

This is a preprint version of this paper:

Tutenges, S., Sandberg, S. & Pedersen, W. (2019). "Sexually violent effervescence: Understanding sexual assault among youth." *Sexualities*. In press.

Sexually violent effervescence: Understanding sexual assault among youth

Introduction

Young people across the world spend a significant proportion of their leisure time in festive settings, such as bars, festivals and private parties. They do so for a variety of reasons, ranging from the immediate aims of listening to music, dancing and having fun with friends to the long-term aims of finding a partner, constructing an identity and collecting good memories (Grazian, 2008; Vander Ven, 2011). Part of the draw of such settings is that they are emotionally uplifting and enable playful transgressions that would be disapproved of or prohibited in other contexts, such as school, work and family life. Festive settings contain myriad cues indicating the types of transgression that partygoers are permitted and expected to perform. For example, underground dance parties often feature religious symbols, experimental art and loud music that encourage sustained dancing, theatrical playfulness and psychedelic experiences (St. John, 2004), whereas pubs and bars typically prioritise advertisements, décor and music that promote drinking, boisterousness and carnivalesque performances (Hadfield, 2006). Many young people value the energised permissiveness of festive settings because it helps them overcome inhibitions and explore new avenues for self-expression and connection (Redmon, 2003).

Festive events are generally associated with pleasure, but they are also volatile and may cause harm (Malbon, 1999). Many types of festivity (e.g. dance parties and private parties) involve the consumption of alcohol and other drugs, and are linked to an increased risk of accidents, fights and sexual assault (Bonomo et al., 2001; Wells and Graham, 2003). It is mostly men who commit sexual assaults against women; however, women may also commit sexual assaults—against women or men, children or adults (Wijkman et al., 2010). Approximately half of all sexual assaults involve the victim, attacker or both having consumed alcohol prior to the assault (Lorenz and Ullman, 2016), and the risk of victimisation seems to increase with the level of Blood Alcohol Concentration (Neal and Fromme, 2007). Moreover, the consumption of alcohol by victims is associated more often with completed rape than attempted rape (Ullman and Brecklin, 2000). In a large survey study conducted in the UK, one in ten women and one in 71 men reported having experienced completed non-volitional sex at least once since the age of 13 (Macdowall et al., 2013). However, there is much to suggest that the rates of sexual assaults are underestimated due to a widespread unwillingness to report assaults to the police, researchers or other public agents. Men in particular may be reluctant to report their sexual victimisation because of widespread stereotypes that men are strong and able to defend themselves, and that only the weak become victimised (Felson and Paré, 2005; Sable et al., 2006; Turchik and Edwards, 2012).

This paper is about young women and men from Norway who have been sexually assaulted in the context of festive events at bars, nightclubs, festivals, private parties, drinking streets and parks at night. We examine how these young partygoers experienced the interactions that immediately preceded and formed their sexual victimization, and we also discuss the mechanisms that prevented them from reporting their victimisation to the authorities. Drawing on Durkheim and neo-Durkheimian theory (Collins, 2004; Collins, 2013; Durkheim, 1995; Mellor and Shilling, 1997; Olaveson, 2004), we propose that the concept of

‘sexually violent effervescence’ may be helpful for understanding sexual assaults among young partygoers because they tend to emerge out of what the Durkheimians call ‘tumultuous’, ‘ambivalent’ and essentially ‘intoxicated’ interactions, which, on the victim side, involve a sense of being caught up in a destructive flow of events that robs them of agency and self-control and leaves them harmed and confused.

Sexual assault: The Nordic context

Sexual explorations and experiences constitute an important and highly valued part of coming of age. The past decade has seen a growing acceptance of the sexual experiences of adolescents and young adults, including when these experiences take place outside of stable relationships (xxxx 2017; Scott, 1998). Young people’s sexual experiences are often regarded as a positive aspect of psychosocial development (Tolman and McClelland, 2011). Studies from Norway suggest that most young people will have several sexual partners before settling down in a stable relationship, and that women have same-sex sexual experiences more often than men (XXXX 2008). In sexual relationships, women seem to profit from both traditionally feminine and masculine gender roles, while men are still restricted by somewhat less flexible gender roles (XXXX 2003). Hence, what has been termed ‘The Nordic pattern’, where females display sexual agency more and from an earlier age than women in many other countries (Kraft, 1991), has prevailed, arguably reflecting a high level of gender equality in Norway.

