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TO PREVENT AND REDUCE MEN'S SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, WE MUST CHALLENGE COMMON SOCIAL NORMS OF MASCULINITY AND MASCULINE SEXUALITY

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To prevent and reduce sexual violence, we must shift masculine norms of sexism and sexual entitlement and encourage equitable and respectful forms of masculinity and masculine sexuality.

Engaging Men and Preventing Perpetration

The last two decades have seen an increasing emphasis in the violence prevention field on the need to engage men and boys in prevention (Flood, 2011). This is evident in the growth of prevention programs aimed specifically at boys and men, increasing emphasis on the value of this strategy in government plans of action, and expanding scholarship on the efficacy of this work (Flood, 2019).

There are also signs in the violence prevention field of an increasing emphasis on the need to address perpetration (Flood & Dembele, 2021). This is visible in the growing adoption of legal and institutional standards of affirmative consent (in which individuals must seek explicit and ongoing consent to engage in sexual interaction). It is also visible in the growing calls in the community to emphasize preventing perpetration. Think, for example, of the marches and rallies in which people's placards urge a move from "Teach: Don't get raped" to "Teach: Don't rape" and from "Protect your daughters" to "Educate your sons."

Addressing the Drivers of Men's Perpetration

To prevent and reduce men's perpetration of sexual violence, we must address its drivers. What are the key risk factors for or determinants of the perpetration of sexual violence among men? There is now a wealth of scholarship on this, including a series of systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Jewkes, 2012; Mannell et al., 2022; O'Connor et al., 2021; Spencer et al., 2022; Tharp et al., 2012).

There are three consistent predictors of men's perpetration of sexual violence that prevention efforts on campuses and elsewhere should address: violence-supportive and hostile masculine attitudes, sexist and violence-supportive peers, and wider gender-inequitable norms and relations.

Violence-Supportive and Hostile Masculine Attitudes

First, men are more likely to use sexual violence (and other forms of violence and abuse) against women and girls if they subscribe to attitudes that condone, minimize, excuse, or justify that violence, and if they have hostile and distrustful attitudes toward women. The role of violence-supportive and hostile masculine attitudes in perpetration is evident from a wealth of scholarship, including a meta-analysis of studies over 2000–2021 of sexual assault perpetration by male university students in the United States (Spencer et al., 2022) and a systematic review of studies over 1990–2020 on male-perpetrated sexual aggression against women (Ray & Parkhill, 2021).

Hostile masculinity is a particularly significant driver of men's sexual violence against women. For sexual violence perpetrated by men, the confluence model has become the predominant explanatory model (Dean & Swartout, 2021; Malamuth & Hald, 2017). It emphasizes two risk factors: hostile masculinity—a distrusting and angry disposition toward women—and an impersonal sexual orientation—a desire to engage in uncommitted sexual involvements for physical gratification. Hostile masculinity represents a set of traits associated with insecurity, defensiveness, distrust, hostility, and dominance toward women (Ray & Parkhill, 2021).

Men's likelihood of perpetrating sexual violence is shaped in part by their adherence to hostile masculinity. Hostile masculinity can be understood in terms of five components, and there are significant relationships between each and men's perpetration of sexual violence against women:

- *Sexual dominance*: sexual motives and feelings of gratification linked to having power over one's sexual partner.
- *Hostility toward women*: antagonistic or distrustful attitudes toward women.

- *Adversarial sexual beliefs*: beliefs that male-female relationships are inherently exploitative and manipulative.
- *Acceptance of rape myths*: rape-supportive attitudes and false stereotypical beliefs about rape.
- *Acceptance of interpersonal violence*: the belief that force is a legitimate way to gain compliance in sexual relationships (Hudson-Flege et al., 2020; Palmer et al., 2021; Ray & Parkhill, 2021).

Hostile masculinity has a more direct effect on men's use of sexual aggression than many other variables and mediates the relationship between sexual aggression and various family-based, relational, and individual-level variables (Ray & Parkhill, 2021).

A substantial proportion of men show antagonistic and distrustful attitudes toward women. For example, in a nationally representative survey of community attitudes in Australia, close to half (45%) of boys and young men aged 16–24 (and 29% of girls and young women) agreed that "[i]t is common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men." About one in eight boys and young men, 13% (and 5% of girls and young women) agreed that "[w]omen who wait weeks or months to report sexual assault are probably lying" (Politoff et al., 2019, p. 27).

Sexist, sexually hostile, and violence-supportive attitudes are not evenly spread among men and boys, nor are they random. Instead, adherence to such attitudes is influenced by social, cultural, interpersonal, and individual factors (Ray & Parkhill, 2021). For example, men are more likely to develop hostile masculinity if they are in contexts and cultures that value stereotypical male characteristics (such as power, toughness, dominance, and status), they associate with antisocial and sexist peers, or they experienced or witnessed adversarial interpersonal relationships in childhood (Ray & Parkhill, 2021).

