

Changing Carolina: College Men Can Make A Difference

An Intervention Program to Engage College Men in Reducing Violence Against Women

The college years are a high-risk time for women to experience sexual assault and dating violence. Violence prevention groups on college campuses, in schools, and in communities are becoming increasingly aware that violence against women cannot end unless men take an active role in stopping it. This awareness has led to an increase in programs that focus on men's roles in preventing violence against women. Studies have found that the risk of engaging in violence can be reduced in male middle and high school populations (Foshee et al., 2004). Prevention interventions geared towards college men have shown promise, although the efficacy of these programs is not yet known. The objective of this project is to implement a preventive intervention conducted with male college students to reduce intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women. The intervention will take the form of a "Men Making a Difference" (MMAD) student anti-violence group composed of men in fraternities and athletics, who will conduct education and outreach activities with their peers. The MMAD group will work to transform men's identification with socially constructed norms for masculinity that promote violence against women; teach that men have a critical role in stopping violence against women; debunk myths that support rape and partner violence; teach skills and confidence to intervene in a situation in which a male peer is condoning or using violence; and conduct anti-violence outreach activities, including a social norms campaign, with male peers. The MMAD intervention will be conducted within the framework of Getting To Outcomes (GTO), a model for community agencies conducting preventive interventions that builds the capacity of agencies to conduct quality prevention practices, such as choosing, planning, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining interventions. This project will strive to transfer psychological science to the community intervention by utilizing theories and models that have been shown to be effective in preventive interventions, including social norms theory, peer education, and GTO.

If awarded, monies from this grant will be used to implement the MMAD intervention within the GTO framework. Grant funds would be used to pay for program costs such as a graduate student assistant; a nationally recognized speaker/trainer; supplies; a needs and resource assessment with male students in fraternities and athletics; an assessment of program efficacy with MMAD participants; and supplies for Continuous Quality Improvement.

Over the course of a college career, up to 25% of women may experience a sexual assault and 45% may experience intimate partner violence. Such assaults result in adverse academic outcomes and high rates of physical and psychological injury. Further, relationship patterns developed during college are often enduring features of relationships. Thus, the importance of reducing the number of women who are assaulted during their college careers is clear. This project also has

important implications for the field of intimate partner violence prevention, which is in its infancy. If successful, this program could provide a model to be used on other campuses and with other communities.

Research Program Narrative

Targeting Men for the Prevention of Violence Against Women. In a large-scale study of dating violence among college students in the U.S., 33% of male students admitted to committing at least one act of physical aggression against a female partner in the past year (Straus, 2005). Furthermore, between 6-15% of men on college campuses reported acts that meet legal definitions of rape or attempted rape (Lisak and Miller, 2002). Though only a minority of men engage in violence against women, all men can have an influence on the culture and environment that perpetuates men's violence against women. Men can work to prevent violence against women not only by personally refraining from violence, but also by intervening in the violence of other men (Berkowitz, 2004). Non-violent men may be bystanders, witnessing or hearing about the violence of their peers. The silence of the bystanders enables perpetrators to carry out violence, unchallenged by their male peers. Tapping the "silent majority" of non-violent men to challenge norms that accept or promote violence against women holds enormous potential in the prevention of violence against women. The MMAD intervention invites men to be partners in solving the problem of violence against women.

Masculinity. Social norms research suggests that masculinity in the United States is associated with strength and authority (over women and other men), independence, suppression of emotions, and superiority to femininity, which is seen as less desirable (Kilmartin, 1999). This social norm is reflected in an idealized male gender role, which prescribes certain behaviors (e.g., financially supporting one's family) and restricts others (e.g., crying in public; Hong, 2000). A man whose self-worth is dependent upon meeting the standards of the idealized male gender role is doomed to failure, as the cultural ideal of masculinity is ultimately unattainable. All men at times engage in "unmanly" behavior such as crying and feeling vulnerable and afraid. *Gender role conflict* refers to the stress associated with trying to live up to rigid gender role expectations (Levant, 1996). The gender role conflict theory postulates that gender roles are often violated by men, resulting in negative psychological consequences and overcompensation through the use of dysfunctional behaviors (e.g., violence) to "prove one's manhood". Studies have found that most men do experience gender role conflict at times, as well as negative psychological consequences related to such conflict (Mahalik, 1999).

