He said she said: How do we define "consent" in an ever-changing sociocultural landscape?

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May 6, 2019

Myth and the Feminine Divine

- In general where you have the hunt accent you have a male oriented mythology/social formation. Female supports Male
- Cold climate: bravery in dangerous acquisition of meat
- Earliest examples of male mythology 40,000 B.C. art in Aurignacian caves

- Where you have the plant accent you have female orientation/social formation: shared labor/female is guardian of home, human development and spiritual life
- Warm climate: anyone can pick a banana
- Goddess art/figures: Paleolithic Venus/ 30,000 years ago

- Joseph Campbell, 2013

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Origin of the word “Patriarchy”

- The word literally means “rule of the father”, from the ancient Greek.
- Part of the idea of “patriarchy” is that this oppression of women is multilayered. It operates through inequalities at the level of the law and the state, but also through the home and the workplace. It is upheld by powerful cultural norms and supported by tradition, education and religion. It reproduces itself endlessly through these norms and structures, which are themselves patriarchal in nature; and thus it has a way of seeming natural or inevitable.

Patriarchy is water

The persistence of white male domination is so much part of the oxygen of life that patriarchy was not even identified as a concept for much of history - unlike democracy, autocracy or oligarchy, whose relative merits were vigorously debated by the Greeks.

You might even say that patriarchy’s particular power is its capacity to make itself as invisible as possible; it tries very hard not to draw attention to the means of its endurance.
Manhood in the Making

- In North American, young men achieve “masculinity” status with modern-day “manhood rituals” that include:
  - violence
  - alcohol consumption
  - high risk activities
  - sexual conquest

~Gary Brooks Ph.D.

Cultural Concepts of Masculinity

- Centerfold Syndrome
- Trophyism
- Alexithymia
- Arrhythmicity
- Emotional Burnout

~Levant and Brooks, Ph.D. Men and Sex
**Men and Sex**

Boys in their childhood learn to associate women’s bodies with softness, intimacy, and sensuality, the very qualities that they have been taught to reject. Boys often crave physical closeness, but have no way to ask for it and few avenues to experience it. In adolescence, young men find themselves besieged by two powerful yet contradictory forces—waves of sexual urgency and the extreme prohibitions against emotional intimacy.

—Levant and Brooks, *Men and Sex*

**“Trophyism”**

- Term to describe how most men experience their masculinity in comparison to other men.
- Male competition for access to women’s bodies starts in adolescence
- Language of competition: 1st to score with the sexiest teenage girl
- Women’s bodies-as-trophies carries into adulthood.

~Brooks, Gary R: *The Centerfold Syndrome, How men can overcome objectification and achieve intimacy with Women*
“alexithymia”

Psychoneurological term to describe a socially conditioned inability to feel, identify or express feelings

“Individuals with high levels of alexithymia are usually aware of their emotional arousal; however, they have difficulty differentiating emotions and verbalizing them”

“Pathological arrhythmicity”

male inability to honor female cycles (consider PMS pathological) or their own... way to describe the male drive to succeed, work hours with no let-up, work despite illness, and suppression of tears or laughter.

“Lusterman, D. Ph.D. Repetitive Infidelity, Womanizing, and Don Juanism
Other symptoms

- Difficulty with relationships and events that are not task oriented
- Vigilance against possible attack
- Absence of reciprocal alternating rhythm of intimacy / men perceive such as partner’s excessive neediness or dependency

“me too”

The movement of #MeToo revealed that despite all those years of working hard, of leaning in, of waiting for unfairness to gradually ebb away, of absorbing and internalizing sexism, of building starry careers or toiling away in menial jobs in the hope that their children would have it better.
#Timesup

you could still be pinned to a bed
or cornered at a party
or groped,
or leered at
or catcalled by a man -
simply because of your woman’s body

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ASH

Strange house we must keep and fill.
House that eats and pleads and kills.
House on legs. House on fire. House infested
House of trick and suck and shrug.
Give-it-to-me house. I-need-you-baby house.
House whose rooms are pooled with blood.
House with hands. House of guilt. House
That other houses built. House of lies
And pride and bone. House afraid to be alone.
House like an engine that churns and stalls.
House with skin and hair for walls.
House the seasons singe and douse.
House that believes it is not a house.

