

**Promising Practices in Sexual Violence Prevention
and Community Mobilization for Prevention:**

A Report to the City of Seattle

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes information regarding promising programs and components of programs that work toward the prevention of sexual violence. Commissioned by the City of Seattle, the report reviews both sexual violence – specific programs and literature from neighboring fields to identify practices which have the greatest likelihood of success in reducing risks for sexual violence and in mobilizing communities to address the problem of sexual aggression. Given the relatively embryonic nature of peer-reviewed literature related to sexual violence prevention, four categories of findings and programs are summarized in this report: a “tested-effective” program, “promising programs,” elements of effective community education programs, and elements of effective community mobilizing programs.

Tested Programs

Programs were identified as “tested-effective” if they had been rigorously evaluated through an experimental research design, had shown a positive impact on both sexual violence – related attitudes and behaviors, and had been formalized to the extent that outside parties could replicate the program. Only one program, the *Safe Dates* curriculum, met these criteria.

Promising Programs

Projects were identified as “promising” if evaluation data suggested a positive impact of the programming on attitudes or behavior, but no experimental evaluation had occurred, or if experimental testing revealed promising, but limited impacts. Further, to be highlighted as “promising,” programs needed to be formalized enough to be accessible to outside agencies (i.e. the curriculum had been manualized and is available online or for purchase). Three programs met these criteria, including the *Expect Respect* Program, Men Can Stop Rape’s *Men of Strength Clubs* and *Mentors in Violence Prevention*. It should be noted that although these programs are promising, they have not been rigorously tested across multiple cultural communities, and caution should be used in implementing curricula in populations for which they have not been evaluated.

Elements of Effective Community Education.

Given the field’s reliance to date on community-based education, elements of effective educational programming were identified via a review of meta-analyses and reviews of psycho-educational approaches to sexual violence prevention. Evidence suggests that education programs which are interactive, multi-session, tailored and culturally-specific, presented to single-gender audiences and which challenge rape-supportive attitudes and norms are likely to be more successful in reducing support for rape than educational programs without these elements.

Elements of Effective Community Mobilization

The sexual violence field is increasingly moving towards a community-based and multi-level approach to sexual violence prevention. Similar to the sexual violence prevention literature more generally, however, studies on the effectiveness of these community mobilization approaches are only beginning to emerge. This report therefore examined other prevention fields such as HIV and substance abuse with a longer history of utilizing community mobilization strategies in order to glean likely elements of effective community-based approaches. Resulting critical components of community mobilization include community engagement and partnership,

tailoring of programming to unique community and cultural contexts, theory-driven prevention activities, a focus on developing strengths and positive relationships among community members, and comprehensive, multi-strategy programming.

Summary and recommendation:

Given available evidence, impactful sexual violence prevention programs are likely to be those that a) adopt some or all of existing, tested or promising programming, b) incorporate elements of community education-based approaches highlighted by literature as contributing to longer-term attitudinal and knowledge change, or c) utilize a carefully constructed community mobilization approach. Community mobilization efforts that have evidence of community partnership and buy-in, a thorough grounding in the local realities and context of the community, multiple components and strategies, a clear theoretical rationale, and an element of fostering strengths and positive relationships are more likely to achieve positive outcomes than efforts lacking some or all of these critical elements.

Introduction

This report was commissioned by the Seattle Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Prevention Division within the City of Seattle Human Services Department. The purpose of the report is to inform, along with a comprehensive community-based needs assessment, the City's priorities in supporting sexual assault prevention and anti-violence community mobilizing initiatives. The report is an overview of the current state of the literature base related to effective and promising approaches to sexual violence prevention. Additionally, current knowledge regarding best practices and critical elements of community mobilizing as a prevention strategy are reviewed. The goal of the report is to assist the City and its community partners in identifying sexual violence prevention-related activities that are likely to carry the greatest impact given limited resources.

Context:

The field of sexual violence prevention is still in the early stages of developing an empirical knowledge base related to effective programming. Sexual violence prevention programs are a relatively recent development and rigorous evaluations of prevention endeavors are rare in existing literature due their high cost, the difficulty of monitoring changes in low incidence behaviors like rape perpetration, and the somewhat fragmented implementation of varied prevention strategies among a wide array of programs, agencies, college campuses and communities. Most of the existing literature base related to sexual violence prevention comes from educational programs implemented on college campuses (and to some extent, high-school campuses), which limits the degree to which findings can be generalized across communities. Further, only one program tailored for a specific ethnic or racial minority population has been rigorously evaluated (see Heppner et al, 1999), resulting in a lack of attention to and knowledge about effective sexual violence prevention strategies in diverse community settings. Many sexual violence prevention practitioners have characterized the state of the field as in a period of evidence-building (e.g. the Prevention Connection, 2007), and argue that a conceptualization of "best practices" needs to consider both available empirical data and evidence emerging from important, but perhaps non-experimental program evaluations and descriptions.

