

Engaging men and boys in violence prevention

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Efforts to engage men and boys in preventing men's violence against women are gaining momentum around the world. This has been prompted, in part, by a growing emphasis in the violence prevention field on primary prevention and the emergence of an 'engaging men' field focused on men's roles in building gender equality. Programmes and interventions aimed at, or including, men and boys have proliferated: across countries rich and poor, in diverse contexts from schools and universities, to faith and sporting institutions and the military. These have been aimed at men and boys in their roles as partners, parents and caregivers, students, athletes and coaches, workers, policy-makers and more.

Some interventions aimed at men and boys focus on domestic or partner violence, some on sexual violence, and others on both. The discussion here focuses on both domestic and sexual violence, given that these often co-occur and they have shared risk factors (Guedes, Bott, Garcia-Moreno, & Colombini, 2016). Many interventions focus primarily on men's violence against women, although they acknowledge that men and boys themselves may be the victims of violence by intimate partners, family members and others.

A wide spectrum of strategies has been adopted to engage men and boys in the prevention of domestic and sexual violence. Moving from micro to macro, these include: (1) strengthening individual knowledge and skills; (2) promoting community education; (3) educating providers; (4) engaging, strengthening, and mobilising communities; (5) changing organisational practices; and (6) influencing policies and legislation (Davis, Parks, & Cohen, 2006). Prevention efforts among men, like those in the violence prevention field more generally, have often involved community education, whether face-to-face education or communications strategies, although there is an increasing adoption of other strategies at 'higher' levels of this spectrum.

Are primary prevention efforts among men effective? We must first acknowledge that there are important limits to the evidence base. Many programmes and interventions have not been evaluated, and existing evaluations are often weak: few studies measure actual violent behaviour as

an outcome, use control or comparison groups, collect longer-term data, or assess mediators of change, and most come from high-income countries (Flood, 2018). At the same time, the evidence base on the effectiveness of men's violence prevention interventions is rapidly growing in both scale and sophistication. There have been three notable reviews in the past 12 years. A 2007 review documented 15 evaluated interventions involving men and/or boys in preventing and reducing violence, judging four as effective, seven as promising, and four as unclear (Barker, Ricardo, & Nascimento, 2007). A 2011 review found that interventions can change boys' and men's attitudes towards rape and other forms of violence against women, and the gender-related attitudes associated with these, but their effectiveness in changing behaviours is far more equivocal (Ricardo, Eads, & Barker, 2011). A 2013 review focused on interventions addressed to heterosexually active men and with an experimental or quasi-experimental design. Of interventions addressing the perpetration of violence against women, three were not in the 2011 review, and all three reported declines in the perpetration of violence, but only one could be classified as methodologically 'strong' (Dworkin, Treves-Kagan, & Lippman, 2013). These accounts of efforts engaging men are complemented by other, wider reviews, attesting to the growing international evidence base on violence prevention (Arango, Morton, Gennari, Kiplesund, & Ellsberg, 2014; DeGue et al., 2014; Ellsberg et al., 2015; Fulu, Kerr-Wilson, & Lang, 2014).

What works in engaging men and boys in primary prevention? At the level of programming, there is an emerging consensus that efforts:

[S]hould have a coordinated focus on multiple risk factors and ecological levels, be based on robust theories of the issue and of how to make change, involve the comprehensive application of multiple strategies at multiple levels, use effective forms of education or communication, be relevant to local communities and contexts, and engage both men and boys and women and girls in gender-transformative ways to reflect on and change gender roles and relations.

