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College Male Sexual Assault of Women and the Psychology of Men: Past, Present, and Future Directions for Research

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For several decades, investigators have attempted to identify factors that explain why some men perpetrate sexual assault in college. However, despite a strong emphasis on men as the perpetrators of sexual assault, current reviews have yet to analyze different masculinities in relation to sexual assault offending. In the present narrative review, we critically examined college sexual assault research published between 1950 and 2015 and identified 3 distinct approaches to examining masculinities: sex comparisons, men's attitudes toward women and violence, and constructs informed by the normative and gender role strain paradigms of the psychology of men. Findings revealed that (a) studies of sexual assault perpetration focusing on men and masculinities are relatively rare in the extant literature; (b) sex differences in perpetration rates are complex; (c) men's attitudes toward women and violence are strong predictors of sexual assault perpetration, and also the most common approach to studying masculinities in relation to sexual assault offending, but they may be limited in their definition; and (d) research examining men's sexual assault perpetration using constructs central to the psychology of men is generally underdeveloped and underrepresented. Future directions for research are discussed, including a need for more investigations focusing on ethnic and sexual orientation diversity, broader definitions of masculinity, and more inquiry using normative and gender role strain constructs.

Keywords: sexual assault, college, masculinity, gender roles

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Sexual assault, defined as the full range of physically forced, verbally coerced, or substance-incapacitated acts such as kissing, touching, or vaginal, oral, and anal penetration (e.g., Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014), is a significant problem on college campuses. National prevalence rates of women's college sexual assault victimization have ranged from 28.5% (Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2009) to as high as 54% (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987), and have been associated with serious behavioral and psychological consequences (Krebs et al., 2007). Thus, it is not surprising that the problem has garnered increased attention from policymakers and the media. For instance, in September 2014, U.S. President Obama launched the "It's On Us" campaign, a social-media-driven effort to raise awareness of sexual assault and to develop research and prevention infrastructure across col-

lege campuses. Numerous other grassroots organizations have also emerged to address sexual assault in college (e.g., the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network [RAINN] and Students Active For Ending Rape [SAFER]).

Although the general public seems to be focusing more on the problem, sexual assault in college has been a productive area of scientific inquiry since the 1950s, yielding more than 2,000 peer-reviewed research studies, numerous books, dozens of critical reviews, and countless book chapters. More importantly, many investigations of college sexual assault perpetration focus on men and socialized beliefs that may make men likely to become perpetrators in certain contexts. For example, the confluence model (see Malamuth, Heavey, & Linz, 1996, for a review), which has become a widely used framework in sexual assault perpetration research, assumes that some men suffer from an insecure, hostile masculinity that predisposes them toward sexual assault offending. Related theoretical frameworks for sexual assault emphasize men's attitudes toward women and violence by highlighting their acceptance of rape myths (e.g., beliefs that hold female victims responsible for their rape; Burt, 1980), hostility toward women (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995), and attitudes condoning or being willing to commit sexual assault if assured of not being caught (Malamuth, 1981). In addition, several scholars have addressed men's gender role socialization in relation to sexual assault perpetration through important theoretical formulations ranging from the influence of hegemonic masculinity (e.g., Katz, 2006) to men's

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socialization to misinterpret women's sexual and nonsexual cues (e.g., Berkowitz, 1992).

Despite a strong emphasis on how men are socialized into specific gender roles (i.e., masculinities) in the sexual assault perpetration literature, researchers and clinicians may be lacking critical information about the psychology of men. Indeed, although numerous critical reviews are available that provide broad overviews of men's sexual assault offending risk factors (e.g., Tharp et al., 2013), as well as more specific reviews of areas such as alcohol use (Abbey, 2011), measurement issues (Kolivas & Gross, 2007), personality variables (Bouffard, 2010), and prevention of sexual assault (Garrity, 2011), investigators have yet to review existing psychological research with respect to different definitions of masculinities and sexual assault perpetration. Therefore, future research and prevention efforts may benefit from a critical analysis of different approaches to studying masculinities in relation to sexual violence. The present narrative review provides (a) an overview of research and ideological trends for studying masculinities in the sexual assault literature over time, (b) critical reviews of different approaches to examining masculinities in the sexual assault literature and their related findings, (c) a discussion of important gaps in the literature, and (d) a list of next steps for future inquiry.

Literature Selection Process

Following best-practice recommendations for narrative reviews by Baumeister and Leary (1997), we conducted a search of research since the decade of the earliest published study of sexual assault on college campuses (i.e., Kirpatrick & Kanin, 1957) using two major databases that tap a wide range of psychological literature: PsycINFO and Google Scholar. Each search used Boolean phrases and was limited to key terms in the title, abstract, or keywords sections. Specifically, we searched for exact or close approximations of the terms *sexual assault*, *rape*, or *sexual coercion*, in relation to any of the following word stems: *men*, *masculinity*, *gender*, *gender role*, *male*, *male role*, and *sex role*. This initial search yielded 2,230 peer-reviewed articles. Next, we examined article abstracts to exclude those that did not address self-reported sexual assault perpetration as either the dependent or independent variable(s), did not focus on men or masculinity, and did not examine college students or college-aged men. This procedure significantly reduced the number of articles because many of the studies from the initial search addressed attitudes rather than actual sexual assault perpetration behaviors, women rather than men, victimization rather than offending, or evaluations of prevention programming with no measures of perpetration.

Thus, the final sample of retained articles ($N = 121$) addressed sexual assault offending in college or college-aged men and included some focus on masculinities. All decisions for article retention were derived by consensus between the first author and a team of graduate students. Although it would be beyond the scope of the present review to discuss each of the 121 articles in depth, the results of the present review provide representative samples and discuss key themes that emerged from consensus among the authors. Additionally, the online supplemental table includes citations for all retained articles, as well as summaries of the most cited articles by decade according to three different citation indexing services (i.e., Google Scholar, Web of Science, and SCOPUS).

