity of the SES is evidenced by a comparison of victims' responses on the SES with their responses to an interviewer. It was found that the Pearson's correlation between a woman's level of victimization based on her responses to an interviewer and her responses to the SES was .73. Most important, however, is the finding that only 3% of women, whose responses on the SES indicated that they were rape victims, changed their responses during the interview. The following items are typical of the item content: "Have you had sex play (fondling, kissing, or petting) when you didn't want to because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.)?" "Have you had a man attempt sexual intercourse (get on top of you, attempt to insert his penis) when you didn't want to by threatening or using some degree of force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.)?" "Have you had sexual intercourse when you didn't want to because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.) to make you?" A woman was defined as a sexual assault victim if she answered "yes" to any item on the SES. Group sexual assault victims indicated that more than one man was involved in the assault and individual sexual assault victims indicated that only one man was involved.

The 44 women who were labeled group sexual assault victims represented 1.5% of the 3,187 respondents, and the 1,441 women who were individual sexual assault victims represented 45.2% of the respondents. In order to conduct comparisons with an equal number of participants in each group, 44 women were randomly selected from the individual sexual assault group, and their responses were compared to the 44 group sexual assault victims in all subsequent analyses. Twenty six (60%) of the group sexual assault victims indicated that they were assaulted by 2 men, and the remaining 18 (40%) group sexual assault victims indicated that they were assaulted by 3 or more men. Demographic comparisons between these two

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of group and individual sexual assault victims located among a national sample of college students

	Percentage "Yes"		χ^2	df	p
	Individual ^a	Group ^b			
Ethnicity					
White	93.2	84.1	4.20	3	.24
Black	2.3	11.4			
Hispanic	2.3	4.5			
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.3	0.0			
Family Income					
\$7,500	2.3	9.1	7.92	5	.16
\$7,501–\$15,000	9.3	11.4			
\$15,001–\$25,000	14.0	22.7			
\$25,001–\$35,000	18.6	18.2			
\$35,001–\$50,000	37.2	13.6			
\$50,001+	18.6	25.0			
Religion					
Catholic	41.9	54.5	2.03	3	.57
Protestant	37.2	34.1			
Other	16.3	9.1			
None	4.7	2.3			
Marital Status					
Single	77.3	65.9	1.73	3	.63
Married	11.4	15.9			
Divorced or separated	6.8	13.6			
Cohabiting	4.5	4.5			

^aMean age = 22.57 (*SD* = 5.92).

^bMean age = 24.77 (*SD* = 6.5).

groups revealed that individual and group sexual assault victims did not differ on current age, $t(86) = 1.66$, $p < .10$; ethnicity, $\chi^2(3, N = 88) = 4.20$, $p < .24$; family income, $\chi^2(5, N = 87) = 7.92$, $p < .16$; religion, $\chi^2(3, N = 87) = 2.03$, $p < .57$; or marital status, $\chi^2(3, N = 88) = 1.73$, $p < .63$. The demographic characteristics for the two groups are listed in Table 1.

Dependent variables. In the self-report questionnaire, respondents who had been sexually assaulted answered additional questions regarding their most severe sexual assault experience. Victims were told that their most severe sexual assault experience corresponded to the highest number to which they responded "yes" on the SES. Victims were then asked whether their most severe sexual assault experience involved 1 man, 2 men, or 3

or more men. They were then instructed to answer all the questions pertaining to the assault while thinking of their most severe sexual assault experience. Since victims were provided with an operational definition for their most severe sexual assault experience and also asked to indicate how many men were involved in their most severe assault, it was possible to ascertain that all victims in the group and individual sexual assault victim groups were answering questions about group and individual assaults, respectively. They were also asked to fill out standardized symptom measures. The dependent variables used in this present study were obtained from these responses; they were rationally grouped using the following six categories.

Victim perceptions. Women rated the clarity of their nonconsent, the man's aggressiveness, their resistance, the amount of responsibility they felt, the amount of responsibility they attributed to the perpetrator(s), and how scared, angry, and depressed they felt at the time of the incident. Each item was rated on a (1) *not at all* to (5) *very much* scale. The alpha internal consistency reliability of these items was .71.