(Greig & Flood, 2020)

Alongside an increasing emphasis on evidence-based practice, there are other trends that mark the field of violence prevention work with men and boys. There has been a proliferation in the settings and entry points for engagement, with interest particularly in developmental periods, such as during school age and adolescence, the transition to parenthood, and as parents and caregivers (Tolman, Walsh, & Nieves, 2017). There is increasing interest not only in educating men but mobilising them for collective action. There is a greater emphasis on taking prevention work with men to scale – on expanding the reach, scope, and coverage of interventions. There are growing calls for work with men to move from a focus on the individual

and interpersonal to the institutional and the structural – to address the broader structures of patriarchy which are at the root of men’s violence against women (Greig & Flood, 2020). There is a growing discussion of the politics and practices of the ‘engaging men’ field itself and its relations with women’s organisations and movements, including issues of competition for resources, the marginalising of women’s voices and leadership, and personal and institutional accountability (ICRW, 2018).

Efforts to engage men in violence prevention face a series of challenges. Perhaps the most fundamental of these is the challenge of inspiring men’s initial involvement and commitment. Two others are how to mobilise men as advocates and activists and how to work across intersections of gender and other forms of social inequality. The remainder of this chapter explores each in turn.

How to inspire men

Men’s lack of involvement in violence prevention efforts is shaped by various factors. Men typically have poorer attitudes towards, and understandings of, intimate partner and sexual violence, than women: they define violence more narrowly, they subscribe more strongly to violence-supportive myths, and they are more likely than women to excuse the perpetrator and blame the victim (Herrero, Rodríguez, & Torres, 2017; VicHealth, 2014). Men’s recognition of sexism also is poorer than women’s: they notice sexism less, and when they do notice sexist incidents they are less likely than women to perceive them as discriminatory and harmful (Becker & Swim, 2011; Drury & Kaiser, 2014). While many men recognise violence against women as an issue of community concern, they see this as a ‘women’s issue’, with little sense of its personal relevance (Crooks, Goodall, Hughes, Jaffe, & Baker, 2007; Rich, Utley, Janke, & Moldoveanu, 2010). Men often overestimate other men’s comfort with violence and their unwillingness to intervene (Hillenbrand-Gunn, Heppner, Mauch, & Park, 2010; Kilmartin et al., 2008). Many have negative perceptions of violence prevention efforts: they feel blamed and attacked, reacting defensively to the feminist orientation of many campaigns (Keller & Honea, 2016; Rich et al., 2010). When men do contemplate taking some kind of action, they also fear others’ reactions to their engagement in such intervention (Carlson, 2008; Katz, Heisterkamp, & Fleming, 2011), and they often lack the knowledge and skills to engage in intervention (Rich et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, given the evaluations described earlier, clearly it is possible to inspire men’s support for violence prevention efforts. How then can we do this? While there has been a little experimental comparison of different strategies for engaging men, guidance comes from advocates’ and educators’ experiences and their perceptions of effective strategies (Casey, 2010; Piccigallo, Lilley, & Miller, 2012). Much of this experience and literature

comes from countries in the global North, particularly the USA, it is not necessarily attentive to intersecting forms of privilege and inequality among men, and the approaches it endorses may thus be less appropriate for men in some contexts. Nevertheless, what does it say?

Personalise the issue. Perhaps the most widely used strategy for making the case to men that violence against women is something they should care about is to personalise the issue. Learning of victimisation among women or girls close to them is a significant source of male anti-violence advocates' sensitisation to the issue (Alcalde, 2014; Casey & Smith, 2010; Messner, Greenberg, & Peretz, 2015; Piccigallo et al., 2012). We can invite men to become aware of the routine risks and reality of violence, abuse, and harassment faced by the women and girls they know and cherish and the impacts of this violence. Men's concerns about such violence can be paternal, chivalric, and even patriarchal (Rich et al., 2010), so one challenge here is to move these towards a fundamental respect for all women's and girls' rights, autonomy, and bodily integrity.

Appeal to higher values and principles. Higher values and principles – notions of rights, fairness, justice, and so on – also often motivate existing support among men for violence prevention efforts (Casey & Smith, 2010; Messner et al., 2015). When men have justice-oriented beliefs, they are more likely to reject sexism and inequality (Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Gervais, Hillard, & Vescio, 2010; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001).