~ Poet laureate Tracy K Smith | Professor at Princeton University and Pulitzer Prize winner
MASCULINITY

Noun:
1: the masculine gender
2: a noun, pronoun, adjective, or inflectional form or class of the masculine gender
3: a male person

Adjective: Having qualities appropriate to or usually associated with a man

Merriam-Webster.com

Masculinity is a concept...

• ...with multiple definitions.
• It’s a gender expression.
• Its various forms are healthy, neutral, and it can integrate other ideas and expressions, such as the feminine, into it.
• It is not necessarily static and varies from person to person.
• It can, therefore, also be “toxic.”
“TOXIC” MASCULINITY

- Toxic masculinity is a term that broadly impacts our culture. Especially marginalized people such as people of color, cis gender women, queer folks, and gender non-conforming people such as those who identify as “trans.”
- Other cis gender men can be the victims of “toxic masculinity.” In fact, men are the most likely victims of male violence.
- Keep in mind that statistically, *most men are not* violent.
- However, most egregious physical violence is committed by males.

MEN’S ROLE

- Does the image he has of himself align with the way the world perceives him?
- Does he currently, or has he ever abused a power dynamic?
- Ask him to consider his grandmother, mother, sister, wife or daughter. Imagine her in a similar sexual situation that you’ve been in. A male shows interest in her and decides to take her out. She’s overjoyed with excitement. After the date, they agree to go back to her place. They begin to make out and she’s say’s, “no.” He gently coerces her into not stopping and they end up having intercourse even though, she really didn’t want to. Are you concerned? Should you be? How do you feel about this?
CONQUEST MODEL

The reason sexual power dynamics don’t change dramatically is because we’re usually given specific examples of what we can and can’t say and what we should and shouldn’t do.

How do we help men create a new sexual model that isn’t a conquest model?

Many of us have been conditioned to look at everything from a legal perspective and definitions of what's appropriate and what’s not; if we look at this problem based on those definitions, the outcome isn’t much to aspire to. It leaves us with lowest common denominator of what you can and can’t get away with - legally.

THE NEW MASCULINITY - COMMON DECENCY?

• Or is it about aspiring to something higher than what the law dictates such as common decency?

• What are the common sense values we can all relate to? Respect, dignity, decorum...

• Instead, what if the collective conversation was about dignity?

• How would you think about this issue differently?
VULNERABILITY

• We must consciously examine our intentions and admit our shadow into interpersonal relationships.
• We must admit how we’re affected by one another and observe how our unresolved issues get stirred up then make adjustments accordingly.
• We must examine our own behavior, motives and how we play into cultural roles and rules.

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

• Be a humanitarian
• Practice common decency
• Stay in your dignity
• Respect others
• Let your principles guide you
• Be vulnerable, talk about your shadow side, ask for help
Mother Myths

- Perfect love: sacrificial and free of ambivalence
- Instinctual: all females are nurturing so every woman “should” be a good mother
- Denial: complexity of mothering across life stages
- Every mother loves each of her children equally.

Adapted from Streep, Peg. Mean Mothers: Overcoming the Legacy of Hurt

Why is Mother Hunger™ so hard to discuss?

- We don’t want to “see” that mothers can be unable to care for infants/children or cruel
- Mother Hunger™ (complex, ongoing trauma) creates chronic grief that frustrates the helping profession/ no easy solution/ we like solutions
“A mother’s victimization does not merely humiliate her, it mutilates her daughter who watches her for clues as to what it means to be a woman. Like the traditional foot-bound Chinese woman, she passes on her affliction. The mother’s self-hatred and low expectations are binding rags for the psyche of the daughter”


A Map for Love

While each baby is born with all she needs, the basic wiring, to learn about love and connection, a baby cannot use it or begin to sense and incorporate the emotional world without a consistent guide
Naming

- Mother Hunger™ wound often unnamable, unspeakable, and therefore untreated.
- Betrayal: neglecting, abusing/using and/or abandoning an infant.
- Collective denial/blindness

Soul nerve

- Stephen Porges / vagus nerve research and teaching
- Second brain
- Unifying organ of the entire nervous system
- Felt sense of love, compassion, fear, grief, loneliness, anxiety, disgust, and despair
- All our feelings involve the soul nerve = "Heartfelt"
- Vital to health and well-being
Epigenetic transmission

- What begins as emotional stress ends in physical brain damage. We can now do brain scans showing that whole chunks of neurons in some brain regions don’t fire.
- Compromised mothers cause intense emotional pain to be transmitted by the brain stem to the neurons around the heart and other viscera, producing, literally, a broken heart.

