

Prevention Connection Web Dialogue
Changing Social Norms of Masculinity: A Dialogue on Preventing Violence
Against Women
Text Chat Q&A June 23, 2006

Q1: How would you define "norms"?

- A: Acceptable
- A: Acceptable
- A: Attitudes, beliefs, what is seen as being acceptable
- A: Socially expected standards for behavior
- A: Expectations
- A: Learned behavior
- A: What people see as general
- A: Socialization
- A: Peers
- A: Status quo
- A: Organic societal controls
- A: How people think they should act/ behave
- A: Cultural
- A: Unspoken rules
- A: Average
- A: What's "normal"
- A: Activities, attitudes and behaviors that are acceptable by the general public
- A: Rules that shape behavior
- A: What I would expect would be my norm

Q2: What does it take to change norms in communities?

- A: Awareness, education and exposure to the issue
- A: Education
- A: Tools for acceptance
- A: Slowly, over time with education for community awareness
- A: Education, breaking barriers
- A: Education at home and within the community
- A: Peer pressure
- A: Community support
- A: Examining what holds the norms in place
- A: Motivation to change
- A: Utilize the ecological model
- A: Media
- A: Consensus
- A: Education
- A: Political climate change
- A: Society involvement to make change in the way they want to change
- A: You have to consider what else is going on – for instance, with breastfeeding, the invention of formula
- A: Using behavior change models
- A: Time, flexibility, openness, listening, non-blaming, lots of laughter

A: Norms can actually change quite quickly – example: in less than 20 years, norms about driving while drunk changed dramatically

Q3: What kinds of norms related to masculinity do we want to promote?

A: If we can change a norm of masculinity, don't we have to have a consensus that a particular norm is not widely acceptable first?

A: Equality in showing emotion and feelings

A: Respect

A: Emotional awareness is permitted and okay. Men can be nurturing parents

A: Positive fatherhood roles

A: Individuality and acceptance of self

A: Allowing men a wide range of behaviors and emotions as "okay"

A: Respect

A: Respect, healthy expression of emotions

A: Empathy, compassion and cooperation

A: It is O.K. for men to step outside the box ie...feelings, career

A: Responsibility, respect, kindness, nurturing

A: Strength – being strong (and using that appropriately)

A: Respect

A: Using strength to end violence

A: Leadership is too powerful, the willingness to accept gentle male leaders

A: Accountability

A: Boys/men can show emotion, feelings, etc. without being something negative

A: Understanding

A: Men engaging other men in more appropriate behaviors

A: Reminders & encouragement of the inherent truth of males.....strong, loving, dependable, forthright, flexible, creative, determined, warm, inviting

A: Women can be angry, men can be sad

A: Ridiculous typing of certain behaviors as "sissy" ie: – male ballet dancers are "gay" in the U.S. but not Russia

A: Men feeling comfortable expressing their feelings with other men

Q4: What kind of norms about masculinity do we want to promote to guide and shape the behavior of men and boys?

A: We must distinguish gender roles (masculine/feminine "divide) vs. gender ranking – that the "masculine" is better/preferred. Gender roles are what impact us the most personally, but its actually gender ranking that has the greatest society – wide effect. (Example: underpayment of women's jobs.)

Q5: What have you learned from these efforts about what works and what doesn't work in changing norms about masculinity to prevent VAW?

A: Strong male roles models work: Big Brother and Big Sisters

A: Need to remember that men need to be involved, taking the lead in norm changing

A: Asset building

Q6: What other kinds of efforts would broaden the impact and sustainability of educational efforts?

A: Our men initiative here in Rhode Island began with a conference/training from Tony Porter from Call 2 Men. His message "Men listen to Men". Men are the Providence community were moved by his thoughts and have formed a local committee addressing these issues.

Q7: What are some of your comments or questions you have about what's been discussed so far?

A: The idea of "protection" how to reframe that to not becoming "possession of women"

A: How do you get initial buy-in from men?

A: Using multiple types of media, both old and new, to get ideas out.

