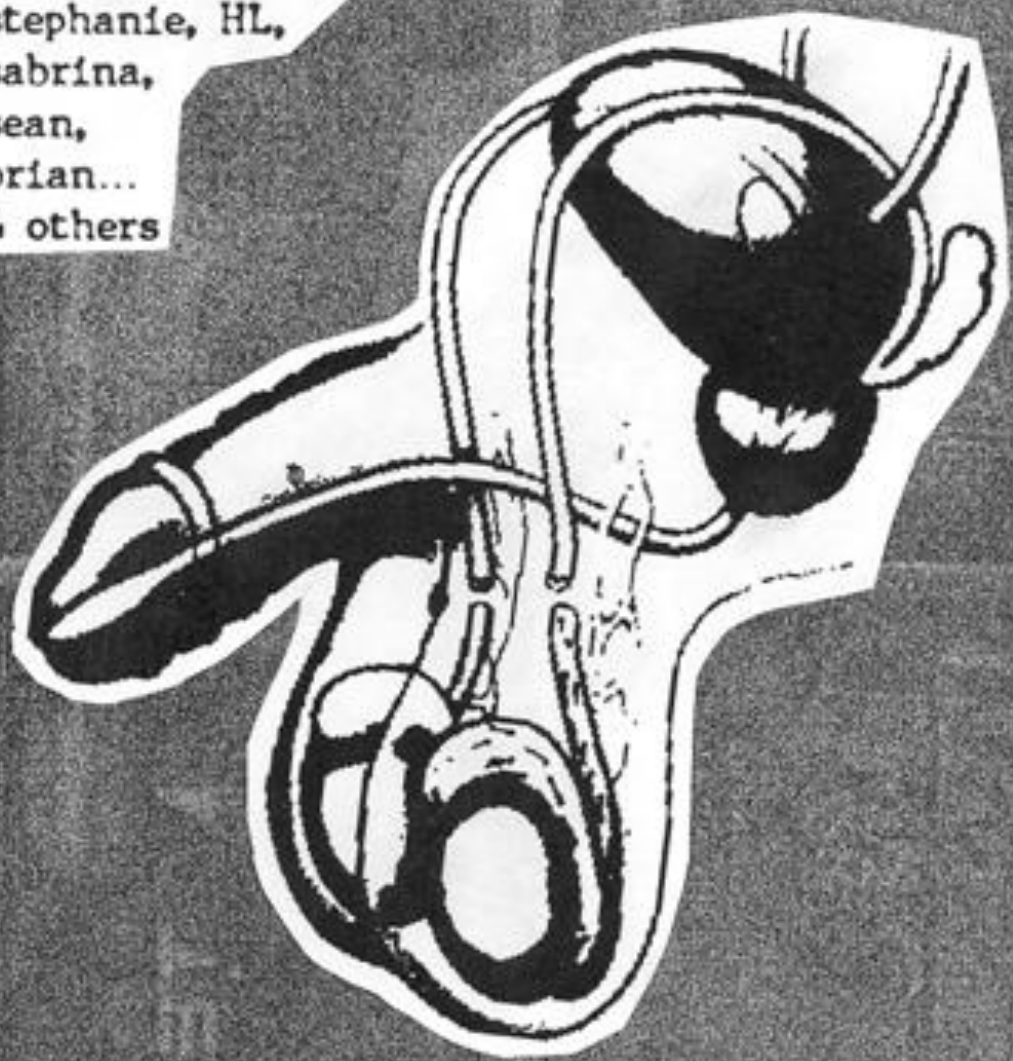


DON'T BE
A DICK



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complaints, or whatever

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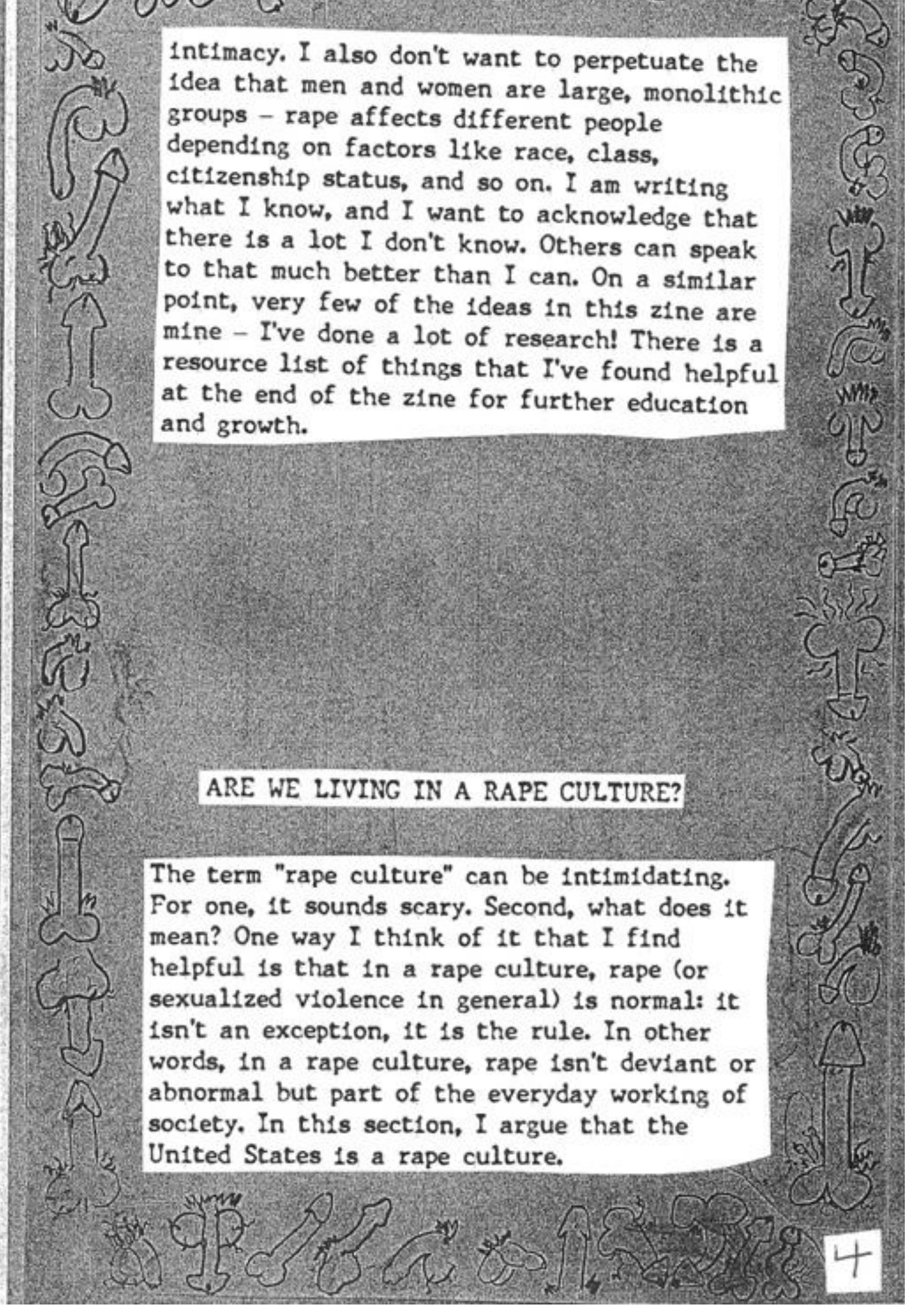
"Men have a simple remedy for this state of things. They can alter their way of life." - Christabel Pankhurst

INTRO

This is a zine intended primarily for straight, non-trans men to do something about sexual violence and rape in their own lives. In a way, I'm writing this for my past self - I could have used something like this a couple of years ago. Although they aren't my main audience, women, trans-folks, and the queer community in general may find this zine useful in understanding where many straight, non-trans men are coming from. In general, want to encourage critical examination of ways of thinking about and relating to others, with the broader goal of encouraging fulfilling, free, and mutually beneficial relationships.

This zine will be most helpful if the reader has a grasp on the dynamics of privilege and oppression between men and women. I have tried to be as accessible as possible without compromising the ideas which I am trying to communicate. Some of the language I use may also raise uncomfortable feelings, especially for survivors of sexual violence. My intent is not to trigger traumatic memories, but to speak plainly and truthfully about my own thoughts and experiences.

I am a straight, white, middle-class male, so I am attempting to write critically from a position of privilege and dominance. I do not intend to perpetuate the idea that monogamous and/or heterosexual relationships are more "natural" than or superior to other forms of



intimacy. I also don't want to perpetuate the idea that men and women are large, monolithic groups - rape affects different people depending on factors like race, class, citizenship status, and so on. I am writing what I know, and I want to acknowledge that there is a lot I don't know. Others can speak to that much better than I can. On a similar point, very few of the ideas in this zine are mine - I've done a lot of research! There is a resource list of things that I've found helpful at the end of the zine for further education and growth.

ARE WE LIVING IN A RAPE CULTURE?

The term "rape culture" can be intimidating. For one, it sounds scary. Second, what does it mean? One way I think of it that I find helpful is that in a rape culture, rape (or sexualized violence in general) is normal: it isn't an exception, it is the rule. In other words, in a rape culture, rape isn't deviant or abnormal but part of the everyday working of society. In this section, I argue that the United States is a rape culture.

Here are some statistics on rape:

*A 1987 study found that a quarter of college males acknowledged using some measure of coercion to force sex with an unwilling partner.