Sexist and Violence-Supportive Peers

A second key predictor of men's perpetration of sexual violence is peer support. Men are more likely to be sexually aggressive if they have sexually aggressive peers, that is, male friends who themselves tolerate or perpetrate sexual aggression. At least two processes shape this: peer reinforcement of sexually aggressive attitudes and behaviors and self-selection into violence-supportive peer groups and settings (Dean & Swartout, 2021).

Peer group norms and patterns of interaction can promote and legitimize sexual violence (Godenzi et al., 2001). Specific peer groups, such as fraternities and athletic teams in universities, may foster a hypermasculine

culture in which men feel pressure or entitlement to use coercion and force for sex. In this sense, men may learn to use sexual violence in part by interacting with male peers who promote or justify sexual violence perpetration. Men who feel they will gain status or acceptance among male peers by having sex may use coercive or aggressive tactics to obtain sex to realize these gains (Dunn et al., 2021). Multiple studies point to the influence of male peer support, including a meta-analysis of studies of sexual violence perpetration in universities (Steele et al., 2020), Spencer et al.'s (2022) aforementioned meta-analysis of studies over 2000–2021 of sexual assault perpetration by male university students in the United States, and a systematic review of risk factors for sexual violence perpetration based on 191 articles (Tharp et al., 2012).

If we are to reduce and prevent sexual violence on campus and in other settings, then we must tackle norms of sexist masculinity. It is particularly important that we challenge male sexual entitlement—the notion that males have a right of access to women's bodies and that women owe men sex.

Male sexual entitlement is a key driver of men's and boys' perpetration of sexual violence against women and girls (Jewkes, 2012). Studies find that entitlement is prominent in men's accounts of why they raped, including rape as fun, entertainment, or "sport," and as a form of punishment for women (Jewkes, 2012). A study among over 10,000 men across six countries in Asia and the Pacific found that the most common motivation for rape was sexual entitlement—men's belief that they have the right to sex (Fulu et al., 2013). A qualitative study among women whose male partners had sexually assaulted them found that a common feature among these men was their sense of entitlement to sex (Parkinson, 2017).

Gender-Inequitable Norms and Relations

Men's sexual violence against women and girls is also driven by gender-inequitable norms and relations. There are associations between men's violence against women and various social and structural elements of gender inequality, including male-dominated power relations in public life as well as in families and relationships, and rigid and patriarchal gender roles (Webster & Flood, 2015, pp. 22–32).

There are powerful challenges in establishing a positive or affirmative standard of consent based on voluntary agreement. A negative standard of consent, based only on the absence of overt resistance among women to men's sexual advances, remains a powerful social norm. In other words, the norm is that a man should stop only when faced with overt resistance from the woman he is with, rather than actively seeking consent throughout. This norm is wrapped up in wider constructions of gender

and sexuality involving notions of uncontrollable male sexuality, female sexual passivity and subservience, a sexual double standard, and male sexual entitlement.

There is a widespread social norm that men should act as sexual initiators and women should act as sexual gatekeepers (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013). Among people aged 16–24 years old in Australia, for example, 24% of young men and 13% of young women agree that "[w]omen find it flattering to be persistently pursued, even if they are not interested" (Politoff et al., 2019, p. 27). This is complemented by the notion of uncontrollable male sex drive: that men are unable to control their sexual desires or impulses, and that women should not "provoke" men or "lead them on." Again, among young people in Australia, 29% of males and 28% of females agree that "[r]ape results from men not being able to control their need for sex" (Politoff et al., 2019, p. 27).

Sexual consent is also discouraged by patriarchal constraints on women's sexuality, including the sexual double standard, in which women's sexual behavior is highly controlled and harshly judged while men's sexual behavior is freer of social constraint. On the one hand, there is little space for women to say "yes" to sex; they are punished if they say yes "too often" or desire sex "too much" (Jozkowski, 2015). On the other hand, while women are given more cultural space to say no than yes, women's refusals are not respected either, and women are expected to be accommodating and to avoid hurting men's feelings.

Two further elements of the typical social organization of heterosexuality feed into men's sexual violence against women: the privileging of male sexual pleasure and a norm of male dominance in relationships. The privileging of male sexual pleasure is visible, particularly in the orgasm gap—men's more frequent experience of orgasm than women's in heterosexual sex (Mahar et al., 2020). The orgasm gap is driven by sociocultural factors, including the cultural prioritization of penile-vaginal intercourse over other sexual activities, women's lack of entitlement to partnered sexual pleasure, and societal scripts about masculinity.

