GENDER DYNAMICS IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION: EMPATHY, SELF-AWARENESS, AND REDUCING REACTANCE

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"Mr. Osborne, may I be excused? My brain is full."
WHO IS IN THE ROOM?
THINK OF A TIME . . .
START FROM A PLACE OF EMPATHY FOR MEN
“To create loving men, we must love males. Loving maleness is different from praising and rewarding males for living up to sexist-defined notions of male identity. Caring about men because of what they do for us is not the same as loving males for simply being.”

• bell hooks
IMAGINE YOU ARE PRESENTING TO A ROOM FULL OF MEN...
FROM OUR PARTNER

• Find your empathy to connect with men as people, partners, and allies, not as possible perpetrators.

• Empathy is about suspending your reality to enter their reality - it’s imaging that you are them, with their background, getting this information in this context (what is “just” and “fair” about what they “should know” is less helpful than really understanding, without judgment, where they really are.

• Men and boys don’t generally wake up in the morning thinking, “Hey, I think I’ll try on misogyny today.”
FINDING YOUR EMPATHY

• When can we call people in instead of calling them out?

• Be mindful of empathy and asking a members of marginalized group to carry the load. This is a place where folks with privilege should find a way to step up (without taking over).
UNPACK YOUR OWN STUFF
THINK-PAIR-SHARE

• What might you carry with you that could get in the way?
• Accurate self-awareness and self-assessment are the emotional intelligence factors that unlock the ability to successfully facilitate with groups at various stages of change.

• Self-awareness is about knowing what you are feeling, why you are feeling it, and being open to and working with your feelings--think of a stream of emotion that we can tap into at any time.

• Accurate self assessment is about being open to feedback, learning from experiences, and understanding strengths/limitations--to improve actively seek feedback from trusted sources, work on growth mindset, and align actions with values.
HELP PEOPLE UNDERSTAND WHAT’S IN IT FOR THEM
THINK-PAIR-SHARE

• What do you want men to take away from this work?
• What do men want to take away from this work?
CASE STUDY: ATHLETIC TEAM
“WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?”

• Never have another incident/report.
• Team chemistry.
• Change the way our team is viewed by other students.
• To improve our image on campus, and become a group people love to see out on the weekend.
• Come together more as a team; improve our image socially across campus.
• I’d like the team & myself to be more open & hospitable to people around campus, especially at our parties.
• Everyone on this team develops a culture in which people on this campus feel comfortable to be around.
• I would like to see the team get to the point where we are respected leaders on campus rather than frowned upon members.
• Help make campus a safe environment where everyone is comfortable.
• We grow as a team and become closer through this process.
• I hope to get a better understanding of what to do to help my teammates in a dangerous situation.
• Gain an increased understanding of how to become a leader and make a difference in difficult social situation.
• To become more united as a team and learn to respect others and their feelings.
• To make the team one that leads social change, not only within our team, but also in the community as a whole.
• I hope we can have a positive impact on the school and the community. I want to be remembered as good people.
Help men find their “buy-in.” Many men experience caring about sexual assault as a personal choice and do not realize the ways they are impacted by sexual and relationship violence.
HEALTH BELIEF MODEL
(U.S. HEALTH SERVICE, 1950s)
REDUCE REACTANCE:
PAY ATTENTION TO STAGES OF CHANGE
The Trans-theoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984)

- Understand stages/readiness for change and attempt to have interventions for all stages.

- Reactance can occur when someone is heavily pressured to accept a certain view or attitude. Reactance can cause the person to adopt or strengthen a view or attitude that is contrary to what was intended, and also increases resistance to persuasion.
Precarious manhood and displays of physical aggression.

Rosson JK, Vandello JA, Burnaford RM, Weaver JR, Arzu Wasti S.