The research on masculinity indicates that violence prevention programs for men should help men explore what they are taught about masculinity, as well as the stress that results from trying to meet a stereotypical and unrealistic conception of masculinity. At first glance, making such demands of male participants in violence prevention programs seems like it would be met with great resistance. However, shifting men's conceptions of masculinity may not be as difficult as it seems because

many men already feel discomfort with measuring up to the masculine ideal (Berkowitz, 2002). The opportunity to reduce this discomfort can provide the motivation for men to work to change the cultural myths and stereotypes that perpetuate violence against women. In addition, if men's disillusionment with traditional definitions of masculinity and its association with violence could be revealed as normative, men might be more willing to express discomfort with the violent behavior of other men, and intervene to prevent a peer's violent behavior (Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkenbach, Stark, 2003).

The Social Norms Approach to Violence Prevention. Social norms theory (SNT) provides a framework of behavior that has important implications for violence prevention (Berkowitz, 2005). SNT states that behavior is influenced by perceptions (correct or not) of how other members of our social groups think and act. Pluralistic ignorance refers to misperceptions that occur in relation to problem behaviors (such as binge drinking or violence) that are overestimated in one's peer group. Studies suggest that many males are mistaken about other males' attitudes regarding masculinity and about men's violent and sexist behaviors towards women (Berkowitz, 2002). Pluralistic ignorance explains why some men disagree with the stereotypic construction of masculinity and its association with violence, yet believe most other men are comfortable with it. Thus, an important reason many non-violent men are not willing to challenge sexist or violent peers is because they believe that they would be the only man to speak up. For example, in one study, college men stated that they personally valued consent and would stop if their date said no to sex, but they believed that the average male student at their university would be much less likely to value consent (Fabiano et al., 2003). *Social norms media campaigns* use various forms of media to educate a community about actual social norms regarding a problem behavior. Several colleges, universities, and high schools have successfully used such media campaigns to reduce alcohol use and smoking (Perkins & Craig, 2002). As part of the MMAD intervention, MMAD group participants will design a social norms media campaign to educate their peers about social norms regarding violence against women.

Engagement and Peer Education Models of Interventions. Several successful dating violence prevention programs conducted with youth have taken place in school contexts in which students are required to participate in the prevention program (e.g., Foshee et al., 2004). Violence preventive interventions with college students, on the other hand, are typically voluntary. Therefore, we propose an Engagement Model, which would work to engage men in a voluntary intervention that is enjoyable, useful, and provides tangible benefits such as making new friends, providing an opportunity for leadership that will enhance their resumes, and learning skills that will be useful in future careers, such as conducting a social norms media campaign. The intervention will engage men through positive messages that build on their strengths and motivate men to take an active role in reducing violence against women. The proposed intervention also employs a Peer Education model, in which the individuals conducting the intervention are not "experts" from outside the community, but rather, peers of the

persons being targeted for the intervention. Using the Peer Education model, community members are empowered to educate their peers about a problem. There are numerous advantages to having peers conduct the intervention. First, the desired behavior change is more likely to be sustained in the peer educators themselves, whose own behavior changes are constantly being reinforced through their work to convince their peers that the behavioral changes are beneficial. Second, peer educators help to change a negative or unhealthy peer group norm by serving as a model of someone within the peer group who supports more healthy norms. Third, peers can be realistic role models. Fourth, peers within the same community (e.g., fraternity brothers) may have an enduring relationship that will continue after the intervention. And, peers will have multiple opportunities to interact with each other in both formal and informal situations outside of the structure of the intervention. Peer education models have been used successfully in numerous venues, including interventions to increase HIV/AIDS risk reduction behaviors (Sikkema, 2005), and to reduce community violence, drug use, and crime (Sikkema et al., 2000). As Sikkema (2005) notes, an individual's behavior change efforts are more likely to be successful and sustained when peer group norms support the change, individuals who serve as role models of behavior change are part of one's peer group, and positive social reinforcements are present.

