Preventing Violence Against Women: Progress and Challenges

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RÉSUMÉ

Le discours et les pratiques entourant la prévention de la criminalité tendent à ne faire aucune distinction selon le sexe. De plus, les programmes traditionnels de prévention et les initiatives dans le domaine se sont développés indépendamment des efforts relatifs à la prévention des crimes violents qui affectent les femmes de façon disproportionnée. C'est alors que des distinctions ont été apportées en la matière : *la violence contre les femmes* comprend la violence contre les conjointes et vise principalement à améliorer le système de justice pénale ainsi que les services sociaux qui viennent en aide aux victimes; *la sécurité des femmes* se concentre sur la prévention de la violence dans les endroits publics, où les agresseurs sont principalement des étrangers (Shaw et Andrew 2005). Les efforts pour prévenir la violence faite aux femmes sont aussi affectés par l'absence de consensus aux niveaux culturel et social concernant la définition de ce que constitue un acte de violence, les torts causés aux victimes et la responsabilité de cette dernière. Les normes culturelles ont créé un climat où ces crimes sont trop souvent tolérés, rendant la prévention particulièrement difficile. Une approche intégrée qui viserait les institutions sociales, les valeurs culturelles, le changement des attitudes des individus, le soutien pour la victime et les différences entre les sexes est nécessaire.

ABSTRACT

The discourse and practice of crime prevention has tended to be gender neutral, and traditional crime prevention programs and initiatives have

developed independent of efforts to prevent those violent crimes which affect women disproportionately. Divisions have evolved within this broad field: *violence against women* deals with intimate partner violence and focuses primarily on improving criminal justice and social service supports for victims, while *women's safety* has focused on the prevention of violence in public places, primarily by strangers (Shaw and Andrew 2005). Efforts to prevent violence against women are also affected by a lack of agreement at the social and cultural levels about what constitutes these acts of violence, the level of harm to victims, and victims' blameworthiness. Cultural norms create a climate where these crimes are often tolerated, making prevention especially difficult. Comprehensive strategies are needed that incorporate social institutions, cultural norms, attitudinal change at the individual level, supports for victims, and a gender perspective.

Introduction

Crime prevention discourse and practice has tended not to incorporate a gender perspective. Efforts to prevent violence against women have evolved separately and remain outside traditional crime prevention work. For the most part, crime prevention initiatives have grown out of police practices while prevention of violence against women has had a different genesis. It was grassroots feminist organizations who first identified domestic violence, sexual assault and sexual harassment as social problems, and to develop rape prevention initiatives, shelters and other supports for victims.

Two separate streams of activity have evolved in this area: (1) violence against women and (2) women's safety in urban spaces (Shaw and Andrew 2005; Shaw and Capobianco 2004). **Violence against women** deals primarily with violence committed by intimate partners and focuses on the provision of supports for victims and improving the justice system responses through training of police and prosecutors, specialized courts, and treatment for offenders. **Women's safety** focuses on the prevention of violence in public places, primarily by strangers. There is an emphasis on audits of the local environment and on using the results of these audits to design situational or environmental crime prevention activities such as improved lighting, urban design and transportation.

The primary focus of efforts to respond to and prevent intimate partner violence has been to expand social service supports to improve the safety of victims and strengthen criminal and civil justice responses. Mandatory charging and prosecution policies, specialized domestic violence courts and treatment programs for violent men are part of a strategy to hold offenders accountable, prevent a repeat of the violence, and demonstrate that partner violence will be dealt with swiftly and seriously. The criminal justice system is an essential resource for victims of violence; however, there are limits as to what the justice system can reasonably be expected to accomplish. First, the criminal justice system cannot respond to the majority of incidents of partner violence or sexual violence because they do not come to police attention, and offenders who are brought before the criminal justice system are least amenable to change due to a history of violence (Johnson 2006: 57). Second, the effectiveness of charging and prosecution policies and batterers' treatment programs in stopping partner violence has not been demonstrated conclusively and may even result in increased violence in some cases (Maxwell, Garner, and Fagan 2001; Gondolf 2002). Third, no-drop policies are problematic for many abused women who may support mandatory charging but not necessarily mandatory prosecution (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group 2002). Important questions have been raised about the potential for these policies to disempower victims by removing control of the situation from them once a report is made to police (Snider 1998).

