

# Why Men Rape: Applications to Prevention

Mary P. Koss

Arizona Prevention Center,  
University of Arizona

## 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 a 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

### **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 Nurturance**

- Heritable personality traits
- Reflect the extent to which person focuses exclusively on own interests
- When dominance is high relative to nurturance, 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?