The Getting to Outcomes (GTO) Model of Planning and Evaluating a Community Preventive Intervention. GTO was developed to address the gap between prevention research and practice by building the capacity needed to conduct critical prevention practices. GTO guides practitioners by posing 10 questions that must be addressed to conduct high-quality preventive interventions, and then provides tools in the form of a GTO manual to help practitioners address each question. The GTO model will be used in designing and conducting the MMAD intervention. Dr. Abraham Wandersman, one of the developers of GTO, will be working with the MMAD intervention (see his attached letter of support). The 10 questions, and how the MMAD intervention will address each question, are briefly stated in the following paragraph. Question 1: "What are the underlying needs and conditions in the community?" We will conduct a needs and resources assessment with students in fraternities and athletics to assess issues such as: are students ready for the program, do we have buy-in from leaders and members, etc. Question 2: "What are the goals, target populations, and objectives?" Fraternities and athletes are strategic populations to target, as these groups are often among the higher-status and more powerful student organizations on campuses. Sikkema (2005) describes the advantage of using popular opinion leaders as peer educators. The diffusion of innovation theory postulates that social norm changes occur when an innovation is first adopted by opinion leaders who are considered to be well liked and credible. Question 3: "Which evidence-based programs can be used to reach your goal?" Currently, no evidence-based programs have been designed for violence prevention with college males. However, there are programs that have shown promise, as reviewed by Clinton-Sherrod et al. (2003). Elements of these programs, such as peer

education and the social norms approach, have been included in this proposal. *Question 4: “What actions need to be taken so that the selected program “fits” the community context?”* The needs assessment data will be used to ascertain how best to design the intervention to engage men in fraternities and athletics. *Question 5: “What organizational capacities are needed to implement the program?”* This question refers to capacities such as adequate staff with appropriate credentials, experience, and a strong commitment to the program. The University of South Carolina (USC) already has a very strong organizational infrastructure to implement the program through a collaboration between the Department of Psychology and the Office of Sexual Health and Violence Prevention (see attached letter of support). Additional letters of support (attached) from a range of USC departments illustrate the organizational support that exists for this program. *Question 6: “What is the plan for this program?”* is described in the Activities/Timeline section. *Question 7: “How will the quality of program implementation be assessed?”* Program implementation (e.g., did the MMAD group meet weekly as planned?) will be assessed monthly using adapted GTO checklists. *Question 8: “How well did the program work?”* Although a full evaluation of program efficacy is not possible without additional funding, interviews will be conducted with MMAD participants when they begin the group, and after 2 semesters of participation. Interviews will assess pretest-posttest changes such as attitudes and beliefs regarding violence against women and skills for challenging the violence-supportive behavior of peers. *Question 9: “How will continuous quality improvement (CQI) strategies be incorporated?”* CQI, conducted on a monthly basis with MMAD participants, will consist of a brief questionnaire that assesses what is working, what is not working, suggestions for improvement, etc. *Question 10: “If the program is successful, how will it be sustained?”* Sustaining the program will occur through developing relationships with supportive university administrators, registering the MMAD group as a student organization, and offering the MMAD curriculum as a class.

Impact of MMAD on the Community and on Violence Prevention Research. The proposed project, if funded, could have a variety of positive effects within the USC community. It could provide a venue to challenge social norms of masculinity that promote violence against women. It could teach skills to speak up and confront violent peers. The young men who participate in MMAD will enter their future relationships with the values and skills they have learned from MMAD. Some of them may go on to assume leadership roles in their communities, providing the opportunity to influence others with values they learned from MMAD. On a broader level, the social norms media campaign conducted by the MMAD participants, together with their peer education activities, could change campus social norms that tolerate and excuse violence against women. If effective, the program could serve as a model to be used in other campuses and communities. The project will also inform violence prevention research by providing preliminary data on program efficacy through the evaluation conducted with MMAD participants.

Violence against women will end only when men become involved in the struggle to stop it. The MMAD program provides a method of engaging college men in that effort.