Trends in Theory and Methodology: The Influence of Feminism

Research investigating college men's sexual assault perpetration grew originally from attempts to understand the psychopathology of rapists in the 1950s. During this time, investigators examined male convicted sexual criminals' psychological profiles to differentiate them from nonoffenders (e.g., De River, 1950). Although this research was valuable, several studies began to suggest that men's rape of women was not solely the product of psychopathology and deviant personalities. For example, Kirkpatrick and Kanin (1957) were among the first to demonstrate that sexual assault was surprisingly common on college campuses, and in the 1960s through the 1980s, other theoretical explanations, such as feminist psychology, began to dominate the sexual assault literature. These ideological shifts may be directly tied to key advances in research and theory from the 1960s to the 1980s. (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004). In particular, Mary Koss and colleagues created the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES; Koss et al., 1987), which revolutionized the assessment of college sexual assault by asking students about specific sexual behaviors that were either experienced or perpetrated against a partner's will. The SES quickly became, and has continued to be, the instrument of choice in most college sexual assault research (Kolivas & Gross, 2007; Testa, VanZile-Tamsen, Livingston, & Koss, 2004). Using the SES, researchers further confirmed that men's sexual assault perpetration may be rooted in systemic dysfunction rather than individual psychopathology.

In conjunction with the SES and similar measures, scholars have argued that feminist perspectives have had a profound impact on the sexual assault literature (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004). For example, Brownmiller (1975) emphasized the role of patriarchy and helped shift attention further away from internal pathology to systemic and social issues. Advancements such as the SES and the development of Burt's (1980) instruments to assess rape-supportive beliefs added weight to feminist perspectives of sexual assault by demonstrating that many men did not label specific sexual encounters against a woman's will as rape, and even held favorable attitudes toward rape (e.g., Burt, 1980; Malamuth, 1981). Feminist perspectives emphasizing systemic devaluation of women and gender inequality as major contributors to college men's sexual assault perpetration continue to be widely embraced in the literature.

Feminist perspectives also appear to be a driving force in different approaches to studying men and masculinities in relation to sexual assault perpetration. For instance, our narrative review identified several distinct areas of research, such as general descriptive studies of college sexual assault perpetration rates (e.g., Koss et al., 1987), characteristics of sexual assault perpetration (e.g., Krebs et al., 2007), and key features of sexual assault offenders (e.g., Abbey & McAuslan, 2004). Consistent with previous systematic reviews (e.g., Tharp et al., 2013), findings across each of these domains indicate that, although there are several avenues that may lead a man toward sexual assault perpetration, certain factors are associated with increased risk, such as living in a fraternity (e.g., Murnen & Kohlman, 2007), viewing violent pornography (e.g., Carr & VanDeusen, 2004), using alcohol on dates or believing alcohol increases the chances for sexual access (Abbey, 2011), endorsing violence toward women or accepting rape myths (e.g., Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002), engaging in

past sexual assault perpetration (e.g., Loh, Gidycz, Lobo, & Luthra, 2005), feeling entitled to sex (e.g., Widman & McNulty, 2010), associating with men who endorse rape-supportive ideologies (Abbey, McAuslan, Zawacki, Clinton, & Buck, 2001; Swartout, 2013), and perceiving that peers endorse rape myths (e.g., Swartout, 2013). In general, investigators emphasized men's socialization (i.e., masculinities) as a driving force behind each of these risk factors. Indeed, we noted three distinct approaches to examining masculinities among the articles in the present review: (a) sex differences, (b) hostile attitudes toward women, and (c) approaches specifically focusing on measures of masculinity commonly studied in the psychology of men. The sections to follow provide examples and critiques of these approaches.

Studying Masculinities Through Sex Comparisons

Of the 121 retained articles, 36 examined masculinities by studying sex differences. Although investigators focused on differences between biological sexes, they interpreted these differences as evidence for gender role socialization and often used the term "gender differences" to describe their findings. Many of these investigations seemed predicated on the general assumption that men and women constitute monolithic groups; thus, within-sex variance was largely ignored.

Several investigators have found that men endorse experiences of sexual assault victimization significantly less often than college women (e.g., Aizenman & Kelley, 1988; Baier, Rosenzweig, & Whipple, 1991; Banyard et al., 2007; Hines, Armstrong, Reed, & Cameron, 2012). These findings are consistent with evidence from the present review. For example, Krebs et al. (2007) examined self-reported sexual assault perpetration and victimization in 1,375 undergraduate men and victimization in 5,466 undergraduate women from random samples at two large public universities: one in the South and one in the Midwestern United States. The authors found that approximately 28.5% of women were victims of sexual assault compared with 6% of the men. Although investigators have yet to examine men and women's sexual assault perpetration rates using the same large-sample techniques employed by Krebs et al. (2007) in the United States, findings from small convenience samples from different universities across several different countries demonstrate that men perpetrate sexual coercion at much greater rates than women (Chan, Straus, Brownridge, Tiwari, & Leung, 2008). To bring greater clarity to these sex differences, Krahé and Berger (2013) recently surveyed 2,149 first-year college students from different universities in Germany and found that the sexual assault perpetration rate was 13.2% for men and 7.6% for women.

Several investigators have also suggested that men underreport their sexual assault perpetration, thus further increasing the gap between the sexes. In their comprehensive review of the literature using the SES, Kolivas and Gross (2007) examined a discrepancy between women's self-reported rates of sexual assault victimization and men's self-reported rates of sexual assault perpetration. First noted by Koss et al. (1987), women consistently reported high levels of victimization (e.g., completed rape as high as 17%) compared with men, who consistently reported lower levels of perpetration (e.g., completed rape as high as 5%). Because the SES specifically instructs participants to rate whether they perpetrated certain sexual behaviors *against their partners' will*, Koss et al.