While law enforcement is an important component of an effective societal-level response to preventing violence against women, legal controls and sanctions are not sufficient. Greater emphasis is needed on preventing violence before it starts. A collateral benefit of primary prevention work will be to strengthen the response of the criminal justice system. Studies have shown that the effectiveness of formal legal sanctions can be improved when informal social controls against the use of violence are strengthened and that legal sanctions are weakened when informal controls are weak (Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group 2002). The aim of this article is to identify appropriate targets for strategies to prevent violence against women, some of the obstacles to successful prevention, and elements of effective prevention strategies.

Risk factors for violence

Theories of crime prevention emphasize the importance of identifying and addressing factors that raise the risk of violence perpetration and victimization, as well as those that help protect against violent behaviour and victimization. In the field of violence against women, the availability of reliable data with which to assess risk and protective factors has grown significantly over the past two decades. Victimization surveys, longitudinal studies and smaller localized studies provide researchers and practitioners with a solid scientific base to plan prevention strategies. Table 1 summarizes the evidence about risk factors for sexual assault and intimate partner violence at the level of the

individual, interpersonal relationships, the community and society. A thorough understanding of risk factors is important for knowing how to intervene, for example, by promoting individual-level attitudinal change, addressing community-level norms tolerant of violence, and patriarchal structures within families. Other correlates of violence, such as the age of victims and the relationship between victims and offenders, can help with the development of program content and help focus initiatives on specific populations.

Table 1: Risk factors for sexual assault and intimate partner violence

	Individual	Relationship	Community	Society
Sexual assault	• Attitudes and beliefs supportive of sexual violence • History of physical or sexual abuse • Impulsive and antisocial behaviour • Alcohol and drug abuse	• Association with sexually aggressive peers • Witnessing family violence • Strongly patriarchal family environment	• Norms that tolerate sexual violence • Few supports for victims	• Laws and practices that support gender inequality • Low prosecution of offenders
Intimate partner violence	• Use of emotional abuse and control • Alcohol abuse • Witnessing or experiencing violence in childhood	• Economic stress • Use of violence outside the home • Male dominance in the family	• Norms supportive of strict gender roles • Norms supportive of violence against women • Few supports for victims	• Laws and practices that support gender inequality • Low prosecution of offenders

Sources: Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, and Lozano 2002; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2004.

Naming the problem

Researchers and practitioners now have a base of knowledge about the causal and contextual factors that contribute to the perpetration of violence against women and an apparent high level of commitment from governments, legal and social institutions to reduce this violence. Yet the problem persists. Why? Wolfe and Jaffe (2001: 283), researcher/practitioners who have been at the forefront of the development of violence prevention initiatives for women and children in Canada, argue that despite good evidence of risk factors and contexts in which violence occurs, the major underlying causes, such as abuse

of power, inequality and modeling of violence in the home, remained poorly understood by the public and largely unchanged.

In order to prevent a problem it must be clearly named and understood at the societal level. A problem that has plagued prevention efforts is the inability to achieve consensus about what behaviours constitute violence. Women in Canada and elsewhere experience violence against a backdrop of ambiguous cultural norms surrounding definitions of violence, the level of harm to victims, victims' blameworthiness, and the importance of gender in understanding the dynamics of violence and the social context and cultural supports for it. All of this makes prevention of these crimes especially challenging. Recently, in Canada, the naming of intimate partner violence by the federal government has shifted to *family violence* which broadens the focus to include violence perpetrated by both women and men against intimate partners, as well as child abuse and the effects of intimate partner violence on children. This re-naming obscures gender as the basis of understanding intimate partner violence, power imbalances in families, cultural and structural supports for gendered power relationships, and women as the primary victims of partner violence.

