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It Isn't All Just Fun and Games: Collegiate Participation in Extracurricular Activities and Risk for Generalized and Sexual Harassment, Psychological Distress, and Alcohol Use

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Abstract

Collegiate extracurricular activities, despite their benefits, may place students at an increased risk for experiencing harassment. This study utilizes multiple waves of data from an online longitudinal survey to examine how participation in college activities (intramural sports, fraternities/sororities, school clubs) relates to experiences of sexual and generalized harassment and outcomes (psychological distress, heavy alcohol use) among undergraduates ($N = 1852$, 58.6% female, 57.4% White) in the Midwestern United States. Activity participation was related to harassment, but the pattern depended on the activity, harassment type, and sex. Fraternity/sorority involvement was associated with generalized harassment, whereas school club involvement was linked to both generalized and sexual harassment. Female intramural athletes were at an increased risk to experience both harassment types. In addition to direct relations, activity participation was indirectly linked to future psychological distress (depression, anxiety) and heavy alcohol use via harassment. Implications for intervention with this college student population are discussed.

Keywords

Sexual Harassment; Generalized Harassment; Extracurricular Activities; Alcohol use; Psychological Distress; Sex

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Involvement in extracurricular activities is often viewed as an avenue for developing strong interpersonal skills. For example, membership in these activities has been linked to college students' enhanced decision making, leadership, teamwork and communication (Foreman & Retallick, 2012; Rubin, Bommer, & Baldwin, 2002). Further, activity participation may yield intrapersonal benefits; individuals often report heightened feelings self-esteem and increased psychological resiliency as a result of these experiences (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006a; 2006b; Kort-Butler & Hagewan, 2011). Yet, participation is not uniformly linked to positive outcomes. For example, participation in some activities can promote substance use, as well as heighten the risk of experiencing harassment, particularly for women (e.g., Grossbard, Geisner, Neighbors, Kilmer, & Larimer, 2007; Maggs, Williams, & Lee, 2011; Peguero, 2009). Given that harassment may contribute to problematic outcomes such as heavy drinking as well as psychological distress (e.g., McGinley, Richman, & Rospenda, 2011; Richman et al., 1999), the current study sought to better understand the extent to which extracurricular activity participation contributes to the risk for harassment and negative mental health and alcohol use consequences in a U.S. college student population.¹

Notably, studies on harm during activities in higher education have often focused on bullying, physical types of victimization or sexual coercion/assault (e.g., Allan & Madden, 2012; Franklin, 2010; Peguero, 2009). Researchers have yet to examine more common forms of victimization, such as harassment. Thus, the current study sought to address this gap by focusing on two major types of harassment: sexual harassment and generalized harassment. In a school setting, *sexual harassment* can be defined as any sexual behavior that interferes with a student's right to an equal education, and can include any type of unwanted sexual behavior based on a student's sex, such as inappropriate touching, sexist jokes, and requests for sexual favors (Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 92 S. 659, 1972). Sexual harassment has been reported by 40%–60% of college women (Cortina, Swan, Fitzgerald, & Waldo, 1998; Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Kalof, Eby, Matheson, & Kroska, 2001; Shepela & Levesque, 1998) and 28–51% of college men (Kalof et al., 2001; Shepela & Levesque, 1998). In contrast, *generalized harassment* in a school setting can be defined as any negative interpersonal interaction that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment, and/or one that may affect the conditions placed on a student as they relate to his or her academic standing, but which is not based on legally protected categories, such as sex or race (Rospenda & Richman, 2004). Researchers have found that 21–25% of college students in the U.S. report bullying victimization. (Chapell et al., 2004; 2006; Modecki, Minchin, Harbaugh, Guerra, & Runions, 2014). Studying both generalized and sexual harassment is important as large groups of undergraduates report being recipients of both forms, and also view these types of harassment as conceptually distinct (Walsh & Magley, 2014).

¹Researchers have found that the definition and prevalence of sexual and generalized harassment or bullying differs across cultures (Paludi, Nydegger, Desouza, Nydegger & Dicker, 2006; Pörhölä, Cvancara, Kaal, Tampere & Torres, 2015). Because a discussion of cross-cultural issues is beyond the scope of this article, we refer readers who are interested in learning more about cross-cultural differences in these constructs to the aforementioned sources.

