

# No Women Allowed: Exclusion and Accountability in Men's Anti-Rape Groups

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## Abstract

This paper is a discursive analysis of men's anti-rape organizations that exclude women, either from physically attending meeting or presentations, or representationally, in that women's perspectives about rape and sexual assault are absent from the material. The discursive framings that result from this exclusion often subvert and preclude helpful anti-rape work. Women's points of view are often excluded from the material or entirely misrepresented leading to the communication of dangerously inaccurate information. Positive anti-rape work is often derailed in the literature as the organizations become entangled in unreflexive rhetorical battles. By examining the discourses, as well as what the discourses exclude, we can understand some of the problems that are foundational to these organizations. The stated purpose of these anti-rape groups is to fundamentally change violence against women in this society and therefore they have the potential to profoundly impact men's and women's lives. Due to this possibility, problems within the literature must be taken extremely seriously, analyzed, and, hopefully, reformed. The exclusion of women creates a variety of problems that demonstrate the necessity for a higher standard of accountability and responsibility for men's anti-rape organizations.

*Keywords:* Men; sexual assault; representation

## Introduction

Over the past decade or so, men's role in preventing violence against women has become of increasing interest to academics, advocates, pro-feminists, charity organizations, and others in the field. Where previously anti-rape work has been predominately founded by and oriented towards women, organizations have sprung up focusing specifically on men as allies in ending rape. Groups involving men in ending violence against women have produced books, guides, pamphlets, packets, advice sheets, and much more. It is my objective in this piece to examine this literature and its role in anti-rape advocacy work. In the course of my research, I have discovered that many of the men's anti-rape groups either exclude women in a physical sense – by preventing women from viewing their programs or from becoming presenters themselves – or, alternatively, in a representational sense – by misrepresenting or negating women's perspectives on rape and sexual assault. This forcible exclusion is troublesome and circumvents efforts to end male violence against women.

As I began my research into this area, I was surprised at the plethora of information now aimed at boys, teens, athletes, coaches, teachers, fathers, and even offenders, offering advice on the prevention of violence against women. With such an overabundance of information, there is a vital necessity to research these materials and ensure that they are accurate and helpful to anti-rape work. The power of these

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<sup>1</sup> Emily Marchese completed this essay while undertaking postgraduate study at the Gender Institute at the London School of Economics. She would like to thank her professors at LSE, particularly her advisor, Ros Gill. She would also like to thank her family for their unconditional support.

organizations and their literature cannot be underestimated: their messages to men about violence are directly intended to influence men's actions and, at times, even reconceptualize masculinity. Their efforts can lead to change in the lives of women and men – positive or negative. By examining how the exclusion of women operates within these organizations and their materials, this essay represents the first stage in the development of a much-needed feminist methodology that evaluates men's anti-rape discourses and holds groups accountable for the information they disseminate.

Organizations that seek to end violence against women are doing vital and appreciated work. Since women have primarily worked in the anti-rape field, men's groups are (or once were) rare – and therefore not often criticized. I am all too familiar with this response in that when I began this research project, I was hesitant to critique others whose intentions were good and whose presence in the field seemed rare. Part of the difficulty in this research project was going against that impulse in strongly and, I hope, unrelentingly examining these organizations. As I continued my research and writing, I became more and more convinced of the problems existing in men's anti-rape work and the importance of advocating their reform. These criticisms, however, should not stop men's anti-rape work, but should become a legitimate basis of reform – a means by which ethical anti-rape advocacy can be improved and strengthened. As Marilyn Frye writes, 'I understand "critique" very richly, as critical attention . . . figuring out what their insights are and working to articulate the limits or inadequacies of the work in ways which suggest what might fruitfully be done next, by that thinker or by others' (1). Men's anti-rape organizations hold a unique position of power in the lives of both men and women, and thus must be held accountable to the highest possible standards.

Due to my own background and time limitations, I chose to limit my research to organizations based in the United States, including Canada's White Ribbon Campaign (WRC). These organizations include: Coaching Boys into Men (CBIM), The Men's Program, Men Against Sexual Assault and Rape (MASAR), Men Against Sexual Violence (MASV), Men Can Stop Rape (MCSR), and The Safety Net. My primary focus is on materials targeting men in anti-rape and sexual assault work. Much of the literature from these organizations is available online, greatly facilitating research. My methodology is a discourse analysis integrating three areas of my own knowledge: first, my understandings of theoretical frameworks on discourse and knowledge production are drawn primarily from Judith Butler's writings. Second, given that masculinity studies and theory are so integral to the literature, I have included the works of pro-feminist men such as Jackson Katz and John Stoltenberg. Finally, this work is founded on literature pre-existing in the fields of rape and sexual assault, particularly the works of Susan Brownmiller, Jane Ussher (1997), and Sarah Projansky (2001). I believe the imagery in the literature would benefit from a further semiotic analysis, especially as the literature is strongly influenced by media advertising. However, a discourse analysis reveals that constructions of rape, sexual assault, masculinity, and feminism are deeply problematic, and disentangling the information shows the difficulties that subvert anti-rape work – particularly that which excludes women.