The intent of this report is to pull together both empirical evidence and "emerging" evidence about effective approaches to sexual violence prevention. The report consists of two sections. The first section overviews empirical evidence regarding effective sexual violence prevention, with a focus on the most commonly-evaluated strategy – community education. Tested-effective and promising prevention programs are identified, followed by an overview of elements of effective education-based prevention. The second section reviews "emerging" evidence, with a focus on the current trend within sexual violence prevention of moving towards a community mobilizing or organizing approach to anti-violence work. In this section, stated rationales for community mobilizing will be reviewed, along with findings regarding the components of community mobilizing that are most likely to contribute to successful outcomes.

Methodology:

Part I: Promising programs and elements of effective education-based prevention. This section was assembled through a literature search of research databases including Psychinfo, Pubmed and Social Work Abstracts from 1990-2007. Because several excellent literature reviews regarding sexual violence prevention have emerged during this time period, the search focused primarily on meta-analyses and existing, comprehensive literature surveys. Additionally, sources for identifying promising and model programs were consulted, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, The Violence Prevention-Connection within the Prevention Institute, and the Arizona Rape Prevention and Education Project.

Programs were identified as “tested-effective” if they had been rigorously evaluated through an experimental research design, had shown a positive impact on both attitudes and behaviors, and had been formalized to the extent that outside parties could replicate the program. Only one program, the Safe Dates curriculum, met these criteria. Projects were identified as “promising” if evaluation data suggested a positive impact of the programming on attitudes or behavior, but no experimental evaluation had occurred, or if experimental testing revealed promising, but limited impacts. Further, to be highlighted as “promising,” programs needed to be formalized enough to be accessible to outside agencies (i.e. the curriculum had been manualized and is available online or for purchase). Three programs met these criteria and are highlighted below. Rigorously evaluated programs that have not been formalized to the extent that they are replicable are reflected in the summary of effective elements of education-based prevention.

It should be noted that none of the tested-effective or promising programs highlighted here solely target the issue of sexual violence. Rather, reducing sexual aggression is a secondary or related outcome to the primary purpose of the highlighted programs. To date, no formally evaluated primary prevention programs targeting the specific or sole issue of sexual violence have demonstrated an ability to reduce rates of sexually aggressive behavior. Further, it should be noted that although these programs are promising, they have not been rigorously tested across multiple cultural communities, and caution should be used in implementing curricula in populations for which they have not been evaluated.

Part II: Community Mobilization as a sexual violence prevention strategy. Elements critical to effective community mobilizing prevention initiatives were identified through a search of Psychinfo, Pubmed and Sociological Abstracts databases for the past decade. To meet inclusion criteria, articles or book chapters needed to review community organizing as a prevention strategy, reflect a meta-analysis of prevention approaches that included a community mobilizing strategy, or describe an empirical evaluation of a particular community-based prevention program. Articles which described, but did not evaluate a particular prevention program were excluded from consideration. Resources meeting search criteria were then reviewed for common themes regarding components of community mobilization efforts that were demonstrated or theorized to contribute to positive preventative change. These critical components are summarized in Part II, below.

PART I

A Tested Program Related to Sexual Violence Prevention

Safe Dates:

Program Description:

Safe Dates is a multi-component prevention program designed for middle and high school students. Designed primarily for co-educational groups in the 8th- and 9th-grades, the program aims to challenge violence-supportive attitudes and norms, increase student self-efficacy in violence-related help-seeking and supporting friends, enhancing healthy relationship skills and reducing physical and sexual abuse perpetration and victimization in the context of dating relationships. Safe Dates consists of several components: a 10-session school-based curriculum delivered in 45-minute segments, a school-wide poster contest, parent materials, and a teacher training outline. The program can also include a follow-up booster session and a script for a dramatic play.

Program evaluation:

SafeDates has been rigorously evaluated over a several-year period. A randomized controlled trial of the program was conducted based on an implementation in North Carolina public schools in 1994. A four-year post-intervention follow-up found that students participating in the intervention reported perpetrating significantly less physical and sexual violence with dating partners than did control group members (Foshee et al., 2004). Intervention group members also reported decreased sexual victimization by dating partners than control group participants. Additional information about this program can be obtained at the SAMHSA model program website: www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/programfulldetails.asp?PROGRAM_ID=84

Promising Prevention Programs

Expect Respect

Program description:

Expect Respect is a multi-component, school-based curriculum evaluated in schools in Texas (Meraviglia, Becker, Rosenbluth, Sanchez, & Robertson, 2003). Although not focused exclusively on sexual violence prevention program, Expect Respect has several related aims; to reduce incidents of bullying and sexual harassment in elementary schools (both of which are associated with subsequent risk for sexual and intimate partner violence perpetration (Pellegrini, 2001)) to increase the capacity of students, staff and parents to respond to harassing behavior and incidents, and to promote healthy intimate relationships among middle and high school students. This intervention is comprised of several component parts:

- Classroom curriculum: Curriculum at the 5th-grade level is based on Nan Stein's Bullyproof (Stein, Sjostrom, & Gaberman, 1996), and classroom content for grades 6-12 focuses on healthy relationship skills.
- Staff Training: Faculty, counselors, administrators and staff attend multiple training sessions. These sessions provide information regarding the dynamics of sexual harassment, bullying and domestic violence, as well as intervention strategies, community resources and support of victimized youth.
- Support groups: Utilizing a manual entitled Expect Respect: A Support Group Manual for Healthy Relationships, facilitators offer 12-24 session, school-based groups for middle and high school youth previously victimized in the context of their family or dating relationships.
- Parent Education: Implementation at the elementary school level included education sessions that provided parents with information about bullying and sexual harassment and intervening with both perpetrators and victims of this behavior.
- Policy: Implementation at the elementary school level included support in developing or enhancing school-wide anti-bullying and harassment policy and protocol.