The federal government's Family Violence Initiative employs a very broad definition of *family violence*; it includes physical, sexual or psychological abuse, physical or emotional neglect and can occur in relationships of kinship, intimacy, dependency or trust. In 2002, Ekos Research was commissioned to study public attitudes towards family violence to determine the level of public understanding and awareness. The results illustrate a lack of consensus among Canadians as to what is included under a definition of family violence. Just 76% considered violence by dating partners to be family violence, 73% included extended family members, 85% immediate family members, and 86% included teenage or adult child toward their parent. When thinking about violence in the immediate family, just 67% included violence between spouses. Women were more likely than men to include all of the relationship categories in their understanding of family violence. There was also a lack of consensus about the behaviours that should be considered family violence: a relatively low percentage were willing to 'always' include pushing, grabbing or shoving, throwing, smashing, hitting, kicking things or hurting pets, kicking, biting or hitting with a fist. There is also a lack of clear understanding of the risk factors: just 59% agreed with the statement "I think someone who insults and humiliates other family members is likely to move to slapping and punching later on." Two decades of research into the causes and correlates of intimate partner violence have consistently identified emotional abuse and controlling behaviours by intimate partners as among the most important

risk factors (Ekos Research Associates 2002; Heise 1998; Johnson, Ollus, and Nevala 2007).

In a recent Australian study assessing community attitudes toward violence against women as opposed to *family violence*, gender differences were found as to the types of behaviours that are considered to be violent (Taylor and Mouzos 2006). Women were more likely than men to include slapping or pushing, throwing or smashing objects, yelling abuse, preventing partner from having contact with family and friends, controlling partner by denying them access to money, stalking and harassment by email. Women were also more likely than men to consider each act as 'serious'. Differences in perceptions of what constitutes violence were also shown among ethnic groups. Members of minority groups were less likely than other Australians to consider certain behaviours to be violence. Among nine countries participating in the International Violence Against Women Survey, the percentage of women who considered their experiences of physical or sexual violence by a current intimate partner to be a crime was less than one-third in all countries (Figure 1). The percentage of victims who considered violent episodes to constitute a crime was higher in the case of stranger attacks in most countries suggesting that the context and degree of intimacy with the offender is important in how victims will evaluate their experiences. The variation among countries suggests that there are sociocultural influences at play in defining intimate partner violence as a crime.

Feminist researchers have argued convincingly for a definition of violence against women that is broad enough to include everyday types of behaviours that affect women's sense of their integrity and safety. Behaviours such as sexual harassment, which are demeaning and threatening, need to be acknowledged as part of the problem, just as the harms associated with bullying have been acknowledged and incorporated into aspects of more general anti-violence programs. Sexual harassment is frequently trivialized and female victims are encouraged to dismiss it as a 'joke'. Yet it can have profound effects of women's feelings of safety and can affect their ability to reject other more serious forms of violence directed at them by boys and men (Berman, Straatman, Hunt, Izumi, and MacQuarrie 2002; Kelly 1988). Sexual harassment is a common occurrence for women. The 1993 Violence Against Women Survey estimates that 39% of women had been sexually harassed by strangers or known men in the previous 12 month period, a figure that rises to 79% for women aged 18-24 (Johnson 1996). The refusal to acknowledge the significance of sexual harassment in the lives of girls and women provides tacit approval for other forms of violence to take place unchallenged (Rooney 1998 as cited in Berman et al. 2002).