I locate myself as a white, Western, college-aged feminist, familiar with feminist organizations and rape prevention work. As a previous college student, I am aware of rape prevention programs and presentations geared towards a college audience. While this position has provided me with important insights in this research, I am also careful

that my bias towards feminist research does not preclude me from seeing non-feminist approaches to rape-prevention as feasibly productive. As a woman and as a feminist, it was disheartening at times to read the incredibly empowering messages that the organizations could give to men about ending rape forever – knowing that these messages cannot be given to women as well. I also had difficulty, as a researcher, with criticizing good intentions, and with my own resentment that men’s organizations have greater power and are taken more seriously than feminist anti-rape work. I locate myself within these struggles, but I believe they have helped me to understand the complexity of anti-rape advocacy in general, and men’s anti-rape work in particular.

Across the organizations I studied, the exclusion of women in men’s anti-rape work is standard. In the first part of this article, I analyze organizations that physically exclude women from presentations on college campuses, workplaces, or other venues. Some also prevent women from being the presenters or advocates themselves. Later, I examine the ways in which women are excluded from these organizations’ masculinist representations of rape. It is eerie to read material about violence against women from which women’s opinions, experiences, and testimony are completely absent. I conclude with a broadened analysis of the discursive framings that exclude and preclude more helpful ways of understanding male violence.

### **Physically Excluding Women from Men’s Anti-Rape Work**

A fundamental responsibility of feminist research is to look at any given field, area, industry, discipline, or category, and ask, ‘Where are the women?’ Few anti-violence organizations I studied come from a male pro-feminist school of thought, and many ignore, or go so far as to refute, a foundation in feminism. Many organizations spend a great deal of energy justifying their exclusion of women from presentations or meetings. This section will analyze the apparent rationale for excluding women, explicitly or implicitly, from men’s anti-violence against women work.

Out of all the organizations examined for this project, John D. Foubert’s *The Men’s Program* is the most adamant about refusing women entrance to their sessions. The tenets of *The Men’s Program* are laid out in a book written by Foubert as a resource and guide for college men who want to establish their own local chapter of the anti-rape group (see Foubert 2005). The need to exclude women is mentioned fifteen times in the manual, which even offers advice for removing more persistent women (they will do a separate performance for women who insist on seeing it). Foubert points to two published reports which he claims prove that ‘all-male, peer-education programs are more successful than mixed-gender programs’ (5). This misrepresents the findings of the two studies referenced, as explained below, and has since been disproved (Anderson and Whiston: 384). Foubert’s approach also illuminates the difficulties that ensue when one situates empirical data as unquestioned ‘truth’: the author disappears from view in the name of objectivity. As Haraway notes, ‘a conquering gaze from nowhere . . . this is the gaze that mythically inscribes all the marked bodies, that makes the un-marked category claim the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation . . . This gaze signifies the un-marked positions of Man and White’ (581). Foubert’s omniscient authorial voice renders it impossible to hold his data accountable to his specific and particular locations and limitations. Instead, through the screen of empirical data, women are, without charge of bias, excluded from the meetings.

Here, it is important to question who is doing the researching and how it is situated within bodies of knowledge that have already been produced (by feminists). When men's anti-violence organizations enter the field without referencing or locating themselves within pre-existing and larger social movements, they are co-opting women's work and establishing themselves at the top of a hierarchy. Foubert's efforts to justify the exclusion of women via empirical data demonstrate the false objectivity that quantitative data can portray, masking the knowledge as natural, rather than masculinist. In fact, one of the studies he sources states that '[a]s men begin to understand the women's perspectives, coed sessions may be in order, but it is certain that such sessions should not be used initially' (Earle: 13). This, then, qualifies a full endorsement of male-only rape prevention work. Additionally, the study reaches its conclusion by comparing rape prevention programs taught to college-aged men and women in large lecture halls by professionals to small group, discussion-based, male-only groups. The great effectiveness of the latter strategy is marked as a result of gender exclusion only, despite the fact that there are many different factors that could also be influencing the outcome. Indeed, this is Anderson and Whiston's point in their later and more comprehensive study, 'Sexual Assault Education Programs: A Meta-Analytic Examination of their Effectiveness' (2005). There was, according to Anderson and Whiston, 'no evidence from these data that men are more likely to benefit from programming administered in all-male groups as compared to men in mixed-gender groups' (384). Additionally, Foubert masks Earle's study's use of 'situational circumstances which could contribute to male aggression towards women . . . alcohol, dress, where the date takes place' (Earle: 5). No serious anti-rape advocate would ever ascribe the above, particularly clothing, as a contributing circumstance to rape.

