

ENGAGING YOUNG MEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Incorporating a Social Justice Lens in
Sexual Violence Prevention

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Roots of Change – Men, Sex & Justice
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WHY WORK WITH MEN

- Negative impacts of violence affect quality of life for men, women & children
- Positive outcomes of a world that is safe & free of violence benefit men, women & children
- Because sexual violence is gendered behavior, its primary prevention requires the involvement, ownership & leadership of boys & men

THE DANGER OF THE "SINGLE STORY"

- Natural tendency to rely on single stories to define reality
- Single stories may be true, but they are incomplete
- Where the story begins is important
- Those in power can control which story is told & suppress others
- Social change requires that multiple stories are told & heard

Source: Chimamanda Adichie (2009, July 23). Paper presented to TEDGlobal 2009 Conference, Oxford, England.

GOALS OF ENGAGING MEN

- Deconstruct male & white privilege
- Integrate intersections of identity
- Reconstruct manhood as nonviolent
- Expand the number of stories about gender, sexuality & relationships
- Teach “doing consent”
- Redirect masculine bonding, male socialization & men’s culture
- Address men’s victimization
- Empower boys & men to be agents of social change

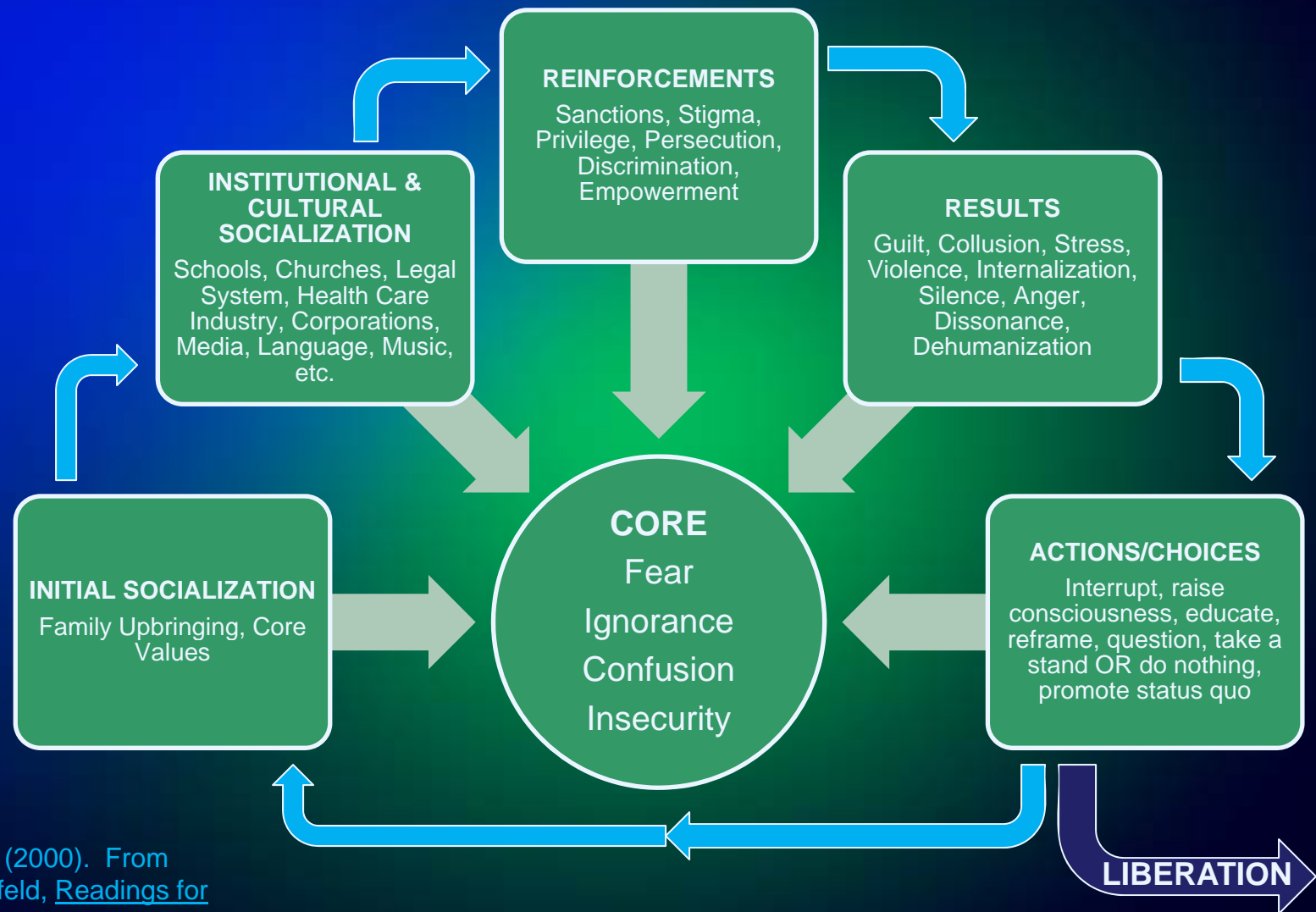
Adapted from: Flood, M. (2003). *Engaging Men. Women Against Violence*, 13: 25-32.