Extracurricular Activities and Harassment

While participation in intercollegiate sports has been identified as a protective factor against harassing experiences (Fasting, Brackenridge, Miller, & Sabo, 2008; Peguero, 2009), *intramural sports* participants are more likely to be victims of peers' verbal and physical harassment (Peguero 2009; Popp & Peguero 2011). Compared to intercollegiate sports, intramural sports participation is not mandatory, less competitive (games are limited to other teams on campus), and more focused on individual well-being and recreation. Thus, scholars have posited that this type of activity lends itself to victimization because either 1) these students do not possess significant social status as compared to intercollegiate athletes, or 2) these activities may not be well supervised by adults or other official school figures (Peguero, 2009). Popp and Peguero (2011), for example, reported that high school intramural athletes were more likely to be victims of bullying or property destruction/theft than those not playing intramural sports. Similar rationale can also apply to students participating in school clubs or activities. Indeed, participation in school clubs (e.g., academic clubs, hobbies, fine arts activities, service) has also been a risk factor for experiencing physical and verbal harassment in high school (Peguero, 2009).

Less is known, however, how these same activities in *college* may predispose an individual to being harassed. Some research has been conducted examining victimization in *Greek* organizations, though typically focusing on sexual assault. Greek organizations refer to the membership-based, single-sex social fraternities (men) and sororities (women) who use Greek letters to label their organization. These social organizations are typically located at undergraduate institutions in the United States, and are known for heavy alcohol use (Cashin, Presley, & Meilman, 1998). Kalof (1993) reported that women belonging to sororities were more likely than other female undergraduates to report sexual coercion involving physical force and alcohol-related nonconsensual intercourse. More recent studies have linked sorority membership with increased likelihood of sexual assault, including rape (Franklin, 2010; Minow & Einolf, 2009). Still, others have found that Greek members are not more likely to experience sexual coercion (physical contact) than the general population; this may be attributed to mandated date rape education in the Greek systems (Gardella et al., 2015; Sawyer, Schulken, & Pinciario, 1997). Regarding other types of peer harassment, Allan and Madden (2012) reported that a specific form of bullying, hazing, was reported by a majority of Greek members (73% reported experiencing at least one type of hazing behavior). Along with intercollegiate athletes (74%), fraternity/sorority participation was most associated with being a victim of hazing behaviors when compared to eight other college-level activities.

In regards to examined outcomes, the studies cited above have primarily chosen to examine either physical harassment (e.g., Peguero, 2009), highly specific types of bullying restricted to a certain period of time (e.g., hazing; Allan & Madden, 2012), or physical types of sexual assault or coercion (e.g., Franklin, 2010; Gardella et al., 2015). Although intramural sports and school club participants self-report more physical types of generalized harassment victimization (e.g., Peguero, 2009); it is still unclear whether they are at risk to experience more broadly defined generalized harassment, and whether collegiate level participants are at a similar risk to be victims of harassment. Moreover, less is known regarding how

participation in these intramural sports and school clubs may alter risk for sexual harassment. Men who participate in intramural sports seem to be more likely to embrace favorable attitudes toward sexual harassment due to heightened sexist attitudes (Covell, 1999). However, other studies have found evidence that participating in any sport in college may protect one against sexual assault (though not necessarily harassment) (Fasting et al., 2008). While research has been conducted regarding sexual assault/coercion and hazing in Greek organizations, we still do not know whether fraternity/sorority members are likely to be victims of generalized types of peer harassment or more broadly defined sexual harassment.

Consequences of Sexual and Generalized Harassment

Understanding risk factors for sexual or generalized harassment in a college population is crucial; experiencing hurtful harassment from peers in a social group can be especially stressful during this period of upheaval, transition, and identity exploration (Arnett, 2005). In turn, this harassment victimization may become overwhelming, thus adversely impacting mental health or drinking behaviors. This notion, that adjustment problems are a symptom that environmental demands have exceeded an individual's coping resources, is consistent with stress and coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Further, when an individual is unable to end stressful experiences through coping efforts, they will often turn to maladaptive or avoidant forms of coping such as substance use (McGinley et al., 2011; Smith, Singer, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003; Rohde, Lewinsohn, Tilson, & Seeley, 1990). For example, research with employed adults has shown that active coping with sexual and generalized harassment in the workplace which fails to end the harassment is predictive of increased problematic drinking (Richman, Rospenda, Flaherty & Freels, 2001). Empirical research with undergraduates has also supported these perspectives. Implementing a diary approach to data collection, DeHart and colleagues (DeHart, Longua Peterson, Richeson & Hamilton, 2014) reported that when college students' coping resources were exhausted (i.e., those days when students indicated higher ego-depletion or mental fatigue) experiencing generalized harassment was positively linked to binge drinking behaviors. Undergraduate men and women who had recently experienced sexual victimization were more likely to drink heavily during college transitions (i.e., transitioning into college, returning from winter break) than those who had experienced distal sexual victimization (Griffin, Wardell, & Read, 2013).