Foubert is so adamant about the exclusion of women from his rape-education programs that it is even listed as the second point in a six-point mission statement for new Men's Program groups:

(We shall follow these principles) To use the most effective, research-proven means to accomplish our primary mission, including but not limited to The Men's Program. Accordingly, so long as rigorous social scientific research continues to strongly suggest that sexual-assault peer education is most effective in a single-sex environment, we will limit our membership to an all-male group. (74)

Interestingly, this principle of exclusion is stated prior to such rubrics as 'put the needs of survivors first' and 'respect and support one another' (74). The quantitative data here is important not for the 'facts' it presents, but for the conclusions it is used to produce. The empirical information is presented as an objective, rational justification for the exclusion of women, shielding the advocates from accusations of sexism and unfairness. These organizations struggle with empirical data: as The Safety Net claim on their website, '[s]tatistics don't mean shit'. At the other extreme, MASV use a 'Violence Against Women Continuum', a pyramid with 'death' at the top and 'attitudes and beliefs' at the bottom (60). These efforts try to simplify an issue that feminists have long regarded as complex.

## **Ethics of Representation**

Nancy Hartsock points out that ‘the position of women is structurally different from that of men . . . the lived realities of women’s lives are profoundly different from those of men’ (36). By introducing reflexivity into one’s research, however, and analyzing ‘how the whole process of research is structured around issues of dominance, gender, sexuality, class, age, and race’, some of the ethical problems in male anti-rape work might be productively illuminated (Riley *et al*: 1). A lack of reflexivity, after all, leads to objectification, with one group discussing what to do about the problems of another. Men meeting with other men to talk about how to ‘help’ women, in spaces from which women are excluded, is complicated at best and condescending at worst. To put another way, the reaction would hardly be welcoming if a group of white people formed an organization dedicated to helping black people, and no black people were allowed to participate or be present. Feminists have long stated the importance of reflexivity in representations of oppressed groups, by oppressed people, but this has not been received by the organizations. In fact, organizations provide their members with information on how to disregard this type of criticism, as I will discuss below.

It is important to empathize with the difficulties of conducting anti-rape work in a patriarchal society, with all its limitations and prohibitions; Men Can Stop Rape (MCSR), therefore, suggest ‘meet[ing] young men where they are’ (2001a). Perhaps if men-only sessions are deemed necessary, at least initially, by some groups, a solution would be to encourage reflexivity within the organization itself. They are accountable and responsible to women in this field and thus need to locate themselves as producing knowledge within a patriarchal system. Unfortunately, there is a tendency for groups to encourage accountability while also ignoring criticism; lip service is not enough. Acknowledging the various complications of representing ‘the other’ could prevent harmful misrepresentations of women.

## **The (Male) Voice of Authority**

The physical exclusion of women from men’s anti-rape work reinforces notions of the male voice as the voice of truth and authority. When women’s experiences of rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence are so routinely doubted, it is imperative that anti-rape work does not undermine their veracity. While some organizations explicitly exclude women, others do so implicitly. Coaching Boys into Men (CBIM) produce a packet that is provided to coaches of male athletic teams – where the coaches are seen exclusively as male. The setting for these interactions between the coach and the team is the locker room, so the ‘woman question’ does not even need to be raised. As one study points out:

Many others have described the objectification of women, misogyny, homophobia, and admiration of violence associated with aggressive team sports . . . for example . . . the gross sexism and homophobia of that inner sanctum of patriarchy, the locker room. (Forbes *et al*: 443)

Some may argue that the places where sexism is most rampant are exactly where it should be countered. However, in cursory discussions of rape, assault, and masculinities, these points go unaddressed (perhaps unnoticed); the locker room setting, or any other men-only location, will only serve to re-marginalize the position of women in a 'man's world'. Without attempting the difficult work of unraveling masculinity's intersections with violence against women, the structures are left standing.

John Stoltenberg, a pro-feminist anti-rape advocate, addresses the issue of exclusion in *The End of Manhood* (2000). He notes that male anti-violence writings, 'seem addressed to men *as if the most important communication that can happen must happen someplace far away from women*' (2; emphasis in original). In the preface to his book he explains that 'this book is written to men – but so that women can overhear every word' (xxxiii). Stoltenberg does, however, acknowledge that it may be easier for men to dialogue without women:

[T]here are men who feel that they simply can never speak their truth with women present, because they feel unsafe as if by definition. There are men who feel completely unsafe whether in groups of women and men or 'alone' in groups of women. I do not doubt that *is* their truth. But I do doubt the meaning of 'safety' when, for someone raised to be a man, its precondition is gender exclusivity. (22; emphasis in original)

Men who always feel uncomfortable speaking their truth around women are exactly the men that need to learn how to communicate beyond gender roles. By acquiescing to their need to discuss violence against women without women, organizers cater to those who demean women – and disregard survivors.

Coaches and fathers are often invoked as voices of authority to bestow anti-rape education. One pamphlet, 'Tough Talk', provides the following advice to men: 'if you're a father, coach, teacher, uncle, older brother or mentor, it is time to talk "man to man" about relationship abuse with the boys in your life' (Liz Claiborne Inc. 2004b: 1). It isn't until the very end that they mention women: 'see if he would be more comfortable talking with someone else. It could be a coach, an uncle, a family friend, or an older brother. It could also be a woman' (5). The latter is, quite clearly, not viewed as a strong option. Perhaps fathers or other male figures *are* the best individuals to talk to some boys; the unfortunate thing is that the opinions of women are not even considered significant in discussions about the prevention of violence. The elevation of the role of men in boys' lives undermines women's authority on a subject that most urgently concerns them.