Program evaluation:

Two evaluations of this program were examined for this review. In a randomized test of the components of the elementary school version of Expect Respect, Meraviglia and colleagues (2003) found that students in intervention schools had a greater level of knowledge about sexual harassment than students in control schools, and that awareness of bullying increased more significantly in intervention schools. In a non-experimental evaluation of the Middle and High School components of Expect Respect, results suggest that support group participants significantly increased their ability to recognize abusive behaviors, and that group members self-report gains in issues such as increasing personal safety and coping with problems (Safe Place, 2005). Further, student participants in classroom presentations reported greater knowledge about healthy relationships and an increased ability to assist a friend. Additional information about the Expect Respect program and training opportunities can be found at: www.austin-safeplace.org.

Men of Strength Clubs (A program of Men Can Stop Rape)

Program description:

Deemed a promising program by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, this program is an element of Men Can Stop Rape's ecological approach to anti-violence activities. Men of Strength (MOST) clubs engage youth or young men in high school and college settings in a 16-week curriculum designed to allow males to critically evaluate dominant conceptualizations of masculinity, to examine the link between traditional notions of masculinity and violence, and to explore new ways of conceptualizing male "strength." Program participants are also exposed to information about violence against women and are engaged in capacity-building activities to increase their ability to become peer leaders and role models in anti-violence activism.

Evaluation:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention sponsored a 1-year evaluation of Washington, DC – based MOST clubs in five high schools with primarily African American youth (Hawkins, 2005). This non-experimental evaluation found that, after participating in the 16-week curriculum, MOST club members were more likely to report a willingness to intervene in the inappropriate touching of a female peer, in the behavior of a good friend or popular peer, and when a male peer is being called names. Qualitative data suggests that MOST club participants felt they gained an understanding of what steps they could take to prevent or intervene in violence against women, and felt they had the capacity to be role models in this regard. Additional information about this program can be found at: www.mencanstoprape.org.

Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP – A program of Northeastern University’s Center for the Study of Sport in Society).

Program description:

MVP, a program developed by Jackson Katz (1995), engages male and female athletes and leaders among high school and college student populations. The central goals of the program are to empower young people to speak out against and intervene in harassment and other forms of abusive treatment towards women, and to be peer leaders and mentors in anti-violence work. Goals for boys also include critically examining traditional masculinity and its link to multiple forms of violence and abuse. Educational sessions are led by both male and female facilitators, and are based on the *MVP Playbook*, a scenario-based manual that generates conversations about positive bystander behavior. Initial training consists of 12-14 hours over a two to three month period, followed by opportunities to participate in “Train the Trainer” sessions designed to increase participants’ abilities to facilitate similar conversations with younger audiences.

Program Evaluation:

A one-year, non-experimental evaluation of MVP was conducted during the 1999-2000 academic school year, and examined its implementation in 10 Massachusetts high schools (Ward, 2000). Pre and post-test survey results suggest that MVP participants significantly increased their knowledge of violence against women, reduced violence-supportive attitudes, and had heightened feelings of self-efficacy related to their ability to confront harassing or disrespectful conduct. Qualitative results suggest that student participants perceive a stronger ability to recognize disrespectful and abusive behavior in their environment, and a greater comfort speaking out against violence. Additionally, some students self-reported implementing bystander behaviors and intervening on behalf of friends or other students. Additional information about this program can be found at www.sportinsociety.org.

Beyond model programs: elements of effective educational approaches to prevention

The vast majority of evaluated approaches to sexual violence prevention, including those summarized above, rely heavily on an educational presentation format. Given this, considerable data has accumulated about aspects of educational prevention programming that are most associated with changes in attitudes, beliefs and knowledge among participants. To date, evaluated prevention programs largely aim for individual-level change in attitudes, beliefs and behaviors (Lonsway, 1996), and have been designed almost exclusively for college-age audiences (Anderson & Whiston, 2005). Thus, although we can speculate that critical elements of college-based community education may apply elsewhere, this has not been as extensively studied.

Educational intervention content typically includes segments addressing knowledge about sexual assault, rape myths (pervasive but false beliefs that excuse rape under certain circumstances, such as if a woman has ‘led someone on’), victim empathy, discussions of gender-role socialization, encouragement for intervening in sexist or potentially abusive behavior among peers, and information about respectful communication and sexual consent (Berkowitz, 2002; Davis & Liddell, 2002; Gidycz, Rich, & Marioni, 2002; Schewe, 2002). Meta-analyses of prevention studies show that on average, prevention program participants evidence more positive change in rape-related attitudes, behavioral intent and knowledge than individuals who have not been exposed to prevention content (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Brecklin & Forde, 2001). Elements of effective educational programming are summarized below.