Show that men will benefit. The notion that men will benefit from progress towards gender equality and an end to violence against women has near-universal currency in efforts to engage men (Expert Group, 2003; Minerson, Carolo, Dinner, & Jones, 2011). There are good reasons for appealing to benefits to men. Men's resistance to gender initiatives stems in part from the idea that gender equality is a zero-sum game – that as women gain greater equality, men will lose (Prime, Moss-Racusin, & Heather Foust-Cummings, 2009) – and it is valuable to emphasise instead that gender equality is 'win-win'. More widely, men will be more likely to support violence prevention efforts if they feel some personal stake in them. While the primary reason for men to support an end to violence against women should be ethical, it also is important for men to see how they themselves will benefit (Brod, 1998).

Again, there are complexities here. Men who perpetrate violence against women do gain some benefit from this (Stark, 2010). More broadly, men in general gain from the gender inequalities which violence against women helps to sustain. Thus perpetrators, and men in general, will have to give up such 'benefits' in order to make progress towards a more just world. In addition, involvement in efforts to end violence and build gender equality

requires that men acknowledge and change their own oppressive behaviour, which is neither easy nor comfortable.

Start where men are. In seeking to reach men, we must start with men wherever they are (Casey, 2010; Crooks et al., 2007). We must work with their existing understandings of violence against women, listen to their experiences, and address their concerns. Various strategies are valuable here: tailoring conversations to the men in question, using relevant messengers (men who appeal to, are respected by, or are reflective of the men to whom they are speaking), and appealing to stereotypical aspects of masculinity. Of course, ‘meeting men where they are’ has risks. There is a tension between meeting potential allies ‘where they are’, on the one hand, and challenging male privilege, on the other.

Build on strengths. The men’s violence prevention literature tends to affirm that efforts should begin with the positive: that most men treat women and girls with respect and most do not use violence. They should be ‘strengths-based’, that is, building on men’s existing commitments to and involvements in non-violence, particularly as a way to minimise men’s defensiveness and disengagement (Berkowitz, 2004; Casey, 2010; WHO, 2007). This is not an invitation, however, to a naïve celebration of men’s virtues. Violence prevention work with men must continue to centre on a feminist critique of men’s violence and men’s power. And given the ubiquity of men’s use of violence against women and other men’s complicity, this work must include materials addressing men as potential perpetrators.

Start with small steps and build to bigger things: Rather than assuming that the first task for men is to entirely transform their lives and identities, and rather than assuming that men must begin their involvements in violence prevention as perfect humans free of all forms of sexism and violence, it is practical to give men initial, small steps and actions to take. To take part in a change process, men need both a desired end state and small steps and mini-goals that will lead to the desired outcomes (Crooks et al., 2007). This also requires exploring what we want men to become – the forms of identity, selfhood, and personal practice we wish them to adopt – and indeed the forms of community and society for which we strive.

Encourage men to develop a counter-story. For men to develop strong practices of non-violence and gender equity, it is valuable for them to develop narratives of self and identity which support these. We can start by recognising the diversity in boys’ and men’s performances of gender (Flood, 2008) and ‘turning up the volume’ on this. We can frame men’s resistance to dominant constructions of masculinity as positive and desirable and highlight ‘counter stories’ of aspects of men’s lives that have been disregarded or marginalised (McGann, 2014).

Show that other men agree. Another important way to inspire men's commitment to ending men's violence against women is to show that they are far from alone – that in fact many other men share this commitment. This involves narrowing the gap between men's perceptions of other men's comfort with violence and unwillingness to intervene and the actual extent of this. There are at least three ways to do this. First, communication campaigns focused on bystander intervention show men speaking up or taking other action, and such efforts can increase normative acceptance of bystander intervention, as a small number of evaluations show (Potter & Stapleton, 2012). Second, efforts may leverage the influence of high-profile men in particular contexts such as workplaces, again to shift social norms and behaviours (Prime et al., 2009). Third, social norms campaigns gather and publicise actual data on attitudes or behaviours, e.g. highlighting that a majority of men condemn men's violence against women and are willing to intervene to prevent or reduce it (Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkenbach, & Stark, 2003).