Men's anti-rape organizations also undermine women's voices by prioritizing audiovisual equipment. Foubert's *Men's Program* suggests ordering a video if a man cannot be found to present the information: '[w]omen looking to present to men who can't find a male presenter could find it [the video] useful to show and then take questions or discuss other material. Also a great tool to show women how men can be educated about rape' (98). Even a virtual man's voice is prized more highly than that of a present, willing, and informed woman. Jackson Katz explains an alternative: many women educating on this issue are often called 'male-bashers' and can off-set that type of

criticism by using ‘video clips of men talking about these issues . . . quotes from anti-sexist men . . . the idea is to bring men’s voices . . . into the classroom to support the woman, and disarm the boys (and possibly girls) who might attempt to discredit the information’ (247). Katz also points out that a male and female presenting team would be extremely beneficial as the audience would see ‘inter-gender collaboration’ on this issue (247). Men can thus support anti-rape work in ways that don’t necessitate the exclusion and devaluing of women’s voices.

The physical exclusion of women from men’s anti-rape work, and the emphatic justification of it, subverts their stated purpose. Many use quantitative data as a smokescreen for privileging masculinist and hierarchized knowledge. A great deal of energy is expended ‘proving’ that women do not belong in an environment where they are being discussed. The male voice is pronounced the authority, and men-only forums are situated as the most appropriate contexts for the discussion of violence against women. This relegates women’s own experiences of violence to the margins and reinforces sexist myths that women cannot be trusted to accurately communicate about rape and sexual assault. Issues of marginalization are superficially acknowledged and dismissed by men’s anti-rape organizations, as I will explore further in the following section.

### **Representational Exclusions**

In the previous section, I examined several men’s anti-rape organizations that prohibited women from participating. In this section, I will analyze a more subtle form of exclusion – one that takes place on a representational level. In much of the men’s anti-rape literature, men’s opinions and perspectives are privileged, while female experiences of sexual assault are devalued and dismissed. Men are at the center of the literature. This representational, or material, exclusion is a two-fold process; I have, therefore, split this section into two parts: the first examines how masculinist knowledge is centered and elevated, and the second explores how women’s experiences are marginalized.

### **The Elevation of Men’s Perspectives: It’s Not You**

Charity organizations usually have a limited amount of space to communicate their message. While some have the luxury of a book, large packet, or published article, words are still precious. Considering this, it is baffling to note the proliferation of time, space, and energy spent reassuring men that they are not, in fact, the problem. Nearly every men’s anti-violence organization emphasized this point, often dedicating entire sections to it and then repeating the message several times throughout the literature. With an issue as complicated and multifaceted as rape, too much time is used placating a perceived male injury.

MSCR offers ‘10 Principles for Engaging Young Men in Violence Prevention’, and its first principle is characteristic of reassurances to men:

Stay positive. When we bring up the topic of violence against women to young men, some will automatically assume they’re going to be blamed and become defensive. So they need to hear again and again that they have an

important and valuable role to play in preventing violence against women and girls. (2001a)

And hear it again and again they do: '[w]e do not think that men are bad'; '[w]e're not anti-male' (WRC 2006a: 14); 'most men are not violent' (Katz: 7); 'men (as all people) are inherently good' (MASV: 42). Reassuring men may be necessary to 'meet men where they are' – in a patriarchal world where there is a lot of animosity for feminism. However, the voluminous and effusive reassurances may be constructing their own necessity. We can never be sure what our discourses, however intentioned towards change, will eventually support (Butler: 241). Making presumptions about male resentment works to standardize it, constructing it as a 'normal' response to anti-rape work. Kelly Anderson makes an excellent analogy in her article 'Only Men Can Stop Rape' (2004). Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), an organization that holds its members and others accountable for not drinking alcohol and driving does not advise potential victims on ways to prevent being hit by a drunk driver; instead, they villainize those who drink and drive (19). Though anyone could, potentially, be a drunk driver, no one criticized the campaign because they felt attacked. Anderson notes that the campaign was so effective that 'drunk drivers are [now] seen as scum' (19). Yet anti-rape programs are seen very differently – as seeking to threaten and attack 'innocent' men. This can be read as part of the feminist backlash that hinders all anti-rape work, but effusive reassurances to men can erase accountability and responsibility. Meeting young men where they are is important, but so is not compromising the anti-rape message.