At the same time, traditional sexual double standards also persist in Norway: women may be judged much more negatively than men for engaging in the exact same sexual behaviours, such as casual sex or group sex. Moreover, Norwegian women do not seem to be any less exposed to emotional and sexual abuse than women in other Northern European countries (Lukasse et al., 2014). In a study conducted in Norway, lifetime sexual abuse in females was estimated at around 12% (Sorbo et al., 2013). A study of teenage girls from

Norway reported that 7% of those who had been intoxicated the previous year had experienced ‘incapacitated sexual assault’, and frequency of intoxication as well as measures of alcohol-induced blackout and alcohol-related motor impairment were positively associated with such experiences (Pape, 2014). Another recent study suggests that ‘party-related assaults’ have increased to represent 48% of reported sexual assaults in Norway (KRIPOS, 2015).

Collective effervescence gone awry

This paper draws on Durkheimian and neo-Durkheimian theory of collective effervescence to analyse sexual assaults that take place in the context of festive events. The notion of collective effervescence is key to Durkheim’s sociology (Durkheim, 1984; Durkheim, 1995) and may be defined as a ‘condition of heightened intersubjectivity’ (Collins, 2004: 35), which is characterised by an intense and indelible sense of unity and antinomianism (Pickering, 2009; Olaveson, 2004). This condition is collective, in the sense that it is communally produced and to some degree communally experienced. Collective effervescence requires the bodily co-presence of at least two individuals, but it typically emerges in situations where large multitudes are thronged together and collaborate in building up high levels of excitement (Wellman et al., 2014). When it peaks, this excitement involves a sense of being overtaken by a supra-individual force with its own will and agenda. It is hard to resist, and tends to be pleasurable, but sometimes perversely and uncontrollably pleasurable (Bataille, 1989).

The effects of collective effervescence are often beneficial both for the individual and wider society (Maffesoli, 1993). It is a form of ‘hyperexcitement’, ‘frenzy’ and ‘delirium’ (Durkheim, 1995) that makes 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. The long-term outcome of the experience is typically an increase in

emotional energy, social solidarity and moral agreement. However, collective effervescence is a volatile condition that can go dangerously awry. It can lead to ‘acts of superhuman heroism’ as well as ‘bloody barbarism’ (Durkheim, 1995: 213).

Durkheim gives several examples of effervescent events, including the Australian corroborees, the French Revolution and the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre (Durkheim, 1995). However, states of effervescence may also be much briefer and smaller in scale, such as when people have sex. Sex may be viewed as a form of effervescent interaction because it involves the bodily co-presence of at least two persons, a shared focus of attention, the rhythmic build-up of emotional energy, and the production of moral commitment and solidarity between the sexual partners (Mellor and Shilling, 1997; Collins, 2004: 223-257). As for sexual assault, this is a form of interaction that also involves the co-presence of at least two persons; one may assume, moreover, that sexual assault typically involves a shared focus of attention (on the ongoing violence) and emotional arousal (e.g. lust, aggression and fear). However, at least on the victim side, the elements of moral commitment and solidarity are absent, and the consequences are overwhelmingly harmful (Marshall et al., 1990; Thompson, 2000; Young and Maguire, 2003).

Durkheim and his followers generally use the term ‘collective effervescence’ in a very broad sense, without specifying how it varies across types of human assembly (see, however, Pickering, 2009; Mellor and Shilling, 2014). The theory of collective effervescence is therefore in need of further elaboration, and one of the important tasks that remain is to build ‘some kind of internal classification of types of collective effervescence’ (Pickering, 2008: 451). For this reason, we advance the concept of sexually violent effervescence, which we consider an important subtype of Durkheimian collective effervescence. This concept is meant as a ‘sensitizing’ tool (Blumer, 1986) for studying the highly complex, diverse and processual ways in which young victims experience sexual assault in the context of festive

events. Essentially, this is an experience of altered consciousness that involves a sense of being overpowered, losing control and being sexually abused.

Methods

This paper is based on in-depth interviews with 104 young people from Norway. The mean age of the participants was 25 years, and 50% of them were women. The participants were not recruited to represent a group of problem drinkers, sexual offenders or victims. Rather, they were selected to represent a group of ordinary, young partygoers who go out frequently and who have had experiences with binge drinking. Therefore, the sample sheds light on how ordinary Norwegian youths experience situations of sexual assault.