(1987) argued that a large percentage of men may not realize, or otherwise deny, that they committed a sexual assault. Although researchers have identified that some men are repeat offenders (Lisak & Miller, 2002; Zinzow & Thompson, 2015), which could partly explain the discrepancy between men's overall rates of perpetration and women's reported rates of victimization, investigators have found that men who are interviewed by another man in private, have read a sexually explicit story, or have consumed a beverage they believed to be alcohol tend to admit to committing sexual assault at rates commensurate with women's victimization rates (Rubenzahl & Corcoran, 1998). Thus, the true estimate of men's sexual assault perpetration may be considerably higher than what large survey studies suggest.

Critique of Sex Comparison Research

Taken together, observed sex differences in sexual assault prevalence rates are consistent with feminist perspectives that men are disproportionately the perpetrators of sexual assault on college campuses, and that men are uniquely socialized (compared with women) toward sexual aggression. Although the evidence supporting these claims is compelling, it is important to note some significant limitations. Most strikingly, many investigators over the years examined research questions that assumed men to be the perpetrators and women to be the victims. For example, Koss et al. (1987) surveyed a nationally representative sample of 6,159 women and men across 32 different higher education institutions in the United States. Their results have been cited more than 1,000 times, often to help corroborate arguments that men are the primary perpetrators of sexual assault. However, these investigators used the perpetration and victimization forms of the SES for men and women separately, with men receiving the perpetration form and women receiving the victimization form. To date, researchers have yet to undertake a study of the same scope (i.e., 32 different institutions) as Koss et al. (1987) in which perpetration and victimization are possibilities for both sexes. Therefore, investigators have yet to precisely determine the relative perpetration and victimization rates between men and women in the United States within a true representative sample of college students. Additionally, although much is known about the psychometric properties of the victimization form, critical reviews of the SES have found that less is known about the performance of the perpetration form, and some items may be ambiguous for men (e.g., Kolivas & Gross, 2007). Koss et al. (2007) revised the SES forms to be applicable for either sex and removed some ambiguous items; however, we were unable to locate any studies in which researchers examined men and women's responses on both victim and perpetration forms using important techniques such as multigroup confirmatory factor analysis for measurement invariance or differential item functioning analyses (i.e., techniques used to demonstrate that an assessment is valid for different groups).

In response to these limitations, a growing number of studies have begun to address sexual assault in college with a gender-inclusive approach, and an emergent literature has focused on men's experiences with sexual assault victimization *and* perpetration (e.g., Krahé & Berger, 2013). For instance, several investigators have found evidence that differences in perpetration rates are smaller when sexual assault involves less extreme methods such as verbal coercion, compared with more extreme approaches such as

using physical violence (e.g., Larimer, Lydum, Anderson, & Turner, 1999). In one highly cited study, Spitzberg (1999) found that sex similarities with respect to less violent sexual assault (i.e., sexual coercion) were generally present across 120 different studies involving over 100,000 participants. To explore men and women's similarities in sexual coercion in more detail, Schatzel-Murphy, Harris, Knight, and Milburn (2009) found that men's use of self-reported sexual coercion was best predicted by measures of dominance and power, whereas women's use of sexual coercion was best predicted by measures of sexual compulsivity. These findings suggest that men and women may have different motivations for sexual assault, with men's motivations stemming from patriarchal values and women's from sexual desire. Thus, the relative rates and reasons for sexual assault on college campuses may be more complex than originally thought.

Additional inquiry is clearly warranted to better understand sex differences in sexual assault perpetration and victimization. At the same time, researchers in the psychology of men have cautioned against the use of a sex-difference paradigm to understand the impacts of men's gender role socialization (e.g., Addis, 2008), and those criticisms are also applicable to the sexual assault literature. Specifically, although evidence suggests that men are more likely than women to perpetrate severe forms of sexual assault, failing to examine both men and women's victimization and perpetration reinforces a perpetrator (male) and victim (female) binary, which may strengthen traditional stereotypes about men and women's roles in a sexual assault. Indeed, such stereotypes can be especially dangerous, given that numerous studies have found that male rape myths (i.e., the belief that men cannot be raped) are prevalent in society and can adversely affect male victims of sexual assault (see Turchik & Edwards, 2012, for a review).

Studying Masculinities Through Attitudes Toward Women and Violence

Of the 121 retained articles, 80 addressed masculinities by examining men's hostile attitudes toward women and violence. In contrast to sex-differences research, the majority of these investigations used all-male samples and focused on attitudes that indirectly or directly represented different masculinities. For instance, in early surveys of male undergraduates, approximately one third of men agreed with an item that it would "do a woman some good to be raped" (Barnett & Felid, 1977). In an effort to explain men's callous attitudes toward women and sexual assault, some researchers have posited that certain social constructions of masculinity may be a driving force (e.g., Malamuth et al., 1996; Mosher & Sirkin, 1984). For example, Mosher and Anderson (1986) found that college men with a "macho" personality consisting of extremely hostile, sexist beliefs about women were more likely to have been sexually aggressive in the past and reported less negative emotions when thinking about rape. Thus, investigators of sexual assault perpetration have examined masculinities as various combinations of hostile attitudes toward women and acceptance of interpersonal violence (e.g., Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991; Mosher & Sirkin, 1984).