*The National Crime Victimization Survey found just under 250,000 rapes in 2007.

*The FBI reports that 80-90% of rapes go unreported to police. This means that most rape statistics dramatically under represent the prevalence of rape.



*The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network reports that 73% of rapes are committed by an acquaintance, not a stranger. For some groups, like college age women, the percentage is even higher.

*As many as 1 in 4 women will experience sexual assault during their lifetime.

*The vast majority, around 99%, of rapes are committed by men.

While I think statistics can be helpful, we cannot end with them. Numbers and quantities can only teach us so much, and their human impact is limited.

It's also important to recognize that women are raped for different reasons and that it affects different women in different ways. For example, female slaves from Africa were raped both by slave masters and other slaves for the purpose of producing more slaves. In modern times, prostitutes are often raped both by johns and the police. Women of color are often targeted for rape based on racist assumptions, i.e. that black women are sexually animalistic or that women of Asian descent are seductresses. Rape is also a tool of governments and institutions. Although rape has been used in warfare for as long as anyone can remember, it was only recently officially recognized as a tool of war by the United Nations. Although institutional rape is

not the focus of this zine, learning about individual behavior can open your eyes to institutional issues in society.

One reason that rape often goes unreported or undisclosed is that many people hesitate to define much sexual violence as rape. The legal definition of rape is forced sexual penetration, but other types of sexual violence can be just as, if not more, destructive. For example, if a previous relationship exists between the survivor and perpetrator, it is less likely to be labeled as rape. A helpful way to think about rape is that it is a denial of agency and autonomy to whoever is being assaulted. Rapists often use rape to "put women in their place," that is, subordinate to men, and explicitly speak of rape in such terms. Rape is an act that is not just sexual, but violent and dominating as well.

Rape can be a scary word for people (both men and women) because it describes an act of power and dominance in no uncertain terms. Sometimes, naming an act as rape can be what people call "speaking truth to power," which can feel especially threatening to the powerful: in this case, men. The overwhelming public silence around rape, especially among men, allows men to continue to rape. A study by *Ms.* magazine found that 88% of men who had committed an assault that met the legal definition of rape were adamant that they had not committed rape. This type of self-distancing allows men to think "I'm not a

rapist," while continuing to commit assaults with a "clean conscience," or even thinking that women enjoy sexual aggression.

Disclaimer: the next paragraph is a personal story about sexual assault that may be triggering.

It was only a few months ago, when reading zines about consent, that I realized that I had crossed women's boundaries in previous relationships. One specific example is when I pressured a former girlfriend into giving me a hand job. I told her how much I wanted it while adding the totally meaningless qualifier "it's okay if you don't want to do it." But my tone of voice and body language said otherwise. Add in the social pressure that she felt to satisfy me sexually, and you had an environment of coercion, not consent. After she was done, she told me how horrible it was, and I apologized, not understanding at all what had just happened. It was only a few months ago that I started to realize what I had done. I'm on good terms with my ex, so I apologized to her, we talked about it, and she gave me permission to share this story. One important thing I take away from this is that had I not taken the effort to educate myself about consent, I would still not understand what I had done. That is a clear example of the privilege that I have in this society; the privilege to not have to think about how my actions affect others. I also want to emphasize that my apology didn't make things "okay." I fucked up and I can't take it back.



One hallmark of rape culture is victim-blaming. This often takes the form of blaming survivors for their rape, with statements like "you shouldn't have been out alone" or "you shouldn't have worn such revealing clothing." In addition to keeping their own sexuality under wraps, women are also frequently seen as being responsible for controlling men's sexuality as well. Criticisms of the perpetrator, like "no means no" or "what the fuck were you thinking?" are much less common. Similarly, what does advice concerning rape prevention look like? It's primarily a list of "don'ts" directed at women. However, since men commit nearly all rapes, men should be the primary target for rape prevention. It is the perpetrators that are responsible, never the survivor. Therefore, men need to get their shit together.

I also need to emphasize that the safety and the healing of the survivor should always outweigh holding the perpetrator accountable. Furthermore, it is survivors who should dictate what the accountability process looks like and how it works, to avoid re-victimization and restore agency & autonomy to the survivor. A personal example of this is how I consulted my ex before putting the story about my actions in this zine.