The participants were recruited and interviewed by three female and four male research assistants, all in their mid-to-late 20s, and all trained sociologists from the University of Oslo. The assistants used snowball-sampling techniques to recruit participants from diverse social networks throughout the country. As such, the sample reflects the normal population of young partygoers more accurately than samples recruited via the police, hospitals and treatment centres. The educational level of the participants was slightly above the national average for Norwegian youths in their age group. One in five of the participants lived in Oslo, the Norwegian capital; most of the rest lived in other parts of Eastern Norway and a minority in Western or Northern Norway. The interviews were conducted by the same researchers who recruited the sample, based on a semi-structured interview guide and after a period of training led by two of the authors. The interviews lasted between 90 and 120 minutes, and included questions about the contexts of alcohol consumption, experiences of intoxication, experiences of flirtation and 'hooking up', and episodes of unwanted sexual experiences. The interview style was informal, inviting and conversational. The interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed and coded using the program HyperRESEARCH.

The notion of ‘sexual assault’ is based on subjective judgments and is highly contested (Malinen, 2014). Our definition of ‘sexual assault’ is therefore broad, and covers acts of taking sexualised pictures or videos of individuals against their will or without their consent, as well as ‘the full range of forced sexual acts including physically forced kissing or touching, verbally coerced sexual intercourse, and physically forced vaginal, oral, and anal penetration’ (Abbey et al., 2004). As a first step in our analysis, we identified all sections in our interview transcripts that represented instances of sexual assault or near-sexual assault. We then analysed all of these sections, paying particular attention to: 1) the interactional dynamics that led up to and constituted these assaults or near-assaults and 2) the rationales given for and against reporting the assaults to third parties, including the health care system and police.

Sexual assaults that occur in relation to festive events

In the following, we examine how the participants described the interactions that immediately preceded and constituted their sexual victimisation. These descriptions were generally marked by much confusion, often on several levels: in relation to what happened, why it happened, what the consequences were, and whom to blame for it. In spite of this confusion, a set of experiential characteristics stood out in the victims’ accounts. First, the assaults were described as having been shaped or caused by an altered state of consciousness, most commonly alcohol-induced intoxication. Second, the assaults involved a sense of losing control. Third, the assaults were described as antagonistic, where those involved acted at cross-purposes, with the attackers using force to take sexual advantage of the victims. These three characteristics are part and parcel of the same type of sexually antagonistic experience,

or what we call sexually violent effervescence. However, for the sake of clarity, we discuss them under separate headings.

Altered state of consciousness

Nearly all of the victims we interviewed emphasised that they and/or the attacker were in an altered state of consciousness as the sexual assault took place. This state was primarily associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs, but it was also linked with the powerful, sometimes frenzied, rush of being in a potentially harmful conflict with one or several opponents. Experiences of cognitive and perceptual distortions were common before and during the assaults, as were impressions of being disconnected from oneself and the ordinary world. Several interviewees claimed that, had they and/or the attacker been clear-minded and sober, the assaults would never have taken place.

Karen described herself as a woman with a penchant for experimentation and new experiences. Normally, her experimentations went well and brought her what she wanted: some fun and a tick on the list of exciting things to try out. However, she described one occasion when things went wrong, allegedly because she was too drunk. It happened while she was on a vacation with a female friend in Southern Europe. They were out drinking as their vacation was coming to an end, and met two men who invited them home. Karen found the men physically unappealing and unkind, but on the other hand she wanted something fun and memorable to happen, so as to get, 'like a buddy story, right? To bring back home'. The two women decided to go home with the men, and, once there, one bad thing quickly led to another:

Karen: I was pretty drunk. I don't think I would have done it if I had been less drunk, simple as that. And I remember that I regretted it a lot the following day.

Interviewer: So both of you had sex?

Karen: Yes, all of us.

Interviewer. Like a foursome?

Karen: Yes. It ended up being like this other person who was living with them, he was suddenly standing there holding a camera. It was a total crisis!

Interviewer: Seriously?

Karen: Yes. I was so drunk that I hadn't noticed it until it was too late.

At the beginning of the evening, Karen and her friend were drinking, having fun and meeting new people, precisely as they had planned. However, they became too drunk, and this made them ignore the warning signs and accept the men's invitation, after which things rapidly spiralled out of control. They had sex with two men they disliked, and then a third man entered the room to film the act without asking permission. The women no longer had any say in what was happening; they were reduced to pawns in the men's game.

