

A brief history of the science and practice of engaging boys and men in sexual assault prevention

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The scope of sexual aggression among boys and men

Whereas anyone can experience or perpetrate sexual violence, rates of lifetime sexual victimization are particularly high among women (Black et al., 2011). The Campus Climate Surveys of the American Association of Universities found that women as well as students identifying as transgender nonbinary and gender queer or questioning reported significantly higher rates of sexual victimization than cisgender men (Cantor, 2017, 2020). In the National Intimate Partners and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), 19.3% of women and 1.7% of men in the United States reported experiencing rape in their lifetime (Breiding et al., 2014). Further, when a more expansive definition of sexual violence is used the rates are much higher, with 43.6% of women in the United States report experiencing some form of contact sexual violence in their lifetime, in comparison to 24.8% of men (Smith et al., 2018).

Regardless of the gender of the victim, men are most often the perpetrator of acts of sexual violence. According to the NISVS, 98.1% of women who experienced rape and 93.3% of men who experienced rape identified the perpetrator as a man (Black et al., 2011). Analysis of the NISVS data also suggests that almost all bisexual and heterosexual women who experience assault (98.3% and 99.1%, respectively) identify the perpetrator as a man (Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2013). Similarly, the majority of lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual women (85.2%, 87.5%, and 94.7%, respectively) who report experiences of sexual violence other than rape indicate the assault was perpetrated by a man (Walters et al., 2013). The high rates of sexual aggression perpetrated by boys and men against girls and women, as well as the range of consequences to victims and society (Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabral, 2009; Lindquist, Crosby, Barrick, et al., 2013; Martin, Macy, & Young, 2011) underscore the importance of targeting sexual assault prevention efforts toward boys and men; who are in a position to prevent these assaults by their male peers.

Fundamental principles guiding prevention with boys and men

Some of the earliest prevalence studies among college students reported that approximately 25% of men reported engaged in some form of sexually coercive behavior, ranging from unwanted touching

to rape since the age of 14 (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). More recent studies report similar rates of sexual aggression (Gidycz, Warkentin, & Orchowski, 2007; Loh, Gidycz, Lobo, & Luthra, 2005; Swartout, Koss, et al., 2015; Swartout, Swartout, Brennan, & White, 2015; Warkentin & Gidycz, 2007). Whereas the prevalence rates are alarming, they also indicate that *most boys and men* do not report engaging in sexually aggressive behavior. Accordingly, it is important for prevention efforts to focus on helping boys and men *who are not at risk to perpetrate* address the sexually aggressive behavior of their peers. It is also important that sexual assault prevention efforts recognize individual, cultural, and gender identity differences among individuals who identify as male (Holz, Fischer, & Daood, 2018).

Research has identified what may be the most productive areas of focus for prevention efforts. Universal prevention approaches must target an array of risk and protective factors for perpetration across the social ecology (i.e., individual, interpersonal, community, societal-levels; as proposed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004). Efforts to address these risk and protective factors can be administered in concert with efforts that engage men as allies in addressing the behavior of other men (Flood, 2019). The need to design interventions for boys and men who are at high risk to perpetrate, in addition to universal prevention efforts for all men, is also clear—especially for those who engage in high-risk behaviors, such as alcohol use, and for men with a history of sexual aggression (Stephens & George, 2009), given that men who report engaging in sexual aggression are more likely than nonsexually aggressive men to report higher levels of alcohol use and problem drinking (Abbey, Saenz, Buck, Parkhill, & Hayman, 2006; Borowsky, Hogan, & Ireland, 1997; Neal & Fromme, 2007), and approximately 68% of college men who engage in sexual aggression do so again (Zinzow & Thompson, 2015).

What we know about perpetrators highlights that some men are aware of their own proclivity to perpetrate (Gidycz, Orchowski, & Berkowitz, 2011), and that expression of sexually aggressive behavior may depend upon certain releasers or facilitators in a social context (Testa & Cleveland, 2017), such as whether there is an opportunity to perpetrate, and whether the environment is conducive/permissive of sexually aggressive behavior. Prevention efforts directed at potential perpetrators must therefore consider the heterogeneity of risk and protective factors for sexual aggression (Tharp et al., 2013) and target a multiplicity of factors, including individual and peer-level influences, situational factors (i.e., alcohol use), and environmental conditions. For example, there are some men for whom contextual factors (i.e., peer relationships and perception of the environment) may be critical to their expression of sexually aggressive behavior during a particular developmental period (see Swartout, Koss, et al., 2015; Swartout, Swartout, et al., 2015; Thompson, Kingree, Zinzow, & Swartout, 2015; Thompson, Swartout, & Koss, 2013). Given this heterogeneity among perpetrators, is unlikely that any single program will be sufficient, suggesting that prevention efforts must be knitted together synergistically across the lifespan (Orchowski et al., 2020).

Sexual assault prevention initiatives for boys and men must also reflect the context in which violence occurs. Despite the myth that sexual aggression is perpetrated by a stranger (Burt, 1980), most sexually violent acts occur between people that know each other. For example, Gidycz et al. (2011) found that 17.6% of their sample of college men reported a history of sexual aggression from the age of 14 to the time of the study, with most perpetrators identifying the victim as a steady or casual dating partner (63%), 27.4% as an acquaintance, and only 5.5% as a stranger, while 4.1% identified their relationship to the victim as “other.” These data speak to the need address the potential for sexual aggression in men’s sexual interactions with casual as well as long-term partners.

The evolution of efforts to engage men and boys in sexual violence prevention

Despite a recognition of the prevalence of sexual violence and the role of boys and men as aggressors in many assaults, prevention science has been relatively slow to develop and test effective prevention strategies. In fact, [DeGue et al. \(2014\)](#) systematic review of 140 outcome studies examining sexual assault prevention approaches found that only 28.6% of programs were geared explicitly toward boys and men, with others commenting that many evaluations of these approaches have lacked methodological rigor (see [Tharp et al., 2011](#)). This raises the question of why the sexual assault prevention field has lacked a rigorous and targeted focus on prevention approaches for boys and men. To provide an answer, it is useful to examine the history and implementation of sexual assault prevention efforts over the past 60 years.