Robert Jensen, in his book Getting Off, writes that "In a culture where the dominant

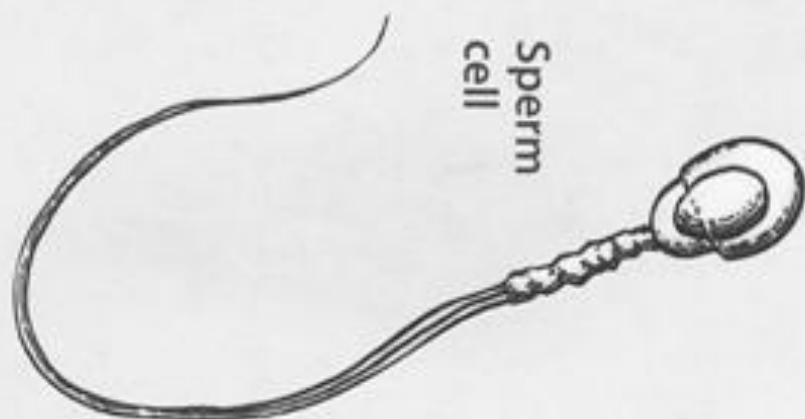
definition of sex is the taking of pleasure from women by men, rape is an expression of the sexual norms of the culture, not a violation of those norms." Another way he says this is that rape culture doesn't mean that this culture openly promotes rape, but that it promotes a form of masculinity that encourages rape.

Jensen is referring to the role of man as sexual aggressor and woman as sexual gatekeeper. These roles correspond to larger cultural themes of men as agents and women as passive, which encourage men to act on women as objects, that is, to rape them. Another way to say this is that women are seen as inherently "rapeable," especially if they are low- or no-income, of color, etc. These social roles also work to deny women agency and autonomy in everyday life, not just sexual circumstances: men are trained to disrespect women's agency and women are trained to not

assert themselves. The following quote illustrates this idea well: "Not every man is a rapist, but every man who grows up in the United States of America... learns all too much to think like a rapist, to structure his experience of women and sex in terms of status, hostility, control, and dominance" - Timothy Beneke. This is an important idea: even if individual men have not committed rape, they were still socialized in a culture that structures their interactions with women in a way that encourages rape. In other words, no man can escape the socialization of rape culture.

I think the United States is a rape culture. Therefore, I live in a rape culture. I was born and raised in a rape culture. Even if you don't have to agree with me, it's clear that we are in need of a change in actions and attitudes. All I ask is that you think about it.

Sperm
(magnified 2000 times)



DE A 111

This section is based on the concept that there exists a dominant ideal about what it means to be a man in United States culture. Ideals like this one are taught to boys as they grow up, dramatically shaping their understanding about who they are and what they can be. So what does it mean to be a man?

Robert Jensen identifies three main traits to being a "real man":

- 1) Avoidance of that which is womanly or feminine
- 2) Struggle for supremacy/dominance in relationships: men are naturally competitive and aggressive
- 3) Repression of "feminine" emotions

I think that these ideas about what it means to be a man encourage men to rape, or to engage in sexual activity without explicit consent from the other person (for example, getting someone drunk because they wouldn't give consent while sober). My thought can be (over)simplified into the following formula:

men taught to be aggressive + men taught to want sex = men commit rape

The first part is what Jensen's second point is getting at above: men aren't taught to listen to others, to check in to make sure things are okay, or to be authentic and vulnerable about how they feel and what they want. Men are taught to take what they want, to take charge and take control. It's not about engaging with others, but swaying them to your desires.

The second part is what men are supposed to want: sex. Michael Betzold writes that "Emotional needs are denied or telescoped into the search to obtain exclusively sexual satisfaction. Although what most men really want from others is friendship, affection, love, and commitment, what they too often end up thinking they want is to go to bed with a *Penthouse* pet." This quote resonated with me because I haven't found strictly physical personally fulfilling, and I know that my lack of contentment isn't because I need to have sex with "more attractive" women. I'm currently not totally sure about what I want from women, which is perfectly okay. At least I'm being honest with myself instead of unthinkingly accepting what *Maxim* magazine says I should want.



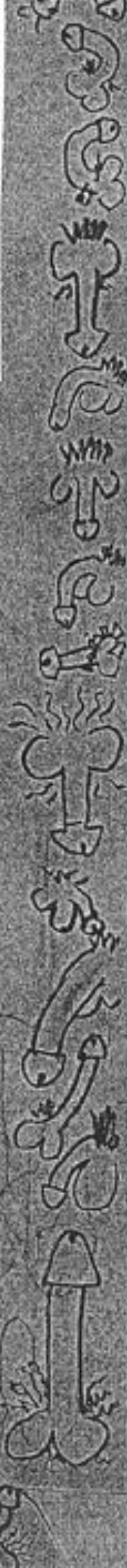
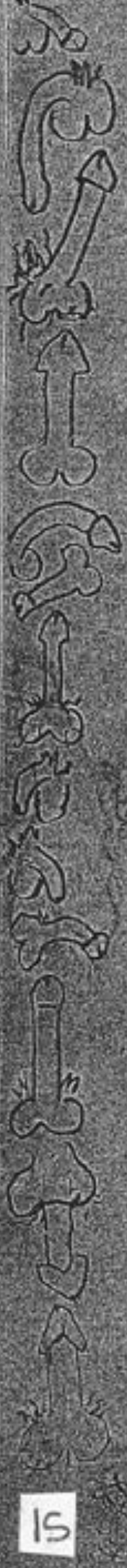
The sex that this culture teaches men to want is basically all physical: it is about pleasure, not intimacy. Sex for men is supposed to be friction and pneumatics, not the joy of

connecting with another human being. Detaching emotions from sex enforces the false split between body and self; thinking of sex as a physical act enables men to think of the person on the other side of the act as an object, rather than a person.