Figure 1: Percentage of victims who considered the violent incident to be a crime
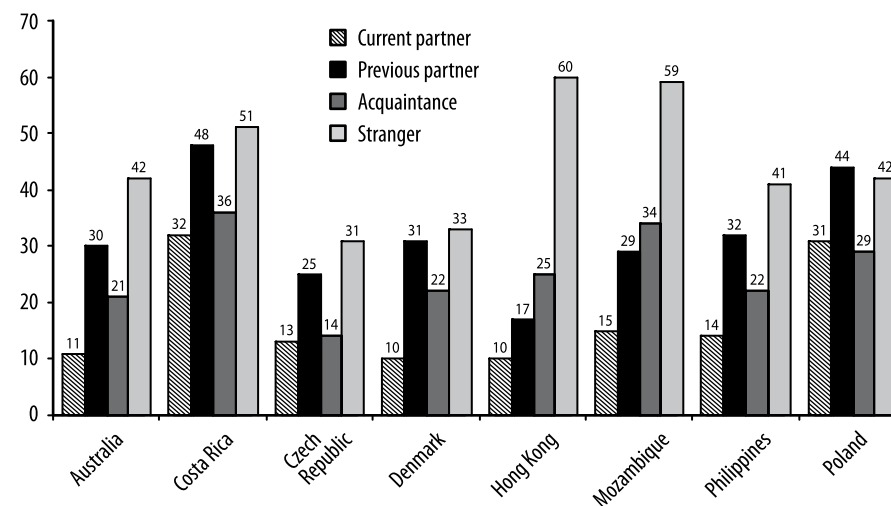
Source: International Violence Against Women Survey, Johnson et al. 2007.

Naming the problem also involves making the gendered nature of violence against women and girls apparent. Many anti-violence initiatives shy away from addressing the gender dynamics underlying violence, due to the complexity of the problem and social myths (Haskell 2000 as cited in Wolfe, Randall, and Straatman 2002). A strategy to end abuse in the lives of women and girls requires an understanding of the social context and cultural supports for it, and must address gender-based social scripts and inequalities.

Swimming against the tide: Attitudes and beliefs

Important risk factors for the perpetration of violence against women include violence-tolerant attitudes and beliefs at the level of individuals, communities and the broader society. Research finds that a substantial proportion of the population holds beliefs supportive of myths and stereotypes about women and violence. Definitions of violence, attitudes and beliefs concerning violence against women, and beliefs in gender equality vary by gender, race/ethnicity and class (Taylor and Mouzos 2006). In the Australian study of community attitudes substantial proportions of the population were willing to excuse domestic violence under certain circumstances, and held negative views about women who report rape. Higher proportions of minority men held these views. For example, substantial proportions of the population agreed that:

- Domestic violence can be excused if it results from people getting so angry they temporarily lose control (23% overall, 44% of minority men).
- Domestic violence can be excused if the violent person genuinely regrets what they have done (24% overall, 57% of minority men).
- Women rarely make up false claims of being raped (23% disagree); and
- Rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex (38%).

Flood and Pease (2006) summarize the research literature on community attitudes regarding violence against women and conclude that attitudes are influenced by dominant social norms, are socially constructed in the socio-historical context of people's lives (which includes gender, age, race/ethnicity, class and sexuality) and can be shaped and altered by a new social consensus. Some research suggests that individual attitudes actually may be less important than the broader social context and social norms, and this is especially true for individuals who are emotionally invested in social groups with strong pro-violence norms. Cross-national studies suggest that sociocultural factors may be a stronger influence than gender on the development of attitudes toward violence against women in different countries (Nayak, Byrne, Martin, and Abraham 2003).

Flood and Pease (2006) summarize what is known about the formation of attitudes toward violence against women:

- People who support traditional gender roles are more likely to express violence-supportive attitudes. Men are more likely than women to hold both traditional views about gender roles and violence-supportive attitudes.
- Attitudes justifying violence against women are reflected in everyday social and family relations.
- Children who witness violence or are direct victims of violence are more likely to develop attitudes supportive of using violence to solve conflicts and this effect is greater for males than females.
- Violence-supportive attitudes are stronger among men who identify strongly with certain groups where norms of gender inequality and male power and toughness dominate, such as college fraternities, sports sub-cultures and the military.
- Rates of violence against women are highest in societies where masculinity equates with dominance, toughness and honour, there are rigid gender roles, and violence is condoned as a way to settle disputes.
- Exposure to pornography, especially frequent use, is related to violence-supportive attitudes.

- Television, music, film and advertising portraying women in narrow sexualized ways can also teach these attitudes.

The good news is that community education programs have produced positive change in attitudes associated with violence against women, and that criminal justice policies that strongly condemn violence against women can lead to the development of new social norms. On the other hand, men's rights groups and campaigns have negatively influenced community attitudes regarding the gender neutrality of intimate partner violence and have contributed to a belief that women make false accusations of partner violence or child abuse to gain advantage in divorce and custody proceedings (Flood and Pease 2006).