While such efforts may change attitudes and social norms, these have only partial, and complex, relationships to violent behaviour. In addition, such efforts may have less impact on the structural and institutional inequalities which are fundamental in shaping intimate partner violence (Pease & Flood, 2008).

Popularise violence prevention and feminism. Efforts to engage men must undermine men's negative perceptions of feminism in general and violence prevention in particular. This involves countering common, defensive reactions such as 'not all men' and 'what about violence against men?', helping men to learn a language for claiming their personal support for feminism, and lessening the perceived threat represented by others' homophobic questioning of their heterosexuality and masculinity (Flood, 2018).

Provide knowledge and skills in intervention. Violence prevention efforts among men must also give them knowledge and skills in intervention (Crooks et al., 2007). While there are guides that provide information on taking action (Flood, 2011), violence prevention also should work to foster the behavioural skills required.

Provide opportunities and invitations for involvement. To be successful in engaging men in violence prevention, we must also provide concrete opportunities and invitations for men's involvement. Some efforts go to the places where men gather, while others try to bring men to them, for example by organising events and groups on issues and topics which may appeal to them (Casey, 2010). Reaching men through tailored approaches in their existing social, family or professional networks seems particularly effective (Bilen-Green et al., 2015; Casey, 2010).

Build communities of support. Finally, communities of support are vital for sustaining men's personal commitment, inspiring personal change and the rejection of patriarchal masculinity, and fostering mutual support (Casey, 2010).

Research among US male anti-violence advocates has found that all-male violence prevention groups can become new kinds of social networks or peer groups for men, both providing support for their members and recruiting other men (Casey, 2010; Piccigallo et al., 2012). We should not assume, however, that single-sex groups necessarily are more effective among men, and the literature on violence prevention education finds advantages and disadvantages to both single-sex and mixed-sex processes (Flood, 2018). Nor should we assume that the best people to educate men are other men (Flood, 2015). Given the risk that all-male groups may reproduce homosocial dynamics in which men condone and collude with other men's violence, such groups must involve critical reflection and lines of accountability to women and women's groups.

How to mobilise men?

While prevention efforts among men and boys have relied particularly on strategies aimed at educating them, another stream of activity focuses on mobilising them as advocates and activists. The former treats men as the objects of change, while the latter gives greater emphasis to men themselves as agents of change.

Community mobilisation – bringing individuals and groups together through coalitions, networks, and movements – is an important strategy for preventing partner and sexual violence (Texas Council on Family Violence, 2010, p. 93). Indeed, it was feminist community mobilisation which formed the foundations of contemporary service and policy responses to domestic and sexual violence and which remains influential today. Community-level strategies for the prevention of men's violence against women are rare, but a vital next step in prevention (DeGue et al., 2012). They are essential to shift the cultures, social relations, and structural inequalities that underpin violence against women (Michau, 2005). They bring violence prevention efforts closer to the general ideal that initiatives be comprehensive, relevant, and engaging (Kim-Ju, Mark, Cohen, Garcia-Santiago, & Nguyen, 2008). And they are empowering for participants themselves as members become involved in both personal and collective change (Espen & Greig, 2008).

Anti-violence men's groups began amidst the second wave of feminism. In the USA for example, profeminist men's groups first formed in the 1970s and intensified particularly in the 1990s (Macomber, 2012). Prominent examples of men's collective mobilisations include the White Ribbon Campaign, which spans over 60 countries across the globe, Men's Action to

Stop Violence Against Women (MASVAW) in India (Shahrokh, Edström, Kumar, & Singh, 2015), One Man Can in several countries in Africa (van den Berg et al., 2013), campus anti-rape groups in the USA, and other efforts. MenEngage, a global alliance of non-governmental organisations and United Nations agencies seeking to engage boys and men to achieve gender equality, formed in 2004, and it has given significant direction to international prevention efforts.