I think it's important to acknowledge that deep down, men don't want rape. But society tells us that we need to "score" to be accepted by other men & that will make us happy. I call bullshit. Men need to wake up, realize what we're doing to others & ourselves, and hold each other accountable.

PORN CAN FUCK YOU UP

You don't have to use porn to take something away from this section of the zine, and if you do, my goal isn't to make you stop. Rather, my goal is to encourage reflection about how pornography is part of rape culture and how it reflects dominant ideas about sexuality.



It can be hard to define pornography. Liberals often define pornography as any sexually explicit material, while radical feminists define pornography as material that sexually subordinates women to men. For the purposes of this zine, I will use the word pornography to refer to mainstream, heterosexual pornography, because that is what is most popular with straight men. When referring to other kinds of pornography (queer, feminist, etc), I will add a descriptive qualifier.

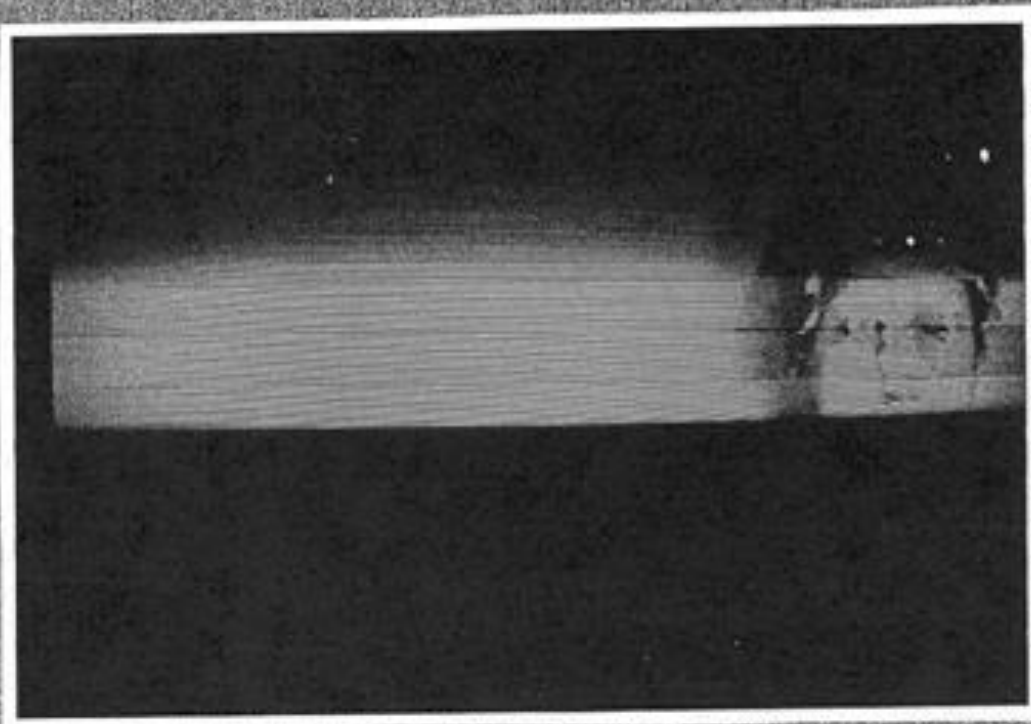
Pornography is often thought of simply as a representation of natural human sexuality. This interpretation is problematic because it ignores how much sexuality is culturally determined (i.e. the missionary position) and also the economic and cultural contexts (capitalism and patriarchy, respectively) in which it is produced. It can be easy to think of any act that involves a penis and vagina as "natural" or biologically-determined, but the reality is that porn is as scripted as a football game. The sexual positions and routines that are common in pornography are not inherent in human relationships.

Porn perpetuates and reinforces mainstream gender roles. For example, men are typically the sexual aggressors, commanding and directing women to perform certain acts. Porn conceptualizes women as and reduces them to their sexuality: a common refrain of female actors is "I'm a cunt." In pornography, men have sexuality, women are sexuality. This model is often followed in "real life," where

men are expected to know what to do, even if they don't know or aren't comfortable initiating sex.