Generalized and sexual harassment have moreover been linked to young adults' psychological distress, another indicator of adjustment problems to chronic stress. In a retrospective study of adolescent peer victimization, Dempsey and Storch (2008) reported that recalled harassment was related to college students' current depression and social anxiety. Various forms of sexual harassment have also been correlated with undergraduates' self-reported depression and anxiety (Buchanan, Bluestein, Nappa, Woods, & Depatie, 2013; Davidson, Butchko, Robbins, Sherd, & Gervais, 2016). Using latent class analysis, Holt et al. (2016) recently found that simultaneously experiencing higher levels and multiple forms of peer and sexual victimization immediately before college was related to higher depression and anxiety in the spring of their first year of college than those experiencing almost no victimization or more moderate levels of peer victimization only.

Drinking and Mental Health in Collegiate Activity Participants

Activity participation itself has been linked with drinking and mental health outcomes. Greek members, for example, are at a greater risk for heavy drinking than those refraining from joining fraternities or sororities (Capone, Wood, Borsari, & Laird, 2007; Cashin et al., 1998; Maggs et al., 2011). While some have suggested that group-promoting social factors (e.g., norms, approval, establishing friendship, modeling) contribute positively to Greek membership drinking (e.g., Capone et al., 2007; Cashin et al., 1998), no studies to date have examined whether harassment stemming from group membership may also spur heavy alcohol use (i.e., as a method of coping). However, Greek students do not seem to be at a greater risk of experiencing internalizing symptoms such as depression as compared to their non-Greek counterparts (Lester, 2013), and may even experience a decline in depression after becoming accepted into the Greek system (Atlas & Morier, 1994). However, Greek women appear to report more depression, and Greek men appear to report more suicidal thoughts than non-Greek counterparts following alcohol consumption (Cashin et al., 1998; Gullete & Lyons, 2005).

Regarding intramural sport participation, multiple studies have indicated that college-level intramural athletes engage in more risky types of drinking compared to nonathletes, and even other athletes (e.g., intercollegiate) (Andes, Poet, & McWilliams, 2012; Barry, Howell, Riplinger, & Piazza-Gardner 2015; Braun, 2012; Grossbard et al., 2007). Research again suggests that peer-group related factors (norms, approval) may maintain these behaviors in intramural organizations (Andes et al., 2012; Braun, 2012). Yet, intramural participation does seem to be a protective factor for college students' mental well-being (Lanier, Nicholson, & Duncan, 2001). Conversely, involvement in high school clubs and activities has been linked to decreased substance use (cigarettes, alcohol), perhaps due to involvement with less problematic peers and individual factors such as increased psychological resiliency (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006a; Metzger, Dawes, Mermelstein, & Wakschlag, 2011). Club participation in high school is neither a protective nor risk factor for internalizing symptoms such as depression (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006b). No research to date has examined the link between participation in club activities and mental health and drinking outcomes in a college population.

Sex Differences

Although research has found little evidence of gender differences in the prevalence of workplace or school generalized harassment/bullying (Keashly, Trott, & MacLean, 1994; Rospenda, Richman, & Shannon, 2009; Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2011), it is clear that women are more likely to experience sexual harassment at both work and at school (Hill & Silva, 2005). When it comes to harassment and activity participation in college, for women, it appears that participation has both benefits and risks. For example, women are at an increased risk of experiencing bullying and property victimization if they participate in intramural sports, though they are at a decreased risk to experience violent victimization if they participate in school clubs or intercollegiate sports (Popp & Peguero, 2011). These findings may be especially important as women who participate in intramural sports drink more than nonathletic women (Grossbard et al., 2007). Metzger et al. (2011)

relatedly found that school clubs and activities offer unique protection for adolescent girls; their participation lessens the risk for future smoking due to their reduced likelihood of being exposed to problem peers. Thus, it is plausible that that women's tendency to drink due to group membership would be partially mediated by positive or negative experiences with peers. In the current study, we examine this possibility by looking at how participation in various extracurricular activities is related to risk for harassment, and whether harassment subsequently increases risk for problematic drinking and psychological distress.

The Current Study

Based on existing research, we expected that participation in intramural activities and school clubs in an undergraduate population would be related to generalized peer harassment, consistent with research on physical manifestations of generalized harassment conducted with high school populations (e.g., Peguero, 2009). However, given that participation in these types of activities has yet to be empirically related to sexual harassment, no *a priori* hypotheses were made. Additionally, as research has connected Greek membership to hazing and physical sexual coercion (e.g., Allan & Madden, 2012; Franklin, 2010), we anticipated that fraternity and sorority members would report more generalized and sexual harassment than nonmembers. Finally, since prior research has indicated that harassment stemming from activity participation may depend on sex (Popp & Peguero, 2011), we investigated whether sex moderated the relations among activity types and both types of harassment. We also expected that links among activity participation and other outcomes (risky alcohol use and psychological distress) could be partially explained by the generalized and sexual harassment that members report.