Offender aggression. Respondents indicated the forms of coercion the offender used, including holding the victim down or twisting her arm; hitting or slapping; choking or beating; and displaying a weapon. They also indicated whether the offender(s) was drinking, using drugs, or both, and how many times the assault occurred. Finally, based on their responses to items on the SES, victims were classified into one of four levels of sexual victimization. Women who were labeled sexual contact victims indicated that they had experienced sexual impositions such as fondling or kissing without attempts at penetration subsequent to the use of menacing verbal pressure, misuse of authority, threats of physical harm, or actual physical force. Sexual coercion victims included women who had experienced sexual intercourse subsequent to the use of menacing verbal pressure or the misuse of the offender's authority; no threats of force or direct physical force were used. Attempted rape victims included women who had an experience where a man/men attempted to force penetration, but intercourse did not occur, and, finally, rape victims included women who had an experience where the offender(s) had forced sexual intercourse.

Victim/offender acquaintance. Women indicated their relationship to the offender(s). If more than one man was involved, they were asked to indicate their relationship to the oldest man. Response options included stranger, nonromantic acquaintance such as a friend or neighbor, casual or first date, romantic acquaintance, husband, or relative. They were also asked to indicate how long ago the assault occurred (ranging from *less than 3 months ago* to *over 5 years ago*), and the extent of prior sexual involvement with the offender(s) (ranging from *none at all* to *sexual intercourse*). Finally, the victims were asked to describe the social situation involving the

assault. Response options included a party, a group date, an individual date, a spontaneous date (i.e., met at bar), or none.

Victim resistance. Victims indicated whether or not they used each of the following strategies: screamed for help; ran away; physically struggled; pushed him away, or hit; turned cold; reasoned, pleaded, quarreled, or told him to stop; and sobbed or cried.

Impact. Women indicated whether or not they discussed the experience with anyone, reported it to the police, used a rape crisis center, considered suicide after the experience, or sought counseling after the assault. Finally, only the victims who had an experience which met the legal definition of rape indicated their label for the experience from among four choices: *did not feel victimized*, *felt I was a victim of serious miscommunication*, *felt I was a victim of a crime but not rape*, and *felt I was a rape victim*.

Symptoms. To assess anxiety and depression, two frequently cited after-effects of a sexual assault experience (e.g., Atkeson, Calhoun, Resick, & Ellis, 1982; Kilpatrick, Resick & Veronen, 1981) — the Trait Anxiety Inventory (TAI; Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1970) and the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock, & Erbaugh, 1961) — were used. The BDI consists of 21 items which reflect symptoms and attitudes of depression. This standardized instrument has been found to be very reliable across a wide range of samples (Beck et al., 1961). Cronbach's alpha for the present sample was .88. The TAI consists of 20 items, and respondents indicated on a 4-point scale — ranging from (1) *almost never* to (4) *almost always* — the extent to which each question reflected how they generally feel. Spielberger et al. (1970) provided internal consistency reliability estimates for males and females, which ranged from .86 to .92. This test also evidenced adequate internal consistency and test-retest reliability for undergraduate students (Spielberger et al., 1970). Cronbach's alpha for this sample was .93. The alpha reliabilities for the BDI and the TAI found in this sample are comparable to those reported by other researchers.

RESULTS

Individual and Group Sexual Assault Victims Compared

Victim perceptions. The eight items which measured victims' perceptions were analyzed by multivariate analyses of variance. The groups differed significantly on these eight items, $F(8, 71) = 2.81, p < .01$ (Pillai's criterion). Post hoc univariate comparisons indicated that group sexual assault victims compared with individual sexual assault victims described the man/men as being more aggressive, $F(1, 78) = 4.38, p < .05$, and themselves as being more afraid during the assault, $F(1, 78) = 14.81, p <$

Table 2
Post hoc univariate comparisons of perceptions between victims
of individual and group sexual assault

Variable	Individual		Group		Univariate ^a		Multivariate ^b	
	M	SD	M	SD	F	p	F	p
Victim Perceptions								
Offender aggression	3.23	1.24	3.80	1.21	4.38	.05	2.81	.01
Clarity of nonconsent	3.79	1.32	3.85	1.46	.03	.85		
Feel responsible	2.79	1.36	3.17	1.43	1.45	.23		
Resistiveness	3.33	1.24	3.68	1.33	1.47	.23		
Man/Men responsible	3.95	.94	3.90	1.44	.03	.87		
Felt scared	2.95	1.52	4.15	1.26	14.81	.0001		
Felt angry	3.31	1.42	3.83	1.50	2.55	.11		
Felt depressed	3.38	1.44	3.68	1.56	.79	.38		

Note: All times were scored on a (1) *not at all* to (5) *very much* scale.