WHAT WORKING WITH MEN SHOULD NOT BE

- Transfer of existing curriculum to male messengers & teachers
 - Culturally irrelevant
 - Educationally ineffective
 - Potentially alienating
- Solely focused on individual attitudes, behavior & knowledge
- Replacing one “single story” of masculinity & manhood with another
- Performed by men or women who have not “unpacked their baggage”

CYCLE OF SOCIALIZATION

Sources of Single Stories



Source: Harro, B. (2000). From Adams & Blumenfeld, *Readings for Diversity & Social Justice*, p. 16

WHAT IS MY STORY?



Men Against Violence at Louisiana State University, 1997-1998 Executive Board

NEW STORY: Reacting Keeps Us Distracted

Primary prevention refers to specific measures which stop or reduce the possibility of violent events from occurring in the first place and which do so across a large portion of the community.

Secondary prevention refers to the early identification and amelioration of situations which could otherwise potentially lead to violence.

Tertiary prevention responses repair or minimize the negative consequences associated with violence that has already occurred.

Source: US Department of Health & Human Services

OPPORTUNITY COST OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

“The fear of sexual assault that is part of the daily life of women in this country takes up a continent of psychic space. A rape culture is a culture of intimidation. It keeps women afraid of being attacked and so it keeps women confined in the range of their behavior. That fear makes a woman censor her behavior – her speech, her way of dressing, her actions. It undermines her confidence in her ability to be independent. The necessity to be mindful of one’s behavior at all times is far more than annoying. Women’s lives are unnecessarily constricted. As a society, this one issue hampers the best efforts of half our population. It costs us heavily in lost initiative and in emotional energy stolen from other, more creative thoughts.”

Source: Buchwald, 1993, p. 188

NEW STORY: Questions Define Answers

The questions you ask define (& limit) the answers you receive

Deciding which questions get asked is a form of power, e.g., setting the agenda for the meeting

Assumptions, fears, hopes, paradigms & world views dictate the questions we are likely to ask

When the solutions aren't working, you probably need to reframe the problem

PROXIMATE CAUSES OF VIOLENCE

- Perpetrator & victim socialization experiences
 - Attitudes & beliefs towards sexuality & sex roles
 - Prior victimization on the part of the victim
- Individual characteristics of the perpetrator
 - Adherence to rape myths
 - Power, control & dominance tendencies
- Interpersonal & situational dynamics
 - Relationship between victim & perpetrator
 - Location of the assault
- Perpetrator's misinterpretation of victim intent
 - Alcohol and/or other drug use
 - Other non-verbal cues

Adapted from: Alan Berkowitz, et al., 1994

ROOT CAUSES OF VIOLENCE

- Violence exists as part of a continuum of behaviors that begins with subtle violations
- We are socialized to accept & be indifferent to violence via cultural beliefs, societal norms, corporate practices & institutional policies
- Violence needs to be deconstructed as gendered behavior & systemic practice
- Violence is inseparably interrelated with issues of social injustice
 - Forms the foundation for a broader system of oppression, power & privilege

NEW STORY: Violence is Gendered

- Males comprise the overwhelming proportion of perpetrators of all forms of interpersonal violence
- Males also comprise a significant proportion of the victims of non-sexual violence.
- Violence by boys & men is used to affirm prevailing norms of masculinity.
- Cultural beliefs about masculinity, as well as homophobia, serve to normalize men's violence

