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### Book Review

**Review of *Engaging men and boys in violence prevention*.** By Michael Flood, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 392 pp., £34.08 (hardcover) ISBN 978-1-137-44210-9, £27.71 (ebook) ISBN 978-1-137-44208-6.

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As the global #MeToo movement continues to expose and challenge individual and structural sexism and gender violence, *Engaging men and boys in violence prevention* provides a thorough and accessible overview of the latest research on the opportunities, challenges, and risks of men's violence prevention work. Author Michael Flood argues in the book's introduction that violence against women is a serious, pervasive, and systemic social problem. Flood notes that recent efforts to address this violence have increasingly turned towards public health and feminist-informed violence prevention approaches that directly engage men and boys. Flood, an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Law at Queensland University of Technology, is one of the most influential and prolific scholars of men, masculinities, and violence prevention today. Using a multi-disciplinary lens and global case studies, this new book reviews the scope and causes of men's violence against women, discusses why men have historically been silent and absent from prevention efforts, and examines the theories, strategies, settings, and best practices of contemporary men's violence prevention. Overall, Flood argues engaging men in preventing men's violence against women can and does produce positive results, but that the field requires continued innovation, improvement, and accountability to address an array of complex challenges and risks. This book is essential reading for researchers and

practitioners working directly on men's violence against women, and a valuable addition for peace educators and scholars interested in the nexus of gender, masculinities, violence, and peace.

*Engaging men and boys in violence prevention* is divided into three parts: I) The Problem and its prevention, II) Strategies and settings, and III) Challenges. In Part I, Flood reviews key debates on the definition and characteristics of men's violence against women and discusses its causes and contexts including gender roles and relations, social norms and practices related to violence, and access to resources and systems of support. In Chapter 2, Flood notes the importance of understanding men's violence against women as a pattern of 'coercive control' and as simultaneously an individual and a structural problem (29). Flood reviews recent trends in violence prevention and highlights the need for a critical and feminist social-ecological framework that engages feminist analysis and practice with a public health primary prevention approach examining individual, interpersonal, communal, and structural levels of violence. Flood's review of existing scholarship and program evaluations in Chapter 4 indicates that well-designed efforts to engage men can and do help address men's violence supportive attitudes and behaviors. Effective programs tend to be informed with sound theoretical frameworks, comprehensive, engaging and well-taught, and culturally and contextually relevant. However, Flood cautions that several meta-evaluations of men's violence prevention programs show mixed results of effectiveness, and that many men's violence prevention programs do not follow best practices. Further, more research is needed as many programs are poorly evaluated or not evaluated at all. Thus, Flood argues for cautious optimism and notes there is a clear need for critical reflection, innovation, improvement, and accountability in efforts to engage men in preventing men's violence against women.

In Part II, Flood reviews the research on men's attitudes and behaviors related to violence against women and looks at the barriers and inspirations for men's involvement in prevention efforts. Flood then explores the most common form of men's violence prevention, face-to-face education programs. Flood's review of the literature indicates, 'The single-most important criterion for effective violence prevention and respectful relationships education in schools, universities, and other institutions is the adoption of a whole-of-institution approach' (185). These approaches are designed to be culturally responsive, context-specific, focused on sustainable and comprehensive work, and aimed at a variety of stakeholders across the institution. Flood complements this broad guidance with an examination of global case studies and a series of best practices discussing curriculum content and structure, pedagogy, and teacher training. Flood argues effective education programs use interactive and participatory pedagogies with both analytic and affective approaches. Furthermore, effective programs tend to be of greater duration and intensity and are often staffed with well-trained and supported educators. Part II continues by

looking at other popular strategies to engage men such as traditional and social media (Chapter 7), collective organizing (Chapter 8), and transforming men's organizations through cultural and institutional change (Chapter 9).

In Part III, Flood focuses on the challenges of engaging men. He starts by discussing men's resistance and defensiveness, including anti-feminist backlash, and outlines a range of strategies related to both the content and process of effectively engaging men. In Chapter 11, Flood discusses the challenges and complexities of working with diverse populations and emphasizes the necessity of using an intersectional analysis in men's violence prevention. In the concluding chapter, Flood reviews the overall development of the engaging men field as well as some of its key challenges and limitations. Flood notes the path forward must maintain a feminist agenda, work in partnership with women and women's movements, link gender justice to other forms of justice, continue to build a rigorous evidence base, politicize men and masculinities, and scale-up efforts.

*Engaging men and boys in violence prevention* provides a robust overview of men's violence prevention literature and practice. The book makes an insightful, practical, and valuable contribution for scholars, students, and practitioners working on this issue. Further, the book is also relevant and informative to the broader field of peace education. Violence against women is a threat to peace around the world that peace educators and scholars must continue to address. Gender-neutral or -blind approaches to peace education overlook the reality that many forms of violence are often fundamentally gendered, and that violence is disproportionately perpetrated by men. Peace education must be responsive to this dynamic and interrogate the connections between socially constructed masculinities and patterns of violence, coercive control, and structural inequality. Peace education scholars and practitioners can benefit from Flood's thorough review of this subject and explore ways peace education could better engage boys and men and benefit from a feminist and critical masculinities analysis of violence.

Flood's book covers a vast amount of research in an efficient manner. But despite the canopy of topics and themes discussed, there is one noticeable omission: the book does not fully unpack the concept of masculinity itself. Comprehensively detailing the complex conceptualizations of masculinities is a massive task and beyond the scope of this book. However, Flood's work could have benefited from a clearer overview of the evolving and competing contemporary theories of gender and masculinity from feminist, public health, sociological, queer, and post-structural perspectives. This book does not cover everything relating to men, masculinities, and violence prevention, nor does it claim to do so, but having a deeper understanding of the concept of masculinity in Part I could have complemented and supported the subsequent chapters by opening a generative space for reflections on how differing conceptualizations

of masculinities impact understandings of men's violence against women, engagement theories and strategies, and the challenges and points of tension embedded in this work.

In the introduction of *Engaging men and boys in violence prevention*, Flood emphasizes the value of a cautious and balanced view of men's violence prevention; bringing both a hopeful and critical orientation to the work of engaging men. Flood argues men's violence prevention educators should avoid the extremes of 1) 'naïve optimism' – that men's violence prevention work will suddenly uproot entrenched patriarchal structures of violence, and 2) 'paralyzing pessimism' – that changing men is impossible and violence against women is inevitable (2). Drawing on Freire (1998) and Rossatto (2005), there are parallels between Flood's call for a balanced optimism and the critical peace education concept of *transformative optimism*. Transformative optimism is a reflexive, critical, and informed optimism that seeks to avoid the traps of pessimism and naivety. Transformative optimism is rooted in an understanding of the interconnected nature of personal and structural change and is bolstered with an iterative critical praxis. When viewed through a critical peace education lens, the evidence and analysis from Flood's book presents a strong case for approaching men's violence prevention with transformative optimism. This emergent field shows promise but still requires continued innovation, improvement, and accountability. Those necessary developments in men's violence prevention could emerge in part from transdisciplinary work with peace education scholarship and practice. Likewise, peace educators could also benefit from a more intentional and gendered analysis of violence and masculinities through examinations of feminist and men's violence prevention approaches. The fields of peace education and men's violence prevention have a lot in common but are rarely explored in conversation with one another. Flood's informative new work offers an opportunity to begin thinking about such collaborative innovations, cross-pollinations, and transdisciplinary praxis.

## References

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