This definition of masculinity is closely aligned with the confluence model of sexual assault, which suggests that there are two interrelated paths leading to sexual assault perpetration in men. In the first, the combination of negative early childhood experiences,

toxic masculine roles, and personality variables contribute to an insecure form of masculinity marked by hostility toward women and a need for dominance. In the second, gender role socialization, delinquency, and risk-taking contribute to acting out and endorsement of impersonal sex. These two paths intersect such that men who have both hostile masculinity and engage in impersonal sex are most likely to have (a) the motivation, (b) the predisposition, and (c) the opportunity to engage in sexual assault (Malamuth et al., 1996). In one highly cited study, Malamuth et al. (1991) tested the confluence model in a sample of 2,656 college men using structural equation modeling. The authors found support for each of the proposed paths of hostile masculinity and impersonal sex attitudes on men's coerciveness toward women.

Of the two paths of the confluence model, however, hostile masculinity has received the most attention, and the construct is often defined by combining variables such as rape myth acceptance and acceptance of interpersonal violence (Burt, 1980), hostility toward women (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995), adversarial sexual beliefs (Burt, 1980), hypermasculinity (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984), and dominance over women (Lisak & Roth, 1988). Connections between aspects of hostile masculinity and sexual assault perpetration are found in numerous studies. Most notably, Murnen et al. (2002) conducted a landmark meta-analysis using 39 studies of male college students' scores on hostile masculinity variables (e.g., rape myth acceptance, hypermasculinity, dominance and power over women, hostility toward women, and attitudes toward women) and found several strong effect sizes in relation to different measures of sexual assault perpetration. A critical finding from this meta-analysis was that the largest effects corresponded to Malamuth et al.'s (1991) constructions of hostile masculinity and Mosher and Sirkin's (1984) construct of hypermasculinity. Murnen et al. (2002) posited that these sexist and toxic masculinities were strongly linked to sexual assault perpetration, because "to be sexually aggressive toward women, one would need to be accepting of violence in relationships, believe that women deserve violence, and think men's place is to be dominant" (p. 370).

There is abundant evidence to support the conclusion that hostile masculinity plays a crucial role in predisposing men toward sexual violence. In addition to the large effect sizes reported by Murnen et al. (2002), subsequent cross-sectional findings (e.g., Swartout, 2013) and longitudinal research (e.g., Abbey & McAuslan, 2004) further suggest that hostile masculinity constructs are robust predictors of college men's sexual assault perpetration. In numerous experimental studies, men who scored higher on hostile masculinity constructs were also more likely to engage in laboratory analogues of sexual coercion (e.g., Thomas & Gorzalka, 2013) and less likely to engage in analogues of bystander prevention of sexual assault (e.g., Parrott et al., 2012) compared to men who scored lower on measure of hostile masculinity.

In addition, recent studies using sophisticated statistical analyses to test the confluence model theory suggest that hostile masculinity plays a larger role than impersonal sex. For instance, Logan-Greene and Cue Davis (2011) used latent profile analysis to identify whether subgroups of men could be statistically created based on their levels of hostile masculinity and impersonal sex. The authors noted that men who had high hostile masculinity scores, but moderate impersonal sex scores, clustered together and exhibited statistically similar scores as a group of men who had high scores on all measures. Additionally, they found that men

with high hostile masculinity scores reported significantly more sexual assault perpetration compared with men with moderate impersonal sex scores.

Investigators have also found connections with hostile masculinity and situational factors believed to facilitate sexual assault. For example, researchers have identified strong associations between alcohol use and sexual assault frequency, and have speculated that alcohol likely facilitates sexual assault by reducing inhibitions that may otherwise block the effects of hostile attitudes toward women on behaviors (see [Abbey, 2011](#), for a review). To examine the intersections of hostile masculinity and alcohol use, [Parkhill and Abbey \(2008\)](#) used path analysis to test an expanded confluence model with alcohol, impersonal sex attitudes, and hostile masculinity. Although the authors originally predicted that there would be no relationship between hostile masculinity and drinking behaviors, and that drinking behaviors would only be related to impersonal sex attitudes, the authors found that including a path between drinking behaviors and hostile masculinity improved the model fit significantly.

Critique of Attitudes Research

Constructs emphasizing callous attitudes toward women and acceptance of interpersonal violence are robust predictors of college men's sexual assault in a variety of domains and study designs. Additionally, given that findings have been relatively consistent across numerous studies with various strengths and limitations, we can conclude with confidence that constructs fitting under the umbrella of hostile masculinity (e.g., rape myth acceptance, adversarial sexual beliefs, and hostility toward women) are positively linked to sexual assault perpetration. However, some critics have suggested that the abundance of cross-sectional versus longitudinal research indicates that it is still unclear whether hostile masculinity attitudes are the cause, consequence, or covariate of sexual assault perpetration ([Tharp et al., 2013](#)).

A closer look at recent longitudinal research suggests that measures of hostile masculinity at baseline are related to later sexual assault perpetration (e.g., [Zinzow & Thompson, 2015](#)). However, many longitudinal studies provide little information regarding changes in the strength of the relationships between hostile masculinity attitudes and sexual assault perpetration over time. Instead, researchers tend to construct categories of men based on their sexual assault perpetration over a given amount of time and examine differences among those groups. For instance, in one highly cited study, [Abbey and McAuslan \(2004\)](#) examined college men's sexual assault perpetration over a 1-year period. They found that men who had committed more than one assault between Time 1 and Time 2 (i.e., repeat offenders) reported the most endorsement of hostile masculinity attitudes in conjunction with a variety of impersonal sex beliefs and behaviors. Interestingly, [Loh et al. \(2005\)](#) conducted a shorter longitudinal study of two time points (3 months and 7 months) and controlled for past sexual assault at each time point. Many behavioral and cognitive risk factors identified by [Abbey and McAuslan \(2004\)](#) were no longer significant after controlling for past sexual assault, including some aspects of hostile masculinity. Instead, past sexual assault was the most consistent predictor of future sexual assault perpetration.