How then can we bring men together in activist groups and networks, to work as allies to women and women's movements? There are some general principles for community-based approaches to prevention which should guide this work. Efforts, ideally, are holistic, engaging the whole community (Michau, 2005), and are based on community ownership, involving and being led by members of the community (Rosewater, 2003). Thus, some of the first steps are to find out about the community in question, develop community relationships (with groups, organisations, formal and informal leaders), and identify the community's needs (Family Violence Prevention Fund, 2004).

To create opportunities for men to mobilise, perhaps the first task is to identify and recruit men who are already supportive of efforts to end violence against women and build gender equality. A second key strategy is the use of community workshops and events. These may work through pre-existing groups of men and community structures, while avoiding drawing only on gender-normative men and reproducing existing and unequal arrangements. Other tasks are to use the preparation process as a tool for mobilising people, to draw on the power of personal testimony, to use the media for both recruitment and social marketing, to document the event, and to plan for follow-up among those who participated (Greig & Peacock, 2005). A third key strategy is to work with influential groups and 'gatekeepers', whether police and legal personnel, spiritual leaders, or others. The fourth strategy is to organise and foster grassroots men's groups and networks.

Community mobilisation requires the formation of partnerships, networks, coalitions, and movements. Efforts to engage men and boys in violence prevention may build partnerships with existing groups and networks of boys and men (student groups, boys' clubs, men's civic organisations and sports clubs, and so on) and organisations with shared agendas, such as those focused on gender inequality, parenting, sexuality, or men's health. Coalition-building can start with obvious partners such as feminist and service organisations likely to support anti-violence work, but also with more non-traditional networks such as high school sports teams, businesses, and corporations (Texas Council on Family Violence, 2010). Violence prevention may also involve the creation of new strategic or policy entities to engage men, such as Coordinated Community Response teams, Advisory Councils, or Mobilising Men Taskforces. It is particularly important to build links between men's anti-violence advocacy and other feminist and social justice movements: to foster collective solidarity, expand understandings of

the links between gender justice and other forms of social justice, and intensify pressure for change (CARE, 2014; Horn, 2013).

How to work intersectionally

Work with men, like all violence prevention work, must also be intersectional. It must reckon with the intersecting forms of social difference and inequality which structure men's lives. Gender intersects with ethnicity, sexuality, class, age, and other forms of social hierarchy, such that men in different social locations have differential access to social resources and social status. Rather than one homogenous 'masculinity' therefore, there are multiple masculinities, albeit ordered hierarchically (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). An intersectional approach is relevant not only for those men who are 'other', who are marked as different from dominant social groups and categories. Instead, all men have 'culture' and 'ethnicity' and all men are located in multiple social relations, involving both privilege and disadvantage.

Applying an intersectional approach to violence, and focusing on race and ethnicity, we can see first that ethnicity shapes women's victimisation: women from immigrant, refugee, and ethnic minority backgrounds face heightened and distinct forms of vulnerability to violence, as well as experiencing culturally specific forms of abuse (Flory, 2012; Menjivar & Salcido, 2002). Ethnicity also shapes men's perpetration of violence. For example, immigrant and refugee men may respond with violence to perceived shifts in family power relations, and may as a result of war trauma respond more readily with violence (James, 2010). Third, ethnicity shapes the ways in which perpetrators and their violence are understood and treated – the likelihoods of this violence being criminalised and racialised, or excused and individualised (Grewal, 2007; Pepin, 2016).

What then does an intersectional approach to engaging men in violence prevention comprise? I focus here on work with immigrant, ethnic minority, and indigenous men, although one could just as readily craft an intersectional approach to engaging white, English-speaking men in prevention.