^adf = 1, N = 79.

^bdf = 8, N = 71.

.0001. The two groups did not differ on their ratings of how clear they made it to the man/men that they did not want sex, how much responsibility they felt for the assault, how much they felt they resisted, how responsible they felt the man/men was for what happened, and how angry and depressed they were during the assault. Both groups of victims felt that they had made it "quite clear" that they did not want sex, and they felt that the man/men were quite responsible for the assault. Further, both groups felt somewhat angry, depressed, and responsible for the assault, and both groups indicated that they had exhibited a moderate amount of resistance. The group means and the standard deviations on the victim perception items, multivariate, and univariate statistics are presented in Table 2.

Offender aggression. The offender aggression items were analyzed by chi-square analyses and standardized residuals when there were more than 2 response options calculated. Standardized residuals are a measure of the differences between observed and expected cell frequencies divided by the square root of the expected value. A standardized residual greater than +1.7 or -1.7 was considered to be significant. The results revealed that a significant relationship existed between victim group and the offender's use of threats of physical force, $\chi^2(1, N = 88) = 6.71, p < .01$; twisting the victim's arm or holding her down, $\chi^2(1, N = 88) = 7.83, p < .01$; hitting and slapping, $\chi^2(1, N = 88) = 4.73, p < .05$; and the use of a weapon, $\chi^2(1, N = 88) = 4.45, p < .05$. Group offenders were more likely than expected to threaten physical force, to twist the victim's arm or

hold her down, to hit and slap the victim, and to have used a weapon. Conversely, individual offenders were less likely than expected to use these measures of force. The offender(s) use of choking or beating, however, was not related to group membership.

There was also an association between group membership and the sexual victimization level, $\chi^2 (3, N = 88) = 12.55, p < .01$. Compared with the expected values, the signs of the standardized residuals suggests that individual sexual assaults were more likely to involve less severe levels of victimization such as sexual coercion, and group sexual assaults were less likely than expected to involve less severe levels of sexual victimization such as sexual coercion experiences. Specifically, 7% of the group assault victims were sexual coercion victims, compared with 30% of the individual sexual assault victims. A further association was found between group membership and the number of incidents, $\chi^2 (4, N = 86) = 14.29, p < .01$. Compared with what was expected, group sexual assaults were less likely to have occurred more than one time and more likely than expected to have occurred only once. For example, 23% of the individual sexual assaults occurred twice, while only 2% of the group sexual assaults occurred twice.

There was no significant relationship found between either victim or offender use of alcohol or drugs during the assault. The results of the chi-square analyses are found in Table 3.

Victim/offender relationship. Chi-square analyses revealed that the victim/offender relationship variable was significantly related to group membership, $\chi^2 (5, N = 88) = 44.95, p < .0001$. Group sexual assault victims (39%) were more likely than expected to be assaulted by strangers, while individual sexual assault victims (2%) were less likely than expected to be assaulted by strangers. It is further noteworthy that a substantial number of group sexual assault victims (39%) were assaulted by relatives. Individual sexual assault victims (61%), however, were more likely than expected to be assaulted while on a casual or first date, and group sexual assault victims (4%) were less likely than expected to be assaulted while on a casual or first date. There was also an association between victim prior involvement with the offender and group membership, $\chi^2 (4, N = 87) = 19.32, p < .01$. Compared with the expected value, group sexual assault victims were more likely to have had no prior involvement with the offenders, while individual sexual assault victims were less likely than expected to have had no prior involvement with the offender. For example, approximately 60% of the group sexual assault victims indicated that they had *no* prior involvement with the offenders, compared with 16% of the individual sexual assault victims.

Finally, there was a significant relationship between the social situation and group membership, $\chi^2 (4, N = 87) = 17.81, p < .01$, and between group membership and the length of time which had passed since the assault, $\chi^2 (5, N = 86) = 20.64, p < .001$. Group sexual assaults (7%)

Table 3

Chi-square analysis of differences in sexual assault experiences between group and individual sexual assault victims