Although these longitudinal investigations provide important information, their correlational designs limit any inferences about

causality, and their use of categories rather than examining differences over time (e.g., failing to use growth curve or cross-lagged regression models) precludes the ability to discern the temporal relationships between hostile masculinity and sexual assault perpetration from one time point to another. For example, one possibility is that committing sexual assault reinforces certain preexisting hostile attitudes toward women over time. Alternatively, men who commit a sexual assault may draw upon hostile attitudes toward women to rationalize their actions, even if they did not endorse these beliefs at baseline. Indeed, [Abbey and McAuslan \(2004\)](#) noted a trend in qualitative responses, in which some men who committed a sexual assault for the first time tended to sound like repeat offenders, such that they rationalized their violence using victim-blaming attitudes and hostility toward women.

In addition to concerns regarding longitudinal research, we noted one potential methodological issue not addressed in previous reviews. Specifically, although the construct of hostile masculinity includes the word "masculinity" in its definition, the instruments commonly used to measure it rarely focus on socially constructed masculine roles. For example, most measures of rape myth acceptance tap attitudes toward women's sexuality (e.g., "When women act and talk sexy, they are inviting rape"; [Burt, 1980](#)). Likewise, the Hostility Toward Women Scale ([Burt, 1980](#); [Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995](#)) consists of several questions about women (e.g., "I feel that many times women flirt with men just to tease them or hurt them"). The Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale ([Burt, 1980](#)) includes some mentions of men's roles (e.g., "Men are only out to get one thing"), but the majority of items measure men's negative attitudes toward women's sexual roles (e.g., "Most women are sly and manipulating when they are out to attract a man"). [Burt's \(1980\)](#) comments about the definition of adversarial sexual beliefs as "the expectation that sexual relationships are fundamentally exploitative . . . that each party to them is manipulative, sly, cheating, opaque to the other's understanding, and not to be trusted" (p. 218) further suggests that such beliefs do not reflect socialized gender roles for men but tap general distrust in intimate relationships. Moreover, we noted that most studies investigating hostile masculinity summed several measures of rape myth acceptance, adversarial sexual beliefs, hostility toward women, and attitudes condoning violence against women together to create a composite variable that was then labeled "hostile masculinity." However, our review returned only one study examining hostile masculinity instruments in a confirmatory factor analysis (i.e., [Malamuth et al., 1991](#)), and although the model demonstrated an acceptable fit to their data, only hostility toward women loaded above .50 on their latent hostile masculinity factor. These issues raise serious doubts about the construct validity of hostile masculinity instruments as measures of men's socialized gender roles.

[Lonsway and Fitzgerald \(1995\)](#) were among the first to raise concerns about the construct validity of these instruments. In a large sample of undergraduate men and women, the authors demonstrated that hostility toward women partially accounted for the relationships between [Burt's \(1980\)](#) measures of adversarial sexual beliefs and rape myth acceptance. They concluded that many of these measures were not tapping men's relational roles but were instead measuring general hostility toward women. Subsequent research has confirmed that attitudes of rape myth acceptance, hostility toward women, and sexism share a common underlying belief system, as evidenced by their strong correlations with each

other (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, & White, 2004), and that hostile masculinity constructs tend to share considerable overlapping variance with racism, homophobia, religious intolerance, and ageism (e.g., Aosved & Long, 2006). Moreover, investigators have found modest to moderate relationships between hostile masculinity measures and instruments specifically tapping men's experiences pertaining to gender role socialization, such as masculine gender role stress (e.g., C. A. Anderson & Anderson, 2008; Malamuth, Linz, Heavey, Barnes, & Acker, 1995), masculine gender role conflict (Rando, Rogers, & Brittan-Powell, 1998), and traditional masculinity ideology (Gallagher & Parrott, 2011). Taken together, these findings suggest that instruments assessing men's hostile masculinity may be more closely aligned with general intolerance and hostility toward women and minorities than socially constructed masculinities. Moreover, the modest correlations between hostile masculinity and normative and gender role strain constructs suggests that measures of masculinity ideology and gender role strain may provide unique information about men in relation to sexual assault perpetration not otherwise captured by hostile masculinity constructs.

Approaches Based on Normative and Gender Role Strain Definitions

Although not nearly as prevalent as studies examining hostile masculinity attitudes, some researchers have studied sexual assault in relation to normative and gender role strain definitions of masculinity offered by scholars such as Levant, Hirsch, Celentano, and Cozza (1992), Pleck, Sonnenstein, and Ku (1993), and Pleck (1981, 1995). These perspectives emphasize how men construct their masculinities, as well as the impact of "endorsement and internalization of cultural belief systems about masculinity and male gender roles" (Good, Borst, & Wallace, 1994, p. 3). Research from the normative and gender role strain paradigms has been influential to the psychology of men (Wong, Steinfeldt, Speight, & Hickman, 2010), and has provided important information about (a) men's endorsement of traditional masculinity ideologies (see Levant & Richmond, 2007, for a review), (b) conformity to different traditional masculine roles (e.g., Mahalik et al., 2003; Parent & Moradi, 2011), (c) masculine gender role stress (i.e., self-reported stress from violations of traditional male roles; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987), and (d) psychological distress associated with rigid internalizations of certain constructions of masculinity that restrict men's interpersonal and intrapersonal expressions (i.e., masculine gender role conflict; see O'Neil, 2008, for a review).

We found six articles addressing masculine gender role socialization using either normative or gender role strain approaches. Interestingly, in the first study to examine college men's masculinity ideology in relation to sexual violence against women, Good, Heppner, Hillenbrand-Gunn, and Wang (1995) identified that masculinity ideology was a better predictor than a variety of other variables, including two measures of hostile masculinity (i.e., adversarial sexual beliefs and rape myth acceptance) in a small sample of college men ($N = 90$). However, Rando et al. (1998) found that only one of four gender role conflict domains, restrictive affectionate behavior between men, differentiated between groups of sexually aggressive ($n = 17$) and nonsexually aggressive ($n = 174$) college men, whereas the sexually aggressive men scored significantly higher in each measure of hostile masculinity.