Improve social and economic conditions. The first task is to address the social and economic conditions of immigrant, ethnic minority, and indigenous men and communities. Improvements in their material conditions, and in individual and community empowerment, are likely to lead to lower rates of intimate partner violence (West, 2008). Education work with newly arrived men from immigrant and refugee communities should address their pre-arrival experiences of war, torture and trauma, social exclusion, and precarious legal status (Flory, 2012; Murdolo & Quiazon, 2016). It is also productive to tackle the social and economic disempowerment that some groups of men experience in the wake of colonisation and globalisation (Silberschmidt, 2011).

Include culturally relevant content. Culturally relevant interventions, tailored to the specific cultural context and participants, are more effective than ‘colour-blind’ ones (Heppner, Neville, Smith, Kivlighan Jr, & Gershuny, 1999). This may mean designing interventions for their contexts, or adapting existing programs from one context to increase their applicability in another, as has been done with various programs aimed at men (Miller et al., 2014; Ricardo et al., 2011).

Acknowledge racism and intersectional disadvantage and privilege: Prevention work should challenge racist myths about ethnic minority men’s propensity for violence against women and highlight the links between racism and sexism and between racist and sexist violence (Funk, 2006). Involving men in critical reflection on their intersecting identities has proven to be productive in engaging them in anti-violence advocacy (Alcalde, 2014). At the same time, men may struggle to recognise the diversity of masculinities in their own lives and communities (Viitanen & Colvin, 2015).

Address culturally specific supports for violence and gender inequality. Violence prevention efforts should address culturally specific supports for violence and sexism. These may include theological or faith-based defences of male authority, local violence-supportive music and film, and so on. For example, defences of violence or gender inequalities in terms of ‘tradition’ or ‘culture’ can be challenged by placing ‘tradition’ or ‘culture’ in their social and historical context, showing that they have varied over time and are shaped by external factors, inviting assessment of their positive and negative aspects, highlighting plurality and dissent, and noting those aspects of ‘tradition’ or ‘culture’ which have already been abandoned as unethical or harmful, thus providing room for further revisions (Braaf & Ganguly, 2002; Greig & Peacock, 2005; Venganai, 2015).

Draw on local resources and texts. In turn, efforts in particular communities also should look for and build on local resources, texts, and norms in promoting non-violence and gender equality. They should make comparisons with other forms of inequality or unjust power and draw on culturally appropriate texts and stories.

Address men’s experiences of changing gender dynamics in families. When men and women migrate or seek asylum, resulting shifts in their employment, civil rights, and opportunities may produce actual or perceived shifts in family gender roles and power dynamics (Flory, 2012; Murdolo & Quiazon, 2016; Simbandumwe et al., 2008). Violence prevention efforts can include strategies to help men to cope with changing gender and family roles, whether through bilingual health education, parenting programs, or programs for men who are newly arrived immigrants or from new and emerging communities (Department of Social Services, 2015; Poljski, 2011).

The ‘engaging men’ field is marked by a growing sophistication in both practice and politics. First, there has been a proliferation in the settings and life stages at which men and boys are engaged in prevention, and standards for effective practice in work with men and boys are increasingly visible, reflecting the increasing expectation in violence prevention that practice must be based on evidence. It is less clear, however, that most actual efforts are moving closer to established standards for effective practice. Second, there are signs of an intensifying awareness of the political complexities of involving members of a privileged group in challenging that same privilege. This is demonstrated by increasing calls for processes of accountability, higher standards for male allies, growing emphasis on an intersectional approach, and reflections on the differing implications of representing men as obstacles to, allies for, or stakeholders in gender equality.

The sobering reality is that it is difficult to shift the entrenched gender inequalities which sustain men’s violence against women. At the same time, we can take heart from the fact that well-designed prevention efforts to engage men and boys in the prevention of violence can and do make a change. More widely, while there are regressive social trends that may worsen domestic and sexual violence, there are also progressive ones: normative and material shifts towards gender equality, community anti-violence mobilisations and promising initiatives in programming and policy.

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