The prioritizing of men's sexual pleasure plays out in part in forms of sexual coercion and pressure in heterosexual sexual relations. In a cultural context where women are socialized to place others' needs before their own and male sexuality is naturalized as biologically driven, women may internalize a sense of responsibility for men's sexual pleasure. Many men assume the right to sexual access, especially when in a relationship, seeking to exert control over when and how sex will take place. Intercourse is often assumed, again making the negotiation of consent difficult. This means, too, that women may consider unwanted or uncomfortable sex as a form of "relationship maintenance" (Indelicato, n.d.).

Norms of male dominance in relationships and families are also relatively common, including among young people. Among people aged 16–24 in Australia, for example, 36% of young men and 26% of young women agree that "[w]omen prefer a man to be in charge of a relationship." In addition, 22% of men and 12% of women agree that "[m]en should take control in relationships and be the head of the household" (Politoff et al., 2019, p. 22). Norms of male dominance in sexual relations may be encouraged in particular by pornography, given its routine depiction and eroticization of male aggression toward women (Crabbe & Flood, 2021).

Men's sexual violence against women is informed in part by social and structural factors, including common elements of the social organization of heterosexuality. This is reflected in the feminist notion of "rape culture," "the social, cultural and structural discourses and practices in which sexual violence is tolerated, accepted, eroticised, minimised and trivialised" (Powell & Henry, 2014, p. 2). And as we have seen, men's perpetration of violence is also structured by aspects of masculinity, including sexist ideologies of hostility and distrust, violence-supportive peer relations, and patriarchal masculine cultures.

Engaging Men and Boys in Change

Energetic efforts to engage men and boys are vital to prevent and reduce sexual violence. There is growing evidence that well-designed education programs can shift the attitudes and behaviors associated with sexual violence, and some evidence that they can lower rates of actual perpetration, from seven reviews since 2007 of programs among men and boys (Flood & Burrell, 2022). For example, in a 2019 systematic review of male-focused programs with evaluations that used randomized designs and measured changes in perpetration behaviors longitudinally, positive impacts on perpetration were found for a program comprising 11 to 12 brief group education sessions among male high school athletes and an online program comprising six modules for male undergraduate students, but other programs showed neutral or negative impacts (Graham et al., 2019). There is also a growing consensus about the elements of effective practice in violence prevention work in general and, to a lesser extent, with men and boys in particular (Flood, 2019).

However, given the evidence of key drivers of men's sexual violence perpetration outlined here, two tasks are particularly important. First, prevention efforts must teach boys and men both why consent is important and how to practice it. Second, they must challenge common social norms of masculinity and masculine sexuality.

If we focus only on educating people about the practice of consent—about effectively communicating one's own sexual wishes and understanding other people's sexual wishes—we may reinforce the myth that sexual violence is often a result of "miscommunication." This is false. The research finds that men accurately understand women's sexual refusals, including ones communicated in subtle ways (Beres & Farvid, 2010; Jozkowski, 2015; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013; O'Byrne et al., 2006). Some men report ignoring women's subtle sexual refusals (such as nonverbal or implicit cues), claiming that such refusals are not genuine, or claiming ignorance or insufficient knowledge (Jozkowski, 2022, p. 216). Australian data finds that 14% of young men aged 16–24 agree that "[w]omen often say 'no' when they mean 'yes'" (Politoff et al., 2019, p. 27). In situations of sexual coercion, research finds that most women report using direct refusals, but the men persisted anyway (Senn, 2011).

Before we teach boys and young men *how* to ascertain sexual partners' consent, we must teach them *why* consent matters. We must nurture a fundamental respect for girls' and women's (and boys' and men's) bodily autonomy and sexual rights and recognition of the harms of sexual coercion or pressure.

For some boys and men, the problem is not that they do not know how to recognize their partner's sexual willingness or unwillingness, but that they *do not care*. They do not care whether their sexual partners are consenting, or may even find sexual coercion arousing. In a cultural context where boys and young men are often taught to see girls and women only as sexual objects, as bodies to win, conquer, and degrade, we must begin by challenging these views and inculcating a fundamental respect for others' bodily autonomy.

If we fail to tackle these wider patriarchal dynamics and focus only on consent, we will first fail to address the frequent forms of sexual coercion in which people (often women and girls) go along with sex they do not want. They have agreed, but reluctantly, and their acquiescence only happens because of internalized, interpersonal, or social pressure. Ostensibly, they have consented, but without genuine space for their own sexual agency (Cahill, 2016), and the experience they have "consented" to leaves them feeling used, disrespected, betrayed, and violated.