Programs that employ interactive techniques are more effective than didactic formats.

Educational formats that engage audience participation and critical thinking evidence more attitudinal change among participants than strictly lecture-based programming (Heppner, Humphrey, Hillenbrand-Gunn, & DeBord, 1995). Factors likely to contribute to engagement and interaction include personal relevance of information or presenters, and opportunities to critically evaluate and discuss the content of the presentation (e.g. Heppner, Neville, Smith, Kivlighan, & Gershuny, 1999). In a study of the most effective elements of high school based educational programming among rape crisis centers in Illinois, Schewe and colleagues found that games, quizzes and survivor panels were more effective interactive techniques than the use of videos or drama (Schewe, n.d).

Interventions that are multi-session over longer periods of time are more effective than one-time programs or programs with limited sessions.

Consistent reviews document that interventions that occur over a longer period of time and that involve multiple sessions are more successful than one-time or shorter duration programs at sparking longer-term attitudinal change (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Brecklin & Forde, 2001). One-time only presentations are unlikely to spark any measurable shifts in attitudes that last beyond 4-6 weeks. Evidence also suggests, however, that in multi-session high school curricula,

shorter individual sessions are more associated with attitude change than longer (multiple hour) sessions (Schewe, 2002).

Educational curricula that use localized sexual assault information and statistics, and culturally-specific information are more effective than more generalized programming.

In the only culturally-specific sexual assault prevention programs to be formally evaluated, Heppner and colleagues (1999) found that an intervention condition with material customized for African American men demonstrated greater engagement and interest among African American participants than did generic presentation content. The use of information and statistics relevant to the local community in which educational programming is implemented is more associated with positive attitude change among participants than more generalized sexual assault content (Schewe, 2002).

Depending on the goals of the programming, interventions for single-gender audiences are more effective than mixed-gender approaches.

Consensus is building that, for many prevention outcomes, single-gender audiences are a more effective prevention approach than mixed-gender audiences. For example, a recent meta-analysis of rape education programs for college populations found that men in male-only prevention programs reported more positive attitude change than males in mixed-gender interventions (Brecklin & Forde, 2001). Additionally, a 1996 study suggested that an intervention for an exclusively male audience resulted in greater attitudinal impact for male participants than the same content presented in mixed-gender formats (Earle, 1996). In a review of sexual violence prevention interventions to date, Gidycz and colleagues conclude that “currently no prevention program for mixed-sex audiences has demonstrated long-term and significant attitude or behavior change among the program participants” (2002 pg. 241). It is important to note, however, that these findings are not universally endorsed (e.g. Anderson & Whiston, 2005). It may be that single-gender audiences may be a more appropriate approach when the intended outcomes of the intervention center around shifting rape-supportive norms or engaging men as allies than when outcomes are focused on general sexual assault knowledge and awareness.

Researchers and sexual violence interventionists have speculated that male-only prevention programs may be more efficacious for attitude change among male participants because they provide an atmosphere that is conducive to open, honest discussion and exploration among men. Noting that sexual violence prevention content can raise defensiveness among male participants, Berkowitz (2002) argues that all-male groups provide an opportunity for men to surface a range of attitudes and opinions about sex, violence and women that they might not feel comfortable raising in the presence of women. All-male prevention programs may also create the opportunity for men to challenge one another’s beliefs and attitudes without fear of disapproval from female audience members, and carry the benefit of protecting female participants and survivors of sexual violence from further exposure to rape-supportive or victim-blaming beliefs that men may express (Berkowitz, 2002; Schewe, 2002). Finally, male-only groups support the message that men are responsible for ending sexual violence and such approaches avoid placing responsibility on women and victims to stop sexual assaults

(Berkowitz, 2002; Lonsway, 1996). Thus, agreement is emerging among researchers based on available evidence that primary sexual violence prevention programs aimed at changing individual men's attitudes and behaviors are more effectively done with male-only audiences (Berkowitz, 2002; Gidycz et al., 2002; Lonsway, 1996). Data on female-only programming is summarized later in this report.

Including content on rape myths, gender-role socialization, aspects of healthy relationships and resources for survivors are likely to contribute to successful knowledge and attitude change among participants.

The preponderance of evidence indicates that content that specifically identifies and challenges rape supportive norms and attitudes is associated with positive attitude change among participants (see for review, Lonsway, 1996; Schewe, 2002). In addition, evidence suggests that content on healthy relationship skills, gender socialization and stereotypes, and resources for survivors are key ingredients of successful programming (e.g. Schewe, n.d.). Components that attempt to build empathy for sexual assault victims have produced mixed results, with some programs actually reducing empathic responses among participants. Programming aimed at building empathy for victims and survivors should therefore be used with extreme caution (Berg, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999).

Educational programs addressing rape-avoidance strategies.