Taken together, these findings suggest that masculinity ideology may be a better predictor of sexual aggression than gender role-strain variables. However, the limited number of studies available indicates that more research is needed to tease apart the connections between these constructs in relation to sexual assault perpetration. Likewise, although Good et al. (1995) provided evidence that masculinity ideology may be a stronger predictor than hostile masculinity constructs, the small sample size severely limits any firm conclusions about the relative contributions of these variables as predictors of sexual assault.

Despite the limitations of previous research, some investigators have suggested that normative and gender role-strain constructs may drive men's hostile masculinity. For instance, Hill and Fischer (2001) examined men's adherence to restrictive male gender role norms in relation to entitlement and various measures of sexual assault perpetration and sexual assault proclivity (i.e., self-reported willingness to rape if assured of not getting caught) in a sample of college men ($N = 119$). The authors created factor scores from the combination of men's reported adherence to a variety of traditional masculine roles and their self-reported gender role conflict. These analyses revealed two factors: status and restriction. Whereas status assessed aspects of toughness, dominance, and gender role conflict related to success, power, and competition, restriction measured antifemininity and gender role conflict related to restrictive emotionality and restrictive affectionate behavior between men. They found evidence that psychological entitlement and, in turn, sexual entitlement mediated the relationships between status and restriction and a variety of variables related to sexual assault perpetration using structural equation modeling approaches. Although the cross-sectional and correlational findings of this study preclude any firm conclusions about causality, their results were consistent with research indicating that men may commit sexual assault if they feel entitled to sexual gratification from women (e.g., Baumeister, Catanese, & Wallace, 2002; Widman & McNulty, 2010).

More recent research suggests that, like hostile masculinity, men's adherence to traditional masculine roles may be connected with problematic alcohol use associated with an increased likelihood of sexual assault perpetration. For example, Locke and Mahalik (2005) explored the interrelationships between men's conformity to 11 masculine role norms, rape myth acceptance attitudes, alcohol use, and sexual assault frequency in a large sample of male college students. Eight of the 11 masculine role norms assessed were significantly related to sexual assault perpetration frequency: winning, risk-taking, violence, power over women, dominance, playboy, self-reliance, and disdain for homosexuals. Canonical correlations revealed that a combination of conformity to specific masculine role norms and problematic alcohol use predicted sexual assault frequency. Specifically, men who adhered to norms reflecting a need for dominance and power and heterosexual status, and who also engaged in heavy alcohol use, were most likely to have perpetrated sexual assault. Interestingly, role norms related to risk-taking and violence were significant predictors in the model, but only produced modest effect sizes in contrast to those norms reflecting a desire for power over women, which produced larger effect sizes. Such findings may suggest that conformity to norms emphasizing dominance and power over women may be more closely related to assault perpetration than role norms underscoring risky behavior and violence.

Relatedly, Thompson and Cracco (2008) found that certain masculinity ideology, especially men's desire to appear tough and confident, predicted college men's self-reported sexual aggression in bars. They concluded that when men are in a masculine environment and their inhibitions are reduced by alcohol use, those men who want to appear stereotypically masculine and dominant are more likely than other men to be sexually aggressive toward women. A recent survey study further examined the contributions of specific domains of traditional masculinity in relation to sexual assault perpetration. Using a moderate sample of college-aged community men who engaged in social drinking, Smith, Parrott, Swartout, and Tharp (2015) tested a path model of the direct and interactive contributions of antifemininity norms and men's gender role stress from subordination to women in relation to sexual dominance and, in turn, sexual aggression. The authors found no support for the interactive effects of antifemininity norms and subordination to women, but they found support for the mediating role of sexual dominance between antifemininity norms and subordination to women and their respective associations with sexual aggression. Such findings support and extend Thompson and Cracco's (2008) earlier conclusion that men who are determined to appear manly may use sexual aggression as a way of asserting their masculinity.

Critique of Normative and Gender Role Strain Research

Research from the normative and gender role strain perspectives has provided findings that may complement investigations of hostile masculinity attitudes. Results generally suggest that men's endorsement of traditional masculine roles and experiences of gender role strain are related to sexual assault perpetration. However, unlike investigations of hostile masculinity, which are so common that some studies' limitations and weaknesses tend to be relatively inconsequential when all findings are aggregated, research examining masculinity ideology and gender role strain has not reached the critical mass necessary to make firm conclusions.

Moreover, existing studies provide somewhat limited findings because of small sample sizes (e.g., Good et al., 1995) or methodological limitations. Regarding the latter, Hill and Fischer's (2001) study, while advanced for its time, would likely not meet the higher standards of structural equation modeling research today (e.g., Kline, 2011). Most notably, the authors did not report indices of model fit from their path analysis. This is an essential component of structural equation modeling because it allows researchers to determine whether the specified paths are consistent with observed data. Therefore, although Hill and Fischer's study suggests that entitlement may play a role in transforming traditional masculinity into attitudes condoning sexual assault, the true relationships between these variables and sexual assault behavior are still relatively unclear. In addition, although Smith et al. (2015) examined a path model following current standards for structural equation modeling, they only used two subscales from instruments with multiple subscales, each measuring different domains of traditional masculinity ideology and gender role strain. Therefore, the connections between men's sexual assault and the many different facets of masculinity continue to be understudied.

