



Sexual Violence Against Men and Power Relations. Understanding Contexts of Exposure

Lucie Wicky

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SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN AND POWER RELATIONS: UNDERSTANDING CONTEXTS OF EXPOSURE

In France, 3.14% of men declared sexual violence during their lives, mainly during childhood and adolescence and committed by other men.
What are the conditions of exposure to violence for men? What are the different power relation that work against men? How are these situations of domination illustrated in the discourses of men themselves?

WICKY LUCIE

PhD Student in Sociology
France

lucie@wicky.fr



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1. BACKGROUND

Research on **Gender-based violence** provides detailed understanding of **exposure, contexts and consequences of violence** experienced by women. **Power relations** define violence, and in particular gender, race, class and sexuality. Knowledge about violence against **men**, and more specifically **sexual violence**, need to be developed. This is particularly the case in France: there is no in-depth research that **describes sexual violence experienced by men during their lives**. Moreover, available research is scattered in **different fields of investigation**: child sexual abuse, violence against bisexual and gay men, intimate partner violence, domestic violence, etc.

2. INNOVATION

This study is the **first research in France to look in detail at sexual violence suffered by men** during their life. The choice to **consider all sexual violence together**, irrespective of age, to understand the **evolution of men's exposure** to violence according to the **context of violence** and the **power relations** at work against them. As men are not affected by violence throughout their lives, but at **younger ages**, the question of **power dynamics between younger and older individuals** is investigated. There is only few research in the field of age studies or aging in the case of childhood and in the context of violence suffered by men.

3. OBJECTIVE

To describe the contexts of exposure and the power relations at work according to the age at sexual violence experienced by men

4. METHODS

Quantitative data: Violence and Gender Relations survey ("VIRAGE")

- Conducted by the French Institute of Demographic Studies (INED) in 2015.
- A sample of almost 16,000 women and 12,000 men representative of the French population aged 20-69.
- Life spaces: within school or university, within the workplace, or committed by a partner or ex-partner, within the family or close social circle and, finally, within others spaces (including public spaces).
- "Violence" or "assault" never used: description purely factual
- Questions about violence declared: frequency, age, perpetrators, etc.

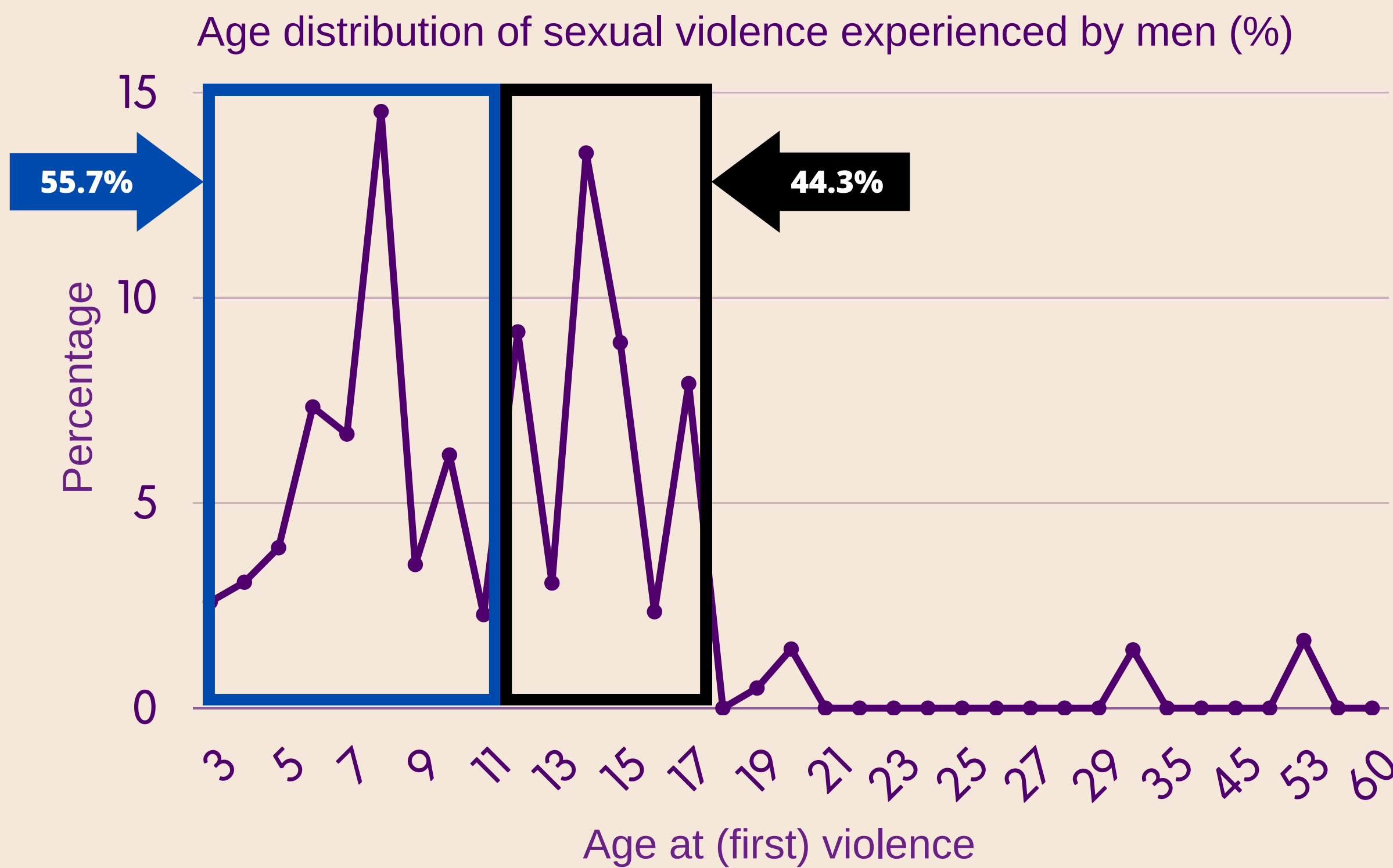
405 men report sexual violence during their lives on VIRAGE