A: The meeting people where they're out seems to be fundamental but seems to be one of the hardest to foster in some of the traditionally feminist organizations

A: I think it is important to validate the power of one. For example, if a poster campaign positively affects one person, that person will likely influence another. It's not what we usually look for – (big numbers, big effect) but I still think it is vitally important to preserve and place value on the importance of one.

A: I am thinking that building on the positive norms regarding men (asset building) so that it doesn't appear that we are only pointing out what they do wrong

A: What are people's experience when first reaching out to men to build support for new norms that don't include violence?

A: We need to not only change men's/boy's views of masculinity, but also women's/girl's. How do we do that?

A: Some key issues also relate to the political "resistance" to focusing on men's violence as opposed to women as victims, and how not only the public reacts to this, but as Sonia state, how the VAW constituencies respond to directing efforts to working with men and boys.

A: Acknowledging the fact that Shelters and Crisis Centers feel that their toes are being stepped on when grassroots Community Organizers come into their "territory"?

A: Its always better to build on the positives rather than attacking the negatives. We put out a call to men in our area and had an overwhelming response.

A: It's important to note that though there are "norms" around masculinity that promote violence, the majority of males are not violent.

A: Start by recognizing how men already function well. Stop labeling emotionality as feminine.....but recognize that it is all inherently male/masculine. Openly show that you care about men. Help men with their old hurts.

A: Also incorporating these messages and ideas in school setting and curriculum

Q8: Given what's been said, what are the implications for future directions in primary prevention of VAW?

Q9: Type your summary of the highlights of today's discussion. What key ideas and themes emerged? What are the implications for your prevention work?

A: 1) Key Ideas: Success in managing conflict and changing norms requires hard work on the part of both genders

A: I like Chad's idea of trying to reach the men farthest from the bar first – if we can reach the hard ones, then everyone else will be easier!

A: Meeting men where they are at and accepting them as true allies in ending VAW. Also that we need to respect what they can bring to the table

A: My final thoughts are that coalitions have a unique role in providing leadership in working with men in many ways its helping member agencies to look at men as separate

culture in some ways applying the same principles they would in doing cultural competent and relevant work

A: This has been a critical and awesome dialogue that needs to be expanded to others and continued over time in different forums and settings. This will contribute to my work by providing new insights in how to support the growing movement of engaging men as part of the solution

A: Meeting men where they are at, honoring the person and their beliefs and building trust is probably one of the best ways to illicit change with the men in both our professional and personal lives

A: 2) My personal implications: How best might community agencies and healthcare agencies collaborate on these issues?

A: We need to empower men to stop violence against women. Just as women can be empowered to leave and abusive situation, men can be empowered to prevent the situation in the first place.

A: Themes – (positive) – openness to men at different levels of learning (negative) – no culturally appropriate talk (if we want to talk about the system we need to talk about all the “isms” and the intersectionality implications)

A: It is important to value and acknowledge the strengths and contributions of both genders. Traditionally male attributes can be used to further our work reframed in a healthy sense

A: All of the ideas and themes validate assessments arrived from our programs and assistance and that they ability to change or educate the norms that facilitate VAW will be impacted minimally.

A: In order for men to end violence against women, men need to feel that this is an important issue.

A: In order to change norms dealing with men.....There has to be a common theme across multiple sectors within society, meaning, the faith community, political arenas, educational institutions and the media for example all need to be saying the same thing about men. The problem is different sectors give out different stereotypes on men. Men are important in telling advocates the barriers that they face in society and how they can best be addressed

A: Creating and understanding that true collaboration does not take away from the original objectives of the organization

A: Implications – all positive; this has to be done, although I truly believe in being accountable to women while planning the work

A: I think the bar also represents the question “What does it mean to get it?”

A: I actually don't think we should be setting and bars (that is, I don't like it as a metaphor).....I would rather say we're working to create a space where anyone who wants to join this work can feel included and gain the nurturance and knowledge to be effective

A: I don't think that society in general likes it when people stand up against the norms – so it is always brave and amazing when someone stands up for something different. If you don't buy into the norms, it is very isolating.