Unmistakably, more research is needed examining men's sexual assault perpetration in relation to masculinity ideology and gender roles strain. Nevertheless, our review uncovered several studies

linking normative and masculine gender role constructs to hostile masculinity variables (e.g., C. A. Anderson & Anderson, 2008; Gallagher & Parrott, 2011; Malamuth et al., 1995; Rando et al., 1998), and this appeared to be a popular area of inquiry. In addition, several studies have examined the connections between masculine gender role strain constructs and gender-based violence (see Baugher & Gazmararian, 2015; Moore & Stuart, 2005 for reviews). However, these studies did not measure sexual assault perpetration, so they were not retained in the final 121 articles. As mentioned previously, these investigations indicate that masculinity ideology and gender role strain are modestly correlated with hostile masculinity. Considering the possibility that masculinity ideology and gender role strain constructs may provide a unique perspective of men's experiences not otherwise tapped by hostile masculinity variables or sex comparisons, the dearth of literature in these domains is striking.

General Limitations and Directions for Future Research

In addition to the issues raised by the critiques in the present review, we noted several common limitations that cut across all studies regardless of how researchers studied the role of masculinities in sexual assault. First, investigations generally lacked sample diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Second, researchers have generally defined masculinities using relatively narrow definitions. Third, investigations as a whole relied too heavily on self-report measures of masculinities and sexual assault. Lastly, we noted a noticeable absence of qualitative research. These important gaps and limitations provide key directions for future research.

Problem #1: Lack of Sample Diversity

Masculinities were often defined in terms of White, Eurocentric perspectives, and the majority of participants were White middle-class men. Part of this problem is likely rooted in the general demographics of colleges and universities in the United States, but very few researchers made a concerted effort to oversample men of color or to focus specifically on men from nondominant groups. A small number of outdated investigations have explored between-groups differences in attitudes toward sexual assault in samples of African American and White students (e.g., Kalof & Wade, 1995) and Hispanic and White students, (e.g., Fischer, 1987). These studies found that men of color generally scored higher on hostile masculinity variables than White men or women of color; however, such investigations rarely involved variables assessing the experiences of race and ethnicity (e.g., acculturation, perceived racism or discrimination, and ethnic/racial identity) and did not examine sexual assault perpetration.

Research examining Asian and Asian American men's sexual assault appears to be more common than studies examining other ethnicities. In addition, recent research with Asian and Asian American men has several strengths that can help inform future inquiry. For instance, studies examining differences between Asian American and European American males generally find that ethnicity is a poor predictor of sexual assault perpetration in both cross-sectional (Hall, Sue, Narang, & Lilly, 2000) and longitudinal studies (Hall, DeGarmo, Eap, Teten, & Sue, 2006). However,

researchers have also found that Asian American men tend to score higher than European American men on hostile masculinity constructs (Hall et al., 2000; Koo, Stephens, Lindgren, & George, 2012). Cross-cultural studies comparing American and Japanese students have found similar results (Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005), and some investigators have suggested that Asian cultural values may buffer the effects of hostile masculinity attitudes on sexual assault behavior. For example, Hall et al. (2006) found that “loss of face,” a culturally based construct that involves a concern about fulfilling one’s social role and the impact of one’s behavior on others, was a protective factor against sexual coercion perpetration among Asian American men but not among European American men. These authors also identified that perceived minority status may increase sexual assault perpetration in Asian American men. Thus, further research is needed to understand the complex connections between ethnic and cultural factors in understanding Asian American men’s perpetration of sexual assault, and researchers should consider examining variables measuring cultural and racial experiences in more detail to better assess diverse masculinities.

In addition to a dearth of research examining cultural and ethnic factors, very little investigation has been conducted specifically on the associations between hostile masculinity or masculine gender role norms on gender and sexually diverse (GSD) men’s sexual assault. Indeed, one reason the present review focused on men’s sexual assault of women is that men’s same-sex sexual assault is vastly understudied. The lack of research examining masculinity and GSD men’s sexual assault perpetration or victimization runs in contrast to a number of studies—not identified in our original PsycINFO and Google searches—indicating that gay men are more likely to be victims of sexual assault in their lifetimes compared to heterosexual men. In a study by Walters, Chen, and Breiding (2013), found a lifetime prevalence of sexual assault victimization of 40% for gay men and 47% for bisexual men, compared to 21% in heterosexual men. Unfortunately, researchers have yet to provide detailed estimates of how these prevalence rates translate into college populations in the United States, and we could not find any studies examining transgender experiences with sexual assault in college. However, compared with heterosexual men, who are more likely to report being sexually assaulted by a woman, gay and bisexual men are more likely to report being assaulted by another man whom they know well or are dating (Walters et al., 2013). In addition, Krahé and Berger (2013) found that college men in Germany who reported same-sex sexual victimization also had higher levels of same- and opposite-sex sexual assault perpetration. Therefore, researchers need to examine sexual assault perpetration in gay and bisexual men, as well as heterosexual men who sexually assault heterosexual women or GSD men.

Problem #2: Narrow Masculinities

Since the 1950s, researchers have attempted to identify the characteristics of sexual assault perpetrators. On the one hand, this approach makes sense given the serious consequences of sexual violence. On the other hand, it is important to note that the majority of men do not commit sexual assault. For example, Koss et al.’s (1987) famous nationally representative study suggested that 75% of men did not engage in sexual assault. Subsequent

research has produced similar findings (e.g., Krebs et al., 2007), and bystander prevention programs, which rely on mobilizing men who do not commit sexual assault, have become increasingly popular and effective (Garrity, 2011). Yet, little is known about the *positive* qualities that differentiate nonoffenders from offenders, or men who stop rape from men who fail to intervene.

Focusing heavily on narrow and negative masculinities may also have important consequences for prevention. Whereas researchers have generally found moderate to strong effects between hostile masculinity attitudes and sexual assault perpetration (e.g., Murnen et al., 2002), meta-analyses of prevention programs have reported an interesting discrepancy. For example, Anderson and Whiston (2005) analyzed 69 studies (58% published) representing 102 treatment interventions and 18,172 participants (51% male). The authors found that prevention programs evidenced small (at best) effects on changing rape-related attitudes (i.e., hostile masculinity constructs). These findings suggest that programs that generally produced large effects sizes for increasing men’s knowledge and awareness of sexual assault are much less effective at decreasing hostile masculinity attitudes.