A sub-group of sexual violence prevention programs target female-only audiences and focus on enhancing women and girls' skills at early detection of possible threat, and of avoiding rape in the context of potential assault. Similar to sexual violence prevention programming more generally, few programs have been rigorously evaluated and almost none have demonstrated a reduction in sexual victimizations among program participants (Ullman, 2007). Additionally, it appears that prevention content needs to be tailored for sub-groups of female participants, as women who have been previously victimized are both at greater risk of future sexual victimization and unlikely to benefit from universal prevention approaches (Hanson & Gidycz, 1993). Evidence related to effective prevention programming for women more generally and previously victimized women will be summarized, respectively, below. It should be noted that all rape-avoidance prevention education for female audiences should be premised on the belief that women do not invite or cause sexual violence, and that strategies are intended to enhance women's freedom and safety rather than to restrict it.

Universal rape-avoidance strategies:

The preponderance of evidence suggests that active, assertive and forceful resistance (including yelling, pushing, fighting and fleeing) to a threat of sexual violence is associated with reduced rape completion and no greater risk of physical injury (Ullman, 2007). Unsuccessful strategies include pleading and diplomacy (Ullman, 2007). Women's choice of self-protective tactics has been shown to depend upon their appraisal of the degree of threat, the social context surrounding the threat and the degree to which they had hoped to build relationship with the offender (Nurius,

Norris, Macy, & Huang, 2004; Nurius, Norris, Young, Graham, & Gaylord, 2000). Women are more likely to respond self-protectively when they are angrier, confer less self-blame and when they are less concerned about the reactions of others in the social context (Nurius et al., 2004). This suggests that universalized prevention programming aimed at rape-avoidance should attend not only to the physical and verbal skills needed to attempt to protect oneself, but should also address the social and cognitive factors influencing the degree to which women feel able to respond to threats of assault.

Unfortunately, no evaluated universal programs for female-only audiences have demonstrated a sustained reduction in sexual victimizations at follow-up (Ullman, 2007), although some have generated short-term gains in women's self-reported use of protective strategies (Gidycz, Rich, Orchowski, King, & Miller, 2006). Further, numerous authors suggest that universalized, non-gender specific prevention programming that attempts to change both women and men's attitudes and beliefs about rape may not be a useful endeavor for female participants, who could benefit more from specific violence-avoidance training (Rozee & Koss, 2001; Ullman, 2002). Rozee and Koss (2001) suggest that assault-avoidance programming should build on Nurius and Norris' (1996) Assess, Acknowledge and Act (AAA) model, in which curriculum provides information that allows women to 1) accurately assess a potential threat, 2) acknowledge that threat even in the presence of other social or emotional concerns or goals, and 3) act on the threat assertively (or aggressively, if need be). Unfortunately, no widely-available, formalized curricula incorporate this model, although its principles could be woven into existing programming for women.

Programs for previously victimized female participants:

Women who have experienced prior sexual abuse are at 1.5 to 2.5 times greater risk for rape than women who have not been victimized (e.g. Arata, 2002). Research on re-victimization indicates that greater levels of traumatic impact from an early assault may result in active post-traumatic stress symptoms and strong feelings of powerlessness (low self-efficacy), two of the most formidable barriers to self-protection in the face of a sexual threat (Marx, Calhoun, Wilson, & Meyerson, 2001; Casey & Nurius, 2005). Studies also demonstrate that although previously victimized women are as skilled as others at identifying cues that someone might pose a threat, they tend to take longer to act on those cues and to employ self-protective strategies (Arata, 2002). This suggests that more practice and skill-building around the specific behaviors associated with leaving a dangerous situation may be helpful for women with earlier victimizations. Specifically, research suggests that programming for previous victims should be done in groups consisting solely of survivors, occur after or in concert with psychological treatment aimed at reducing trauma symptoms, and allow participants to problem-solve and practice responding assertively and even physically to a sexually coercive scenario (Marx et al., 2001; Ullman, 2002) In a successful intervention designed specifically for survivors of sexual assault (Marx et al., 2001), participants are asked to consider their own personal risk factors for sexual victimization. In addition to reviewing common sexual assault red flags and risks, women are asked to think about their own lives and identify the risks that may be most relevant to them. Participants can then role play how they might respond if one of these factors becomes associated with a safety threat. Unfortunately, this intervention program has not been manualized or made widely available, although its central concepts could be other programs.

Limitations of educational prevention programming

While encouraging gains have been made in designing prevention approaches that carry the potential to reduce rape-supportive beliefs among individual participants, it should be noted that these strategies carry serious limitations. Across many studies, shifts in sexual-assault related attitudes tend to be short-term, and to rebound to pre-intervention levels after relatively brief follow-up periods of weeks or months (Davis & Liddell, 2002; Gilbert, Heesacker, & Gannon, 1991; Heppner et al., 1995). Further, virtually no existing prevention programs have a demonstrated impact on the incidence of sexual assault itself. Only one evaluated program, the Safe Dates curriculum summarized above, has been associated with decreases in sexually aggressive behavior, and only one study has shown a reduction in rates of victimization among female participants at follow-up (Marx et al., 2001). Finally, almost no culturally-specific prevention programming has been evaluated, seriously limiting the generalizability of findings outside of Anglo-American audiences. Thus, while prevention interventions that rely solely on educational components may carry benefits in terms of gains in knowledge about sexual assault, visibility of resources and services and short-term changes in rape-related attitudes, they appear to have limited impact on long-term shifts in rape-related attitudes and norms, or on rates of sexual victimization.