Variable	Percentage "Yes"		χ^2	df	p
	Individual	Group			
Offender Aggression					
Threats of physical force	9.1	34.1	6.71	1	.01
Twisting, holding	27.3	59.1	7.83	1	.01
Hitting, slapping	4.5	22.7	4.73	1	.05
Weapon	2.3	18.2	4.45	1	.05
Choking, beating	4.5	18.2	2.82	1	.10
Sexual Victimization Level					
Sexual contact	15.9	9.1	12.55	3	.01
Sexual coercion	29.5*	6.8*			
Attempted rape	29.5	27.3			
Rape	25.0	56.8			
Number of Incidents					
1	43.2	78.6	14.29	4	.01
2	22.7*	2.4*			
3	11.4	7.1			
4	4.5	0.0			
5+	18.2	11.9			
Man Using Intoxicants					
None or don't know	54.8	30.9	7.75	3	.10
Alcohol	33.3	42.9			
Other drug	0.0	4.8			
Both	11.9	21.4			
Woman Using Intoxicants					
None or don't know	66.7	46.7	4.22	3	.24
Alcohol	26.2	34.9			
Other drug	2.4	7.0			
Both	4.8	11.6			
Relationship					
Stranger	2.3*	38.6*	44.95	5	.0001
Relative	18.2	38.6			
Casual or first date	61.4*	4.5*			
Romantic acquaintance	9.1	0.0			
Nonromantic acquaintance	6.8	9.1			
Spouse	2.3	9.1			
Prior Intimacy with Offender					
None	15.9*	60.5*	19.32	4	.01
Kissing	18.2	4.7			
Petting	15.9	9.3			
Attempted intercourse	6.8	2.3			
Intercourse	43.2	23.3			

(continued)

*Standardized residuals $\geq +1.7$ or -1.7 .

Table 3 (continued)

Variable	Percentage "Yes"		χ^2	df	p
	Individual	Group			
Social Situation					
Party	9.1	23.3	17.81	4	.01
A group date	6.8	2.3			
An individual date	40.9*	7.0*			
A spontaneous date	9.1	25.6			
None	34.1	41.9			
Length of Time since Assault					
Less than 3 months	20.5	9.5	20.64	5	.001
3-6 months	4.5	0.0			
6 months-1 year	15.9	4.8			
1-2 years	25.0	9.5			
3-5 years	25.0	28.6			
Over 5 years	9.1*	47.6*			
Resistance Strategies					
Crying, sobbing	11.4	38.6	7.33	1	.01
Running away	4.5	29.5	8.04	1	.01
Pushing, hitting	31.8	59.1	5.54	1	.05
Turning cold	65.9	38.6	5.51	1	.05
Reasoning, pleading	59.1	68.2	0.44	1	.51
Screaming for help	6.8	22.7	3.25	1	.07
Impact					
Sought crisis services	0.0	19.0	6.77	1	.01
Reported to police	0.0	16.7	5.61	1	.05
Considered suicide	20.9	43.9	4.08	1	.05
Had therapy	19.5	54.8	9.56	1	.01

were less likely than expected to have occurred on an individual date, while individual sexual assaults (41%) were more likely than expected to have occurred on an individual date. It is important to note, however, that the most frequent response for the group sexual assault victims was "none"; that is, 42% of the group sexual assault victims indicated that none of the response options listed accurately described the social situation surrounding their assaults. It is further noteworthy that the group sexual assaults (48%) were more likely than expected to have occurred over 5 years before the time of assessment, and individual sexual assaults (9%) were less likely than expected to have occurred over 5 years before the time of assessment. The results of the chi-square analyses are found in Table 3.

Victim resistance. A significant association existed between victim group and the victim's use of crying and sobbing, $\chi^2 (1, N = 88) = 7.33$,

$p < .01$, running away, $\chi^2 (1, N = 88) = 8.04, p < .01$, and pushing or hitting, $\chi^2 (1, N = 88) = 5.54, p < .05$, as resistive strategies. Group sexual assault victims were more likely than expected to use crying or sobbing, running away, and pushing or hitting, and individual sexual assault victims were less likely than expected to use these resistive strategies. For example, approximately 39% of the group sexual assault victims, compared with 11% of the individual sexual assault victims, used crying or sobbing. Further, 30% of the group sexual assault victims used running away, and 59% of them attempted to push or hit the offender. Comparatively, only 4% of the individual sexual assault victims attempted to run away, and 32% of them attempted to push or hit. Further, there was an association between group membership and turning cold in response to the offender(s) aggression, $\chi^2 (1, N = 88) = 5.51, p < .05$. Group sexual assault victims (39%) were less likely than expected to turn cold, and individual sexual assault victims (66%) were more likely than expected to turn cold in response to the offender(s) aggression. There were no significant associations found between group membership and the victim's use of reasoning or pleading and screaming for help as resistance strategies. The results of the chi-square analyses are found in Table 3.