Method

Sampling and Data Collection

Study participants were recruited from a sample of 9,100 incoming freshmen at eight colleges and universities in the Midwestern United States. Six schools provided us with a random sample of students, and two schools chose to allow us to sample all freshman students. Electronic and mail survey (for students for whom schools provided us with a postal address) invitations to complete a web survey were sent out at five points in time: at the very beginning of students' first year of college in the fall of 2011 (baseline), the spring of 2012 (T1), about 4 months after baseline, the beginning of fall 2012 (T2), about 4 months after T1, the beginning of fall 2013 (T3), about 12 months after T2, the beginning of fall 2014 (T4), about 12 months after T3, and the beginning of fall 2015 (T5), about 12 months after T4. Only baseline, T4 and T5 measures were used for the current study as extracurricular activity information was not collected until T4. Students were required to be at least 18 years old at baseline in order to complete the survey. Students were sent a \$25 Amazon gift certificate for completing the baseline survey and a \$40 certificate for completing the T4 and T5 surveys. The study was reviewed and approved by the IRB at the authors' institution, as well as the IRB at each school (although some schools deferred to the authors' institution and waived review). Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

At baseline, 2,984 students responded to the invitation. Data was excluded from the current analysis for various reasons, including age less than 18 at baseline ($n = 2$), greater than 20 at baseline ($n = 72$), erratic responses to items ($n = 1$), and non-freshman status ($n = 1$). We also excluded participants who reported their gender was transgendered or other ($n = 9$) as we were conducting a sex-moderator analysis and required groups with sufficient sample sizes. Additionally, we had 66% retention at T4, and only included participants who had attended school and had at least one response to the activity questions. Thus, a total of 1852 (58.6% female) participants were retained in the final analysis (T5 outcome measures were implemented but any missing data at T5 was estimated in Mplus). Of those who reported information on race and ethnicity ($n = 20$ participants left this question blank), 57.4% reported White, 6.2% reported African American, 17.0% reported Asian/Pacific Islander, 12.6% reported Hispanic/Latino, and 6.8% reported multiracial/other. Attrition analysis (a series of chi-square and t -test analyses) indicated that those who did not participate at T4 were less likely to be White and more likely to be African American, binge drink at baseline, drink to intoxication at baseline, and be depressed at baseline (p 's $< .05$) than those who completed measures at T4. However, there was no statistically significant difference in sex, generalized harassment, and sexual harassment between these two groups.

Measures

Generalized Harassment—We used a modified version of the Generalized Workplace Harassment Questionnaire (GWHQ; 20 items) to assess generalized harassment at Baseline and T4. The GWHQ was developed based on input from a series of focus groups, including two groups of students, and is comprised of four factors: covert hostility (e.g., being excluded from important meetings or events, 3 items), verbal hostility (e.g., being yelled at, talked down to, 7 items), manipulation (attempts at controlling the target's behavior, e.g., through threats or bribes, 4 items), and physical aggression (e.g., pushed, hit, kicked, 1 item) (Richman et al., 1999; Rospenda & Richman, 2004). We added items to tap more “passive” forms of harassment, such as failing to respond to requests for help, and items to measure experiences particularly relevant to a college population, such as a) “cyber bullying” – e.g., through e-mail, text-messaging, or online sites such as Facebook, b) being the target of pranks or practical jokes that the target did not think were funny, c) pressure from others to do something that the student didn't really want to do. Respondents rated each experience as to the frequency of occurrence (0 = “never,” 1 = “once,” or 2 = “more than once”) during the past 12 months of school. Item responses were summed to create a single overall scale score. Coefficient alpha reliability was .91 at both baseline and at T4.

Sexual Harassment—Sexual Harassment was measured at Baseline and T4 with a 12-item modified version of the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ)(Fitzgerald et al., 1988), worded to make items applicable to both males and females. Items behaviorally depict: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion. Additionally, two items assessed the potential problem of cyber-harassment (e.g., “Sent you offensive e-mails or text messages that were sexual in nature”). Respondents rated each item for their experiences in school (in high school at baseline, college for T4) as occurring “never (0),” “once (1),” or “more than once (2)”. Questions about SH were modified to reflect the

previous 12 months. Item responses were summed to create a single overall scale score. Coefficient alpha reliability was .87 at baseline and at T4.

Psychological distress—Depressive symptomatology (past 7 days) was measured by seven items from the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression (CES-D) scale which were utilized in research by Mirowsky and Ross (1990) due to their high correlation with the overall CES-D ($\alpha = .81$ at Baseline; $.89$ at T5). Anxiety (past 7 days) was measured by the nine item tension-anxiety factor of the Profile of Mood States (McNair, Lorr, & Droppleman, 1981) ($\alpha = .87$ at Baseline and $\alpha = .90$ at T5).