PART II

Community Mobilization as a sexual violence prevention strategy

Given the circumscribed success of existing sexual violence prevention programs, the field has begun to explore more comprehensive approaches to prevention intervention. Accumulated research suggests that risk factors for sexual violence perpetration exist not only at the individual attitudinal level targeted by many current programs, but also at family, peer, community and societal levels (Heise, 1998). Reducing this risk likely requires commensurate preventative attention to macro-level contributors to violence. This recognition has prompted a move toward more comprehensive, community-involved conceptualizations of sexual violence prevention that seek to impact larger supports for aggressive behavior.

Among the strategies that have emerged in this regard is a community mobilization approach to sexual violence prevention and intervention. Typically defined as engaging community members in an effort to mobilize resources, build community capacity to respond to and prevent violence and to change community norms, community mobilization is a strategy that has become increasingly more common in violence prevention endeavors. The terms community mobilizing and community organizing connote similar key features; community involvement, community empowerment and capacity building (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2002) and thus, the terms “community mobilizing” and “community organizing” will be used interchangeably here. Although not formally tested in the sexual violence arena, community mobilizing strategies have demonstrated effectiveness in HIV prevention (Hays, Rebhook, & Kegeles, 2003), and drunk driving prevention (Wagenaar, Murray, & Toomey, 2000). Further, community-based strategies carry the inherent potential to be tailored to the needs and norms of specific communities, and thus to be culturally relevant and accessible (Trickett, 2002; Tseng et al., 2002).

Calls for community-based prevention. Several prominent groups have called for or conceptualized sexual violence prevention in terms of a community-based approach. Most prominently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a 2004 document entitled “Sexual Violence Prevention: Beginning the Dialogue” in which it argued for an ecological approach to sexual assault prevention programming. The result of work by a national panel of sexual violence prevention experts, this document suggests that effective prevention must occur at multiple levels simultaneously (i.e. individual, family, community, society) with a particular focus on community-based efforts to change the social norms and environments that support aggressive behavior.

In 2006, the nationally recognized Prevention Institute, in partnership with the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, released “Sexual Violence and the Spectrum of Prevention: Towards a Community Solution,” a document calling for community involvement in rape prevention work. The “Spectrum of Prevention” is a Prevention Institute model comprised of simultaneous, mutually reinforcing prevention activities at individual, community and societal levels that has been applied successfully in arenas such as youth violence (Davis, Parks, & Cohen, 2006).

Finally, individual states have turned towards community-based approaches to sexual violence prevention. After an extensive review of sexual violence prevention research and community development literature, the State of Washington adopted a community development approach as a component of the sexual violence prevention activities it supports. As a result of state-wide implementation in the late 1990's, all Washington State Community Sexual Assault Programs receiving pass-through Rape Prevention and Education funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are required to incorporate community engagement into sexual violence prevention activities. Similarly, after a year-long review process supported by the Oregon Department of Human Services and the Oregon Attorney General's Office, a cross-state task force issued a report outlining recommendations for future sexual violence prevention activities in the State of Oregon (Oregon Department of Human Services, 2006). Central to the task force's recommendations are adoption of the ecological model promoted by the CDC, and a particular focus on community engagement and culturally-specific community-based prevention.

Limitations and cautions: Although numerous groups have called for involving communities in the process of creating anti-violence social change, no rigorous evaluations of these approaches exist specifically in relation to sexual violence. Further, although abundant literature exists conceptualizing prevention more generally in community mobilizing terms, a small but growing number of studies empirically demonstrate the effectiveness of community organizing prevention strategies in other fields, and even fewer speak to the success of community mobilizing in traditionally underserved communities. Practitioners considering a community mobilization approach should be aware of both the emerging promise of this strategy and the limited empirical evidence available to date of its utility in relation to sexual violence.

Critical elements of community mobilization strategies

Evidence from neighboring prevention fields suggests the potential efficacy of community-involved prevention strategies, and community mobilization strategies have existed in fields such as HIV and substance abuse long enough to offer guidelines regarding critical elements of successful mobilizing efforts. Sexual violence prevention efforts could benefit from the adoption or adaptation of these critical components. This report summarizes commonly identified critical components of community mobilization prevention strategies emerging from fields including but not limited to HIV prevention, substance abuse and drunk driving prevention, and youth violence, delinquency and pregnancy prevention.

Community mobilization inherently involves community engagement and partnership – universally-identified key components to success.

Community mobilization strategies are premised on the idea that sustainable change is contingent upon the participation and commitment of community members themselves to the design and implementation of change strategies (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2002; Thompson & Kinne, 1990; Tseng et al., 2002). By involving community members as partners in pinpointing

issues for change and identifying strategies to address those issues, interventions are assured of relevance to the needs and realities of the community itself. Community engagement often takes the form of recruiting community members to participate in needs assessments, convening advisory boards comprised of multiple constituencies within a community, empowering community members to carry out chosen intervention strategies and evaluation endeavors, and recruiting community members to occupy leadership positions within the prevention effort (Minkler & Wallerstein). Genuine community partnerships have been associated with the sustainability of prevention efforts following the end of formal support (Bowen, Gwiasda, & Brown, 2004; Fernandez et al., 2003).