Whereas mobilization to address sexual violence against women can be traced back to the early 1900s (see [Chan, 2017](#); [McGuire, 2015](#)), significant growth in efforts to address violence against women was not fostered until the feminist consciousness-raising groups of the 1960s and 1970s (see [Davis, 2005](#); [Rose, 1977](#)). The activism of groups such as the National Organization for Women (NOW), as well as the individual efforts of survivors telling their stories through “speak-outs,” led to the establishment of rape crisis center (see [Connell & Wilson, 1974](#); [Greensite, 2009](#); [Heldman & Brown, 2014](#)), as well as telephone crisis lines for victims of sexual violence (see [Wasserman, 1973](#)). Susan Brownmiller’s seminal book—*Against Our Will*—positioned sexual violence as an issue of gender equity, rather than a matter of criminal behavior ([Brownmiller, 1975](#)). With these developments, the antirape movement grew from and within the women’s rights movement, driven primarily by survivors themselves as well as the women and men who supported them (see [Butler, 1996](#); [Poskin, 2006](#)).

In the 1970s, increases in public awareness regarding violence and women led by these feminist antirape activists fostered legal reform and policy change within the United States, with Congress passing the Rape Control Act in 1975, and the establishment of the Coalition Against Sexual Assault in 1978. Subsequently, in 1982, governmental money was allocated to sexual assault crisis response centers through the Preventative Health and Health Services Block Grants. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), passed in 1994, provided increased government funding to support the prevention of sexual violence, as well as services for victims. These efforts established a necessary foundation for supporting victims and subsequently for the development of sexual assault prevention efforts and continue to provide critical infrastructure and fiscal support to advance these goals.

These early legal reforms and policy changes were followed prevention initiatives in the early 1970s that took a criminological approach, focusing primarily on opportunity reduction and offender deterrence. This focus was troubling to many feminist activists, who recognized these strategies as limiting the freedom of girls and women (i.e., telling women not to go out at night) and neglecting the role of men in prevention ([McCall, 1993](#)). In addition, these reforms ushered in very little change in accountability for perpetrators ([Bienen, 1983](#)). The early field of sexual violence prevention also lacked rigorous evaluation of programs and policies, leading to a lack of understanding of the effectiveness of these prevention efforts. In this regard, George [McCall \(1993\)](#) noted that “a quarter century after passage of the Rape Prevention and Control Act, sexual assault prevention programming remains a confused, scattered, and sporadic enterprise with little scientific underpinning” (p. 277).

Also missing from early antirape movements were the voices and actions of men, which can be attributed to some men not seeing a place for themselves in this effort, and others indirectly or directly supporting men's engagement in harmful behavior toward women (Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997; Schwartz & Nograd, 1996). There was also—and continues to be—a backlash by some men to feminist efforts to call attention to men's violence against women, with some trivializing the seriousness of this violence and others actively participating in antifeminist initiatives (Dragiewicz, 2013; Funk, 1993). Despite this, a growing awareness of the issue and increasing numbers of profeminist men has fostered increased attention to the role and involvement in men in addressing gender-based violence (Berkowitz, 2002; DeKeseredy, Schwartz, & Alvi, 2000; Katz, 2006), a trend facilitated by ongoing conversations regarding men's role in feminist activism at large (hooks, 1952). As noted by Macomber (2018), "men who were involved often became involved because their female partners were already in the movement and they supported the ideas and efforts of the women's movement" (p. 1492). As more victims shared their experiences, more men became aware of how women and girls in their own lives were impacted by the issue, fostering a desire to become a part of the solution (Casey & Smith, 2010). Some men also voiced their complicity in sexism and their discomfort with the problematic behavior of other men (Thompson, 1995), leading men to perceive a need to make changes in themselves, to learn ways of intervening with other men, and to change the larger culture that fosters violence against women (Katz, 2006). Alan Berkowitz summarizes the progression of men's involvement in the antirape movement in an interview with the Centre for Leadership for Women as follows:

The need for men's involvement in sexual assault prevention aligns with the reality that men are the strongest influence on other men and most likely to change the behavior of men who are perpetrators. During the 1980s and 1990s, several pro-feminists, antirape organizations were launched across the United States (Kimmel & Mosmiller, 1992), which continue to do the work of engaging men in anti-violence work today.

Ending violence against women has always been seen as the province of women: first because all the original leaders on these issues were women; second because women were skeptical about men's involvement, and third; because men did not step up to the plate to be a part of the work. But seeing violence prevention as only the responsibility of women I see as an example of thinking that perpetrates the problem.

Berkowitz (2007, pp. 191–192)

Men's work on this issue was not without resistance and skepticism by woman feminist activists as well (Kivel, 1992; Messner, Greenberg, & Peretz, 2015; Schechter, 1982). As reviewed by DeKeseredy et al. (2000), some feminists were reluctant to engage with men due to a fear of "collaborating with potential assailants" (p. 922) or were reluctant to provide opportunities for men to enact patriarchal socialization and take over the work that they had worked hard to advance. These concerns are valid given that men within feminist movements often receive more favorable attention and positive reactions for doing work that has historically been done by women (Casey, 2010; Flood, 2003; Macomber, 2018). Facebook posts made by female activists highlighted by Berkowitz (2019) speak to this concern, for example: "I am tired of these men promoting the end of violence against women for their own gain" and "some men are commodifying and colonizing the battered women's movement" (p. 26). As noted by Wiley and Dunne (2019), there is a danger of men reproducing a patriarchal structure when they take

the role of offering help and acting *on behalf* of women, rather than supporting women to be autonomous in solving problems with men serving as allies.

Given these concerns, feminist scholars have highlighted the need for accountability on the part of men when working with feminists to advance social change (Berkowitz, 2019; Flood, 2019; Kimmel & Mosmiller, 1992; Macomber, 2018). Alan Berkowitz notes:

Many women advocates and leaders have come to the understanding that it is important to have male partners in the work who can speak with and understand men. At the same time, men have become more aware of violence against women because of the many courageous survivors who have chosen to not be silent. So, there is a growing awareness that men have a role to play in this issue, but that it must be alongside of and accountable to women.

Berkowitz (2007, p. 192)

Defining accountability can be difficult. At a minimum being accountable to women's work in violence prevention requires that profeminist men take clear action to align their behavior with their spoken values (Flood, 2019).

Due to these developments, we are now “on the brink of a major cultural shift, as men's involvement in gender-justice work proliferates across the globe. No longer considered ‘women's work’ only, men are emerging as visible allies and leaders in the fight for gender equality” (Macomber, 2018, p. 1492). The early focus of crime deterrence and opportunity reduction has shifted to more environmental and public health prevention strategies (see Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004). Prevention efforts have also changed from treating men as potential perpetrators, to recognizing men's ability to influence the environment that allows other men to perpetrate as well as to intervene with potential perpetrators themselves (DeKeseredy et al., 2000; Flood, 2005).