Mother and Daughter

- In every relationship between mother and daughter, it is the mother’s voice that first defines the boundary of the self.
- The process of UNLEARNING her voice = greatest challenge for an adult daughter of an unloving mother
- Broken heart : Soul nerve
- Repeating her love will be painful: friendships and lovers
Betrayal Trauma

Research has confirmed that exposure to traumas that are high in betrayal, such as an assault by someone close to the victim (caregiver/infant) is linked to poorer mental health outcomes including symptoms of depression, anxiety, dissociation, post-traumatic stress disorder, borderline personality characteristics, and increased physical health problems, as well as an even greater risk of further victimization.

First Broken Heart

Betrayal trauma theory explains that the double bind a victim faces (on the one hand, a need to protect against betrayal, but on the other hand, a need to remain attached to a caregiver) leads to a host of reactions, including blindness about the betrayal, memory impairment about the betrayal, and eventually an increased risk for developing mental and physical distress.
Trauma creates the Unknown Self

- Forgetting abuse is a way to preserve the attachment relationship; bonding trumps fear and our brain will “forget” in service to protect the bond.
- Blind to the trauma/ complex post traumatic stress
- Daughters will not develop a self/ Divided self to cope with betrayal trauma
- One she shows the world, secret self she hides
- Climate for love / sex addiction
- Complex PTSD symptoms/ Major Depression Symptoms
- MH Symptoms

DEFINITION OF CONSENT

Verb: To give assent; approval

Noun: Compliance in or approval of what is done or proposed by another; agreement as to action or opinion. Specifically, a voluntary agreement

Merriam-Webester.com
THE 21ST CENTURY – WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- April 19th, 2017 - Bill O'Reilly is forced to resign by Fox News as a result of multiple allegations of sexual misconduct by several different women
- October 5th, 2017 - New York Times publishes Harvey Weinstein Allegations
- October 11th, 2017 - The “Shitty Men in Media” Google Doc goes viral
- The #MeToo movement is born
- Between April 2017 – May 2018: 219 celebrities, politicians, CEOs, and others who have been accused of sexual misconduct.

1-https://www.vox.com/a/sexual-harassment-assault-allegations-list

THIRD WAVE FEMINISM…

...is about “fucking without feelings.” The notion of “slut pride” was born to attack the double standard, and to name women’s pleasure as real.

This movement offered women the space to find out what they wanted sexually and to be unapologetic about it even though many women don’t like anonymous or casual sex.

Prest, “The Heart Podcast,” 2018
WHAT HAPPENS IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT?

- Women can get sexually turned on by “making out” but stop when they feel like they’ve had enough contact.
- Males experience that activity, and the accompanying arousal, as a green light toward genital sex and will cajole the female to “keep going.”
- Women tend to acquiesce to men, even though they state at the beginning of the encounter that they don’t want to “have sex.”
- They go through with sex, are able to orgasm, but feel sad internally.
- Later - they get angry.

WHY DO WOMEN ACQUIESCE SEXUALLY?

- In general, females want to make males happy. She’ll over ride her needs, then her defenses go down. She tells herself that she’s “cool” with what’s going on. This doesn’t mean she’s being forced, but she feels like she doesn’t have a choice.
- She’s brought up to want male attention to get a husband.
- It’s impolite to say “no” since she’s concerned about hurting the guy’s feelings; she’s afraid that he’ll walk away and that she could lose him.
HER BIND…

- He cajoles then convinces her that the reason she’s saying “no” is “stupid.” She says, “no” then he does it anyway.