Reassurance discourses pre-empt a message of accountability and personal responsibility. If the problem is only *some* men, as the literature profusely states, then it needs to do more rhetorical juggling to justify why *all* men should get involved. These groups thus create various special roles for men: 'men as bystanders' (Katz: 7); men as those who set 'examples of how to build healthy relationships' (Liz Claiborne Inc. 2004b: 1); men as 'potential helpers' (Foubert: 5); men as 'supporters/advocates' (Scheel *et. al*: 259); men as 'powerful leaders' (CBIM 2005: 4); and men as 'active participants' (MASV: 3). They enlist men's aid in special capacities while avoiding accountability. The furthest reflexive step is in examining their language choices or thinking about what it means to be a 'real man', though there is no analysis of why these things might be important (see CBIM 2005: 19; Liz Claiborne Inc. 2004b: 3). However, male pro-feminists, whose work is not often cited in the literature (with Jackson Katz being a major exception), encourage all men to question the structures of masculinity that they support and reproduce. Many male pro-feminists point out that '[w]hile most men and boys want to do the right thing and are not abusive, all males in our society are socialized to promote competition over cooperation and isolation over connection' (Okun: 2). In fact, describing rapists as abnormal monsters, completely different from 'normal' men, is part of the problem: 'when we believe abusers are brutish slimeballs, we are more likely to disbelieve victims whose abusers don't live up to that image' (Hines: 2). Robert Jensen points out that to 'look in the mirror, [and] examine the ways we are not only different [from sexual predators], but to some degree, the same' does not equate to self-hatred or male-bashing, but should 'lead us to really change the system in which we live' (3). Men's anti-violence organizations are so absorbed in proving that they do not hate men, that they lose the opportunity to challenge men towards reflexivity and accountability.

## Primacy of Male Victims of Rape

I will preface this section by saying that all cases of rape should be taken absolutely seriously and that all victims of rape should have access to all the resources necessary for their recovery. My objective in this section is to question the centering of male victims of rape in literature that is expressly stated to be about violence against women, and to interrogate the treatment of sexual assaults on men as more serious than those on women. It is not, in any way, my suggestion that male victims of sexual assault should not receive attention. Rather, I am interested in the ways in which male victims are centered at the exclusion of women.

Men's anti-rape literature geared at teenage boys mimics slang and supposed teenage speech patterns in an effort to, 'meet young men where they are'. Unfortunately, slang is not always appropriate for such a serious subject matter. WRC discusses the number of women who are assaulted with, 'WHYZZAT? That's the 876,000-rapes-a-year question' (2006b: 2). Mocking cavalier attitudes towards rape, the authors write, 'they don't know what it's like to have some dude hold you down' (ibid). Male victims of rape are rarely discussed in jocular ways: '[w]e don't like to think about it, and we don't like to talk about it, but the fact is that men are also sexually assaulted' (MCSR 2001c). In fact, MASV lists that it has two main purposes: first, to increase men's education as a way of ending a culture of rape, and second, to expand 'services available to *male* victims of sexual assault', a 'traditionally underserved population' (3; emphasis in original). MASV highlights that 'male rapes (especially of adult males) tend to have a higher rate of weapon use, physical injury, and participation by multiple assailants as compared to the rape of women' (83). They continue: 'unlike women, men are never taught to live with the fear of their own vulnerability to sexual assault . . . they may experience a heightened degree of pure shock and surprise' (83). Furthermore, we are told, 'male victims are and have not been afforded the same types of services that are available to women . . . much work is needed . . . to create equity in the types of services made available to victimized males' (4). MASV thus denies female victims resources by making male rape sound more violent and excruciating. As in debates of whether it's more difficult to be a male or female advocate, the ideology is still 'us' (men) versus 'them' (women). An organization can include male victims of rape within its scope without this kind of privileging that takes the focus away from women and propagates a long-standing backlash myth of men being 'new' victims as a result of the feminist movement (Faludi: 288).

Empathy exercises that deal with the issue of male rape are designed to help men imagine themselves in a female survivor's position. Groups often ask men to imagine a rape victim is their, 'future wife, daughter, sister, niece, or mother' (WRC 2006a: 13). Rarely in the literature do they suggest imagining the victim to be a friend, co-worker, teacher, or colleague. This literature, then, appeals to men explicitly through its referencing of patriarchal kinship ties (Rubin: 94-95). This defines victims and women solely in relation to their position among men, reinforcing notions of rape as a crime against property (Brownmiller: 376). Organizations that encourage men to imagine being raped by a man immediately address charges of homophobia: 'talking about male-on-male rape is not something that is homophobic by nature' (Foubert: 142). Homophobic fears, however, play an important role in encouraging men to imagine male rape as more

frightening than heterosexual rape. Foubert's justification is research showing that 'describing a woman's experience as a survivor *increased* men's rape-myth acceptance . . . and also *increased* men's likelihood of sexual aggression' (148; emphasis in original). However, the analysis ends there, without examination of why describing a female sexual assault might increase the potential for rape. Male-rape empathy techniques repeatedly prioritize male experience over female experience: men raping other men is terrifying, while men raping women is sexy. This is exactly what men's anti-rape programs need to combat.