Risky Drinking—We measured drinking using two separate items from Wilsnack and colleagues (1991), revised to measure drinking in the past 12 months at baseline and T5. The first question, “About how often in the last 12 months did you drink enough to feel drunk, that is, where drinking noticeably affected your thinking, talking, and behavior?” (drinking to intoxication) and “About how often in the last 12 months did you have 5 or more drinks (males)/4 or more drinks (females) of any alcoholic beverage on the same occasion?” (binge drinking). Respondents indicated the extent of drinking on a 6 point scale, with “0” reflecting no binge/drinking to intoxication drinking, and “5” reflecting five times a week or more.

Results

Data Analysis Plan

Using Mplus version 7.2 software (Muthen & Muthen, 1998–2012) we first conducted a series of regression analyses in order to examine the relations among T4 activity participation and T4 generalized or sexual harassment, and whether sex moderated these relations. The demographic (sex, male or female; racial/ethnic group) and respective baseline measures (generalized harassment or sexual harassment) were entered in Model 1. In Model 2, Activity participation (0 = no participation, 1 = participation) for Fraternity/Sorority, Intramural Sports, and School Club participation was added to the model. In Model 3, the three Sex $\times$ Activity interaction terms were added.

Next, the mediation model was tested, again using Mplus version 7.2 software (Muthen & Muthen, 1998–2012). Both direct and indirect effects were included (see Figures 1–3). Direct effects included activity participation predicting risky drinking and psychological distress. Indirect effects included activity participation predicting risky drinking and psychological distress via one type of harassment (generalized *or* sexual). For the purposes of data reduction, we added a measurement aspect to the model by having binge drinking and drinking to intoxication be indicators of latent risky alcohol use, and depression and anxiety be indicators of latent psychological distress. We tested the hypothesized indirect effects of the model using the Model Indirect command in Mplus, which uses a delta approach to test mediation. We regressed T5 risky alcohol use and psychological distress onto T4 generalized or sexual harassment and each individual activity, as well as respective baseline latent factors. T4 generalized or sexual harassment was regressed onto T4 activity. All variables were regressed onto sex, racial/ethnic group, and respective baseline harassment. However, if the sex $\times$ activity interaction term was found to be significant, then

we only conducted the analysis for one sex at a time (men or women) instead of regressing the model variables onto sex.

Moderation Analysis

Univariate statistics for categorical and continuous main study variables are presented in Tables 1 and 2. In the Generalized Harassment regression Model 1 ($R^2 = .14$), Latino participants were less likely to report generalized harassment than White participants. Additionally, baseline generalized harassment moderately predicted current generalized harassment. In Model 2 ($R^2 = .16$), participation in Fraternities/Sororities and School Clubs was significantly associated with increased generalized harassment. In Model 3, the Intramural Sports $\times$ sex interaction term was statistically significant ($R^2 = .17$). Intramural Sports participation only predicted generalized harassment for women (see Table 3).

In the Sexual Harassment regression Model 1 ($R^2 = .12$), Latino, Black, and Other race participants were less likely to report sexual harassment than White participants. Additionally, baseline sexual harassment moderately predicted current sexual harassment. In Model 2 ($R^2 = .13$), participation in Intramural Sports and School Clubs were significantly associated with increased sexual harassment. In Model 3, the Intramural Sports $\times$ sex interaction term was statistically significant ($R^2 = .14$). As with generalized harassment, Intramural Sports participation only predicted sexual harassment for women.

Mediation Analysis

The mediation models examining Fraternity/Sorority participation, generalized or sexual harassment, and risky alcohol use and psychological distress can be found in Figure 1. Since sex did not moderate the relations between fraternity/sorority participation and either type of harassment, the overall mediation models were examined. Generalized harassment significantly mediated the relations between Fraternity/Sorority participation and risky alcohol use (unstandardized estimate = .02, $p < .01$) and psychological distress (unstandardized estimate = .02, $p < .01$). Fraternity/Sorority participation also directly predicted increased alcohol use, but decreased psychological distress. While similar direct relations were found in the sexual harassment model, no significant indirect relations were found as Fraternity/Sorority participation was not related to sexual harassment.

The mediation models examining Intramural Sports participation, generalized or sexual harassment, and risky alcohol use and psychological distress can be found in Figure 2. For women only, both generalized and sexual harassment significantly mediated the relations between Intramural Sport participation and risky alcohol use (unstandardized estimates = .03 for generalized harassment and .04 for sexual harassment, p 's $< .01$) and psychological distress (unstandardized estimates = .03 for generalized and sexual harassment, p 's $< .05$). These relations were not significant for men as there was no relationship between Intramural Sport participation and either generalized or sexual harassment. Additionally, Intramural Sport participation directly predicted increased risky alcohol use for both men and women, and directly predicted less psychological distress for men.