Prevention efforts specifically targeting boys and men in sexual assault prevention can be seen in the theoretical and research literature starting in the 1990s (see Berkowitz, 1994). For example, Katz's (1995) *Mentors in Violence Prevention Program* aimed to encourage students to take an active role in changing their community, by responding to intervention against sexual harassment and assault. Berg, Lonsway, and Fitzgerald (1999) utilized an empathy-based prevention program for boys and men, designed to decrease men's rape supportive attitudes, and rape proclivity, by educating men on the aftereffects of sexual violence, and encouraging men to support survivors. Foubert, Newberry, and Tatum (2007) developed a 1 in 4 program focusing on raising empathy for sexual assault survivors. Most of these efforts used male facilitators to deliver programming to all-male audiences, a best practice supported by science and expert recommendations, which also averts placing men and women in the same workshop which can be distressful for female survivors (see Lonsway et al., 2009 for a review).

Despite the somewhat favorable evaluations of these programs in the peer-review scientific literature, programs targeting boys and men represented a minority of the available approaches. Thus, Morrison, Hardison, Mathew, and O'Neil (2004) suggested that male focused programs represented only 8% of programs in the literature—with many of these efforts failing to utilize valid theoretical and workshop formats and failing to produce measurable changes. Instead, as discussed by Gidycz et al. (2011), there was—and perhaps still is—a “tendency for men's prevention programming to be conducted in a theatrical format, whereby groups of trained students or professional speakers are *hired by a university* to provide a speech or dramatic presentation” (pp. 169–170), rather than universities developing their own, theoretically based and scientifically supported programs.

A notable exception is Berkowitz (1994, 2002) which is a theory-based program which applied social norms and bystander intervention theories to address sexual assault prevention in college men that has been empirically evaluated and shown to produce positive outcomes. The program, offered as the “Men’s Workshop” was first evaluated by Earle (1996) and Davis (1997, 2000) with a larger, more stringent evaluation being conducted by Gidycz et al. (2011). Since this time, several additional interventions specific to boys and men have been reported in the research literature (Orchowski et al., 2017, 2018). Due to these efforts engaging boys and men in sexual assault prevention is now seen as a vital component of sexual assault prevention practice with several promising strategies being documented (see Flood, 2019 for a review), with separate-gender programming considered as a best practice (Lonsway et al., 2009).

Current efforts to address sexual violence are also now framed within a gendered lens. The World Health Organization (2019) highlights the importance of addressing harmful gender norms that uphold male privilege, limit women’s autonomy, justify violence, and stigmatize survivors in violence prevention efforts, and uses the term “gender-based violence” when describing sexual assault (see Barker, Thomas, & Nascimento, 2007). Using this view, cultural systems of patriarchy and sexism are recognized as core drivers of gender-based violence (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Kearns, D’Inverno, & Reidy, 2020; McCauley, Tancredi, Silverman, et al., 2013; Sanday, 1981). As described by Dworkin, Fleming, and Colvin (2015), programs that take a gender transformative approach are particularly important “because individual men are seen as participants in the construction of the gender order through the practice of masculinities” and because “it is possible to challenge dominant norms by both encouraging positive aspects of masculinity in the name of improved gender equality and health and by disrupting the masculinity/femininity binary” (p. S131). Research supports the promise of this approach. A systematic review of gender transformative programs addressing sexual risk found that 9 out of 11 programs produced significant declines in at least one outcome (Dworkin, Treves-Kagan, & Lippman, 2013). Accordingly, many violence prevention initiatives now take a gender-transformative approach (Casey, Carlson, Two Bulls, & Yager, 2016; Dworkin et al., 2013; Dworkin, Hatcher, Colvin, & Peacock, 2012; International Center for Research on Women and Instituto Promundo, 2007).

Whether focusing on gender-transformation, norms correction, or other themes, current sexual assault prevention programs are diverse in content, format, facilitation style, and key outcomes (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; DeGue et al., 2014; Orchardski et al., 2020), with only some demonstrating success. Common program elements include offering trainings in an all-male setting, seeking to reduce both engagement in sexual aggression and adherence to attitudes that condone sexual violence, as well as to lower the barriers that prevent men and boys from intervening with other boys and men. Programs that aim to foster change in individual attitudes commonly address attitudes associated with perpetration or with bystanders not intervening, such as acceptance of stereotypical rape myths, holding adversarial views toward women, condoning violence, or holding traditional attitudes about sex roles. Prevention programs may also provide a critique of male socialization, foster the development of empathy, teach social and communication skills, and/or correct misperceptions of relevant social norms. Some programs also include elements of bystander intervention training, intending to shift community tolerance of sexual violence, and engaging boys and men as allies in addressing the sexually aggressive behavior of their peers. Engaging boys and men in addressing the behavior of peers is important, given studies suggesting that boys and men are especially sensitive and responsive to what other males think (Austin, Dardis, Wilson, Gidycz, & Berkowitz, 2015; Dardis, Murphy, Bill, & Gidycz, 2016; Hillebrand-Gunn, Heppner, Mauch, & Park, 2010; Mennicke, Kennedy, Gromer, & Klem-O’Connor, 2018;

Mulla et al., 2019). For example, Kilmartin et al. (2008) implemented a social norms intervention to target college men’s ascription to sexist attitudes, documenting that men who were presented with normative feedback about the true more positive norm among other men subsequently endorsed lower ascription to sexist beliefs relative to men in a control group. College students are also more likely to intervene to address sexual violence prosocial manner when they believe their peers would respond in a similar way (Deitch-Stackhouse, Kenneavy, Thayer, Berkowitz, & Mascari, 2015). This well-established body of data confirms that many men are operating with flawed beliefs about what other men think and do, which can facilitate the engagement in problem behavior of men at risk as well as hold other men back from taking action to confront their problematic behavior.

What does it mean to “engage” boys and men in prevention of sexual assault?

The dictionary defines “engage” as “inducing participation” in something. With respect to “engaging boys and men” in the prevention of violence against women, the term has been used in diverse ways. At times it refers to including boys and men as active participants while at other times it is used more broadly to directing prevention programs toward boys at men. Sometimes it is used very generically in discussions of men’s role in advancing violence prevention efforts.

Engaging boys and men in prevention requires their involvement in the larger conversations that are taking place regarding violence against women and in addressing the ways in which the dominant masculine culture contributes to violence. These conversations, which originated among women, requires bringing men “to the table” to participate in them. Boys and men need to be involved as partners and leaders—both in the conversation about what is needed and in the orchestration of programming and policy changes—an involvement that requires not just physical presence, but also in longevity and spirit. Men must also be involved as participants, partners, and leaders in the development and administration of efforts to examine and change men’s role in sexual violence (Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015). Problematically, as this has occurred, researchers have noted a tendency for men to “take over” these discussions (Casey, 2010; Flood, 2003) highlighting the need noted earlier to define and operationalize how men can be accountable to women while being active in this work (Flood, 2019; Hollander, 2013).