Impact. Chi-square analyses revealed that there was a significant association between group membership and a victim's seeking of crisis services, $\chi^2 (1, N = 84) = 6.77, p < .01$, and her reporting the assault to the police, $\chi^2 (1, N = 84) = 5.61, p < .05$. Compared to the expected values, group sexual assault victims were more likely to seek crisis services and report the assault to the police, while individual sexual assault victims were less likely than expected to seek crisis services or report the assault to the police. While none of the individual sexual assault victims sought crisis services or reported the assault to the police, 19% of the group sexual assault victims sought crisis services, and 17% of them reported the experience to the police. There was also a significant relationship between group membership and seeking therapy, $\chi^2 (1, N = 83) = 9.56, p < .01$, and the consideration of suicide to the point of considering a method after the assault, $\chi^2 (1, N = 84) = 4.08, p < .05$. Compared to the expected values, group sexual assault victims were more likely to have considered suicide and to have sought therapy after the assault, while individual sexual assault victims were less likely than expected to have considered suicide or to have sought therapy. For example, while only 21% of the individual sexual assault victims considered suicide and 20% of them sought therapy, 44% of the group sexual assault victims considered suicide, and 55% of them sought therapy after the assault. The results of these chi-square analyses are found in Table 3.

A final chi-square analysis was conducted with only rape victims in order to assess what proportion of individual and group sexual assault victims who were actually raped conceptualized their experience as rape.

Table 4
Chi-square analysis of differences in the label for the assault experience between group and individual rape victims

Variable	Percentage "Yes"		χ^2	df	p
	Individual ^a	Group ^b			
Label for the Experience					
Don't feel victimized	10	8.3	.80	3	.85
Miscommunication	40	33.3			
Crime, not rape	10	4.2			
Rape	40	54.2			

^a_n = 10.

^b_n = 24.

These results revealed that individual and group rape victims did not significantly differ in their conceptualization of the experience. It is noteworthy, however, that only 40% of the individual rape victims and 54% of the group rape victims actually indicated that their experience was "definitely rape." The results of these analyses are summarized in Table 4.

Symptoms. A MANOVA conducted with the TAI and the BDI as the dependent variables revealed that the groups did not differ in the psychological symptoms they were currently experiencing, $F(2, 82) = .29$ $p < .75$ (Pillai's criterion).¹ The means on the TAI for the group sexual assault victims and the individual sexual assault victims were 43.83 ($SD = 13.03$) and 42.69 ($SD = 11.97$), respectively; the means on the BDI were 11.08 ($SD = 9.42$) and 10.90 ($SD = 10.03$), respectively. Univariate comparisons were not conducted in the absence of multivariate significance. Although the two victim groups did not differ in levels of symptomatology, both groups' scores were elevated compared to the nonvictimized women in the sample. For example, the victims had BDI scores that were approximately 1 standard deviation above the mean of the nonvictimized women ($M = 5.47$, $SD = 6.05$). Scores on the TAI for the victim groups were also approximately 1 standard deviation above the mean of the nonvictimized women ($M = 37.89$, $SD = 9.47$).

DISCUSSION

The popular notion that the amount of aggression in group sexual assaults may increase as each man takes his turn (e.g., Warshaw, 1988) was supported by the findings. Group sexual assault victims indicated that they were more frightened during the assault, and they described the man/men as more aggressive than individual sexual assault victims. Group sexual

assault victims were more likely to indicate that the offenders utilized severe forms of coercion such as hitting or slapping or the use of a weapon. Thus, it may be true that men acting collectively in groups will engage in activities that they would not commit when alone.

In response to these aggressive assaults, group sexual assault victims were more likely to use running away, pushing or hitting, and crying and sobbing as resistance strategies. Although past research with individual rape victims has indicated that running away is one of the most effective strategies for avoiding assault (Levine-MacCombie & Koss, 1986), the results of this study suggest that with group sexual assault, running away may not be the most effective strategy. Although group sexual assault victims were more likely than individual rape victims to utilize running away as a resistance strategy, they were also more likely to be raped. Because group sexual assault victims are clearly "outnumbered," attempting to run away may not be as likely to work. However, future research is needed which compares women who have avoided group sexual assaults to those women who were unable to avoid the group assaults in order to further substantiate these results.