Attitudes are important not only for their link to the perpetration of violence: they are also significant in shaping the language used to describe and understand violence against women, societal and individual responses to violence, and responses of female victims (Flood and Pease 2006). Community norms play an important part in whether violence is tolerated and supports for victims are weak, or whether violence is sanctioned with a high level of disapproval toward offenders and adequate support for victims.

But are violence-supportive attitudes a good predictor of violent behaviour? Men are more likely to have perpetrated sexual assault or say they would commit rape in the future if they hold hostile and negative sexual attitudes toward women, hold rape-supportive beliefs, and identify with traditional images of masculinity and male privilege (Murnen, Wright, and Kaluzny 2002). Men who hold traditional, rigid and misogynistic gender-role attitudes are also more likely to be violent toward female partners. However, attitudes are only a partial explanation for behaviour, and there is a difference between implicit and explicit attitudes. Implicit attitudes are a more accurate representation of inner feelings than are explicit attitudes, but explicit attitudes are what gets measured on attitudes scales (Bassili and Brown 2005 as cited in Flood and Pease 2006). People can therefore hold explicit attitudes favouring gender equality and at the same time hold implicit biased attitudes. There can be an explicit condemnation of discrimination or violence toward women and at the same time an implicit approval of the social scripts, norms and gender roles that lead to violence (Vandello and Cohen 2003 as cited in Flood and Pease 2006). As a result, a decline in community tolerance for violence, as measured by attitude scales, will not necessarily be reflected in a decline in actual violence. The social context and situational factors all play a role, and attitudes intolerant of violence may be neutralized by situational factors, such as peer group pressures.

To assess changing support for gendered power relations in families, an Environics poll asked a sample of Canadians whether they agreed with the statement "The father of the family must be master in his own house". The percentage of Canadian adults who agreed with this statement was 26% in 1992 and dropped to 18% in 2000 (Adams 2003: 51). This indicator of changing attitudes toward gender equality coincided with a decline in spousal homicide rates over the same period. In a statistical analysis, Statistics Canada links other indicators of improved women's socio-economic status, such as increased labour force participation and education and reductions in age at first marriage and first child, with a decline in rates of spousal homicide in Canada over the past two decades (Pottie Bunge 2002). Interestingly, the same Environics polling question in the United States about patriarchal authority in families showed an *increase* in the percentage who agreed with this question, from 42% in 1992 to 49% in 2000, even though spousal assault and homicide rates also *declined* there (Catalano 2006). This suggests that while attitudes toward gender equality may be linked to attitudes supportive of violence against women, community-level attitudes concerning gender equality are not a sufficient explanation for the level of violence against women in North American society.

At what point to intervene?

According to Wolfe and Jaffe (2001: 285), anti-violence education is applicable to people of all ages, but the content and format of educational programs should vary at different points of development:

Infants and preschool children – Direct experiences of violence, through victimization or witnessing parental violence, are a significant risk factor for developing violent behaviours. Prevention efforts can include reducing the number of children who are exposed to violence, or intervening as quickly as possible with children in those situations. Also, home visitation programs by public health nurses should involve counselling regarding parent-child relationships, steps in healthy child development, parenting skills and reducing the isolation of young mothers.

School-age children – Prevention efforts can include raising awareness about cultural stereotypes and inequalities that foster relationship violence, increasing social and emotional competence, prosocial skills development, and promoting attitudes favourable to non-violence.

Adolescents – Efforts include engaging youth in discussions about the dynamics of abuse against intimate partners and responsibility and blame at a time when they are motivated to learn about intimate relationships.

Adults – Public awareness campaigns need to take into account the diversity of local communities, including gender, race and social class. They also need to offer practical advice about what the average person can do to help a friend, and what they can do in their communities.