The term “engaging boys and men” is also used to reflect the ways in which violence prevention efforts can reach out to male audiences and thus may simply refer to the efforts to disseminate antirape messaging. Given the variety of uses of this term, it is important to carefully define what we mean by “engagement” looks like. At a minimum, these definitions suggest when men and boys are involved programmatically, that they should be active agents of a solution, rather than merely passive recipients of the information. As noted by Pease (2008), this reflects a broader shift from focusing on men as potential perpetrators to “involving them as partners in primary prevention strategies” (p. 1).

It is important to note, however, that simply engaging men in prevention efforts is insufficient for producing meaningful attitude and behavior change. The importance of “program process” is therefore recognized as an essential component of engaging men in sexual assault prevention (Berkowitz, 2004; Breitenbecher, 2000; Davis, 2000; Lonsway, 1996). Stereotypes about masculinity can impede men’s meaningful participation in prevention efforts, and programs which are poorly administered or cursory in nature are likely to do little to shift men’s beliefs and can even foster a “backlash” (Capraro, 1994). Thus, engaging men without active and meaningful involvement that is consistent

with a feminist understanding of the issue is inadequate. When boys and men claim to renounce violence against women without *active involvement* in efforts, they reduce themselves to passive participants in the movement and bypass the need for personal change. This issue is described by Thayer (2000), who notes:

I considered myself a “passive objector.” I knew women had been oppressed throughout history, but I believed that presently things were pretty even. As far as being homophobic, I had gay friends, but rarely spoke up when I heard gay slurs. I was a non-sexist and non-homophobic male, but I did not believe that it was my place to stand up for either of these issues. (p. 1)

True engagement requires that individuals recognize allyship as an active, ongoing process which requires ongoing healing work, acknowledgment of biases, action to overcome defensiveness and openness to feedback, and to discomfort in uncomfortable situations (Berkowitz, 2005). Truly engaged violence prevention require men to do more than just “walk the walk” and “talk the talk”, but also foster deep reflection on personal values, beliefs, and behaviors.

The term “engagement of boys and men” has also been debated at a theoretical level. As discussed by Flood (2015), there are several common assumptions surrounding men’s engagement in sexual assault prevention efforts, for example: (1) that it is in men’s interest to be involved in efforts to prevent violence against women and to advance gender equity; (2) that the most effective individuals to work with men are other men; and (3) the problematic premise of framing efforts around what it means to be a “real man.” Burrell and Flood (2019) take note of the ongoing discussions about which profeminist beliefs and strategies for activism profeminist men should support and engage in. Globally, men are often involved in preventing violence against women through collaboration with women and women-serving organizations, with accountability as a core component of this process, but with questions about who profeminist men should be accountable to and how (Flood, 2015, 2019; Hollander, 2013). Burrell and Flood (2019) conclude that an open feminist practice can help to shape better-suited individuals for tackling men’s violence against women.

Barriers to engaging men in violence prevention

Despite the growth in male-oriented prevention approaches, there are several barriers to engaging men to be a part of the conversation and to ensure that they are *fully involved* in the implementation of change strategies (Berkowitz, 2004). One survey conducted by the Family Violence Prevention Fund asked why men were not actively involved in efforts to address violence against girls and women (Garin, 2000). Of those not so engaged 21% reported that they were not involved because no one had asked them to be involved, 11% felt that violence was a personal issue that they did not feel comfortable addressing, 16% reported that they did not have the time, 13% noted that they did not know how to help, and 13% reported that their noninvolvement stemmed from feeling vilified (i.e., seen as *the* problem rather than a part of the solution). These data suggest that two core components of ensuring male involvement are ensuring that men feel *invited* to participate and that this invitation is framed in a way that encourages men to be a part of the solution.

Some men report feeling distanced from efforts to address violence against women, feeling blamed for the “problems of other men” and not seeing how they can be part of the solution. Prevention efforts

framing men as potential perpetrators also can instill defensiveness by failing to recognize frame the role of nonviolent as allies (Choate, 2003; Flood, 2019; Kilmartin & Berkowitz, 2005). Another challenge is that when prevention of sexual violence is presented in a binary fashion as exclusively addressing “men’s violence against women” it obscures experiences of sexual victimization among men, as well as of individuals who identify as nonbinary, gender nonconforming, or gender queer as well as other marginalized groups whose identities render them more vulnerable to abuse by men. Recognizing men’s experiences of sexual victimization can promote the acknowledgement of men’s humanity and in its recognition of vulnerability undermines one of the pillars of sexism that these efforts hope to dismantle (Lisak, Hopper, & Song, 1996). Fully recognizing men’s victimization in the context of sexual assault prevention efforts also serves to de-stigmatize men who are victimized (Scarce, 1997) and challenges paradigms of male dominance and female subordination (Stemple & Meyer, 2014). Further, because gender identity can be fluid, framing sexual assault prevention only around “men’s violence against women” assumes a binary configuration of gender that can delegitimize the experiences of non-binary and gender queer individuals. It is therefore important that our educational efforts be inclusive of different cultural and sexual expressions while at the same time acknowledging the gendered nature of sexual violence issue both in terms of who assaults and who is targeted. This requires working in a space of “both/and,” which addresses the ways in which gendered power dynamics and traditional notions of hypermasculinity facilitate the perpetration of sexual aggression by boys and men, while also attempting to transform broader and culturally acceptable restrictive gender norms.

Backlash to sexual prevention efforts

The sexual assault prevention literature has raised the issue of a backlash to men’s engagement in violence prevention efforts (Flood, 2019), with some expressing concern that interventions targeting high risk men will be unsuccessful because they foster reactance and hostility among participants (Malamuth, Huppert, & Linz, 2018). This has been termed the “boomerang effect” with one form of boomerang related to television and media-based antiviolence campaigns that may produce negative reactions among recipients, with high-aggression individuals reporting more favorable attitudes toward violence following campaign exposure (Cárdaba, Briñol, Brändle, & Ruiz-San Román, 2016; Keller, Wilkinson, & Otjen, 2010; Rivera, Santos, Brandle, & Cardaba, 2016). Other concerns relate to men’s experience of interactive workshops (Malamuth et al., 2018). One possible for this boomerang is that brief antiviolence messages or interventions that are not carefully conceptualized may arouse defensiveness without being able to address and diffuse it. In this regard, it is important to note that many of the studies which evidence a back-lash effect use techniques which that not considered best-practice, such as a focus on very brief media messages, as well as workshops that do not use a peer-facilitated, discussion oriented approach. For example, a rape prevention workshop using an all-male peer facilitated approach was successful in reducing participant sexual assaults, rather than producing a boomerang (Gidycz et al., 2011). Thus, the question of whether high-risk men need more intensive intervention remains. Research examining the effectiveness of bystander prevention programming for high- and low-risk college men conducted by Elias-Lambert and Black (2015) also highlights how more men who are at higher-risk for violence may also simply require more intensive intervention, with other studies showing a subsequent reduction in assaults when normative feedback from other men is provided that corrects men’s misperceptions of their peers (Bohner, Siebler, & Schmelcher, 2006; Eyssele, Bohner, & Seibler, 2006; Mulla et al., 2019). Exposing high-risk men to