These dynamics are common in sexual assaults, as described by the participants. An initial experience of pleasurable effervescence slips into an experience of sexually violent effervescence, leaving one or more of those involved in a condition of being subjugated, harmed, and with no perceived way of escape. These are intoxicated interactions gone awry, where mutual consent and elation are replaced by coercion and abuse. We do not know how the men experienced the situation, and can only assume that they were caught up in a mood of perverse pleasure and excitement; for Karen, however, it was 'a total crisis'.

In our study, the majority of those who described having been sexually assaulted were women. However, there were also several men who had been victimised, typically in

situations where they were impaired or incapacitated by alcohol. We were told about incidents where men, after having passed out, had had their clothes removed, objects inserted into their anus, female breasts put into their face, and humiliating photos taken of them. One participant, Thomas, described an incident that took place in his late teens:

I was getting wasted at a party. I think it was Halloween. Then there was a woman [...] I was hanging out with her most of the night. I thought it was like, cool. But then I got so damn drunk, so I don't actually remember how—I remember that we left the place, and she was all over me, and what I clearly remember is waking up to her fucking me, like, and the first thought that came to me was simply, “OK, this is how it is”. Afterwards, I came to think that it was, like, a bit too much [...] had I been a girl, it would have been over the line, wouldn't it?

Thomas explained that this incident left him ‘damned paranoid’ that he might have contracted AIDS; but he also referred to the episode as ‘fun’ and only hesitantly condemned the woman’s actions. He repeatedly said that he had been ‘drunk’, ‘blind drunk’ and so forth, and that he had spent several hours partying with the woman before she forced herself upon him. Their interactions were initially consented, reciprocal and uplifting but then switched into the sexually violent variant of effervescence as Thomas became too drunk and had sex against his will. As he woke up from his drunken sleep, he realized what was happening but did not ask the woman to stop. This may be interpreted as a deliberate strategy to avoid an open conflict and further embarrassment; it may be an attempt to zone out, opt out and let things take their course; and/or it may be an expression of Thomas’ drunken inability to fully understand and respond to a situation that he had never been in before. Even years after, Thomas was still

deeply confused over what had happened. He fluctuated in his evaluation of the incident, of the woman and of his own actions and emotions that night.

The problem with alcohol and other drugs, according to many participants, is that they destabilise the body and mind, something which may impede adequate responses to emerging threats. Collective effervescence is by definition tumultuous (Durkheim, 1995: 216-218), and alcohol- and drug-fuelled effervescence even more so. So when young people are sexually assaulted in festive contexts of drinking and drug use, their reactions are often confused, erratic and contrary to their ordinary ways of experiencing the world and relating to other people (Young and Maguire, 2003). They may find themselves sensing as they have never sensed before, tolerating what they would normally never tolerate, and making decisions that they later consider to be disastrously wrong. It is in this manner that the participants framed their sexual victimisation as being brought on and driven by their own, and in some cases also the attacker's, altered state of consciousness.

Loss of control

Many participants placed the sexual assault that they had been through in the context of their early youth, a time when they were having their first experiences with sex, alcohol and, for some, illegal drugs. They typically portrayed this as a particularly lively and careless period in their lives, where they would throw themselves into various risky situations out of curiosity and for 'fun', but without necessarily knowing how to assess and handle these situations. For the most part, the resulting experiences were enjoyable. They met new people, had pleasurable sex and so forth. On rare occasions, however, the risky situations spiralled out of

control and led to the essentially tragic experiences of being robbed of agency, of autonomy and of influence over their own fate.

Kenneth described an incident that took place when he was in his late teens. He was at a party with some friends, and they met two women older than them and who they had not seen before. One of the women made sexual advances to Kenneth. 'I wasn't interested, but she kept messing with me, touching my penis a whole lot, unzipping my pants in front of all the others'. This happened on a sofa in front of his friends, and not knowing how to get rid of her or how to respond, he let her drag him into another room where she proceeded:

She ripped off all of my clothes and just went for it. It was the first time I felt that I had, like, real sex. It was, like, several times and, yeah, I wasn't raped, in a way, it was like this because I was going along with it the whole time, but I felt a bit, like, as if I had been forced into the situation.