Bowen and colleagues (2004) provide an example of the impact of community engagement in an evaluated effort to prevent community violence. They demonstrated that mobilizing geographically delineated communities created lasting partnerships between different sectors within neighborhoods, and sparked measurable reductions in incidents of violence. Steps in this multi-site intervention included coalition-building among residents and diverse representatives of multiple community systems, conducting a collaborative needs assessment, and jointly developing an implementation plan informed by residents and the findings of community assessments. In this project, formal coalition structures persisted in 7 of the 8 sites after the cessation of formal funding, and sites posted successes including improvements in physical environments, creation of new resources, active engagement of large numbers of residents, and reductions in local homicide rates. While this particular organizing approach was not tested in a randomized trial, its apparent efficacy in generating new community structures signals its potential utility in other settings and with other social issues.

A second example of community engagement and partnership comes from cancer prevention literature. In a two-year project aimed at increasing cancer awareness and behaviors associated with cancer prevention among African American communities, Blumenthal and colleagues (2005) developed a community-based intervention that relied on partnerships with constituents within two large African American communities. This project assembled advisory committees comprised of African American church leaders, business owners and community leaders who then designed and implemented the dissemination of health messages through community-relevant channels such as historically Black colleges, African American community events, informal social networks and health practitioners with high African American patient loads. An evaluation of the program found that African Americans in intervention communities accessed significantly higher rates of cancer screening services than those living in comparison communities.

Community mobilization should be undertaken with the unique context of the community in mind; efforts should have a demonstrated consistency with cultural norms and expectations and with an understanding of the history and needs of a community.

Literature on effective community-based programming consistently indicates that community mobilization must involve a holistic analysis of the array of community factors contributing to or impacting a particular “problem” (Felner, Felner, & Silverman, 2000; Trickett, 2002; Wingood & DiClemente, 2002) as well as factors such as the community’s historical relationship to the problem and to the interventionists, researchers and “helpers” who have sought to address the issue in the past (Tseng et al., 2002). Inherent here is attention to a community’s framing of the

issue, language used to talk about the issue and beliefs about appropriate solutions (Marin, 2003; Nation et al., 2003). Contextualized prevention is particularly important for the issue of sexual violence, around which attitudes, norms and beliefs about sex, women and relationships are deeply culturally embedded, and vary among religious, ethnic and community groups (Fontes, 1995). Clearly, a contextualized approach to prevention cannot occur without engaging community members as partners and identifying their beliefs about the causes of, contributors to, and likely solutions for sexual violence.

Evidence from successful community mobilization initiatives also suggests that intensive pre-intervention ethnography and needs assessment is critical to designing programming that is relevant to the unique context of each community (Kelly, 2005; Lai, 2005). To increase effectiveness and relevance, practitioners suggest engaging highly bounded, specified communities rather than large, vaguely delimited communities (Marin, 2003; Rogers, 2000; Trickett, 2002; Wingood & DiClemente, 2002). For example, prevention programming might engage a specific migrant worker immigrant community in a particular geographic region rather than attempting to develop approaches for all migrant worker groups. Tailoring preventions for smaller communities allows for greater adaptation and relevance to the particular concerns and structural issues surrounding the central “problem.”

Marin (2003) provides an example of culturally-relevant, contextualized HIV prevention programming for “high risk” Latina women. Based on extensive interviews with community members, the intervention incorporated language and idioms used by community members, content on the external and structural barriers to safe sex behavior perceived by participants, and attention to the context of discrimination or stigma in which program participants live. Taking the form of small group educational and support sessions 3-4 hours in duration, the intervention successfully reduced STD rates among attendees to a significantly greater extent than did a control condition (Marin, 2003).

Multi-component community mobilizing efforts (and prevention efforts more generally) are more successful than single-component programs. Programs that target multiple levels (i.e. individuals and communities) for change are more successful than interventions operating at only one level.

In their extensive review of characteristics of effective prevention interventions (including community-based strategies), Nation and colleagues (2003) identified “comprehensiveness” as the most commonly present component in successful programs. This conclusion echoes nearly every review of effective prevention and community mobilization (e.g. Sallis & Owen, 2002; Wandersman & Florin, 2003). Comprehensiveness consists of two components: first, implementing two or more change strategies that address different levels of risk simultaneously (Jason et al., 2002; McKinlay & Marceau, 2000; Wandersman & Florin, 2003). Change at one level (i.e. in individual behavior) is theorized to be better supported by shifts in the peer or community environments surrounding the individual. Second, comprehensiveness implies the inclusion of multiple strategies targeting the same outcome for change. An example might be launching both educational presentations and a poster campaign that aim to reduce rape-supportive attitudes. Recent conceptualizations of sexual violence prevention by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (*Sexual Violence Prevention: Beginning the Dialogue, 2004*) and the Prevention Institute (*Sexual Violence and the Spectrum of Prevention: Towards a*

Community Solution, 2006) have called for a multi-level approach with simultaneous strategies at micro, mezzo and macro levels.

