



EDITORIAL

No woman signs up for this

Kāore he wahine o te ao nei ka whakaae ki tēnei

Nobody starts off in a dating relationship knowing they are going to be verbally or psychologically abused, hit or punched. No woman willingly agrees to this. Recent media coverage by Newshubb (2017) revealed sexist comments made by some young college students over social media that were disrespectful toward women.

After posting comments about rape, apologies were issued, and the young men said it was meant to be a joke. The young men involved have been suspended and counselled. Agencies like Rape Crisis were called in to talk to these young men about respect and consent in an intimate relationship. I wondered what part of any comments - when made about rape - could be construed as a joke. I also began to wonder if young men are made to think about how the sexualized language they use objectifies women and how much of this language conveys their values and beliefs about women, and how this contributes to the high rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) in our society.

So what is it that we teach our sons about the values of a 'good man' and how is this related to the masculinities of the present-day New Zealand male? The ideal aspects of a New Zealand male, as defined by his peers, is one based on early pioneering values of toughness and the repression of tenderness in order to be a good soldier and rugby player (Abdinor, 2000). Bray and Hutchinson (2007) claimed that the developments of boys' masculinities are socially shaped to conform to an image of hardness, and the suppression of tender emotions, which leads to the acceptability of anger. Murphy (2009) found that although men would like to be caring and loving toward their partners, there is pressure to conform to the

dominant masculine view held by New Zealand society. Perhaps a dissonance occurs when men are socialized to be physically strong, good providers, and allowed to display anger by society yet expected to be caring, loving, and respectful partners.

The way that violence began for women, in my PhD study, was through power and control. Power and control came through initially as ownership practices that could be construed as caring. The violence was hidden and dressed as care and protection until it was slowly revealed as control. Amanda's narrative is a prime example of how power and control proceeds gradually and is often mistaken for the intensity of love and protection before it descends into violence.

Well no one says hi my name is so and so and punches you in the nose because that's no sort of opening line... ..The way it unfolds is interesting and unusual... ..[he was] very protective, very caring, very sort of, "I'll come here with you to do this, go with you and I'll take care of this," like a bear type and it was 'oh that's so nice that he's caring for me', but it was actually that he needed to control this for himself in case I caused some disruption. But interestingly to start with I saw it as very caring and not as control or a loss of freedom. Just saw it as, 'someone wants to be with me that much that everything has to be engineered that way'.

There is a level of maturity needed to work out one's identity without conforming to peer pressure. Perhaps

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if we had a college curriculum that asked boys what they think masculinity is in New Zealand society, and what their ideal aspects are of a New Zealand male in the 21st century we may begin to understand gender-based violence and the imbalance of power relations in which IPV is found. I believe such questions should be part of all college curriculums. A college curriculum that would look at the nature of what expectations young men have around a woman's role would be worth undertaking to investigate if there are stereotypical images that boys grow up with that could account for their behavior toward women in IPV. Perhaps alongside this, we should teach our girls about what a healthy relationship looks like. The same educational aspect could be put to young girls to investigate femininities of the present day and how they are socialized into their roles. Perhaps we could then begin to interpret the messages that influence the mindset in young women of what to expect from an intimate relationship when dating. We need to raise female awareness early in puberty of the ways that society objectifies and sexualizes women, and we need to ask questions about whether this lack of respect can lead to their abuse. Such understanding is significant in the light of data from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey that found that 23.2% of women first experienced physical, sexual violence, stalking and other forms of violence from an intimate partner before the age of 18 (Breiding et al., 2014). More alarming is that the survey found that 23.1% first experienced IPV at ages 11-17 (Breiding et al., 2014). The impact of IPV at such an early age puts young women at risk for HIV, STIs, mental health problems such as anxiety and depression,

antisocial behaviour and substance abuse, as well as risk for suicide (Breiding et al., 2014). Intimate partner violence is played out through bullying behaviour over contraceptive use and what they wear, what friends they see, and how they behave around social media and all forms of technology, for example posing nude, which puts them at risk for blackmail and further repercussions at a later stage in life (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). The future impact for young women is the future vulnerability to further episodes of IPV, and the susceptibility of manipulating power and control tactics in later life. Power and control in the form of IPV toward young women contributes to psychological distress, physical injury, and the erosion of a sense of self and identity. The distress and disruption that psychological abuse causes in their lives can have ongoing physical and mental health consequences.

No young woman signs up for abuse in an intimate relationship. It happens insidiously. Rates of intimate partner and family violence in New Zealand are the worst in the world, and we only know what is reported. Many more women choose not to report what has happened to them. Over the centuries, regardless of the shifting social constructions of maleness, gender-based violence and inequality of power continue to exist and remain, the leading causes of IPV where women are the primary victims.

Sandra Thaggard, BHSc(Nsg), MHSc(Hons), PhD, Senior Lecturer, Department of Nursing, School of Clinical Sciences, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, NZ

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