It is all too easy, in a patriarchal society that seeks to disregard feminism, for men's experiences and opinions to take the spotlight, and for female victims of rape and sexual assault to be marginalized. Groups spend a great amount of time and energy, not on explaining the intricacies of female sexual assault, but on reassuring men that they are not the problem. Male-dominated arenas are elevated and extolled, occasionally at the derision of women and feminist efforts, and, accordingly, male victims of rape are treated more seriously. As male experience is re-centered by men's anti-rape groups, female voices are summarily dismissed. It is this phenomenon that I will explore in more depth in the next section.

### **Silencing Women**

When men are re-centered in anti-violence work, women are pushed to the sidelines. As the spotlight focuses on male needs, concerns, and opinions, there is less and less space for women. This section explores some facets of women's exclusion from men's anti-violence material. First, I will examine how the men's anti-rape information is influenced by a feminist backlash that antiquates feminism and mocks its progress in the anti-violence movement. This leads into an analysis of how all female criticism is categorically ignored as such by some of the organizations. Finally, I posit that the lack of female perspectives contributes to strong inaccuracies in men's anti-rape material, leading to the inauthentic or completely incorrect representation of women's experiences of violence.

### **Feminists Have Failed**

Unfortunately, some men's groups justify or 'market' their organization at the expense of feminism. They use the fact of rape today to 'prove' that feminism has not worked in preventing men's violence against women. *MASV* states that 'the number of sexual assaults has not declined since the anti-sexual violence movement was begun in earnest in the 1970's . . . therefore, a new strategy must be utilized' (1). This situates feminism as both out-of-date and ineffectual. An enormous amount of literature points out failings in an *imagined* feminist approach to ending rape – an approach in which feminists are primarily concerned with accusing and attacking all men as rapists. Nearly every men's anti-violence group disavowed themselves from this stance.

According to Foubert, The Men's Program appeals to a 'potential helper' persona, rather than the 'potential rapist' persona found in most other rape-prevention approaches (5). For Alan D. Berkowitz, the best way to bring about an end to rape is to encourage men to be partners in solving this problem rather than 'criticizing or blaming' them (3). Scheel *et al* observe something similar in a 2001 article: '[t]he most common form of inclusion has been to educate men about gender roles, change attitudes towards women, and respect

women's boundaries . . . we have labeled this approach as the "men as potential perpetrators" approach . . . studies . . . of such programs have documented limited success' (258).

This 'potential rapist' approach is never sourced or referenced; it exists so that these groups can claim to be 'better than' organizations with feminist affiliations. This discursive creation of an anti-rape group that attacks all men for being rapists perpetuates a backlash against feminism where, apparently, teaching 'no means no' means regarding all men as potential rapists. Again, the literature becomes preoccupied with preemptively defending men against feminist attack by distancing itself from any approach that incorporates accountability or male responsibility.

The enormous effort to deny feminism is indicative of the struggle in anti-rape work in general. Those following in feminism's footsteps must minimize and devalue their predecessors to maintain credibility. In the face of the backlash, anti-rape work is going to be very slow. The feminist news journal *Off Our Backs* summarizes the problem precisely:

There seems to be a kind of statistical dyslexia that people get when feminists start talking about male violence. The statement, 'Most violent crimes are committed by men' is often misheard as 'most men are violent'...the conversation usually stops there, stuck in rounds of denial and accusation, while the defensive person accuses the radical feminist of man-hating, male-bashing, and unfairness, and of wanting to alienate half of the population . . . The conversation never goes on to examine what it is about men that causes the violence . . . or anything constructive. (21)

This statement perfectly sums up how feminist research is viewed and the way debates get sidetracked from their intended goal. The rhetorical hyper-focus on the 'all men are rapists' approach derails the discussion from more helpful frameworks. This is evidenced in Ben Jamieson, a male peer educator for The Men's Program, who critiques, without sourcing, other supposed rape-prevention programs. He first states that, 'rape-education programs seemed to assume that their audiences consisted exclusively of rapists or would-be-rapists' (Jamieson qtd. in Foubert: 63). He goes on to imagine this 'other' presenter's voice:

Female Presenter: We're coming to you, untrustworthy and vile men, to tell you why rape is bad, and why you should never, ever do such a horrible thing. We know that you are naturally inclined towards it, and this is why we, as women, have endeavored to convert you...  
This is obviously an exaggeration, but perhaps not such a great one. (ibid)

It is no coincidence that this voice is female. The criticism of other rape-prevention methods is not about substance, but about gender. Women are not allies in rape-

prevention, but probable foes. These discourses unite men by pitching them against women, rather than modeling any kind of inter-gender partnership.