- All the while, she’s struggling with, “how do I give him what he want’s in a way that’s not terrible for me?” This is especially difficult if she’s said “no” several times and doesn’t want to make a scene.

- Her bind is between taking care of him vs. what she needs. She’s grappling with a million things, he’s only thinking of one thing and not paying attention to her.

THE GOOD GIRL CODE

- Women are taught to be people pleasers.

- Female infants are born with the capability of reading facial cues; girls and women survive by being aware and reading social cues.

- We know when men get angry, lash out, or are happy, we’re safe or not safe.

- Sex can be a social currency to stay safe and belong. “It’s important to be liked by someone who has your fate in their hands.”

  Prest, The Heart Podcast, 2018
WOMEN’S ROLE

• Does the image she has of herself align with the way the world perceives her?

• Does she buy into the patriarchy? If so, how does she contribute to the patriarchy?

• Does she use her sexuality in a way that gives males mixed messages? Does she silently condone and side with the problem that violates her?

ABC’s of Consent

Awareness - How aware are you of your body? What do you want from your sexual experience? What do you like sexually? What do you need in order to feel safe enough to have sex? What is pleasurable for you? How much time have you spent investigating these questions?

Boundaries - Do you know what a boundary is? Are you available for sex on the first, second, third, etc. date? What about intercourse? Are there parts of your body you don’t want touched? Does “no” mean “no?”

Communication - How do you talk about your wants and needs to a partner? Do you communicate your boundaries?
COMMUNICATION

• Communication is not just about talking. It’s difficult and includes the invisible social and historical contexts at play in the moment.

• Communication in a shared language; a million ways to convey “no” from STOP to non-verbal.

• These forces impact how entitled we feel with our comfort and, also, how likely we are to put others’ needs before our own needs.

• It’s the invisible things that create problems when not attended to.

COMMUNICATION

• Current male fear may have men begin to pay attention to the many things that are taking place in the room.

• Males should analyze the process to look at “their part in it.”

• They should be aware of the power dynamics, talk about them, the ways they’re scary, fun, or pleasurable. This engenders trust.
COMMUNICATION

- We must create less stigma about explicit conversations about sex and sexuality. When she says, “That was terrible for me,” the other party should say, “Let’s talk about it” instead of gas lighting her.

- If the person had a bad experience with you then you probably regret it. What do you want sexually? Is it what others expect you to want or what you really want?

“Tell me about your history. Who are you?”

- Context can be historical like race, class, gender or any other power differential such as age, SES, etc.

- It can be situational as when someone’s in love and the other party isn’t. The person who isn’t in love can sense that the smitten party will do what they want. They now have a responsibility.

- When things are uneven, the person in power has to take extra care to allow for an environment that allows for “no.”
WHAT IS CONSENT?

- Consent is **not** just about “no means no,” “yes means yes” or “no means yes.” Consent is affirmative, verbal permission. Verbal consent can be withdrawn at any time.

- There can be consent to A & B but not C. (Eg. Yes to kissing and heavy petting, but not to intercourse).

- Consent is **knowing** that the other person is excited about what’s going on; it’s clear that both parties are on the same page.

Consent means that you’re giving someone permission to **do** something to you or on your behalf. Compliance.

- BDSM community - RACK; SSC
- Be adult, take responsibility for communicating and also if you fail to communicate.
- We Consent APP
- Consent means that you’re giving someone permission to *do* something to you or on your behalf. Compliance.
- We have sex with someone else.
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MEN AND WOMEN

**The Masculine Directs, The Feminine Invites** (Deida, 2006)

- Can men in power empower women without being seductive, feeling weak or like they’re going to lose something?
- Can women stand in their power without choking off their femininity or turning themselves into sexual objects?
- How do both genders honor each other’s humanity?
MEN AND WOMEN

• How do you contribute to the problem?
• What solutions can you bring to your dating life on a daily basis?
• What are your personal values?
• What are your personal guiding principles?
• How do you want to be treated in romantic relationships?
• If you’re attracted to someone in life or in the work place, what is an appropriate way to approach that person based on your values and principles?
• How can you intervene when you see inappropriate dynamics taking place?

CenterForHealthySex.com