



## Working with Men to Prevent Violence Against Women: Program Modalities and Formats (Part Two)

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With contributions from David Mathews

In Part One of this paper an overview was provided of men's role in prevention along with effective strategies for ending men's violence against women, and the importance of creating culturally relevant programs that address all of men's identities was presented. The discussion is continued in this document by providing an overview of best practices in prevention, the content and format of men's prevention programs, and an overview of different program philosophies or pedagogies.

It is a challenge to classify and summarize the many different types of violence prevention efforts that have been developed for men in recent years. One-way to conceptually organize and describe them is in terms of: 1) program content; 2) program format (how the information is provided and delivered), and; 3) program philosophy or pedagogy. In addition, extensive research within the prevention field regarding program effectiveness has identified best practices that can be applied to programs on all three of these dimensions. These topics are reviewed below, beginning with best practices.

### Best Practices in Prevention

The prevention literature suggests that effective prevention programs have a number of characteristics that are independent of particular issues or topical areas. In particular, effective prevention programs are comprehensive, intensive, relevant to the audience, and deliver positive messages. (For a more detailed discussion of these areas with respect to rape prevention see Berkowitz, 2001.)

**Comprehensiveness.** Comprehensiveness addresses who participates in the intervention. In a comprehensive program all relevant community members or systems are involved and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Linking activities that are normally separate and disconnected can create positive synergy and result in activities that are more effective in combination than alone. A comprehensive program views the target population as the whole community and emphasizes creating meaningful connections with colleagues. This can foster awareness of what others are doing, develop a common prevention framework, and provide information and messages that are mutually reinforcing, integrated and synergistic. Within the domestic violence prevention movement, comprehensiveness has been encouraged through the development of coordinated community responses to men's violence and its prevention (Pence, 1999).

**Intensiveness.** Intensiveness is a function of what happens within a program activity. Programs should offer learning opportunities that are interactive and sustained over time with active rather than passive participation. In general, interactive interventions are more effective than those that require only passive participation (Lonsway, 1996; Schewe, 2002). Interactive programs that are sustained over time and which have multiple points of contact with reinforcing messages are stronger than programs that occur at one point in time only. As noted earlier, providing meaningful interactions between men that foster change is a critical element of successful violence prevention programs.

**Relevance.** *Relevant* programs are tailored to the age, community, culture, and socioeconomic status of the recipients and take into consideration an individual's peer group experience. Creating relevant programs requires acknowledging the special needs and concerns of different communities and affinity groups. These programs are stronger when group-specific information is used in place of generic statistics (Schewe, 2002). Relevance can be accomplished by designing programs for general audiences that are inclusive and acknowledge participant differences, or by designing special programs for particular audiences. Relevant programs pay attention to the culture of the problem, the culture of the service or message delivery system, and the culture of the target population (Berkowitz, 2003). Differences in these three cultures must be addressed in the design of programs. Carillo and Tello (1998) provide an excellent example of the issues involved in designing culturally relevant programs for men of color from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Part One of this paper contains an extensive discussion of relevance from the perspective of developing culturally inclusive programs for men.

Positive messages should build on men's values and predisposition to act in a positive manner. Men are more receptive to positive messages outlining what can be done than to negative messages that promote fear or blame.

To design a program that incorporates these elements may seem like a daunting task. It is important, therefore, to focus on quality and process rather than quantity. A few interventions that are carefully linked, sequenced, and integrated with other activities will be more powerful than many program efforts that are discrete, isolated, and unrelated.

### **Program Content**

As noted earlier, programs focusing on men's responsibility for preventing violence against women can address men's violence in general or focus on specific forms of violence, such as sexual

assault and rape prevention, domestic violence prevention, dating violence prevention, stalking prevention, and sexual harassment prevention. Other programs may address the issue of violence indirectly by teaching men relationship, parenting and fathering skills, how to manage aggression and anger, how men are socialized, and by providing positive re-socialization and bonding experiences for men. There is some controversy in the field regarding whether these latter programs can be considered bona-fide violence prevention for men, with the answer depending on the content of the individual program and the degree to which links to men's violence are made explicit (for an excellent discussion of this issue go to [www.endabuse.org/bpi/](http://www.endabuse.org/bpi/) in the Online Discussion Series). Because they devote considerable attention to addressing socialization and cultural issues that underlie men's violence they certainly have a place in the larger task of redefining masculinity and male culture of which violence prevention is a part. They may also be more appropriate with men who do not have a history of violence and when safety issues are not a concern.