Much like the abovementioned Thomas, Kenneth found himself surrendering to a woman's sexual demands despite the fact that he was not interested in her. He explained this surrender as being a result, in part, of his young age. He had no prior experience with being sexually targeted and preyed upon; he found it embarrassing to be undressed in front of his friends; and he did not know how to refuse the woman. The effervescent character of the situation may have further complicated things, since high levels of emotional energy combined with the intake of alcohol and other drugs may impede individual judgment and thinking. Kenneth was left with little room to reflect upon the woman's conduct and how to react to it. Feeling embarrassed and confused, he let the woman take control and was engulfed in a flow of interactions that were at odds with what he wanted and how he normally behaved.

Preben told about a sexual experience where he acted both as victim and perpetrator of violence. He had been out partying, hooked up with a woman and they went to his apartment:

I undressed her, to my bed, heavy petting, good mood. Then suddenly, we're kissing deep, and she bites my tongue, not long from its root, takes hold, kind of, keeps and keeps and keeps on, won't let go. My first reaction was to knock her in the face, hit her. She started to bleed from her nose. Finally, she let go. We had sex afterwards, very strange; no dig at all. I should really have been without that experience. Don't know what it was about, being kinky? A fetish for pain?

Preben liked sexual experimentation and adventure, but he was not into sadomasochism and he definitely did not like to be bitten on the tongue. What began as pleasurable sexual interaction was interrupted by violent exchanges before shifting back to consented sex. This points to the inherent volatility of effervescent experiences: they are never stable or predictable; they quickly shift in intensity and character; and they always involve the possibilities of loosening, losing or regaining control.

It must be emphasised that, for most participants, the loss of control was to some degree a welcomed aspect of festive events. For example, drinking to the point of having difficulty thinking and walking straight was widely considered as acceptable or 'fun', because this facilitated a lowering of inhibitions and an increase of sociability. Many participants aimed for what has been termed a 'controlled loss of control': a type of voluntary risk-taking behaviour that entails the maintaining of control in situations on the brink of chaos (Hayward, 2002; Measham, 2002). However, in the cases reported in this paper, the loss of control went far beyond the bounds of acceptability and 'fun', because there was very little or no sense of being in control of what was happening. The sexual assaults were non-consensual and the

result of physical or verbal violence, and they involved unwanted transference of control to one or several persons with bad intentions.

Domination

Several participants emphasised that their sexual victimisation had taken place in a situation of unequal power distribution. This imbalance was usually gendered and tied to physical strength, typically in the case of a man assaulting a woman who was physically weaker than him. However, the imbalance sometimes lay in numbers (the assailants outnumbered the victims), status (the assailant was older, had a higher social rank, or was more experienced), or level of intoxication (the victim was more intoxicated than the assailant). The sexual assaults were thus portrayed as imbalanced, something that attackers exploited in their efforts to take control and sexual advantage of their victims (Collins, 2013).

Charlotte described an episode in a nightclub where she was dancing, drinking and having fun until she was sexually harassed by a group of army recruits:

[Recruits] can be really extreme [...] I was dancing with a girlfriend on the dancefloor and they came up behind us, tried to press us together and, like, hold on to us. When we tried to leave, they just pulled us back, grabbing us.

This type of sexual harassment has been observed in licenced venues across the world, and typically, though not always, involves men harassing women (Fileborn, 2016). What Charlotte described was sexual harassment involving several people, a group of men against two women, with the men collectively using force to impose their dominance over the women. However, although Charlotte and her friend were outnumbered and out strengthened, they

succeeded relatively quickly in fending off and fleeing from their assailants. The interactions thus shifted abruptly from joyful dancing to the emotional turmoil of sexual assault; but it did not evolve into the full-blown version of sexually violent effervescence since Charlotte and her friend managed to retain some level of control over themselves and the situation. In other words, the power relations in situations of assault are never pre-given or fixed, but always contested and subject to change—even in situations of extremely unequal power distribution, micro-situational domination is never complete (Foucault, 1980: 142).

Central to sexual harassment that occurs in crowded places, such as dancefloors, is the negotiation over how to define the ongoing interaction: attackers will often use playful signals such as smiles and laughter to indicate that what they are doing is a form of fun or flirtation, whereas the victims often try to counter this with rejection or alarm signals to indicate that the interaction is distinctly not fun and unwanted (Tan, 2013; Fileborn, 2016). However, the effervescent character of these situations may obfuscate the signals that are being exchanged, making it difficult for those directly involved, as well as third parties, to adequately understand and respond to what is happening. Moreover, the condition of effervescence may encourage transgressive actions including violent crimes (Durkheim, 1995: 218) and may subsequently serve as an excuse for wrong decisions, immoral behaviour and harms done (Ven and Beck, 2009).