The mediation models examining School Club participation, generalized or sexual harassment, and risky alcohol use and psychological distress can be found in Figure 3. Since

sex did not moderate the relations between club participation and either type of harassment, the overall mediation models were examined. Both generalized and sexual harassment significantly mediated the relations among School Club participation and risky alcohol use (unstandardized estimates = .02 for generalized harassment and .01 for sexual harassment, p 's < .01) and psychological distress (unstandardized estimates = .03 for generalized harassment and .01 for sexual harassment, p 's < .01). School Club participation also directly predicted increased alcohol use, but was not directly related to psychological distress.

Discussion

The current study sought to understand the links among activity participation, generalized harassment, sexual harassment, risky alcohol use, psychological distress and sex in an undergraduate population. We found that participation in fraternities or sororities, intramural sports, and school clubs was associated with experience of at least one form of harassment. Greek participation was related to generalized harassment, but not sexual harassment, contrary to our hypothesis that it would be related to both forms of harassment. Participation in intramural sports predicted sexual and generalized harassment, though only for women. Participation in school clubs, on the other hand, predicted both sexual and generalized harassment regardless of sex. This is the first study to our knowledge linking participation in these activities to sexual harassment in general, and to generalized harassment at the collegiate level.

As hypothesized, we uncovered indirect relations among activity participation, harassment, and psychological distress and heavy drinking for almost all mediational models (with the exception that Fraternity/Sorority participation failed to predict sexual harassment, and the indirect effects were only significant for women for intramural participation). In sum, this supports previous theory and research suggesting that adjustment problems and avoidant coping approaches can follow harassing experiences (e.g., DeHart et al., 2014; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Rohde et al., 1990; Smith et al., 2003). Further, this study has filled in a gap in the existing literature by providing initial evidence that forms of harassment partially explain the relations between college activity participation and drinking and mental health outcomes.

It is notable that direct relations among activity participation and outcomes remained after taking into account indirect relations. For example, Fraternity/Sorority participation directly predicted increased risky alcohol use, but also directly predicted decreased psychological distress. Similarly, intramural sports participation directly predicted increased risky alcohol use, but appeared to be negatively related to psychological distress for men. Finally, School Club participation directly predicted increased alcohol use. Thus, all three activities appear to provide social opportunities to engage in problematic alcohol use. Outside of harassing experiences, students may be engaging in these problematic drinking behaviors because of norms and availability within the organization (e.g., Andes et al., 2012; Braun, 2012) or for other reasons not directly examined in the current study. Thus, harassing experiences are just one explanation for observed greater risky alcohol use among activity participants. However, activity participation in Fraternity/Sororities in particular appear to offer protection in terms of psychological distress, consistent with a prior study noting declines in college students'

depression after acceptance into a sorority (Atlas & Morier, 1994). Overall, this set of findings corroborates with previous research on college student outcomes related to Greek organization or intramural participation (increased alcohol use, lower psychological distress). The current study also found no relation between college club participation and psychological distress, similar to research at the high school level (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006b). However, while research at the high school levels shows that club participation is a protective factor regarding substance use (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006a; Metzger et al., 2011), the current study found the opposite effect for club participation in college.

While this study was the first to formally examine collegiate activity participation in relation to multiple forms of harassment and subsequent outcomes, some limitations should be noted. First, the relations among activity participation and harassment were examined using measures collected at the same wave (T4), limiting the cause-and-effect interpretability of this aspect of the data analysis. We did control for baseline levels of harassment, psychological distress and heavy drinking across all models, and tested outcomes at a future wave (T5). In other words, we accounted for the possibility that those who are harassed, experience psychological distress or engage in heavy drinking may be more inclined to self-select into activities, and examined future drinking following these experiences of harassment. Still, future studies should examine longitudinal patterns of activity participation and related outcomes in order to better establish cause and effect relationships such as those proposed in the current study. Additional studies are needed to flesh out why these individuals experience greater levels of harassment as compared to non-participating peers. For example, understanding if group factors (e.g., values, norms, traditions) or administrative factors (i.e., type of supervisor, presence of supervisor, sanctions) can modify harassment levels may help college campuses develop policy and interventions to decrease harassment. Given the heterogeneous nature of school clubs (Allan & Madden, 2012), particularly how they were broadly categorized in the current study, future studies should identify what types of school clubs, or what characteristics of school clubs, are linked to harassing experiences.