### **Program Format**

Violence prevention programs that focus on changing individual men's behaviors can be offered as one-time only events, such as educational programs or workshops, or as multiple linked events over time. These types of workshops have been traditional in the violence prevention field. Recently, there have been attempts to also address the larger culture of violence and target the general population through the use of media in the form of social marketing campaigns that provide positive messages about men, social norms marketing campaigns that provide data about healthy anti-violence norms, and through activist events such as the White Ribbon Campaign and appropriate participation in Take Back the Night. There is very little research on these larger efforts, although preliminary research suggests that social norms marketing campaigns can change relevant attitudes and in some cases behav-

iors (Berkowitz, 2003; Bruce, 2002; Hillenbrand-Gunn et. al, 2004; White, Williams & Cho, 2003). It may be even more powerful to combine both types of interventions in a synergistic fashion so that men participating in individual workshops are also exposed to supportive media campaigns outside the workshop setting.

### **Program Philosophy**

Violence prevention programs for men may differ in terms of their pedagogy, i.e., their philosophy regarding how to help men change. Programs may focus on building empathy towards victims, the development of personal skills, learning to intervene in other men's behavior, re-socialization of male culture and behavior, or media efforts to change the larger environment. While there has been debate about whether men's violence prevention efforts should be pro-feminist, it is this author's contention that violence prevention for men is pro-feminist by definition because it is about changing men in ways that support the feminist agenda of creating of a society in which women and men are treated equally and equitably (see Capraro, 1994 and Corcoran, 1992 for a discussion of the feminist underpinnings of men's anti-violence efforts). These program philosophies are briefly summarized below.

***Fostering empathy for victims.*** It is undeniable that men need to understand and be empathic to the experiences of victims and that development of such empathy may discourage men from harming women. Presenting stories of victims in person, by video, or through interactive theater, can help create such understanding and empathy. For victim stories to have an impact it is important that men's defensiveness first be reduced. Victim empathy programs are useful when men are not sufficiently aware of the problem of men's violence. However, they fall short of asking men to make changes in our own and other men's behavior and run the risk of appealing to a male-helper mentality. In addition, they are not appropriate for coercive and/or opportunistic men

with impaired empathy. The literature on empathy induction programs has been reviewed by Berkowitz (2002a), Lonsway (1996) and Schewe (2002).

***Individual change.*** Learning skills such as managing anger, understanding gender based privilege, relationship skills (including communication, partnership, and parenting skills), or how to ensure that intimate relationships are consenting can all help to reduce men's violence. Research has established that deficiency in these skills is associated with violence and that teaching men these skills may decrease the likelihood of future violence when the acquisition and maintenance of these skills is encouraged in a supportive environment (Low, Monarch, Hartman, & Markman, 2002). However, while focusing on personal skill development moves beyond empathy development by asking men to change behavior and take responsibility for actions and intentions in relation to others, it still does not address the larger cultural context that supports and maintains men's violent behaviors.

***Bystander interventions.*** Programs attempting to reduce bystander behavior teach men how to intervene in the behavior of other men (see for example, Berkowitz, 2002; Katz, 1995). Men who are likely to commit violence are men who over-identify with traditional masculine values and roles and who are especially sensitive to what other men think. The focus of bystander intervention programs is to provide the majority of men who are uncomfortable with these men's behavior with the permission and skills to confront them. Bystander interventions move beyond empathy and individual change to make men responsible for changing the larger environment of how men relate to each other and to women. This can change the peer culture that fosters and tolerates men's violence.

***Re-socialization experiences.*** Socialization focused programs explore the cultural and societal expectations of men that influence how men are taught to think and act in relation to women. A

socialization-oriented discussion inevitably focuses on men's homophobia, heterosexism, and sexism.