the healthier beliefs and attitudes of others may therefore foster change without the backlash effect, due to the positive impact of peers. Whether or not backlash occurs within more intensive prevention approaches that are based on best practice and include an opportunity for meaningful dialogue thus requires further examination.

Resistance to environmental change is common (Smither, Houston, & McIntire, 1996) and members of a dominant group may be resistant to change because of the perceived loss of a status quo (Sidanius, 1993). Social norms theorists highlight that “kick-back” is to be expected when information is presented to individuals that challenge their longstanding beliefs about what others feel and do (Perkins & Berkowitz, 1986). Negative outcomes may be especially likely when programs are offered by facilitators with inadequate training. Thus, “facilitators who have worked deeply on their own biases and prejudices are also more likely to be able to support participants in examining these matters” (Chrobot-Mason, Hays-Thomas, & Wishik, 2008, p. 45). It is therefore vital that facilitators be well prepared to “roll with the resistance” of program participants (see Oesterle, Orchowski, Borsari, Berkowitz, & Barnett, 2017; Orchowski et al., 2011) so that the space can be generated for men to uncover and deconstruct misperceptions about masculinity, gender, and power that lead to these reactions. Creating a space for meaningful dialogue requires that facilitators be trained to address the various forms of resistance that commonly occur in these programs (e.g., denial of the problem, generation of distractions, victim-blaming comments, etc.) and constructively utilize the group dynamic to foster support for change, with men giving feedback to each other (Orchowski et al., 2011). Participants who hold high levels of resistance to program material may also find it easier to work through their ambivalence when facilitators refrain from taking an “expert stance.” Instead, facilitators can foster collaboration with program participants utilizing a motivational interviewing approach (Oesterle et al., 2017) which, as noted above, may minimize backlash from high-risk men. In this regard, a pilot study conducted by Orchowski et al. (2018) with heavy drinking college men (believed to be at high risk to perpetrate) found that participants were highly receptive to integrated alcohol use and sexual assault prevention program which utilized motivational interviewing techniques. When this program was adapted for young male active-duty military service members, men indicated such an interest in having meaningful conversations about the topic, that they asked to stay after the scheduled end time of the program (Orchowski et al., 2017).

How to get men involved

Broadly, men are more motivated to become involved when they are approached in a nonconfrontational manner by other men (Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012). Nonpersonalized approaches to engaging men such as media campaigns or large public events that do not offer personal opportunities for discussion are less effective in fostering men’s engagement (Casey, 2010). Casey and Smith (2010) conducted a series of 27 qualitative interviews with men who indicated involvement in an organization or event associated with the prevention of sexual violence or intimate partner violence and found that men often became involved in violence prevention efforts through connections in their social network. Men may also become involved as “secondary victims” (i.e., after a sensitizing event in their own lives, such as a disclosure of violence from someone they know; Casey & Smith, 2010; Piccigallo et al., 2012). Tolman et al.’s (2019) global examination of motivations for involvement revealed that men most often reported getting involved in violence prevention efforts because of their interest in social justice issues, and because of exposure to the issue of gender-based violence

through their work, or through another's disclosure. Similarly, [Crooks, Goodall, Baker, and Hughes \(2006\)](#), found that men's involvement stems from family experiences, for example, when fathers become aware of the issue based on the experiences of their daughters. Once involved in violence prevention efforts, men report receiving moderate support from their peers for engaging in such efforts ([Tolman et al., 2019](#)).

Guiding prevention frameworks

Adopting a gender-transformative feminist framework

Given the documented link between sexism and male perpetration, a feminist analysis is often proposed as the required frame of reference for the development of meaningful research and effective prevention programming ([Capraro, 1994](#)). While other lenses (i.e., criminological) can also be utilized to examine and address the issue of sexual violence, a feminist analysis correctly frames and addresses the problem as "gender-based violence" ([World Health Organization, 2019](#)). A similar pro-feminist approach is articulated by [Flood \(2004, 2011, 2018\)](#), who notes that men must be involved in efforts to end violence against women, given that they are the primary perpetrators of such offenses. A feminist approach can be combined with a public health approach to prevention that incorporates a clear assessment of the risk and protective factors of a problem ([Grauerholz, 2000](#); [Heise, 1998](#); [Kerns & Prinz, 2002](#); [Mihalic, Irwin, Elliott, Fagan, & Hansen, 2001](#); [Neville & Heppner, 2005](#)), that occurs across the individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels of the social ecology ([Tharp et al., 2013](#)). Accordingly, an approach that combines a feminist, ecological, and public health perspective offer the most comprehensive guiding framework for addressing the issue, one which acknowledges that gender-based violence is fundamentally a result of sexism and gender-injustice that requires the systematic targeting of risk and protective factors across the social ecology through multiple interventions.

A feminist approach is grounded in a recognition that acts of sexual assault experienced by women and other vulnerable groups are most often—but not always—perpetrated by boys and men in their lives ([Black et al., 2011](#)) and this perpetration is related to their socialization and peer experiences as men. The need for such an approach is bolstered by research documenting that adherence to traditional notions of masculinity is associated with a greater risk for engaging in sexual violence against all gender identities ([Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002](#)). As a result, most successful efforts to reduce gender-based violence have placed a primary emphasis on changing the sexist attitudes and beliefs that promulgate men's engagement in sexual aggression and their reticence to confront it ([Jewkes et al., 2014](#)), a shift which is more likely to occur in all-male settings when feedback is provided by other men. To foster transformation in individual beliefs about gender, it is essential that programs give participants an explicit opportunity to discuss and critically assess ideas about masculinity and femininity and the link between gender socialization, ascription to gender norms, and engagement in violence. Gender-transformative approaches are globally well-recognized frameworks for fostering such discussions and have led to the development of important resources for this purpose ([World Health Organization, 2019](#)).

