Why Men Rape: Applications to Prevention

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Objectives (action on Guiding Principle 8)

- To identify targets of primary prevention
- To review levels of influence on rape
- To learn the confluence model as an conceptual foundation for prevention
- To brainstorm implications in terms of who, what, when, where, and how to intervene
Understanding Causes Guides Prevention

- **Who abuses?** Reducing conditions that foster perpetration

- **Who is abused:** Increasing avoidance to its maximum potential
Causes of Rape

• Influences range from macro society to the molecular level
• Determinants change over the life span
• Multiple causes operate probabilistically
Society-wide Influences

• Valuing male toughness, aggression, competition
• Male dominated social system with codified gender imbalance
• Cultural practices such as child rearing, sexual initiation, arranged marriage, norms for dating
• Broad social conditions such as war
• Influential Institutions
How Institutions Contribute to Rape

- Adverse environments
- Teach or reinforce male and female role imbalance
- Teach or reinforce values favoring impersonal sex
- Teach or reinforce attitudes condoning sexual abuse of women
- Absent or maladaptive teaching of alternatives to violence
Peer Group:
Self selection, negative influence, or both?
• Gang or delinquent associations
• Sexual activity norms and pressure
• Drug/alcohol norms and pressure
Dyads

- Type and stage of relationship
- Characteristics of the woman
- Communication
Determinants Within Individuals

- Hereditary traits & mental processes
- Physiology, neurophysiology, brain dysfunction, psychopathology
- Interactions of above with alcohol
- Personality traits
- Traditional gender schema
- Sex and power motives
- Attitudes reflecting rape myths
- Social learning history -- arousal, rejection

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Feminist Theory of Rape

• Men desire to dominate women and establish social institutions to do so
• Rape is the ultimate form of domination and enforces male superiority
• Women are targets because they are vulnerable and are useful to men
• Men learn rape through socialization including attitudes, sex roles, emotions, perceptions, and cognitions that justify male dominance
Questions to Ask

- Q. Why are patriarchal cultures so widespread?
- Q. Why haven’t women established female dominant cultures?
- Q. Why is rape of women by men nearly universal?
- Q. Why are women sexual aggressors so rare?
- Q. Why do men rape women and not vice versa during war?
The Confluence Model

• Re-conceptualizes at individual level and maintains the emphasis on modification by culture, environment, and social learning of attitudes, scripts, values, perceptions, arousal patterns
• Primary motivator of rape is seen as mechanisms governing sexuality
• Women are targeted because rape is motivated by sexual desire
• Assumes that all male children possess characteristics that enable rape
Confluence Model is Evolutionary-based

- The human mind formed in response to adaptive problems faced by ancestors over many generations
- Mechanisms cannot be understood in terms of current environments
Adaptations

• Mind is composed of many specific adaptations for accomplishing goals
• They are evolved structures or processes that overcome environmentally posed obstacles
• Most identical for men and women
• Sexual strategies differ due to different biological capacities
Evolutionary does not mean fixed

- Open mental program -- directs development via interaction with environment (facultative)
- Closed mental program -- minimally affected by variations in environment (obligatory)
Sexual Access Strategies

- Convergent interests--pair bonding, emotional investment, long-term relationship, mutually satisfying sex, raising of offspring
- Divergent interests--short-term, unemotional relationships, uncommitted
Major Components of the Confluence Model of Sexual Coercion

- Individual personality traits of dominance versus nurturance continuum
- Impersonal versus personal sexuality programmed by benign or harsh environments
- Hostile masculinity -- emotions and attitudes that mobilize the use of coercive tactics when facing conflict
Dominance and Nuturance

- Heritable personality traits
- Reflect the extent to which person focuses exclusively on own interests
- When dominance is high relative to nuturance, impersonal sexuality is most likely
Impersonal Sexuality

- Not just high sex drive--
- Emphasis on partner variety
- Sexuality is devoid of affection and bonding, noncommittal, gameplaying
- Looks for sex earlier in relationship
- More than one concurrent relationship
- Many one-time partners, unfaithful when in monogamous relationships
Hostile Masculinity

• The force that directs impersonal sex into coercion--
• Hypersensitive and distrustful towards women
• Uses sex as a means of asserting dominance
• Perceive hurt and rejection by women
• Coercive sex reduces anger, anxiety and low self-esteem
Adverse Childhood Environments

- The force that triggers development of impersonal sexual interests--
- Emotional or physical neglect
- Sexual, physical, emotional maltreatment
- Witness violence
- Parental drug abuse or mental illness
- Parental loss or absence
- Negative role models
Pair Bonding

• Mother/infant bond universal across primates
• Emotional bonding in monogamous couples more common when there is shortage of women
• Emotional bonding a strong predictor of sexual satisfaction
• Extent to which a person solves problems by focusing on his/her own interests
• When dominance is high relative to nurturance, short-term sexual strategies are more likely
Securely Attached People

- Ideally seek a relationship with few mates over long periods of time
- Place more emphasis on physical appearance in short compared to long-term relationships
- No sex differences
Social Learning

- AGGRESSION IS NOT INEVITABLE—“Even in violence-prone animals, aggression is always an optional strategy... All organisms have coevolved equally potent inhibitory mechanisms that ... suppress aggression when it is in their interest to do so.”

- SEXUAL AGGRESSION MAY NOT BE UNIQUE—other forms of violence against women share many of these same causal factors. There are links to peer violence, school violence, hate crimes, sexual harassment, and physical assault in relationships.
Implications for Prevention Education

- Who should we be targeting?
- When should interventions occur?
- What content might be added?
- Where should interventions occur? Are there institutions we could be partnering with?
- How would change be measured?