### ***Social marketing and social norms marketing.***

In recent years there has been an effort to augment and reinforce small group interventions through the use of media campaigns that portray men in positive, non-violent roles or through social norms marketing campaigns that provide data about the true norms for men's behavior (see Bruce, 2002; Hillenbrand-Gunn et al, 2004; Men Can Stop Rape, 2000; White, Williams, & Cho, 2003). The social norms approach relies on the assumption that men commonly misperceive the attitudes and behaviors of other men that are relevant to violence. For example, men think that other men are more sexually active than themselves, are more comfortable behaving in stereotypically masculine ways, are less uncomfortable with objectification of women and violence, are more homophobic and heterosexist, and are more likely to endorse rape myths (Berkowitz, 2003, 2004). Because of the powerful influence that men have on each other, correcting these misperceptions can free men to act in ways that are healthier and more aligned with personal values. In one study, for example, it was found that the strongest influence on whether men were willing to intervene to prevent violence against women was the perception of other men's willingness to intervene (Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkenbach, & Stark, 2004). Thus, correcting misperceptions among men about violence-related attitudes is an emerging and important prevention strategy that can be implemented in media campaigns or in small group interventions.

All of these approaches are interdependent and overlap in practice. Considering these four approaches is helpful in adapting a program to the needs and characteristics of a specific audience. They can be thought of as occurring in a developmental sequence starting with creating an awareness of the problem of violence against women, to fostering personal change, and ending with a com-

mitment to impact the behavior of other men, all within a context that is consistent with the goals and practices of feminist thinking.

### **Summary**

Effective prevention programs for men must be developed that are consistent with the prevention literature – i.e., they must be comprehensive, intensive, and relevant. These programs can focus on a variety of issues relevant to men's violence, including specific forms of violence and the larger cultural context that makes men's violence possible. Such programs may attempt to foster empathy in men, change individual men's attitudes and behaviors, encourage men to intervene against other men's behavior, and provide men with positive re-socialization experiences. Programs may also be developed utilizing social marketing and social norms marketing techniques to present images of men in new and different roles and by providing alternative perspectives on men's behavior. All of the programs share common assumptions and philosophies for working with men that were reviewed in Part One of this paper.

*Note:* Portions of this review were adapted from *Fostering Men's Responsibility for Preventing Sexual Assault* and *Working with Men to Prevent Sexual Assault*, both written by the author in 2002.

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**Suggested Citation:** Berkowitz, A. (2004, October). *Working with Men to Prevent Violence Against Women: Program Modalities and Formants (Part Two)*. Harrisburg, PA: VAWnet, a project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence/Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Retrieved month/day/year, from: <http://www.vawnet.org>

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***In-Brief:***  
**Working with Men to Prevent Violence Against Women**

There is a growing awareness that men, in partnership with women, can play a significant role in ending violence against women. This has led to an increase in programs and activities that focus on men's roles in preventing violence against women. Men's anti-violence programs are informed by the understanding that violence against women hurts women and men and that men can have an important influence on reducing violence by changing their own attitudes and behavior and by intervening to prevent other men's violence.

This paper provides an overview of current efforts involving men in the prevention of violence against women. Part One discusses men's role in prevention, what is effective in men's prevention, and cultural issues and considerations in working with men. Part Two discusses best practices in prevention, provides an overview of different program modalities and formats, and reviews pedagogies that can be used in working with men to prevent violence against women.

Prevention programs can take the form of workshops that meet one or more times, social marketing and social norms marketing campaigns, and public events. These activities are based on the understanding that male intimate violence is gendered and they share a number of common assumptions: that men have a role in preventing violence against women, that men need to be invited to be partners in solving the problem, that small, interactive-all male groups facilitated by men are particularly effective, that positive anti-violence values and actions of men need to be strengthened, and that men must work in collaboration with women in these efforts.

The literature evaluating these programs is limited, with the majority of research conducted on sexual assault prevention programs for college students and dating violence programs for students in high schools and middle schools. The college literature suggests that for young adult men all-male programs facilitated by other men using an interactive discussion format are the most powerful form of intervention for changing men's violence-prone attitudes and possibly behaviors. Younger high-school and middle school dating violence programs offered in mixed gender contexts have been found effective in changing attitudes and behaviors, but these formats have not been compared with all-male formats to determine their relative efficacy as has been done with college men. There is also preliminary evidence supporting the efficacy of social norms media interventions to address men's violence.

It is important that men who provide these programs work to develop strong alliances and accountable relationships with women doing this work, and that they examine how male privilege and sexism may impact their leadership. It is also necessary that prevention programs be designed which are relevant to the variety of men's communities that exist based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and other identities. Successful prevention programs are comprehensive, relevant, intensive, incorporate positive messages, and may employ one or more of the following strategies: fostering empathy towards victims, changing individual men's attitudes and behaviors, teaching men to intervene against other men's behavior, and using social marketing strategies to foster positive norms.