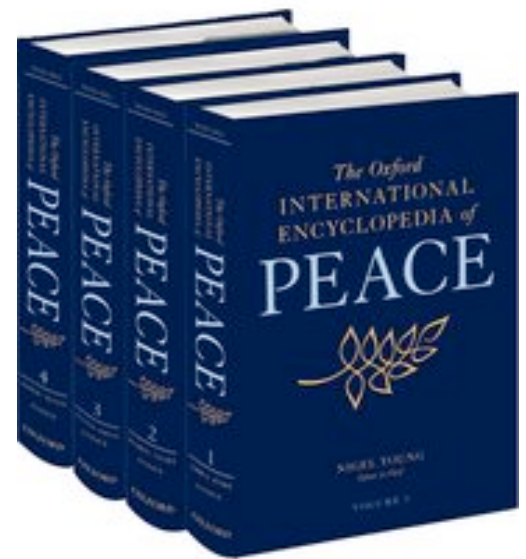


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Male Violence, Unlearning of



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At the interpersonal, group and international level the conduct of violence has largely been the province of men, and increasingly men are being asked to take more leadership in ending it.

Compared with women, men, especially young men, are overwhelmingly involved in all types of violence. It is mostly men who commit acts of personal violence - against women and girls, as well as towards other men and boys. Men are also most often implicated in other types of “organized” or institutional violence as victims and perpetrators of violence. Around the world..., militaries consist of only men or mostly men. Men fight more than women – in wars, in the home, schoolyard, and on the street. It is primarily men who are drafted into jihadi, nationalist or separatist movements or who perpetrate acts of terrorism. In general, men use weapons more than women, and are imprisoned and murdered more than women. It is also a fact that, in general, men control more resources and wield more power than women. (UNESCAP, 2003)

The World Health Organization multi-year and multi-national study on violence notes that violence against women by intimate partners occurs in all countries and cultures, although some populations are at greater risk than others. Studies show that 40-70% of female murder victims are killed by their husbands or boyfriends, frequently in the context of an ongoing abusive relationship. In some countries as many as 69% of women report being physically assaulted by an intimate male partner at some point in their lives. (WHO, 2002)

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Explanations for Male Violence

There are numerous theories about why men use violence to the extent that they do against women. These include biological, neurochemical and genetic explanations focused on the physiology of human males, as well as various intrapsychic and intraindividual perspectives that stress psychoanalytic causes, early childhood traumas and individual characteristics. Family systems models, working at a slightly broader level, focus on the negative interactions and interpersonal skills (or lack thereof) enacted within the couple or family unit. Despite providing useful insights, empirical (and political) support for these models as frameworks for a solution to violence is mixed and advocates for an end to male violence have turned the bulk of their attention toward social learning and culture of violence explanations. These approaches place greater importance on social norms, media influences and patterns of reinforcement and reward that support, directly or indirectly, the use of violence by men. Also significant are feminist explanations for male violence that point out the problems produced by structural inequalities that more often than not put men in positions of power in relation to women, limit the opportunities for women, and encourage contested hierarchical struggles between men that come at a high cost to women. The UNESCAP (2003) report notes:

Violence and being a man seem to go hand in hand. As do violence and seeking and retaining power. But that is not to say violence is a natural condition for men, or a natural part of being a man. Nor is it to say that all men are in positions of power. Men are taught to use violence, and at times are encouraged to use it. Violence is culturally and politically sanctioned, both implicitly and explicitly in different ways.

Intervention Approaches

The approach that male violence can be “unlearned” assumes that social learning, cultural influences and social structures all play a key role in promoting male violence, and that social and cognitive interventions can help move men away from a culture of violence and toward a culture of peace. It is also assumed that intervention needs to occur at multiple levels in order to address such a complex problem.

Coordinated efforts to end intimate partner violence against women have been visible since at least the 1970’s when women’s anti-rape and anti-domestic violence movements began to call public attention to the issue. Initial services to respond to domestic partner violence were geared primarily toward helping battered women. The goal was to redress the imbalance of power in homes by providing women with new resources and increased options. Emergency shelters for battered women, perhaps the key tool in these early efforts, developed at a relatively rapid pace. In the United States there were less than a dozen known women’s refuges in 1973 but this grew to more

than 600 by 1980 (Haas, 1980). Beginning in the late 1970's, programs designed to work directly with the men who perpetrated the violence emerged as well. There were two such intervention programs for abusive men in the U.S. in 1977 increasing to about 150 by 1982 (Norberg-Bohm, 1987). The number has continued to increase since that time.