Similarly, the findings regarding intramural sports warrant further research, given the observed gender differences in the effects of intramural sports participation on reported harassment. While advances have been made in recent years, sports participation has historically been considered more of a “masculine” activity, and girls and young women who defy traditional gender role norms by participating in competitive team sports may be subject to social stigma (Griffin, 1998; Schmalz & Kerstetter, 2006). Berdahl (2007) argues that all forms of harassment derive from perpetrators trying to exercise or maintain their social status in response to perceived status challenges. From this perspective, women who participate in intramural mixed-gender sports may be more likely to experience harassment from male teammates who use harassment as a way to reinforce gender-based social statuses, i.e., by “putting women in their place.” Harassment experiences may be related to increased use of alcohol among women to the extent that some adolescents and young adults view engaging in heavy drinking as a way to achieve higher social status among peers who consider such behaviors normative (Allen, Porter, McFarland, Marsh & McElhaney, 2005). Research supports this perspective, indicating that both male and female young adults who are heavier drinkers are more likely to be rated as having higher status within their social

groups (Dumas, Graham, Bernards & Wells, 2014). Young women participating in intramural sports, or more broadly in social settings where they experience discrimination or harassment, may thus increase their risky drinking as a way to reclaim or improve their social status among their peers who use alcohol. We were unable to directly test these possibilities in the current study, as we did not ask students to report what specific activities or sports they were participating in, or the extent to which these activities were same- or mixed-gender. Future research in this area, or on the gendered effects of harassment on substance use in general, should consider assessing these factors, as well as considering status-based explanations for both risk of harassment victimization and increased drinking over time.

This study is further limited by the fact that harassment was measured in terms of overall harassment experienced, and not harassment limited to the activity itself. In other words, the current study cannot attest to the frequency or specific harassing behaviors within the context of one activity versus another. Subsequent investigations should focus on the amount of harassment experienced within each activity in order to better understand whether one type of activity is more strongly linked to harassing experiences. A more focused effort should similarly be made to assess whether participants' drinking occurred within the activity for recreational purposes or outside of an activity as a result of harassment. Due to the low number of participants reporting intercollegiate sport participation, we could not include this activity in the current investigation. Thus, efforts should be made to adequately sample from students involved in intercollegiate athletic activities. Finally, the current study was limited in terms of the scope of its sample. Only students enrolled in colleges and universities in the Midwestern United States were invited into the study, and it is unknown how these results would apply to other regions of the United States or internationally. Due to the longitudinal nature of our study, those who remained in our study at T4 were less likely to be African American, more likely to be White, were less depressed, and were less likely to endorse heavy drinking (at baseline) compared to those who only responded at baseline. Thus our study only captured the relations among activity participation, harassment and outcomes for this unique subset of participants. Future research should make a concerted effort to assess activity participation for a more diverse group of students.

Despite the limitations, the current results suggest that students engaging in activities at the collegiate level are at risk for experiencing harassment. Since college students in particular may not be sufficiently equipped to cope with harassment given other developmental tasks they are facing (e.g., transitions, stress stemming from identity searches; Arnett, 2005), it is important to identify sources and contexts of harassment so students, as well as others (e.g., college counselors) may recognize when students are at a heightened risk of experiencing harassment. Understanding that engaging in certain extracurricular activities may increase the risk of experiencing harassment can help counselors and students to better identify harassing behaviors, problematic responses, and explore alternative approaches to coping with this type of stressor. In this process, colleges and universities may further be able to decrease heavy alcohol use often associated with participation in certain activities and improve the mental well-being of its student population.

Our knowledge of the effects of activity participation during emerging adulthood from the current study generally corroborates with what has been observed during early to late adolescence. Participation in activities, while affording adolescents and emerging adults with inter- and intra-personal skills, can simultaneously pose a risk via sexual and generalized harassment. Understanding that these effects continue through the second and third decades of life highlights the need to provide adolescents, as early as possible, with the necessary skills they need to identify and cope with harassment in different settings. Adolescents who are equipped with the skills to cope with harassment experiences and their harmful effects in healthy ways (e.g., reporting the harassment to someone who can help get the perpetrator(s) to stop the harassment, self-care strategies such as exercise or meditation rather than substance use) will be better equipped to navigate similar social interactions following major transitions as they enter emerging adulthood. This speaks to the need for harassment prevention efforts that continue from primary through post-secondary education. Our results also speak to the need for schools to better monitor extracurricular activities, particularly intramural sports, perhaps by providing harassment prevention training and substance abuse recognition training to coaches, and by developing clear guidance for students about how to report incidents of harassment that occur both during school and during participation in extracurricular activities. Harassment experienced during these activities can harm students' mental health, enthusiasm for learning, desire to attend school, and ultimately their academic performance if not addressed in appropriate and healthy ways.