A gender-transformative approach is effective in part because many boys and men are not violent and may hold more flexible attitudes toward gender role expectations while bearing witness to and feeling uncomfortable with the aggressive or inappropriate behavior of other boys and men ([Berkowitz, 2002](#)). Thus, boys and men themselves have a positive role to play in reshaping gendered culture that

they have been socialized to and which promotes both gender-based violence itself and inhibits efforts to end it (Berkowitz, 2002, 2004). Thus, engaging boys and men in violence prevention may not only prevent sexual assaults perpetrated by boys and men but also promote opportunities for health, safety, and well-being for men themselves.

Social ecological framework

The factors that undergird sexual aggression span a social ecology that includes individual risk and protective factors, as well as peer-, family-, community-, and societal-level factors that influence risk for perpetrating it (Tharp et al., 2013). Although some initiatives to prevent sexual aggression address the outer layers of the social ecology (i.e., bystander intervention programs and media campaigns), most sexual assault prevention programs include a range of predominantly individual-level interventions aimed at increasing awareness of the role of traditional masculine norms. Ideally a comprehensive approach should go beyond engaging boys in men in individual-level prevention efforts to include more broad-based media campaigns as well as promoting larger changes in policies and practices within communities and society at large, as is also recommended by Flood (2019).

The paucity of efficacious prevention efforts to reduce sexual violence may in part be due to the complexity of factors that facilitate the expression of sexual aggression. Numerous intersecting factors serve as risk and protective factors for sexual aggression, and it is not possible for any single prevention approach—especially if only targeting a limited number of risk and protective factors—to serve as a “silver bullet” to bring rates of sexual violence down to “zero.” Even when programs produce positive outcomes, evaluation efforts suggest that a program may have an initial short-term change in attitudes and behaviors that is not maintained over a longer follow-up period (Gidycz et al., 2011). While this may seem disappointing, it may not be reasonable to expect that a single, relatively short intervention (2–4 h in length) will show sustained change in attitudes and behaviors, which are linked to longstanding and pervasive societal norms. Short-term gains may therefore be an indication of an effective intervention strategy, and sustaining such change may require reinforcement through routine, comprehensive, multipronged programming efforts over time.

Effective efforts to reduce sexual aggression thus require the mobilization of a multitiered response that engages individuals, families, organizations, and communities and seeks to change some societal structures and systems at large. Such a comprehensive approach could include programs that aim to reduce risk among potential perpetrators while engaging nonperpetrators to be active, engaged bystanders; providing strategies for vulnerable populations to reduce risk and fight back; establishing and enforcing protective and preventative institutional policies; and fostering change in the community-level and societal-level factors that promote gender-based violence. To accomplish this goal, comprehensive prevention packages must be developed that address the complexity of the issue, ones that include synergistic activities that build upon one another and deepen learning overtime and that avoid the assumption that “single-shot” programs are sufficient (Banyard, 2013; Flood, 2019; Orchowski et al., 2020).

Applying a public health framework

A comprehensive approach must also integrate a public health framework as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the 2004 publication, “Sexual violence prevention: Beginning the dialogue.” A public health approach to prevention recognizes that there are multiple

risk and protective factors for sexual violence across the social ecology and speaks more broadly to the way in which intervention should be developed, implemented, tested, and disseminated. Specifically, a public health approach to prevention requires that researchers and practitioners “move upstream” to identify and intervene upon the factors that facilitate sexual violence in the first place and follows several principles. First, the approach focuses on the application of population-based approaches for prevention through collective action, including efforts to encouraging entire communities to prevent sexual violence, rather than resting this responsibility with rape crisis centers (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). Second, it emphasizes data-informed and evidence-based approaches, which utilize a systematic definition of the problem to identify risk and protective factors, develop and test prevention strategies aligned with these factors, and ensure widespread adoption of successful strategies. A public health approach promotes intervention occur at several time points, including primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention (i.e., intervention before sexual violence, immediate responses after it occurs and longer-term responses that addresses lasting consequences among victims as well as treatments of offenders). Prevention efforts can focus on men who do not engage in sexual aggression while also address men who have perpetrated or who are at high risk for sexual aggression with the possibility of addressing both groups at the same time. The inclusion of high-risk populations in universal prevention efforts is supported by research confirming the inhibiting impact of nonperpetrators on those who perpetrate (Dardis, Murphy, Bill, & Gidycz, 2016; Mulla et al., 2019). Of note, most prevention initiatives are not broad enough to address all levels of the social ecology or include universal as well as more targeted prevention efforts. However, working toward more comprehensive prevention packages is a needed step for the field (Orchowski et al., 2020).

Putting it all together: “Best practice” in prevention

Whereas there is no evidence to suggest that a *single* comprehensive sexual assault prevention package is “working” to reduce rates of sexual violence, much is known about what constitutes “best practice” in prevention that can be applied to this issue and there is also an evidence that particular prevention approaches may be effective with men. As summarized by Nation et al. (2003) in a comprehensive review of the prevention literature, there are several core principles of effective prevention that can be grouped into three broad domains: (1) program characteristics; (2) program matching to the target population; and (3) implementation and evaluation. These include, but are not limited to, the comprehensiveness of the program, including a variety of teaching methods, and administering a sufficient dose.

Nation et al. (2003) also call attention to the importance of the theoretical framework of a program. To maximize effectiveness, prevention programs should be grounded in a theory of change that guides intervention strategies and a theory of sexual aggression and intervention targets. Theories of change differ from other models of sexual aggression in describing *how to foster change* in an attitude, belief, or behavior (i.e., through modeling [social learning theory] by increasing readiness to change [trans-theoretical model of change], correcting misperceptions [the social norms approach] etc.) as opposed to offering a set of ideas about *how any why sexual aggression occurs* in the first place which are often a focus of theories emphasizing perpetrator etiology.

Programs must also be appropriate for the target audience, including being properly developmentally timed and including the socio-cultural lens relevant to the target population (Nation et al., 2003). Sexual aggression often emerges around 16 years of age (Grotpetter, Menard, Gianola, & O’Neal, 2008; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2013; Ybarra & Thompson, 2018), highlighting the need to start sexual assault

prevention efforts early in the lifespan. Prevention efforts should also be implemented at older ages, and include programs specifically addressed to parents, fathers and father-figures, and male mentors/role models, who play a role in helping children to develop notions of gender that are closely linked to sexual aggression (Edwards, Banyard, & Kirkner, 2020; Miller et al., 2012; Testa, Hoffman, Livingston, & Turrisi, 2010). A robust approach would also need to be implemented across several developmental time points, including various types of programming at different ages, as well as efforts to engage parents as change agents, taking into consideration the ways in which early socialization experiences play a role in the intersection between masculine norms and aggression (Orchowski et al., 2020).