Lisbeth told about a sexual assault that took place at a family wedding. She said that the assault was ‘very coincidental’ and her ‘first sexual experience’:

There was this guy who was way up in his twenties. Yeah. And I was 15. He poured an incredible amount of moonshine into me and got me out in the woods and wanted a quickie right there. But I wouldn't. And I went like, ‘No I am a [name of religious group] and I can't do this’ and so on. And then it became this

compromise. He should butt, like anal, because he thought that this was perhaps better than vaginal or something like that. He's like, an idiot, I can't even... So then, yeah. I was scared senseless afterwards because now I was going [straight to hell] and having sinned against God and all that. There has been this tremendous bad consciousness afterwards.

The perpetrator of this crime was much older and stronger than Lisbeth. He used alcohol, verbal coercion and intimidation until she gave in to his demand for anal sex. Ever since that day, she had struggled with a feeling of guilt over having been tricked by an 'idiot' into something that she did not want and that her religion deemed a sin. It was of little consolation that the man had left her with almost no room to divert from the destructive spiral of events that he had set out. This is typical of sexually violent effervescence; several of the participants felt guilty, ashamed or partly responsible for the abuse they had suffered (see also Hydén, 2005). This type of self-blame has to do with the antagonistic motions and emotions of sexual assaults, which makes it difficult for those involved to comprehend or recall who did what, in what order, why, and so forth (Collins, 2013). Pernille who had been cornered and brutally raped at a party also took part of the blame on herself, 'it felt like it was a bit my fault, since I was so wasted and I'd flirted with him'.

Many participants presented their efforts to defend themselves as clumsy and confused: they reported having talked when they should have screamed for help, fallen when they should have run away, sought isolation when they should have gone to the police and so forth. Wiser courses of action may seem clear in hindsight, but were obscured in the emotional darkness of the actual assaults. Anne described a chaotic incident that took place at a private party in a large house shared by a group of her friends. Anne was becoming

increasingly drunk and decided at one point to take a shower to freshen up; but then a stranger broke into the bathroom:

He came in and started to take off his clothes, like he was going to take a shower. I came out to grab a towel, and then he came and touched me. I pushed him away and went to the bedroom that was right next to the bathroom. He followed, and then my friend came. She was really drunk, but tried to help me. She lay on top of me in such a way that he wouldn't be able to rape me or... it was really weird, but then he lay on top of *her*, then we started to scream because the window in my bedroom was open. Then he got scared and left.

Anne clearly signalled to the man that she wanted him to go away, but he forced himself into the rooms where she was and touched her against her will. She did not have the physical strength to fend him off, even when she was assisted by her friend. The drunkenness of the attacker and victims added to the confrontational confusion and made them act in ways that Anne subsequently deemed 'weird'. The situation thus proceeded in a dark flow of effervescence, with a high level of anger, fear and chaotic actions at cross purposes.

Collective effervescence is a form of psycho-social disequilibrium that may be exploited, consciously or unconsciously, to perpetrate and conceal crimes, perhaps most clearly exemplified in dancefloor incidents where harassers use the permissive atmosphere of the dancing crowd to take sexual advantage of their victims. Victims may not have the power to avoid victimisation, but they always have room, however small, to respond to what is done to them – at least in the aftermath when they exert their freedom to make sense of what happened to them (Frankl, 2006).

Discussion

There is growing recognition that sexual violence is a global problem with detrimental psychological and physical consequences (García-Moreno et al., 2013). Most of the existing research on sexual violence has focused on examining the lifetime prevalence and consequences of sexual offences against women. Comparatively little is known about the sexual victimisation of men (Maddowall et al., 2013), and there is also a dearth of research into how victims experience and describe the interactions that immediately lead up to and constitute sexual assaults.