Abstract
The results of three experiments demonstrate that physically aggressive displays are part of men’s cultural script for restoring threatened gender status. In Studies 1 and 2, challenges to men’s gender status elicited heightened physically aggressive displays, including punching a pad with greater force and selecting an aggressive boxing activity over a nonaggressive puzzle activity. Study 3 established that a public display of aggressive readiness reduced men’s anxiety-related cognitions in the wake of a gender threat. This suggests that aggressive displays may function to downregulate negative affect when manhood has been threatened. The discussion considers past research on gender and physical aggression in light of the authors’ thesis that manhood, relative to womanhood, is culturally defined as a precarious status that must be actively, even aggressively, defended.
A SLURRED YES! DOESN’T MEAN YES.
be clear on consent.
NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION

Where might new students be across the stages of changes in terms of thinking about sexual respect and sexual violence?
Some ways to reduce reactance:

• Allow opportunity for reflection, change in attitudes, room for approximations of truth and emotional safety to voice perspectives that don’t align with your message.

• Understand the complexity of experience that would land any particular individual with the perspective they had, all of the conditioning and socializing that had it develop, the neural pathways that have fired together for as long as they have, and then try to imagine bringing new information that has no easy assimilation into that context--its a lot to ask from a cognitive perspective.

• Few humans excel at making room for information that doesn’t fit their world view.
AVOID ASSUMPTIONS AND OTHERING
START WITH SOME OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

• Ask “What are you already doing that is working?”
• What are the protective factors of the men with whom you are working?
• When are you using “they” or “they all” to describe a population with whom you are working?
SHOW PEOPLE WHAT TO DO, NOT JUST WHAT NOT TO DO
My Strength is not for hurting.

So when she changed her mind, I STOPPED.
Men can stop rape.
MyStrength.org

When Kate seemed too drunk to leave with Chris
I checked in with her.

I'm the kind of guy who takes a stand
WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Men can stop rape
Preventing sexism and sexual assault
SMALL WAYS MEN CAN HELP PREVENT SEXUAL AND RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

- Take responsibility for playing a role in ending sexual and relationship violence and embrace gender-based violence as a men’s issue too.
- Intentionally model respect for women.
- Refuse to participate in events that support violence as normal and healthy.
- Refuse to participate in events that denigrate and objectify women, such as pornography (especially violent pornography) and rating women’s bodies.
- Respectfully confront and educate when other men behave in sexist ways, understanding that this behavior is also personal.
- Learn skills to intervene that include learning how to talk to other men that fits their style and type of relationship.
- Develop healthy expressions of masculinity such as courage (including emotional courage that includes empathy and love), leadership, independence, orientation toward action, and appropriate risk-taking (such as risking one’s stake in "precarious manhood" in service of action based in compassion towards those being denigrated or objectified).
- When in a group of men conversing, understand that one’s inner reactions are often different than how they appear (i.e., public approval like laughing indicates internal approval though you may not). In order to help challenge others, find an ally in the group to help find the courage to speak up.

(adapted from Kilmartin and Berkowitz, 2005)
AVOID JUDGMENT WHEN POSSIBLE: SHAME KILLS LEARNING
imagine if men were as disgusted with rape as they are with periods
ACTIVE BYSTANDER SCENARIOS

• “You’re in the locker room and one of your teammates starts talking about a hot girl that he is hoping to score with on Saturday.”
• “Your team’s end of season tradition of making people do shots and run naked through campus may be making some people uncomfortable.”
• “Devise a scenario where someone is uncomfortable in your locker room.”
• “Devise a scenario where a team tradition might be leaving people out.”
• Understand the “patriarchal dividend” that may have left many men unaware and complicit. Additionally, many people become defensive when discussing issues related to privilege and have trouble seeing how they benefit when they are often stuck in the oppressed status of their identity. This takes a very skilled presenter, understanding, and empathy.
ENLIST MEN AS ALLIES
MEN SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN PLANNING PROGRAMMING
MEN SHOULD BE PART OF YOUR TEAM; WHEN THEY ARE NOT, PILOT!!!
“It seems the message and intent are different. With the tagline “What’s your move?”, I’d expect some education and examples of how men can get involved.”
RESOURCES


THANK YOU

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