To be relevant, prevention efforts with boys and men must also be tailored to the group, organization, school, community, or workplace they are administered in (Berkowitz, 2004); another characteristic of effective prevention, which supports the need for all-male programs. As noted by Carlson et al. (2015), it is essential that sexual assault prevention strategies be driven by the cultural, contextual, and economic concerns of local communities, which includes ensuring that the messaging of prevention efforts are distinctive and delivered by the appropriate messengers in a community as well as acknowledging the role of women-led organizations and women themselves. Potter, Moynihan, and Stapleton's (2011) research examining social self-identification in social marketing campaigns to foster bystander intervention speaks to this issue, highlighting importance of students being able to "see themselves" represented in prevention efforts.

Accordingly, it is recommended that schools, campuses, and communities take careful steps to adapt interventions to their audience (see Cares et al., 2015). In a publication of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Perkinson, Freire, and Stocking (2017) discuss the essential elements to consider when selecting and adapting a prevention approach. An example of ways in which researchers are adapt existing interventions for new audiences is Orchowski et al.'s (2017) treatment development study, which is utilizing qualitative and quantitative methods to adapt a promising sexual assault prevention programming for college men to meet the needs of male soldiers.

It is also important to consider varying ways in which front-line prevention efforts can be delivered in a manner that is culturally relevant. As Storer, Casey, Carlson, Edleson, and Tolman (2015) note, global efforts to engage men in work to end violence against women are often guided by western practices that are not adapted to a different cultural context. Studies suggest that there are different factors that motivate perpetration among men of different ethnic backgrounds (Hall, Sue, Narang, & Lilly, 2000; Kim & Zane, 2004). Further, other studies suggest that some programs are differentially effective among men of varying racial backgrounds (Heppner, Neville, Smith, Kivlighan, & Gershuny, 1999). Men's experience with the criminal justice system also varies as a function of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and can influence fears relating to being accused. It is therefore essential that program developers and practitioners acknowledge and attend to these differences within programming efforts. Safe South Africa, a treatment development study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (R34MH113484) conducted Caroline Kuo and Catherine Mathews, is an excellent example of how prevention interventions for adolescent boys can be adapted for varying cultural contexts (see Kuo et al., 2021).

The way a program is implemented is equally important (Nation et al., 2003). It is essential for staff to be well trained and implement the intervention with high quality and adherence to a program manual. As already noted, with respect to in-person workshop facilitation, the potential for defensiveness and "push-back" requires that facilitators be especially well trained to appropriately engage audience members in discussion (see Orchowski et al., 2011). This includes training facilitators in how to

roll with the resistance that naturally arises when individuals are presented with information that challenges their beliefs (Orchowski et al., 2011). Further, because men's socialization experiences often do not foster opportunities to explore emotions and relationships with other men or women (Pollack, 1998), men may be unprepared to have sensitive discussions with other men about their concerns how to navigate intimate relationships (Walker, 1994), suggesting the desirability of in-person workshops led by men themselves, that can foster communication, self-reflection, and sharing of experiences among men. Comprehensive prevention also means implementing activities that engage all members of a community, while also targeting the ways in which gender norms foster risk for violence among boys and men.

Trying to do all of the above—providing a public health, feminist-informed, social ecological prevention approach that meets Nation et al. (2003) recommendations for best practice—can be overwhelming and impossible for practitioners to achieve. While it may not be possible for practitioners, schools, and agencies to implement an approach that meets each of the above standards, is necessary to strive to implement prevention approaches with a vision and activities that is consistent with “all of the above.” Aspiring toward this goal will require practitioners and researchers implementing and evaluating sexual assault prevention efforts to “think big,” leverage partnerships, and plan meaningful intervention systems, rather than implementing programming in a limited, or responsive manner.

Limitations and future directions

Recognizing the shortcomings of our research base is a vital first step in synthesizing our current literature on the theory, research, and practice of sexual assault prevention for boys and men. Thus, it is important to recognize that most studies examining the etiology of sexual aggression do not consider the intersection of race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as contextual factors in the experience of violence. Further, as Dworkin et al. (2015) note, “gender-transformative approaches to improving sexual and reproductive health among men clearly privilege gender as the key axis of intervention. Such an approach does not adequately consider that there are differences and inequalities among men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messner, 1997) that shape both health outcomes and the collective practice of masculinities” (p. S131). As a result, there is currently little discussion of the intersections of the role of implicit bias and racism in existing sexual assault prevention approaches. For instance, to acknowledge the negative experience of men of color with the criminal justice system, which may influence their response to policy enforcement, or foster a fear of being falsely accused, the fact that some male identities are more vulnerable to violence by other men, or that “most” social norms campaigns may not feel relevant to men with a minority identity.

Prevention efforts also often assume a heteronormative and cisgender frame, that serves to maintain a gender binary, resulting in programs that limit their focus to men's perpetration of violence against women and what men can do to address other men's perpetration. This framing limits the extent to which a program can be gender transformative for all who identify as male while at the same time creating a space for the majority, who are cisgender men, to discuss issues relating to their own experiences, to accept responsibility for their gender privilege and to understand the dynamics of being an ally. Moving forward, attention is needed to the way in which identity (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other areas of identity) is constructed within the theories and research examining the etiology of sexual violence. Research that could inform an intersectional approach to prevention would

ask participants to report identity outside of the gender binary and have a sample size that includes a sufficient number of nonbinary, gender queer, gender nonconforming, and transgender participants. Prevention efforts must also be broadened and made more inclusive while acknowledging that most perpetrators and the men who can intervene against them share dominant identities.

An additional gap is the lack of recognition of men's victimization in existing research on sexual victimization, with this problem causing the field to develop programming efforts which may obscure men's victimization. There is a great need for research addressing men's victimization, for example, very little is known about the role of alcohol use in men's victimization experiences. Other questions needing attention include conducting research to examine: (1) if there are differences in the paradigms and prevention practices for victimization of men as opposed to women; (2) to what extent perpetrators engage in sexual aggression toward individuals regardless of gender identity or because of their perceived gender identity; and (3) to what extent aggressors are selective in who they target (i.e., women, gender nonconforming men, transgender, and/or nonbinary individuals) as potential victims? Once these questions are answered, partially or fully, prevention efforts would need to be modified and re-designed accordingly.