Some of these early programs, but certainly not all of them, were developed by pro-feminist men who saw their efforts as being supportive of the women's movement. In fact, three different organizational patterns were common, namely programs located within mental health or family service counseling centers, programs designed as adjuncts to battered women's shelters, and programs based in men's collectives or those developed around a self-help format somewhat comparable to Alcoholics Anonymous. In the 1990s more programs developed using formats that are directly connected to courts and the criminal justice system as part of court-mandated treatment systems. Programs designed specifically for domestically abusive men now exist in North America, Australia and many countries in Europe.

Batterer intervention programs are not the only approaches being used to promote changes in male behavior and shift attitudes away from violence. As Alan Berkowitz (2004) reports in a summary of violence prevention programming with men and boys,

Prevention programs can take the form of one session, a series of sessions or ongoing interactive educational workshops, leadership training, social marketing and social norms media campaigns..., or through participation in one-time or ongoing public events. These may focus directly on the issue of violence or on its specific forms (for example, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and/or harassment, and stalking), or indirectly through men's involvement in consciousness raising, fatherhood and/or skill-building programs that foster attitudes and behaviors that may protect against violence, or by providing healthy resocialization experiences about what it means to be a healthy, nonviolent man. In its broadest definition, violence prevention for men includes any activity that addresses the root causes of men's violence including social and structural causes as well as men's gender role socialization and men's sexism.

Among men's violence prevention programs those for school-aged boys have tended to focus on issues of sexual harassment and dating violence, those for college age men have tended to focus on sexual assault, and those for men not in college or older have tended to focus on domestic violence in longer-term partnerships.

The U.S.-based Family Violence Prevention Fund has developed an online "Toolkit for Working with Men and Boys to Prevent Gender-Based Violence" that provides a well-

balanced collection of materials for people interested in taking on this challenging work. See <http://toolkit.endabuse.org/>

Prevention Program Assumptions

Practitioners who work with men to prevent violence have concluded that effective violence prevention programs for men share some or all of these assumptions (Berkowitz, 2004):

- Men must assume responsibility for preventing men's violence against women.
- Men need to be approached as partners in solving the problem rather than as perpetrators.
- Workshops and other activities are more effective when conducted by peers in small, all-male groups because of the immense influence that men have on each other and because of the safety all-male groups can provide.
- Discussions should be interactive and encourage honest sharing of feelings, ideas, and beliefs.
- Opportunities should be created to discuss and critique prevailing understandings of masculinity and men's discomfort with them, as well as men's misperceptions of other men's attitudes and behavior.
- Positive anti-violence values and healthy aspects of men's experience should be strengthened, including teaching men to intervene in other men's behavior.
- Work with men must be in collaboration with and accountable to women working as advocates, educators, and prevention specialists.

International Efforts to Engage Men

Since the early 1990's there has been a concerted international efforts to eliminate violence against women. The UN General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104, of 19 December 1993) provides the shared framework for analysis and action at the national and international levels. The Declaration defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." This encompasses "physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family and in the general community, including battering, sexual abuse of children, dowry-related violence, rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women, forced prostitution, and violence perpetrated or condoned by the state."

The involvement of men will be a key component in promoting gender equality and eliminating violence against women, and this has been highlighted in several United

Nations documents and declarations. These include the Beijing Declaration, adopted during the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, where participating governments expressed their determination to encourage men to participate fully in all actions to end violence against women.

The UNESCO publication *Male roles, Masculinities and Violence: A Culture of Peace Perspective* (2000) is based on an expert group meeting convened in Oslo in 1997 by the UNESCO Women and Culture or Peace program. Participants at the meeting agreed that the transformation from a culture of violence to a culture of peace is dependent on the development of more egalitarian and partnership-oriented forms of masculinity, as opposed to traditional forms premised on dominance, authority, control and force.

More recently, the UN Secretary-General's In Depth Study on All Forms of Violence Against Women (DAW-DESA 2006) notes that work with men will be key to the long-term elimination of violence.

The struggle to transform gender relations and to eliminate violence against women cannot be successful without the involvement of men. There are promising examples of coalitions in which men address the need to end community acquiescence in violence against women and support women's leadership roles. Strategies to engage men in the prevention of violence against women have included work to raise awareness of the issue with organized groups — such as the military, trade unions, sports teams and the police — as well as campaigns that utilize positive male role models to oppose violence against women.

Some illustrative examples of successful men's involvement campaigns that have been documented include Rozan, an NGO in Pakistan; the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre; the Man's Action to Stop Violence against Women (MASVAW) network in India; the Cambodia Men's Network and the international White Ribbon Campaign (UNESCAP, 2003). Since its inception in Canada in 1991, the White Ribbon Campaign has spread to 47 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Pacific.

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