Visually, this is seen as close examination and fragmentation of the female body, where women are visually presented as the sum of their sexualized parts: breasts, buttocks, anus, and vagina. Sexual positions are arranged for maximum display of the female body, while male actors are often off camera or relegated to the periphery. This theme shows

objectification of the female body, specifically by men, since the viewer is assumed to be male and often sees the "action" from the point of view of a male participant in the scene.



- - -

"In pornography, the world is a balanced and harmonious place. The sexual requirements of women and men are perfectly congruent, symbiotic in relation and polar in definition: women live to be fucked, men inevitably fuck."
- Margaret Baldwin

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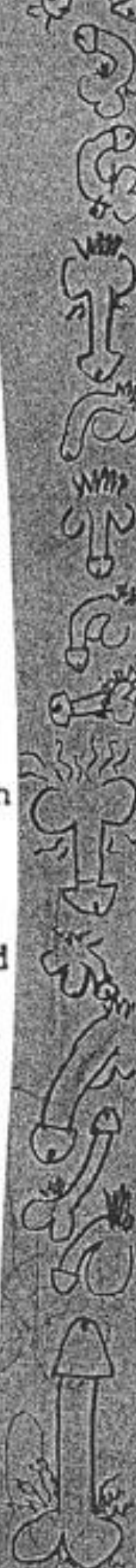

There are three main themes to the depiction of women in pornography: 1) all women want sex from all men at all times, 2) women enjoy all sex acts that men perform, and 3) any woman who does not fall into the above two categories will, if the appropriate amount of force is applied. [These themes are from Getting Off]. These three themes work together to create a cultural construct of sex that encourages rape. The first theme perpetuates the idea that women are sex - that their relation to men is sex and that it is natural. Rape can't exist, because all women really crave sex, even if they don't admit it (or say no, or fight back). The second theme allows men to focus on their own desires and drives and further extends the first theme. Combined, the first two themes say that women are willing to have any sex at any time with any

partner. This is a recipe for rape, because it encourages men to convince themselves that women want sex when they actually don't. The third theme seals the deal: women who assert their own desires, thereby going against the

first two themes, can easily be "brought back into line" with violence. The insidious aspect is that these themes are presented as the way things naturally are: male dominance is naturalized, and therefore basically unquestionable. The idea that men should take sex from women is supported by mainstream pornography.

By reinforcing gender roles and male dominance, porn perpetuates rape culture. It is sometimes a visual document of the rape of actors, and it encourages sexual roles that lead men to rape women and engage in sex without consent. Overt control is not necessary because women are shown as always desiring sex, even in situations where sex could hardly be anything except rape, such as a break-in of a house. Often, a woman's entire body (hands, mouth, vagina, anus) will be utilized to provide sexual pleasure for me. This theme constructs women as always wanting sex. This is a set-up for rape, especially for men who learn more about sex from watching videos than interacting with other human beings as equals. Pornography's decontextualization of sex, it's removal of sex from the context of a relationship between two autonomous individuals, undermines the idea of consent, because consent isn't

necessary if a woman is "always ready" for sex.