Flood and Pease (2006) suggest a number of other settings and populations for intervention, including children who have witnessed or experienced violence; youth; boys' peer cultures; young men at risk or who are already using violence; organizations such as university colleges, sporting clubs, workplaces, and military institutions; religious institutions and leaders; mass media, including social marketing, news reporting, media literacy in schools, regulation of media content; the criminal justice system; medicine and health systems; community development and mobilization, ie., immigrant and refugee communities, Indigenous communities, rural communities, and low-socio-economic communities.

In sum, prevention efforts should involve every aspect of society, including community and neighbourhood forces, schools and peer groups, family processes, and individual strengths and weaknesses. All of these can influence violence and all should play a role in its prevention (Wolfe and Jaffe 2001: 286).

Elements of successful prevention programs

In contrast to the extensive evaluations of crime prevention programs for youth, notably in the United States, programs and initiatives aimed at preventing violence against women have received far less attention (Kruttschnitt, McLaughlin, and Petrie 2004). Some rape prevention programs have been evaluated and show effects on attitudes in terms of reducing adherence to rape myths and rape-supportive attitudes, and acquiring greater empathy for victims. However, these evaluations have tended to focus on immediate attitudinal change and have not included longer-term follow-up. The few evaluations that include a longer-term follow-up find some reduction in the initial positive results. Few assess whether there has been an impact on actual perpetration of sexual assault. In addition, evaluations of violence prevention programs tend to use inconsistent definitions of success and different sets of outcome measures (Schewe and Bennett 2002). More rigorous evaluations

of prevention strategies are needed in order to permit us to identify effective program elements and implementation principles.

Relationship violence prevention programs

In their prevention work, Wolfe, Jaffe, and Crooks (2006: 159) utilize a health promotion framework which goes beyond encouraging youth not to engage in violence and other risk behaviours, and builds on developing positive capacity and coping skills to help youth develop resiliency. This is a strategy that helps build competencies so that youth are better able to make healthy choices in a wide range of domains and will be better prepared to face difficult situations when they arise. These general competencies are paired with strategies to use in particular problem situations. Prevention with adolescents requires recognition of the gender-role stereotyping they typically face and the fact that notions of gender at this age tend to be very rigid. Adolescents generally lack a gendered understanding of the nature of partner violence.

Health promotion efforts to help youth avoid high-risk experimentation and learn healthy ways of coping with peer pressure are based on the following principles (Wolfe et al. 2006: 172):

- Be comprehensive: interventions need to target a range of behaviours and recognize the multiple contexts within which youths live (individual, family, peer, school and community circumstances).
- Be well-timed: information and skills are provided during mid-adolescence when youth are experiencing social, cognitive and physical change.
- Involve parents, teachers and schools and increase the connection between youth and these groups.
- Focus on skills, particularly social competence.
- Address communication and social competence in different areas.
- Focus on the importance of relationships to youth.
- Provide opportunities to develop assets rather than focusing on problems.
- Emphasize risk and harm reduction.
- Equip youth with the knowledge and skills to successfully negotiate situations.

A review of evaluations of school-based programs aimed at preventing violence against girls and young women suggests that effective programs are action-oriented, repeated throughout all stages of child development, link violence prevention to the school curriculum, engage the entire school community, and focus on creating a non-violent school climate (Alberta RESOLVE 2002). Programs that are embedded in school curricula report greater impacts on students' attitudes and norms over time compared with one-time or occasional workshops.

"The Fourth R" is a curriculum-based program for building healthy relationships that focuses on developing social skills and youth capacity (www.thefourthr.ca). The Fourth R is aimed at grade 9 students and has been incorporated into the curriculum of the Thames Valley District School Board in London, Ontario. It is a 21-lesson skill-based curriculum delivered by physical and health education teachers who receive specialized training. It is designed to promote healthy relationships and targets violence, substance use and risky sexual behaviour among adolescents, and includes components addressing the school, parents and the larger school community. The focus is on clarifying values, building social and emotional competence, skill development through role playing, accurate information, strengthening motivation to change and encouraging youth to take responsibility for their health and decisions. A preliminary evaluation concluded that students in Fourth R schools had significant gains in knowledge and attitudes related to violence, substance use and sexual health, and significant gains in skill acquisition (the evaluation did not assess change in actual behaviour). Results of a more rigorous randomized control trial are expected in 2007.