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Figure 1. Mediation Model Examining the Direct and Indirect Relations among Fraternity/Sorority Participation, Generalized/Sexual Harassment, and Outcomes (Risky Alcohol Use and Psychological Distress)

Note. Bold lines indicate a significant indirect effect; solid lines indicate a significant direct effect; dashed lines indicate a nonsignificant effect. Overall estimates are presented as gender interactions were not statistically significant. Harassment and Drinking variables were square-root transformed in the analysis. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 2. Mediation Model Examining the Direct and Indirect Relations among Intramural Sport Participation, Generalized/Sexual Harassment, and Outcomes (Risky Alcohol Use and Psychological Distress)

Note. Models were conducted separately for gender (male/female). Indirect effects were only significant for women. Bold lines indicate a significant indirect effect; solid lines indicate a significant direct effect; dashed lines indicate a nonsignificant effect. Harassment and Drinking variables were square-root transformed in the analysis. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$

Figure 3. Mediation Model Examining the Direct and Indirect Relations among School Club Participation, Generalized/Sexual Harassment, and Outcomes (Risky Alcohol Use and Psychological Distress)

Note. Bold lines indicate a significant indirect effect; solid lines indicate a significant direct effect; dashed lines indicate a nonsignificant effect. Overall estimates are presented as gender interactions were not statistically significant. Harassment and Drinking variables were square-root transformed in the analysis. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Table 1

Univariate Statistics for Categorical Main Study Variables

		n (%)
<i>Demographic Predictors</i>		
	Male	767 (41.4%)
	Female	1085 (58.6%)
	White	1052 (56.8%)
	Black	114 (6.2%)
	Latino	230 (12.4%)
	Asian	312 (16.8%)
	Other Race	124 (6.7%)
	Missing Race	20 (1.1%)
<i>Activities</i>		
<i>Fraternity/Sorority</i>	Yes	332 (17.9%)
	No	1512 (81.6%)
	Missing	8 (0.4%)
<i>Intramural Sports</i>	Yes	319 (17.3%)
	No	1526 (82.7%)
	Missing	9 (0.5%)
<i>School Clubs</i>	Yes	1058 (57.1%)
	No	790 (42.7%)
	Missing	4 (0.2%)

Table 2

Univariate Statistics for Continuous Main Study Variables

	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Harassment Variables</i>		
Baseline Generalized Harassment	.53(.45)	1846
T4 Generalized Harassment	.22(.33)	1850
Baseline Sexual Harassment	.22(.35)	1842
T4 Sexual Harassment	.10(.25)	1851
<i>Outcome Variables</i>		
Baseline Anxiety	2.25(.76)	1838
T5 Anxiety	2.15(.82)	1625
Baseline Depression	1.94(.63)	1838
T5 Depression	1.89(.74)	1623
Baseline Binge Drinking	.93(1.41)	1830
T5 Binge Drinking	2.18(1.83)	1624
Baseline Drinking to Intoxication	.90(1.40)	1831
T5 Drinking to Intoxication	2.19(1.82)	1623

Note. Harassment and Drinking variables were square-root transformed in the main analysis.

Table 3

Standardized Regression Model Results for Generalized and Sexual Harassment

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
(Generalized Harassment Model)			
<i>Demographic/Baseline Predictors</i>			
Gender	.01	.01	-.03
Black	-.02	-.01	-.01
Latino	-.09**	-.07**	-.07**
Asian	-.02	-.02	-.02
Other Race	-.04	-.03	-.03
Baseline	.36**	.35**	.35**
<i>Activities</i>			
Fraternity/Sorority		.06*	.11
Intramural		.04	-.12
Clubs		.12**	.07
<i>Gender × Activity Interactions</i>			
Fraternity/Sorority × Gender			-.05
Intramural × Gender			.15*
Clubs × Gender			.06
<i>R</i> ²	.14**	.16**	.17**
(Sexual Harassment Model)			
<i>Demographic/Baseline Predictors</i>			
Gender	.07**	.08**	.02
Black	-.06**	-.06**	-.05**
Latino	-.05**	-.04*	-.04*
Asian	-.04	-.04	-.04
Other Race	-.06**	-.05*	-.04**
Baseline	-.31**	.32**	.32**
<i>Activities</i>			
Fraternity/Sorority		.01	.04
Intramural		.06*	-.13
Clubs		.07**	-.01
<i>Gender × Activity Interactions</i>			
Fraternity/Sorority × Gender			.03
Intramural × Gender			.20*
Clubs × Gender			.08
<i>R</i> ²	.12**	.13**	.14**

Note. Harassment and Drinking variables were square-root transformed in the analysis.

All Activities coded as 0 = *no participation*, 1 = *participation*. Gender coded as 0 = *male*, 1 = *female*; The dummy variable for race compares each group to White participants.

*
 $p < .05$,

**
 $p < .01$

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