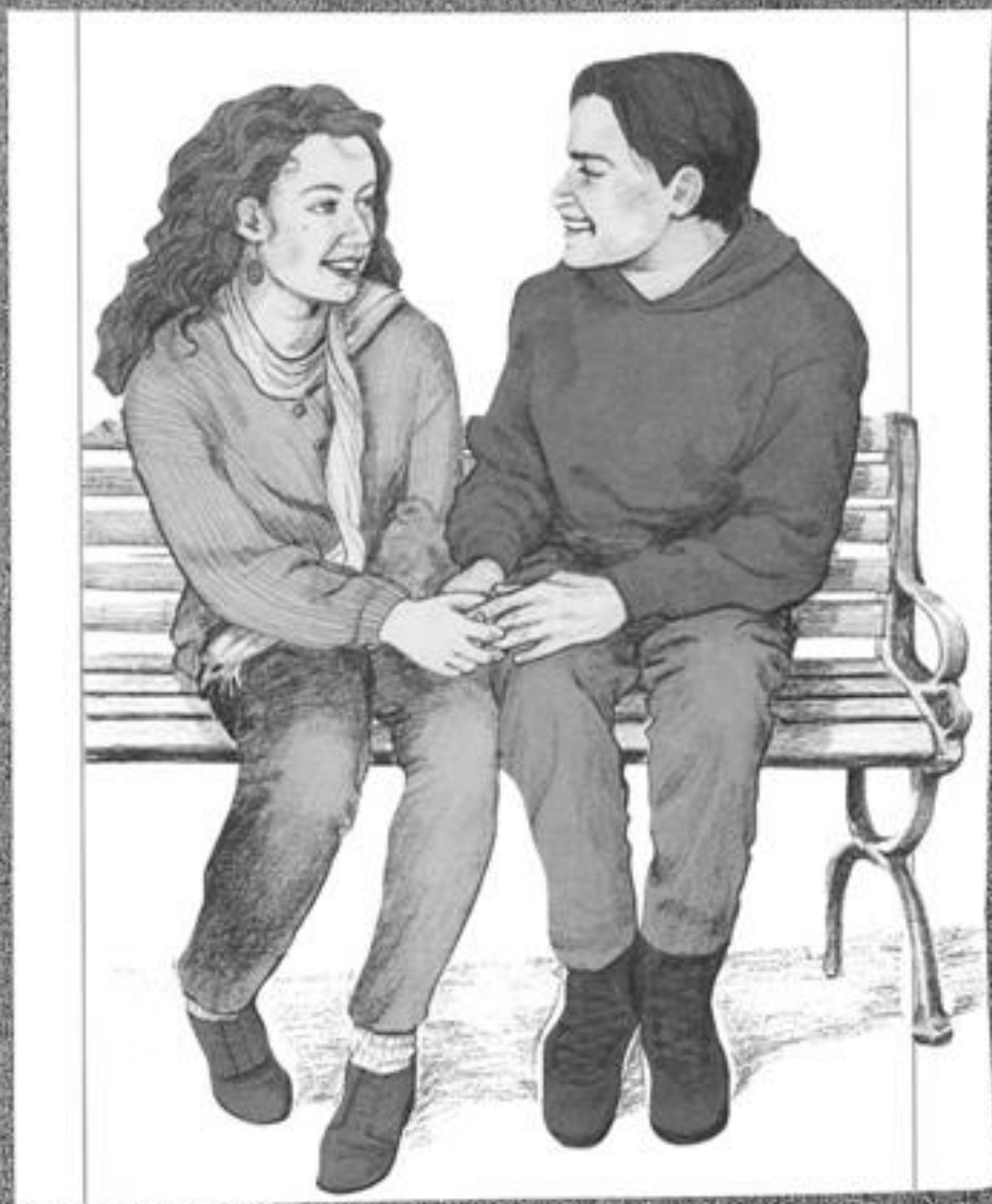
Michael Betzold writes that "while pornography promotes a male fantasy of continued societal power, its effect is to render men more powerless to meet their emotional needs. Besides reinforcing destructive fantasies towards women, porn promotes self-destructive attitudes and behavior in men. By providing substitute gratification, it makes it harder for me to relate to women as people. It encourages unrealistic and damaging expectations: that all women will look and act like *Playboy* bunnies, that sex can be obtained quickly, easily, and without commitment or even caring."

I know that for me, pornography has not been nearly as satisfying as actually engaging with another person. In the past I've used it when I'm lonely and/or single, although that's a habit I've dropped. Now I realize that what I was looking for in porn was something I would never find there: intimacy and connection with another human being.

One final note: this section is not meant to be anti-porn. There are ever-increasing numbers of women and queer folks producing porn that emphasizes consent and deconstructs gender roles. I am not familiar with much of it, but it's on the internet and worth seeking out.

LET'S TALK ABOUT CONSENT, BABY

This is probably the most important section of the zine. That's because by learning about consent, I have been provided with a positive relationship model and I can see more clearly what has been missing from my life so far and isn't being provided by mainstream ideas about manhood.



So what does consent look like? I think the most important part of good consent is good communication. You need to talk with your partner(s) about what you want, what you don't want, what your boundaries are, if something feels good, if something feels uncomfortable, etc.

Consent is often assumed, especially with someone you are in a relationship with. This is not the definition of consent that this section is about. Instead I am advocating radical consent, which is the idea that **true consent is yes, not the absence of no.** (This is what I'm talking about whenever I just say "consent.") This kind of consent is important because saying "no" can be very difficult, especially for women (and other marginalized groups in society, such as working class people, people of color, etc), who often feel social pressure to acquiesce to men's demands. Yes with trust, consent, and good communication means so much more than an awkward yes that is spoken under pressure. Opening up yourself to rejection is scary,

because "no" becomes a very real possibility, but every "yes" is affirming and validating. Good things can also come out of "no" as well - people have can have a lot of good reasons to say no that aren't related to the person they're in the relationship with, like not being on birth control, not feeling good, past trauma, health stuff, inexperience, etc. Being able to discuss "no," if both people are willing, shows that the relationship is in a healthy place.

It also bears saying (and repeating): **consent is sexy!** Some think that consent takes away from the spontaneity and excitement of sex. I don't really get that argument, so I think about it this way: when two people trust each other, are willing to share their deepest desires, and feel safe enough to shed their inhibitions, how could the sex be anything but great?