Groups also marginalize feminist efforts by superficially acknowledging their contributions, a rhetorical pat-on-the-head. Foubert, in an oddly gender-neutral manner, states, 'These people [the larger sexual-assault community] have probably been involved in this work for longer than you have; you can learn a lot from them. We certainly did' (67). WRC's informational packet's title, 'It's Time for Guys to Put an End to This', implies that women have attempted to stop rape, but that men are ultimately required to get the real work done: 'Guess What! Guys can practically solve this problem overnight' (2006b: 5). This, of course, works to trivialize the enormous institutional and cultural forces that lead to rape and sexual assault. Hank Shaw, a WRC member, started his campaign when his wife, an anti-rape advocate, asked him to look up rape statistics (some of which he finds 'invalid'). He then continued the work because, 'If I don't do this, who will?' (2006b: 14). Apparently, his wife's efforts aren't enough (Shaw then dedicates the brochure to his wife and two others, in small print, at the bottom). He lists five reasons why he is dedicated to his work (his wife is not one of them), including Jackson Katz. Perhaps he should note his mentor's repeated emphasis of the importance of listening to women and his effusive respect for women's pioneering efforts in the field: 'Women blazed the trail that we are riding down' (Katz: 7). Additionally, Katz notes that the 'majority of men in the gender-violence prevention field have been profoundly influenced by women writers and educators . . . Many have female mentors who played an indispensable role in their evolution into anti-sexist men' (246). In this way, Katz usefully refutes the notion that boys can only learn from male role models. Shaw's page, 'Introducing the Non-Violence All-Stars', is an all-male list of celebrities who signed a one-sentence pledge (WRC 2006b: 9). What message about respect for women is communicated when a male C-list celebrity is thanked for his work in ending violence against women, and not a single woman? Women's efforts are rhetorically rendered less important than men's. There is an undercurrent in these writings that for any work to be legitimate it must be men's work. Rus Erwin Funk points out, in *Stopping Rape: A Challenge For Men* (1993), that '[w]e have all learned to respond to a situation by "fixing it" – by figuring out what needs to be done, taking over . . . we've learned that to "be a man" we're supposed to take over the situation' (84). His words, now out-of-print, gesture meaningfully towards the problems of unreflective male anti-rape work.

### **Circumventing Female Criticism**

The most significant opposition has come from women who believe that our work actually 'hurts' the movement. They believe that the idea that women cannot stop sexual assault on their own, and that they need help from men, is perpetuating the idea that men are superior to women, thus perpetuating violence against women . . . At first, when confronted with this view I was outraged. (McAllister qtd. in Foubert: 60)

Steve McAllister, quoted above, is not alone in his indignation that some women have criticized men's anti-rape work. McAllister complains that 'when a group of good men

offer to help end violence against women, we are scrutinized and our motives are questioned'. McAllister speaks to 'many different people' but it is not until his (male) friend Pat shares this piece of advice that McAllister feels at peace: '[i]f a group of people are oppressed by another group of people for hundreds of years, and all of a sudden members of the oppressing group offer to help them, it's reasonable to think they would question their motives' (ibid). The fascinating aspect of the above quotes is the way entirely legitimate female criticism is completely unaddressed and unanswered in favor of trying to understand why women are not lining up to shake their hands in gratitude. Jackson Katz and other pro-feminist men caution others to separate anti-rape work from chivalry. However, male anti-rape organizations are often disconnected from most pre-existing work in the field. There are a plethora of ethical issues that deserve to be addressed by men's anti-rape groups (to name just one, the potential disempowerment of women by saying only men can stop rape). Unfortunately, all female criticism is viewed as an attack and is thus answered only in self-pitying tones. Some charged Foubert's group members with not being 'as well educated about the issue as we could be', which seems fair considering he recommends teaching a semester-long course on rape prevention that is based on reading his book (66). However, instead of addressing this, the following monologue ensues: 'The Men's Program has received criticism in the past, and it probably would again. At times the criticism became hard to deal with. At times we felt personally attacked. At times we were. It's difficult, but extremely important, not to be daunted by this kind of criticism' (Foubert: 66). 'This kind of criticism' apparently has no other characteristic besides being authored by women. The WRC recommends treating female criticism by remembering 'that if a woman works with abused women, for example, she is seeing the worst every single day' (2006a: 5). Criticism comes from being burned-out or emotionally exhausted; no legitimate points are allowed. This unilateral treatment of women's opinions suggests that no female criticism is important enough to address.

### **Inaccuracies, Misrepresentations, and Falsehoods**

The lack of female representation in some men's anti-rape literature contributes to startling inaccuracies in the literature. Surprisingly, there is a trend for refuting the feminist tenet that rape is about power. The Safety Net website states the following:

One of the things people will tell you all the time is that rape isn't about sex. The truth is that rape can be about anything, sex including. Not every rapist walks into a room ready to humiliate and degrade someone for his own satisfaction. Some people are rapists because they didn't listen. Because they wanted something so badly that they let themselves lose control. Because they wanted to be close to someone and they thought they were. There are a million reasons a rapist could give for doing what he did but there is not one excuse.

Foubert likewise quotes an exchange that illuminates similar concerns:

Participant: Many say rape is about power and control and not sex, what do you think? Facilitator: When talking about this issue, it's important to separate the victim's experience from the

perpetrator's. I think it's safe to say that when a person is sexually assaulted, they feel overpowered and controlled. When men rape, they are definitely using power to control/dominate someone. However, these men may also feel as though they're just having sex. This makes more sense if we look back at how men learn and talk about sex. When men learn that sex is a conquest, a hunt, a game, and an achievement, it is difficult for them to separate it from power and control. (128)

For Earle, '[s]ome of the predictor variables pertaining to males' sexual aggression against women that have been examined in the literature are power, anger, sexual frustration . . . A review of the literatures clearly suggests that attitude is the strongest single predictor variable (4).