UNDERSTANDING GENDER

- Gender refers to socially constructed statuses & ideas about how men & women are supposed to behave & relate to each other
 - Does not refer to biological or physiological differences
 - Definitions may shift across time, place & context
 - Socialization into dominant gender role norms begins in childhood
- While there are multiple constructions of gender, there is a hegemonic masculinity & an emphasized femininity

Sources: Andersen & Collins, 2007; Connell, 1987; Lorber, 2000

DECONSTRUCTING MASCULINITY

Traditional Metaphor (Brannon & David, 1976)

No Sissy Stuff

Be A Sturdy Oak

Be A Big Wheel

Give 'em Hell

Hypermasculinity (Collins, 2005; hooks, 2003; Kimmel, 1993; Majors & Billson, 1992)

Men in marginalized social groups may overcompensate when prejudice & discrimination block pathways to masculinity

All-male social groups (Benedict, 1997; Messner, 1992; O'Sullivan, 1993; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997)

Exacerbates adherence to traditional norms of masculinity

Metamorphosis (Gerschick & Miller, 1995; Hong, 2000; Connell, 1995)

Reliance/reproducing

Rejection/resisting

Reformulation/transforming

NEW STORY:

Privilege & Perpetration Are Linked

- “How do we develop analyses and organizing strategies against violence against women that acknowledge the race of gender and the gender of race?”
- “...we must also learn how to oppose the racist fixation on people of color as the primary perpetrators of violence, including domestic and sexual violence, and at the same time to fiercely challenge the real violence that men of color inflict on women.”

Source: Angela Davis (2000). Keynote address for *Color of Violence: Violence Against Women of Color Conference*, Santa Cruz, CA.

RAPE CULTURE

“It is a complex of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women. It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent.... A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women *as the norm*. In a rape culture, both men and women assume that sexual violence is a fact of life, inevitable as death or taxes. This violence, however, is neither biologically nor divinely ordained. Much of what we accept as inevitable is in fact the expression of values and attitudes that can change.”

Source: Buchwald, Fletcher & Roth, 1993

CRITIQUE OF THE MASTER NARRATIVE

- We privilege the legal perspective
 - Was there penetration?
 - Is there proof beyond a reasonable doubt?
 - Is the perpetrator guilty (or innocent)?
 - Was there consent?
- We privilege the medical perspective
 - Were there visible bruises?
 - Was semen present?
 - Are the post-trauma symptoms typical or “normal?”
- We privilege the media perspective
 - Goal is to increase advertising revenue & raise ratings
 - Whose “story” is missing or not told?
 - Technology exacerbates the “single story”

NEW STORY: Sources of Strength Vary

“In this world, there is nothing softer or thinner than water. But to compel the hard and unyielding, it has no equal. That the weak overcomes the strong, that the hard gives way to the gentle - this everyone knows. Yet no one asks accordingly.”

- Lao Tzu, 600 BC, Chinese philosopher, founder of Taoism, author of Tao Te Ching