As with many health and behavioral issues, there is a large gap between the research and practice communities. For example, rigorous systematic reviews of sexual assault prevention programs such as those conducted by [DeGue and her colleagues \(2014\)](#)—which include only published outcome studies in peer reviewed journals—conclude that there are relatively few male-directed programs, while others have reported on a wide range of such programs. These divergent statements can be understood considering the gap between research and practice. For example, little is often known about programs that have not been rigorously evaluated and/or published. The peer-reviewed scientific literature therefore gives us limited information on the extent to which programs yet to sustain empirical evaluation and publication are theoretically grounded, follow best practices and are comprehensive and synergistic in nature—and therefore likely to produce changes in participants. Because so few programs implemented in school, community, and organizational settings undergo a formal outcome assessment, and are disseminated through scientific journals, the analysis of the research literature and of the scope of practice can lead to very different conclusions about the state of such programming. Bridging this gap would require relying on the findings published in the peer-reviewed scientific literature while drawing conclusions and recommendations that can be implemented in all programs. Further progress in this area requires enhancing researcher/practitioner partnerships, to better disseminate the work of practitioners into research communities.

It is also important to note that research findings are often mixed, and that more research is needed to inform the literature base that guides prevention programs. For example, patterns of repeat perpetration may look different depending upon the population studied (i.e., college samples, community samples, military samples), as well as the research methodology utilized to examine them (see [Edelstein, 2016](#); [Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005](#); [Lussier & Cale, 2013](#); [McWhorter, Stander, Merrill, Thomsen, & Milner, 2009](#)). As a result, many programs address risk and protective factors that have *not* been substantiated in the research literature, which may compromise the effectiveness of these programs. A middle ground is to make recommendations for addressing various topics in the content of sexual assault prevention programs based on existing research, such as focusing on risk factors such as rape myths, or knowledge of consent—while extrapolating from this knowledge and adapting it to different contexts. Thus, while continued research and questioning of “what we know” regarding sexual aggression is necessary, evaluation research has documented success in some program areas that can be more broadly

incorporated into program development even while researchers continue to examine the complex factors that maintain occurrences of sexual violence. At a minimum, prevention efforts should incorporate or center around factors—such as perceived peer norms, and bystander intervention strategies—that have shown consistent links with perpetration of sexual aggression and its deterrence.

Advancing sexual assault prevention for boys and men will require additional research, as well as continued rigor in the development and implementation of prevention programs. Based on what we know from research and practice, the following in our opinion represent “best practice” in sexual assault prevention for boys and men. Thus, a synthetic overview of the literature suggests that interventions are most impactful when they:

- Adopt an intersectional, inclusive approach that acknowledges the different forms of masculinities in terms of sexual and gender expression and race and culture, as well as of male victimization.
- Avoid themes that imply what it means to be a “Real Man,” which serve to reinforce dominant traditional masculine ideologies, and work against a gender transformative approach.
- Provide men with a space to engage in meaningful discussions about masculinity with peers, through all male workshops facilitated by other men (Berkowitz, 2002; Breitenbecher, 2000; Lonsway, 1996; Schewe & O’Donohue, 1996).
- Are facilitated by male practitioners (whether peers, or professionals) who are intensively trained to engage an audience, roll with and work through potential resistance by fostering group discussion, rather than offering expert advice (Oesterle et al., 2017).
- Apply theories of change that complement each other, such as social norms theory and bystander intervention (for examples of program approaches, see Gidycz et al., 2011; Mennicke, Kennedy, Gromer, & Klem-O’Connor, 2021; Salazar, Vivolo-Kantor, Hardin, & Berkowitz, 2014; Zapp, Buelow, Soutiea, Berkowitz, & DeJong, 2021).
- Are combined with other interventions that operate synergistically across multiple levels of the social ecology, and with multiple target audiences (i.e., universal intervention, targeted intervention), which share a similar theoretical framework (Casey & Lindhorst, 2009). This might include an on-line course, an individual intervention and/or a media campaign that are theoretically compatible and designed to be mutually reinforcing (see Banyard et al., 2018).
- Are administered alongside of other interventions which foster broader community engagement (McMahon, Steiner, Snyder, & Banyard, 2019), as well as opportunities for women and vulnerable groups to learn resistance education skills (Orchowski & Gidycz, 2018).
- Are implemented in a manner that is accountable to women in the field of violence prevention. The nature of this accountability should be clearly articulated. As described by Berkowitz (2002), one way of the many ways of being accountable is to offer an all-male workshop to women to garner their feedback, and to incorporate women and women’s voices into facilitator training (see Flood, 2019).

Summary and conclusions

In sum, despite almost a half century of activism, program development, and research, large scale surveys reveal little if any change in the overall prevalence of sexual aggression (Basile & Smith, 2011; Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Rozee & Koss, 2001; Smith et al., 2018). Whereas rates of sexual violence

have yet to witness significant change, efforts to engage boys and men in sexual assault prevention *have changed* tremendously. The field has grown, with significant attention being paid to strategies for meaningfully engaging boys and men as allies in ending sexual assault and with a number of “best-practice” strategies emerging, both in terms of what information should be covered and how. In many regards, men are no longer on the periphery of violence prevention efforts and are now seen as critical partners and leaders in this work, although it is certainly true that men need to do more. Whereas McCall (1993) described the field of violence prevention nearly 30 years ago as “scattered,” some more comprehensive, science-based sexual assault prevention programs targeting sexual aggression among boys and men now exist, focusing on social norms change and engaging men as active bystanders in addressing risk for sexual aggression among their peers. Recent literature reviews have made it clear that the field of sexual assault prevention for boys and men can be informed by strong theoretical frameworks as well as rigorous research on risk and protective factors for sexual aggression. Integrative alcohol and sexual assault prevention efforts which apply active alcohol intervention strategies are an example of how the field of sexual assault prevention is slowly becoming less siloed (Orchowski et al., 2018). It is also now recognized that integrating different types of interventions as well as interventions that target societal-level factors have the potential for producing cross-cutting effects on multiple health outcomes (Armstead, Wilkins, & Doreson, 2018).

Despite these gains, barriers to the implementation of rigorous sexual assault prevention efforts remain. Areas for further inquiry and research include linking prevention with boys and men with other approaches, strategies for engaging boys and men in prevention without incurring defensiveness, and the need for practitioner perspectives in guiding the development of prevention efforts. For the field of sexual assault prevention, it is also vital for researchers and practitioners to expand ongoing research and program implementation efforts to better address intersections in identity, and more critically consider the systems of gender in which sexual violence exists. It is through the tireless work of striving toward best practice in prevention, with the understanding that dismantling the systems that sustain sexual aggression require continued, systematic effort, that we will continue to make meaningful advances in the science and practice of creating a world without violence.

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