The contradictions that vex the prevailing thought on rape and sexual assault sends mixed messages to male audiences, and does not have any analytical basis. Separating, or ignoring, victim's experiences of rape in favor of advancing theories about how rapists interpret what they do is dangerous advice. Refuting that 'rape is about power' disinvests sexual assault from the political and institutional frameworks that are central to how it is understood in the field today. Without referring to why power is an insufficient framework for understanding rape, male anti-rape initiatives are not holding themselves accountable to even the most modest of intellectual standards. The groups also make some troubling assertions. The WRC suggests the following:

A lot of guys think porn is harmless entertainment. If you agree, take this challenge. Immerse yourself in your favorite porn rag or video. Then hit the streets. How do you view the women you see? Do you think of them as 3-D human beings? Or do you see them as 2-D sex objects? (2006b: 15)

Boys and men are already coached by the media to enjoy pornography, so this reflexive experiment, without any further support or explanation, only maintains the status quo. CBIM offers a mixed message when it suggests not to cat-call, but also notes that a pretty girl might still appreciate the sentiment (2005: 29). The Safety Net website beleaguers its own name by asking the following: 'Do you want to live in a world that looks like *Maxim* magazine, where women are able to walk around half-naked and talk about sex? Then we have to make it safe for them to do that'. Additionally, there is a repeated emphasis on specifically respecting women that one dates, rather than asserting respect for all women. One pamphlet states that 'when it comes time for dating, be sure he knows that treating girls with respect is important' (CBIM 2004b). Another advises, '[e]ven if a boy is not dating yet, he will be soon, and his values and behaviors are being shaped right now' (Liz Claiborne Inc. 2004b: 1). This is not only heterosexist, but suggests that only some women are worth treating with respect. These mixed messages confuse an already intricate issue. Mistakes and inaccuracies show that presently men's anti-rape organizations are not being held to sufficiently high standards in their representation of rape.

These disturbing trends reflect some of the problems that arise when men's perspectives are allowed to eclipse those of women. Feminist achievements and philosophies are belittled, or treated as past phenomena. Female criticism is treated as uniform, and is uniformly ignored as such. Without the input of feminist or pro-feminist scholars, pseudo-analysis prevails, creating a façade of critical interrogation while avoiding depth and complexity. Finally, the lack of female perspectives contributes to the circulation of various misrepresentations and mixed messages that complicate and undermine men's anti-rape literature.

The problem with charity and non-profit work in general is that, while there may be watchdog groups monitoring the way donations are used, there are few, if any, umbrella organizations that monitor the information these organizations present. Unfortunately, acknowledging accountability in the literature does not make one accountable. When women are excluded from anti-rape organizations, these groups have no-one to be responsible to – only the ethereal figurehead of the rape victim. The only opportunity for accountability would be from an outsider's perspective, and the literature offers an array of advice on ignoring or discounting this kind of (female) criticism. As a consequence, there is currently little room for potential reform.

## **Conclusion**

The ramifications of excluding women from anti-rape organizations reveal a variety of ethical problems. The literature ranges from misrepresentative to incorrect in its efforts to preach a feminist message while not appearing feminist. This may be part of a larger problem in anti-rape work in general; there is not enough energy to fight two battles: the one against violence and the one against feminism. The discourses establish an 'us' versus 'them' mentality, rather than reflecting a collaborative effort between men and women, which may be the key to more helpful anti-rape work. Rather than men starting their 'own' anti-rape groups, men and women could work together within pre-existing organizations that value equality, communication, and collaboration. Currently, the efforts of men's anti-rape groups stymie in an epistemological quagmire: they must celebrate men and traditional masculinity while disentangling those structures that support violence against women; they must reassure men that they are not the problem while holding them accountable for changing and challenging sexist attitudes; they must encourage respect for women while soothing anticipated male anger by excluding women from presentations and overpowering female criticism. Their efforts to push women out only further entrench them in unhelpful and unfruitful discourses for ending rape and sexual assault.

In this paper, I have pointed out some of the serious problems in men's anti-rape organizations that exclude women, either physically or representationally. Accountability may be difficult to enforce, but it is a critical step towards reintegrating women into a subject matter that primarily concerns them. In the eagerness to incorporate men's efforts in the anti-rape movement, we cannot compromise the terms of the struggle, the framings that center on women. Feminist scholars have established an enduring body of theoretical works on rape and sexual assault – as well as masculinities – that could be used as helpful methodological tools for these organizations. Many men's anti-rape organizations preclude the useful re-conceptualization of advocacy work by excluding women from their work. This is exacerbated by a tendency to ignore feminism and feminist

foundations, and to categorically exclude criticism by women. Accountability to women, and responsibility in ethical, reflexive representation, are thus critical points for consideration if these organizations are to continue their work in a field where they have the potential for positive change.

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