The popular notion that group rape is synonymous with "party rape" (e.g., Erhart & Sandler, 1985) was only partially supported in this study. Group sexual assaults were slightly more likely than individual sexual assaults to occur at a party. Specifically, 24% of the group sexual assaults occurred at a party, whereas only 9% of the individual sexual assaults occurred at a party. But many group sexual assault victims (45%) indicated that the social situation involved something "other" than the response options which were provided. This finding is contrary to media depictions where almost all of the assaults take place at parties.

Another popular notion of group sexual assaults is that they are likely to be perpetrated by either casual or romantic acquaintances at parties. In this sample 39% of the group assaults were perpetrated by relatives (compared with 18% of the individual sexual assaults), and 39% of the group assaults were perpetrated by strangers (compared with 2% of the individual sexual assaults). Further, while individual sexual assaults were more likely to have occurred between 3 months to 2 years prior to the time of assessment, surprisingly, a number of group sexual assaults occurred 5 years or longer before the time of assessment. Since the average age of the individual sexual assault victims was 22 years, it is likely that the majority of these assaults took place during the college years. Although the group sexual assault victims were slightly older (mean age 24.77 years) than the individual sexual assault victims, it is possible that some of these group sexual assaults may have occurred during the teenage years. Ageton (1983) for example, found in her analysis of 172 separate assaults reported by adolescents that 12 of them were group assaults. Future research must further explore whether a substantial number of group sexual assaults actually occur during adolescence. It is possible, given that some of the

group sexual assaults may have taken place during the teenage years and were perpetrated by relatives and strangers, that the women indicated that the social situation was "none" of the response options because the assault may have taken place in their own homes, while visiting relatives, or unexpectedly in unfamiliar environments. Future research should address the situational characteristics of group sexual assaults among younger victims and explore those assaults that occur among relatives. This finding that a number of relatives are perpetrators in group sexual assaults deviates substantially from the cases of reported group sexual assaults. Although group and individual sexual assaults did not differ with respect to either offender or victim use of alcohol or drugs, a substantial number of victims and offenders in both groups were drinking and/or using drugs.

The results of this study further suggest that group sexual assault victims may be particularly impacted by sexual assault. Group sexual assault victims were twice as likely as individual sexual victims to have experienced suicidal ideation after the assault. Although very few group sexual assault victims reported the assault to a crisis service or to the police, or sought therapy, they were more likely to do so than were individual sexual assault victims. Davis and Friedman (1985) suggested that talking about a crime experience is the single most therapeutic behavior engaged in by crime victims. It still remains to be seen if this suggestion is generalizable to group sexual assault victims. Some researchers (Roze-Koker & Polk, 1986), for example, suggested that group sexual assault victims are less likely to receive support from others than individual sexual assault victims. Finally, although individual and group *rape* victims did not differ in their label for the assault, it is noteworthy that approximately half of the women in both groups did not conceptualize their experience as rape. Research with individual sexual assault victims has found that a woman's conceptualization of the rape is correlated with her level of acquaintance with the offender; that is, the rape victim who does not conceptualize her experience as rape is likely to have been victimized in the context of a close personal relationship (Koss, 1985). Further research is needed with group rape victims in order to assess how a victim's conceptualization of the group rape may be related to important assault variables and postassault behaviors.

The following cautions and limitations must be raised in regard to the results of the present study. First, the respondents were all functional college women. It is possible that those women who had the most damaging sexual assault experiences may not have ever attended college. The impact of sexual assault may be so devastating that many victims may drop out of school. Thus, the mild levels of depression and anxiety found in this investigation may represent the least disrupted lives. These results, therefore, should not be generalized beyond a college student population. An additional limitation is the use of a retrospective design. However, due to the salience of the victimization experience coupled with the relatively young

age of the victims, it is quite likely that a significant amount of memory decay had not occurred. This investigation was an initial attempt to investigate a previously neglected topic. It is believed that the results offer some important descriptive characteristics of group sexual assaults that need to be further assessed in subsequent research.

These results suggest that group sexual assault victims differ in some important respects from individual sexual assault victims as well as from stereotypes about group rape. Because group sexual assault victims seem to be at a greater risk for suicidal ideation than individual sexual assault victims, a higher priority towards research on group rape phenomena is needed.

NOTE

1. A multivariate analysis of covariance was also conducted with the individual and group sexual assault victims, utilizing the BDI and the TAI as the dependent variables and the length of time which has passed since the assault as the covariate. This analysis was also nonsignificant, $F(2, 80) = .72, p < .49$ (Pillai's criterion).

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