Qualitative data: biographical interviews

- 50 men who declared sexual violence in VIRAGE survey (follow-up interviews by phone)
- Random selection from violence within family and close social circle and/or within other spaces (incl. public spaces)
- A larger sample of male victims, diversity of experiences of sexual violence and diversity of sociodemographic profiles
- Life history calendar: trajectories of violence, childhood, conjugality, sexuality, education and work, health, norms to violence, gender and sexuality

5. RESULTS

Temporality of violence structuring the contexts



Power relation related to age and gender depending to age of exposure

Perpetrators by their gender, adulthood and family relationship, by age at experience of violence to male victims (%)

	0-11 years old	12-17 years old
Adult men perpetrators	57.7	27.8
Adult men within the family	46.3	6.9
Adult men outside the family	11.4	20.9
Other perpetrators	42.3	72.2
Other perpetrators within the family	24.7	14.7
Other perpetrators outside the family	17.7	57.5

0-11 YEARS OLD: VIOLENCE DURING CHILDHOOD

- Older men perpetrators
- Age domination linked to family hierarchies
- Identify easily "violence" as such during adulthood: difference between the "child" victim he was and man he is today

Obligations to do things to an adult... [...] You have to masturbate your grandfather at six

Philippe, 59 years old, assaulted by his grandfather from 6 to 11 years old

He didn't force it, but I still had, I don't know, some kind of moral obligation to listen to my big brother. I mean, I was still too young to understand and realize what was going on

Bastien, 39 years old, raped from 11 to 15 years old by his elder brother

When things happened, I wasn't able to understand what was going on. You can't force to have sex with a child who doesn't know what it is

Bernard, 64 years old, assaulted from 3 to 13 years old by a cousin (14 years old), a priest and a teacher

12-17 YEARS OLD: VIOLENCE DURING TEENAGE YEARS

Spaces of socialization between men

- School, hobbies, rarely sexual experience
- Heterosexuals' (and bisexuals') men
- Without mentioning "sexual violence"
 - A teenager cannot be a victim
 - To refuse violence limiting impact on masculinity

Have you experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence?

Sexual, no. Well, yes, well... it wasn't really violence, but... You see, in boarding school, it is a contest between guys, and we do it to have peace, you know what I mean.

What happened?

It was big willy competition. Masturbation competition. Oh, wait yes! About violence, we also had abs exercise forced sessions.

Johan, 44 years old, "stupid game" at boarding school (13-14 years old)

Same-sex experiences

- Begging of same-sex experiences
- Principally gay men
- "Confusion" or "non-consent situation": difficulty to speak of "violence"
 - Protect the whole LGBT community
 - Limiting impact on the already subordinated masculinity
 - Sexualisation of the age difference

Have you ever accepted sex without wanting to?

Without wanting to? Not at all, no. I don't know, maybe it's not very precise, but I think of things... and in particular gay encounters, clearly, where it's implied that you don't dare to say that you're not sure. [...] But not... I have trouble saying "non-consent", I would rather say... where things, well... we feel a little bit in a kind of... how can I put it? in a corridor, it has to come, here. [...] A little bit of that... that is... a confusion.

Jordan, 31 years old, sexual experiences with other men (16-25 years old)

6. CONCLUSION

- Different contexts of violence before the age of 18, depending to age of exposure
- Childhood: gender and age domination
 - Adult men (of family) perpetrators: gender and age relations are intertwined, often with family hierarchies
 - Qualification of violence as such during adulthood facilitated by status of "child"
- Teenage years: gender, sexuality and age domination
 - Situations of male socialization that are difficult to qualify as violence (hétérosexuels' men)
 - First experiences of sexuality between men, not qualify neither

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Centre Maurice Halbwachs

L'ÉCOLE DES HAUTES ÉTUDES EN SCIENCES SOCIALES

LES SCIENCES SOCIALES DU GENRE ET DE LA SEXUALITÉ