In this paper we respond to these gaps in the literature by examining how victims described sexual assaults that befell them in the context of festive events, and which were perpetrated by and against both women and men. However, the number of victims in our study is limited and does not allow for any definitive conclusions about sexual assault. It is important to note, moreover, that the participants predominantly had positive things to say about festive events. They were especially favourable of ‘wild parties’, with lots of drinking, emotional excitement and sexual opportunities. Moreover, the participants generally placed high value on sexual experimentation and experiences, and their accounts of sexual encounters were primarily positive and filled with stories of playful transgressions, adventure and pleasure. However, some of the participants talked about festive situations that turned sexually violent.

We propose that the concept of ‘sexually violent effervescence’ encapsulates key aspects of how victims experience and respond to these violent confrontations. Sexually violent effervescence is a dark sub variant of Durkheimian collective effervescence and has three defining components: 1) it constitutes an altered state of consciousness in the sense that

victims experience themselves, other people and their surroundings in an un-ordinary manner; 2) it involves a sense of losing control: victims get carried away and do things that they would not normally do, or they give in to the emotional flows of the situation; 3) finally, it emerges out of asymmetrical relations and involves negotiations over dominance, with one side feeling sexually exploited and abused.

Durkheim writes that collective effervescence is a form of ‘delirium’ (1995: 228) that involves a blurring of the lines between licit and illicit, and which is so physically and mentally destabilising that it can temporarily change people, not only in ‘nuance and degree’ but in their very core (1995: 212-213). These observations apply to how victims describe situations of sexual assault. During assaults, victims often have a sense of losing touch with reality and who they normally are, and they may find themselves acting in ways that they later consider surprising, bizarre or morally wrong. This experiential dislocation and self-estrangement may pose a hindrance to effective self-defence, because when utterly confused, it may be tempting to let others take control and make the decisions, even if this goes against one’s immediate will or intuition. Hence the tendency, during assaults, for victims to freeze, become numb, turn silent or block out the world through fainting.

Sexually violent effervescence may be particularly confusing for very young people who have little experience with festive events and sexual interactions. Several participants found it difficult to fully recall and describe what they had been through, and even years later, some were still unsure whether the assault they had endured constituted a crime, whether they had been responsible for it and whether it was a problem worthy of any mentioning. This explains in part why all but one participant in this study refrained from reporting their victimisation to the police.

References

- Abbey A, Zawacki T, Buck PO, et al. (2004) Sexual assault and alcohol consumption: What do we know about their relationship and what types of research are still needed? *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 9: 271-303.
- Bataille G (1989) *Theory of Religion*. New York: Zone Books.
- Blumer H (1986) *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Bonomo Y, Coffey C, Wolfe R, et al. (2001) Adverse outcomes of alcohol use in adolescents. *Addiction* 96: 1485-1496.
- Collins R (2004) *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Collins R (2013) Entering and leaving the tunnel of violence: Micro-sociological dynamics of emotional entrainment in violent interactions. *Current Sociology* 61: 132-151.
- Durkheim E (1984) *The Division of Labor in Society*. Translated by WD Halls. New York: Free Press.
- Durkheim E (1995) *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by K Fields. New York: Free Press.
- Felson RB and Paré PP (2005) The reporting of domestic violence and sexual assault by nonstrangers to the police. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67: 597-610.
- Fileborn B (2016) *Reclaiming the Nighttime Economy: Unwanted Sexual Attention in Pubs and Clubs*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Foucault M (1980) *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Frankl VE (2006) *Man's Search for Meaning*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- García-Moreno C, Pallitto C, Devries K, et al. (2013) *Global And Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- Grazian D (2008) *On The Make: The Hustle of Urban Nightlife*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hadfield P (2006) *Bar Wars: Contesting the Night in Contemporary British Cities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hayward K (2002) The vilification and pleasures of youthful transgression. In: Muncie J, Hughes G and McLaughlin E (eds) *Youth Justice: Critical Readings*, pp.80-94.
- Hydén M (2005) 'I must have been an idiot to let it go on': Agency and positioning in battered women's narratives of leaving. *Feminism & Psychology* 15: 169-188.
- Kraft P (1991) Age at first experience of intercourse among Norwegian adolescents: A life-style perspective. *Social Science & Medicine* 33: 207-213.
- KRIPOS (2015) *The Rape Situation 2014*. Oslo: The Norwegian Police.
- Lorenz K and Ullman SE (2016) Alcohol and sexual assault victimization: Research findings and future directions. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 31: 82-94.
- Lukasse M, Schroll AM, Ryding EL, et al. (2014) Prevalence of emotional, physical and sexual abuse among pregnant women in six European countries. *Acta Obstetrica Et Gynecologica Scandinavica* 93: 669-677.
- Macdowall W, Gibson LJ, Tanton C, et al. (2013) Lifetime prevalence, associated factors, and circumstances of non-volitional sex in women and men in Britain: Findings from the third National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal-3). *The Lancet* 382: 1845-1855.
- Maffesoli M (1993) *The Shadow of Dionysus: A Contribution to the Sociology of the Orgy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Malbon B (1999) *Clubbing : Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality*. London: Routledge.
- Malinen K (2014) "This was a Sexual Assault": A Social Worlds Analysis of Paradigm Change in the Interpersonal Violence World. *Symbolic Interaction* 37: 353-368.
- Marshall WL, Laws DR and Barbaree HE (1990) *Handbook of Sexual Assault: Issues, Theories, and Treatment of the Offender*. New York: Plenum Press.