An example of successful comprehensive, community-based programming is the HIV prevention intervention entitled the Mpowerment project. Designated by the Centers for Disease Control as a “model” HIV prevention program, this intervention successfully reduced rates of unsafe sexual behavior and HIV transmission among young gay men (Hays et al., 2003). The Mpowerment project included both multiple community-level strategies, such as engaging members of local gay communities and developing advisory boards of community members and health system representatives, as well as several peer and individual-level tactics such as small discussion and psycho-educational groups. By including activities at both of these levels, individual changes in attitudes or behavior were reflected and supported in small groups, peer networks and by evidence of commitment from gay communities more generally.

Community-based prevention and prevention efforts more generally are more effective when they are informed by a clear theoretical rationale.

A strong theoretical rationale is an inherent element of most reviewed community prevention frameworks (Felner et al., 2000; Marin, 2003). Premising prevention programming in clearly delineated theory involves both connecting prevention activities to theory about the causes or origins of the problem as well as to theory regarding the mechanisms through which attitudinal, behavioral or community change is expected to occur. For sexual violence, this means grounding mobilizing efforts in both a clear theoretical understanding of why sexual assault is happening in a particular community, and in how chosen strategies are anticipated to generate shifts in beliefs or behaviors. To date, critiques of existing sexual violence prevention intervention often point to a lack of underlying theoretical grounding as a potential reason for their limited efficacy (eg. Gidycz et. al., 2002).

The Teen Action Research Project (Schensul, 1998) is an example of a theory-driven, community based intervention. Informed by social learning theory, which focuses on behavior change through modeling and increasing individuals’ self-efficacy to perform new behaviors, this project developed relationships with and recruited “at risk youth” who were then trained in a problem-solving, critical theory-based substance abuse prevention curriculum. Youth were then supported in developing a similar theory-based project in their own neighborhoods, where they modeled pro-social behaviors and engagement. Evaluation data suggests that participating youth had reduced school drop-out and gang-affiliation rates. Further, qualitative data indicated an improvement in relationships between youth and institutions in their neighborhoods.

Community mobilization efforts should incorporate a focus on fostering community strengths and capacity in addition to addressing risk factors for sexual violence.

Finally, many discussions of community-based prevention approaches highlight the importance of enhancing community strengths and opportunities for positive interactions between members as a critical element of success. (Nation et al., 2003; Shoveller, Johnson, Savoy, & Wia Peitersma, 2006; Tseng et al., 2002; i.e. Wandersman & Florin, 2003). Tseng (2003) advocates for a focus on “promotion” rather than prevention, suggesting that social change involves not only the alleviation of problems, but also the enrichment of the well-being of community

members. Further, positive shifts in attitudes and behaviors are more likely to be sustained in environments characterized by social support, by positive role modeling, and by opportunities to participate meaningfully in pro-social activities and goals (Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbott, & Hill, 1999). For sexual violence prevention, this likely involves providing youth with mentorship and modeling regarding healthy relationships and interaction, offering community members meaningful and positive ways to become involved in anti-violence work, and expanding opportunities for collaborative and respectful interactions between men and women in the community.

A sexual assault-specific program provides a good example of capacity-building prevention. Banyard and colleagues (2007) developed and tested a bystander approach to sexual violence prevention in which college students were trained to recognize potentially problematic situations as they were developing, and to safely intervene in disrespectful or possibly sexually coercive interactions. Students were also trained to respond appropriately to disclosures of sexual victimization. Evaluation results at 4 and 12 months found that students receiving this training reported sustained reductions in rape-supportive attitudes and beliefs, and significant increases in positive bystander behavior when compared with control condition students.

Conclusion

It bears re-stating that knowledge-building related to sexual violence prevention is in its early phases. Although evidence is accumulating regarding aspects of effective prevention, few prevention programs in their totality have proven to have long-term impacts on rape-related norms and beliefs, and only one has demonstrated an ability to reduce sexually aggressive behavior. Further, existing tested-effective and promising programs do not center solely on sexual violence, but may impact sexual-assault related outcomes in their focus on issues such as healthy relationships, harassment and bullying, and fostering the development of community role-models and mentors.

Given the formative state of sexual violence prevention, effective programs are likely to be those that a) adopt some or all of existing, tested or promising programming, b) incorporate elements of community education-based approaches highlighted by literature as contributing to longer-term attitudinal and knowledge change, or c) utilize a carefully constructed community mobilization approach. Community mobilization efforts that have evidence of community partnership and buy-in, a grounding in the local realities and context of the community, multiple components and strategies, a clear theoretical rationale, and an element of fostering strengths and positive relationships are more likely to achieve positive outcomes than efforts lacking some or all of these critical elements. Further, it is critical for sexual violence prevention or community mobilizing efforts to identify their intended outcomes, and to link activities to those outcomes. On-going evaluation of community-based efforts to end sexual violence will continue to add to the emerging knowledge base of effective practice, and will add to our ability to design relevant, successful prevention programs.

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