I find it helpful to think of sexual violence on a continuum, with rape by physical force at one end, then threat of force, intoxication, coercion, pressure, etc. The important thing to me is that if sex involves force, pressure, or coercion, it isn't consensual. It may not be rape, legally or otherwise, but it isn't consensual. Instead of trying to avoid rape, I think it is more effective to strive for consensual sexual interactions. This is because you can still cross someone's boundaries if you are trying to avoid "just" rape, especially if your definition of rape is exclusive. But if you are focusing on

respecting another's desire and autonomy, rape won't be an option.

I think it's especially important for men to learn about consent because we are the ones who have been trained to be sexually aggressive: typically, men are socialized to act and women are socialized to be acted upon.

NO MEANS NO

"NOT NOW" MEANS NO
I HAVE A BOY/GYRLFRIEND MEANS NO
MAYBE LATER MEANS NO
NO THANKS MEANS NO
YOU'RE NOT MY TYPE MEANS NO
FUCK OFF MEANS NO
I'D RATHER BE ALONE RIGHT NOW MEANS NO
DON'T TOUCH ME MEANS NO
I REALLY LIKE YOU BUT... MEANS NO
LET'S JUST GO TO SLEEP MEANS NO
I'M NOT SURE MEANS NO
YOU'VE/I'VE BEEN DRINKING MEANS NO
SILENCE MEANS NO

DATE RAPE = NOT UNDERSTANDING NO

Consent is a way for men to refuse to take agency and autonomy away from others, especially women. Men are the ones who end up committing the vast majority of rapes. This was illustrated for me when I started thinking about my own boundaries. What would it be like if I had to fend off the advances of a woman? The idea is so foreign to me I can hardly comprehend it - aren't I supposed to be willing to go as far as I can with any woman I find sufficiently attractive? That's a message I get often, but it's not true. And that brings up my final point: everyone needs to work on all aspects of consent. That includes figuring out your own boundaries, respecting others, taking respectful sexual initiative (or giving room for others to do so), asking questions, and so on. I think that some people need to work on some aspects more than others, but everyone, and I mean everyone, has a critical role in establishing consent in relationships.

I've changed a lot in the few years that have elapsed since the event I recounted earlier. I've started to incorporate consent into my relationships and continue to do so. Before I get physical with someone, I tell them that I

don't want to make them uncomfortable, cross their boundaries, or do anything that they don't want to do. I say that I want there to be open communication about what each of us want and that I don't want to create an environment of coercion where either of us feels pressured to do anything we don't want

to. To that end, I also acknowledge any power dynamics that may be present between us: I'm a man, she's a woman; I'm white; she is of color; and so on. I also frequently check in when I'm intimate with someone, asking how things are, what they're enjoying, anything at all. A lot of things depend on where the other person is at, but I see my role as a collaborator working on bringing consent into the relationship, to help to create a safe space where two people can be honest with each other. I've only been doing this for less than a year, so I have a lot to learn, but it's something that I continue to work on and learn about.

Consent also has a role in platonic relationships and friendships - it's not just for lovers! It can feel uncomfortable to discuss physicality with friends, but it can be important in creating a safe space for others. Some of your friends are probably survivors of abuse, and may be triggered by hugs or other types of touching that others would find innocuous. As a man, I'm aware that my simple presence can make women uncomfortable. This is unfortunate, but it's true. I continue to work on checking in with friends to make sure that I'm not doing anything that they don't

like, building a foundation of trust and respect that we can build on.

Baby, how do you
feel about pegging?



IT'S OK TO WAIT

RESOURCES:

books:

Transforming a Rape Culture edited by
Buchwald, Fletcher, Roth [get the revised
edition published in 2004]

Getting Off by Robert Jensen

The Will to Change by bell hooks

Pornography: Men Possessing Women by Andrea
Dworkin

Rape and Society edited by Searles and Berger
Men's Work by Paul Kivel

The Macho Paradox by Jackson Katz

Refusing to be a Man by John Stoltenberg

zines:

Learning Good Consent [this and a ton of
other great zines can be found at
www.phillyspissed.net]

websites:

www.mencanstoprape.org

www.incite-national.org

fruitiondesign.com/dealwithit/02wispy.php

www.menstoppingviolence.org

www.canikissyoud.com

films:

The Price of Pleasure

Ma Vie En Rose [My Life in Pink]

Straw Dogs

Tough Guise

FREE
X
YOUR
MIND

AND
YOUR
DICK
WILL
FOLLOW



thanks to:

Dr. Mark Cohan,
the editing collective,
Seattle U sociology dept,
& everyone I've ever kissed

art credits:

cover illustration by Carey Smith
page 1: vasdoctor.co.uk
page 5: Lucas Boyle
page 9: negritude
pages 11 & 13: "Male Facts" health pamphlet
page 16: Jenny Burrows
page 20: "Talking Abstinence" pamphlet
page 23: "Learning Good Consent" zine
page 26: "Talking Abstinence" pamphlet

all else is me