If we focus only on consent, we may also end up encouraging young men to "pressure for consent." Men may use forms of pressure to extract from women a reluctant or ambivalent "yes," seeking "an 'ethical cover' . . . a tick-box, covering-your-back kind of consent that is motivated by the interests of the person seeking consent, without proper regard for the interests of the person they want consent from" (Gavey, 2017). Significant proportions

of men already use aggressive or deceptive strategies to obtain consent. In one study, for example, 27% of men described "telling" their partners they were going to have sex with them, 14% used physical or aggressive behaviors to indicate consent, and 12%–13% used deceptive tactics to obtain sex (such as inserting their penis into their partner's vagina or anus but pretending this was done in error) (Jozkowski, 2022, p. 214).

Effective strategies to prevent and reduce men's sexual violence will also challenge common social norms of masculinity and masculine sexuality. They will seek to disrupt the societal expectations that men and boys "should always want sex, seek to display sexual prowess, have many sexual partners, and be in control and aggressive in sexual interactions" (Flood & Burrell, 2022, p. 228). They will seek to challenge social norms of male sexual entitlement, uncontrollable male sexuality, the positioning of women as the guardians of sexual safety with responsibility for both their own and men's sexual behavior, the sexual double standard, and hostility and distrust toward women.

Three strategies are important for disrupting the dominant masculine norms that feed into sexual violence. First, prevention efforts must more directly address dominant norms, structures, and practices of masculinity (Jozkowski, 2022; Our Watch, 2019). Advocates must raise public awareness of the harms of stereotypical constructions of masculinity and masculine sexuality. This may draw on media and popular discussions of "toxic masculinity," although conscious of their limitations (Flood, 2018b). We must target the influences of male peer support, including through interventions in peer cultures and in the social environments that can foster sexual violence (Gidycz et al., 2011). Efforts to promote sexual consent must address the systematic differences in men's and women's understandings and practices of consent, including both the differing cues on which they rely (Jozkowski, 2022, pp. 213–220) and their contrasting commitments to consent *per se*. Education and social marketing programs must be tailored to the differing interpretations and impacts these programs have among women and men (Jozkowski, 2022) and to higher- and lower-risk men (Flood, 2019).

More broadly, the violence prevention field must shift to a more sustained attention to men's roles in violence prevention, adopting gender-transformative approaches intended to shift inequitable structures and ideologies of gender among men and boys (Casey et al., 2016; Flood & Burrell, 2022). Such should be complemented by community- and societal-level strategies intended to remedy the social inequalities that also inform sexual violence (DeGue et al., 2012).

Second, prevention efforts must weaken the cultural influence of patriarchal and violence-supportive constructions of masculinity and masculine sexuality. This may involve:

- Highlighting the gap between masculine social norms and men's own ideals and practices.
- Turning up the volume on the facts of diversity and change among men.
- Engaging men and boys in critical conversations about manhood.
- Challenging the sources of violence-supportive masculine norms in media, pornography, and elsewhere (Flood, 2018a).
- Intervening in the online media and communities that may otherwise recruit men and boys into both online and offline violence (Flood, 2023).

Finally, we must promote non-violent, ethical alternatives to the forms of masculinity and masculine sexuality that sustain sexual violence. Boys and men cannot be what they cannot see. We must disseminate positive, credible, and meaningful visions of the kinds of people we wish men and boys to become. There are debates over how to name these alternatives (healthy masculinity, positive masculinity, something else?) and the extent to which they should be tied to masculinity at all (Flood, 2018a). Nevertheless, violence prevention work must include the promotion and affirmation of non-violent identities and relations among men and boys that are grounded in non-violence and gender justice.

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ADVANCING SEXUAL CONSENT AND AGENTIAL PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

TOWARD A NEW COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Edited by JASON A. LAKER
and ERICA M. BOAS

ADVANCING SEXUAL CONSENT AND AGENTIAL PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This book provides an in-depth exploration of sexual consent communication and negotiation practices among students and efforts to prevent and respond to sexual coercion and violence within the context of North American higher education institutions.

Delving into the complexities of communication around sexual consent, it examines how factors such as identity, early learning experiences, societal norms, and coercive elements influence interactions among young adult postsecondary students. It emphasizes the importance of agency in intimate settings and how this is shaped by these factors. The methodology employed in this decade-long research is innovative and interview-based, providing a rich narrative from student perspectives. These narratives serve to highlight the intricate interplay between individual agency and societal expectations in intimate situations. The book also incorporates valuable insights from other experts in the field. These contributions serve to contextualize the study's findings within the broader theoretical framework and research on the subject. This approach not only enriches the descriptions of the study but also provides a more holistic understanding of the topic. As such, the book ultimately helps to inform educational policies and professional practices to promote sexual agency and address pressing issues such as sexual coercion, violence, and assault on campus.

This volume will appeal to researchers and stakeholders in higher education, including educators, upper-level students, professional practitioners, and parents. In doing so, it contributes to the conversation around creating a safer and more respectful environment in higher education institutions.

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