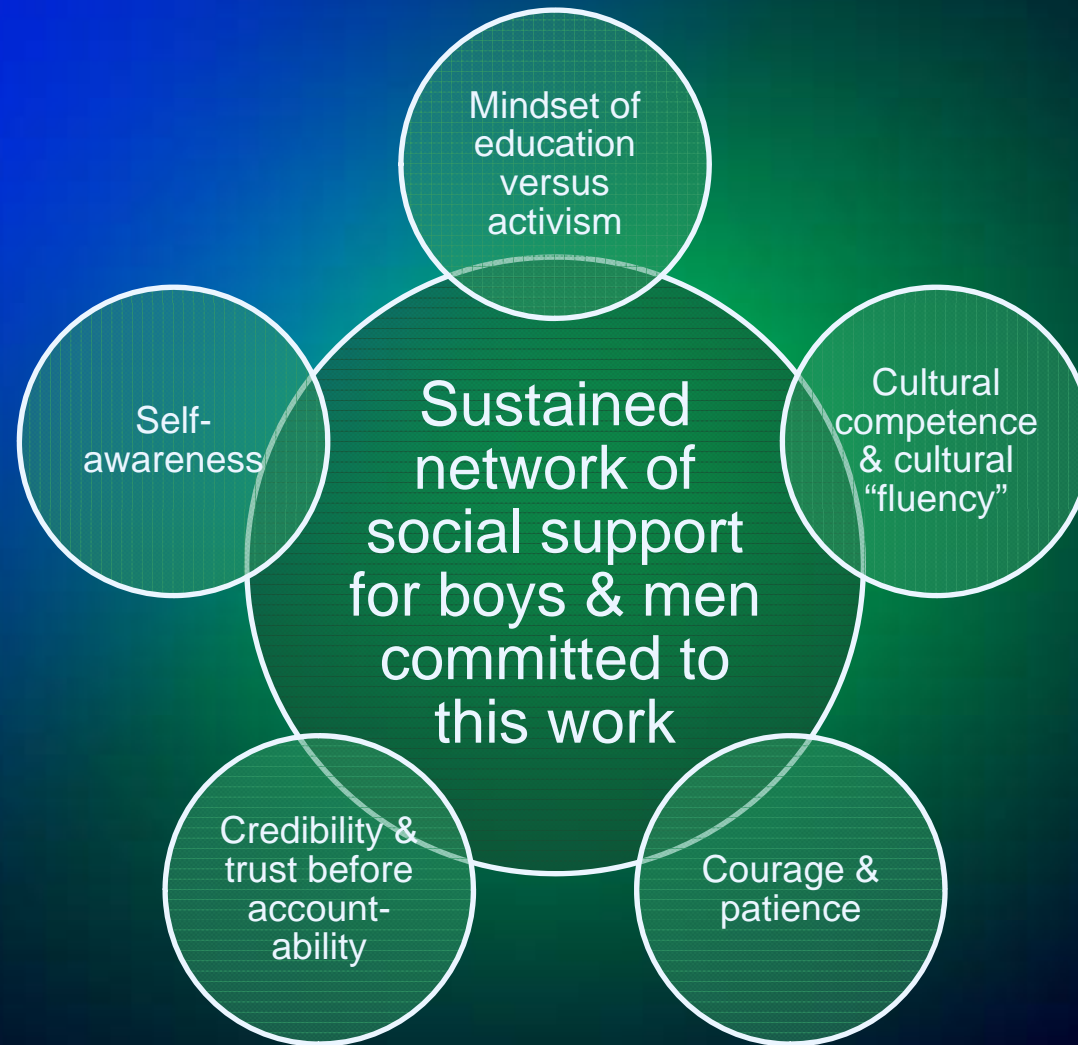
MEN'S WORK

“Essentially, all men were beaten up, harassed, intimidated, sexually assaulted or humiliated at some point in childhood. These men who we know, love, and depend on carry out their childhood pain on others and teach others to do the same.

Understanding this training gives us two handles for working with men. First, if we have learned to be violent, we can unlearn it. And since this learning came from men, the most powerful way to learn other, gentler ways is also from men. Second, if we were hurt as children, we can heal that hurt, work through the anger, and become stronger and more loving adults without retaliating or striking out.”

Kivel, P. (1992). [Men's Work: How to Stop the Violence That Tears Our Lives Apart](#). Center City, MN: Hazelden, p. 96.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS



BARRIERS TO RESOLVE

Getting stakeholders to “buy in” to this paradigm shift

- Suspicion about men’s programs
- What role do women have

Bystander behavior & apathy (e.g., “I’m not violent: why do I need to get involved?”)

Historical belief that “boys will be boys”

Keeping the focus on men’s behavior & privilege rather than on women’s choices & vulnerability

Homophobia in all-male peer support networks

Fear of the “feminist agenda” (e.g., “man-hating” & emasculation)

Developing a transformed curriculum which does not reproduce or rely on traditional stories of masculinity

Maintaining hope & resilience

Allocating limited resources

- Prevention is less glamorous
- Results aren’t immediate or “countable”

TOWARDS LIBERATION

"It seems to me, that this, too, is how memory works. What we remember of what was done to us shapes our view, molds us, sets our stance. But what we remember is past, it no longer exists, and yet we hold on to it, live by it, surrender so much control to it. What do we become when we put down the scripts written by history and memory, when each person before us can be seen free of the cultural or personal narrative we've inherited or devised? When we, ourselves, can taste that freedom."

Source: Rebecca Walker, (2001). *Black, White, and Jewish: Autobiography for A Shifting Self*. New York: Riverhead Books, pp. 304-305.

THANK YOU!

“Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in "Why We Can't Wait", 1963

“It takes two people to speak the truth: one to speak and another to hear.”

- Henry David Thoreau

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