One interpretation of these data is that hostile masculinity attitudes may be resistant to change. However, another interpretation is that hostile masculinity attitudes, because they represent negative and narrow aspects of masculinity, may not resonate with most men. Hostile masculinity may not reflect the many different and more positive ways of being a man (i.e., masculinities). More research is needed to examine additional aspects of masculinity in relation to sexual assault that may better represent the average college male’s experiences. Positive psychology perspectives of masculinity (see Kiselica & Englar-Carlson, 2010, for a review) may help identify positive qualities that are socially constructed as masculine (e.g., being a protector or being respectful to others), which may reduce the likelihood of sexual assault offending or increase the chances of bystander intervention.

Problem #3: Reliance on Self-Report Measures

Sexual assault research since the 1950s has relied heavily on self-report measures of masculinities, perpetration, victimization, and nearly every construct described in the present review. However, a small but growing number of investigators have begun to examine men’s attitudes toward women using implicit association tests. Unlike self-report measures, these tests are capable of assessing both conscious and unconscious biases through decision latencies in response to various stimuli. Rudman and Mescher (2012), for instance, produced the first published study exploring men and women’s implicit tendencies to objectify or dehumanize women in relation to their self-reported attitudes toward rape. The authors found a strong sex difference, such that men were more likely than women to have a positive association (e.g., lower response times) pairing images of women with objects, tools, and animal parts. Moreover, men’s implicit bias to dehumanize women was positively correlated with self-reported willingness to rape. In a subsequent study, Blake and Gannon (2014) examined men’s implicit and explicit biases in relation to self-reported willingness to rape. Their analysis revealed that explicit measures of bias against women were stronger predictors of self-reported willingness to rape, with one exception: Men’s implicit bias that women are objects emerged as a strong predictor. Considering that, in

prospective studies, men's self-reported willingness to rape is a strong predictor of whether they have committed an assault and whether they are likely to commit another in the future (e.g., Gidycz, Warkentin, Orchowski, & Edwards, 2011), future investigations should examine men's implicit biases to objectify and dehumanize women in relation to past sexual assault perpetration.

In addition to an inability to capture important implicit attitudes, current research is limited by relying too heavily on the same self-report instrument. In particular, the SES is by far the most popular and widely used assessment of sexual assault perpetration. However, relying too heavily on the same measure may be problematic, because several researchers have identified potential problems with the SES. First, although investigators have examined the reliability and validity of the SES victimization scales, comparatively little research is available examining the psychometric properties of the SES perpetration scale in men or women (e.g., Kolivas & Gross, 2007). Second, different scoring methods of the SES are widely used with little justification, and although investigators have demonstrated that each scoring method produces reliable and valid results, they also tend to produce different rates of sexual assault perpetration (Davis et al., 2014). Third, competing measures such as the Sexual Strategies Scale (SSS) yielded discrepant patterns of responding when compared with patterns on the SES, suggesting that other measures may be capturing unique aspects of sexual assault perpetration not tapped by the SES (Strang, Peterson, Hill, & Heiman, 2013). Taken together, these findings indicate that more research is needed examining men's sexual assault via other instruments.

Problem #4: Reliance on Quantitative Data

Compared with the vast number of quantitative studies examining men's sexual assault perpetration, very little qualitative research is available. Qualitative findings help contextualize the relationships between masculinity variables and college men's sexual assault. For example, Armstrong, Hamilton, and Sweeney (2006) conducted nine months' worth of ethnographic observations of college life, including 42 interviews with residents of a "party dorm." Armstrong et al. provided valuable information by following college students to fraternity parties, observing interactions between men and women, and then following up with targeted questions. The authors noted strong themes of gender role socialization intersecting with men and women's sexual agendas. In one example, fraternity members hired limousine services to take women from the dorm to their parties, and students referred to this practice as "dorm-storming" (p. 490). The authors noted how fraternity members often controlled every aspect of the party: who gets in, what people drink, and the level of safety against sexual assault. In a related study, Foubert, Garner, and Thaxter (2006) interviewed fraternity men about their experiences with sexual consent at parties. The authors found strong themes of ambiguity regarding consent when alcohol is involved and a general aversion to asking for consent.

Although issues of generalizability are always a concern with qualitative research, such findings are important for providing a deeper understanding of previous quantitative research. Thus, future investigators should consider using qualitative or mixed methods designs to better illuminate the complex connections between masculinities and sexual assault. Mixed method designs are espe-

cially needed. For instance, researchers may consider examining mediation and moderation models, and then interviewing selected participants who score high or low on various measures to qualify their results.

Concluding Comments

Because previous reviews have covered a variety of areas in the sexual assault literature but have not addressed masculinities directly, we focused our review on different approaches to studying masculinities. However, it is likely that masculinities are but one important piece in a complex puzzle. Researchers need to continue to examine men and masculinities to help clarify how these variables are related to sexual assault perpetration on college campuses. At the same time, the present review suggests that the literature is unbalanced with respect to these issues. Investigations focused on men and sexual assault perpetration are substantially fewer in number than investigations of other issues in the sexual assault literature (e.g., victimization or attitudes toward sexual assault). Moreover, listed in order from greatest to least, the present review suggests that researchers are most interested in examining masculinities as a function of hostile masculinity variables, sex differences, and normative and gender role strain constructs. We hope that the present review serves as a call to action for increasing scholarship in these important areas, especially considering that some, such as the normative and gender role strain approaches, have been influential to the psychology of men but are vastly underrepresented in the sexual assault literature.

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