- Measham F (2002) "Doing gender"—"doing drugs": Conceptualizing the gendering of drugs cultures. *Contemporary drug problems* 29: 335-373.
- Mellor PA and Shilling C (1997) Confluent Love and the Cult of the Dyad: The Pre-Contractual Foundations of Modern Contractarian Relationships. In: Davies J and McLoughlin G (eds) *Sex these Days*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, pp.51-78.
- Mellor PA and Shilling C (2014) *Sociology of the Sacred: Religion, Embodiment and Social Change*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Neal DJ and Fromme K (2007) Event-level covariation of alcohol intoxication and behavioral risks during the first year of college. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 75: 294-306.
- Olaveson T (2004) 'Connectedness' and the rave experience: Rave as new religious movement? In: St John G (ed) *Rave Culture and Religion*. London: Routledge, pp.85-106.
- Pape H (2014) Sexual assault while too intoxicated to resist: A general population study of Norwegian teenage girls. *Bmc Public Health* 14.
- Pickering WSF (2008) Emile Durkheim. In: Corrigan J (ed) *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.438-456.
- Pickering WSF (2009) *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion: Themes and Theories*. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co.
- Redmon D (2003) Playful deviance as an urban leisure activity: Secret selves, self-validation, and entertaining performances. *Deviant Behavior* 24: 27-51.
- Sable MR, Danis F, Mauzy DL, et al. (2006) Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assault for Women and Men: Perspectives of College Students. *Journal of American College Health* 55: 157-162.
- Scott J (1998) Changing attitudes to sexual morality: A cross-national comparison. *Sociology* 32: 815-845.
- Sorbo MF, Grimstad H, Bjorngaard JH, et al. (2013) Prevalence of sexual, physical and emotional abuse in the Norwegian mother and child cohort study. *Bmc Public Health* 13.
- St. John G (2004) *Rave culture and religion*. London: Routledge.
- Tan QH (2013) Flirtatious geographies: Clubs as spaces for the performance of affective heterosexualities. *Gender Place and Culture* 20: 718-736.
- Thompson M (2000) Life after rape: A chance to speak? *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 15: 325-343.
- Tolman DL and McClelland SI (2011) Normative Sexuality Development in Adolescence: A Decade in Review, 2000-2009. *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 21: 242-255.
- Turchik JA and Edwards KM (2012) Myths about male rape: A literature review. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 13: 211-226.
- Ullman SE and Brecklin LR (2000) Alcohol and Adult Sexual Assault in a National Sample of Women. *Journal of Substance Abuse* 11: 405-420.
- Vander Ven T (2011) *Getting Wasted: Why College Students Drink Too Much and Party So Hard*. New York: New York University Press.
- Ven TV and Beck J (2009) Getting drunk and hooking up: An exploratory study of the relationship between alcohol intoxication and casual coupling in a university sample. *Sociological Spectrum* 29: 626-648.
- Wellman JK, Corcoran KE and Stockly-Meyerdirk K (2014) "God Is Like a Drug...": Explaining Interaction Ritual Chains in American Megachurches. *Sociological Forum* 29: 650-672.
- Wells S and Graham K (2003) Aggression involving alcohol: Relationship to drinking patterns and social context. *Addiction* 98: 33-42.
- Wijkman M, Bijleveld C and Hendriks J (2010) Women don't do such things! Characteristics of female sex offenders and offender types. *Sexual Abuse* 22: 135-156.
- Young SL and Maguire KC. (2003) Talking about sexual violence. *Women and Language* 26: 40-52.