"Roots of Empathy" is also an evidence-based classroom program that has shown effects in reducing levels of aggression and violence among school children while raising social/emotional competence and increasing empathy www.rootsofempathy.org/; Schonert-Reichl, Smith, Zaidman-Zait and Hertzman 2003). The program currently operates in nine provinces across Canada as well as in some parts of Australia.

Rape prevention programs

Adherence to rape myths and other negative attitudes toward women is a major correlate of willingness to engage in sexual aggression. Not surprisingly, the most common construct addressed in rape prevention programs is addressing rape myths. Others include increasing empathy for rape victims, increasing rape awareness, teaching self-defence and rape avoidance, and increasing assertiveness skills (Schewe 2002: 107). In a review of rape prevention programs and outcomes, Schewe (2002) identifies certain aspects frequently used in rape prevention as holding some promise for reducing rape-supportive beliefs and sexual aggression. Program elements shown to have positive effects on students' attitudes toward rape are the following:

- Attempting to change rape myth acceptance
- Raising victim empathy
- Emphasizing the perceived consequences of rape (getting caught, negative responses from family and peers); however, information about the very low likelihood of victims reporting rape may reduce the effectiveness of this approach. The bystander approach can influence students' perceptions of the likelihood of experiencing negative consequences as a result of using sexual aggression.
- Educating women to avoid high-risk situations (those involving date rape drugs, alcohol, isolated locations, the possibility of rape by a trusted person) can help raise awareness of vulnerability to rape and improve decisions to increase safety. Care must be taken not to impart victim-blaming messages. This aspect of rape prevention should not be used for male or mixed-sex audiences: men may take away messages that rape is common (i.e., normal), rape is rarely reported, and taking a woman to an isolated location or using date rape drugs and alcohol are effective ways to force a woman to submit to rape.
- Self-defence training can provide women with practical tools to help them avoid rape, without blaming women who do not attempt to fight back or flee.

Addressing rape myths, victim empathy and the negative consequences of rape will result in more attitude and behaviour change than a program that addresses only one of these issues.

Aspects of rape prevention shown to be less successful include (Schewe 2002):

- Factual information about legal definitions of rape, the prevalence of rape, descriptions of victims and offenders, description of rape trauma syndrome, and information about local resources for survivors are rarely effective in changing male students' attitudes. However, this type of information may help establish personal relevancy and motivations to change. Statistics will be more useful when they refer to local rather than national figures.
- Communications training focusing on accurately interpreting information and clearly expressing limits have not been widely evaluated but may be useful in combination with other successful elements listed above.

Rape prevention programs should be tailored to the specific audience with respect to age, race and ethnicity, should be interactive and include multiple

presentation methods, should focus on skills development to increase pro-social behaviours rather than focus exclusively on decreasing negative behaviour, employ frequent sessions rather than single sessions, and contain content that is theory-based and focuses on the causes of rape. There is some evidence that prevention information presented in single-sex audiences can be more effective than mixed-sex groups (Schewe 2002).

Public awareness programs

Public awareness campaigns are designed to change community-level norms and individual-level attitudes, although few have been subjected to rigorous evaluation. "Neighbours, Friends and Family" is a public awareness campaign that has been implemented in almost 40 cities in Ontario (www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca). The focus is on raising awareness of the signs of intimate partner violence and where to go for help so people close to an abused woman or an abusive man can intervene to prevent violence. Many violence prevention public awareness campaigns employ the slogan that 'violence is everyone's business' but many people don't know what to do to intervene and don't recognize the warning signs. The key message of the campaign is that violence against women is preventable and that neighbours, friends and family have a crucial role to play. An evaluation of short-term attitudinal change among program participants is currently underway.

Research has shown that attitudes towards violence against women can be shaped and altered by a changing social consensus (Flood and Pease 2006). Community leaders in some Canadian cities have used their influence to encourage a change in community norms. A good example is the Charlottetown and Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence prevention in Prince Edward Island where a purple ribbon is permanently mounted on City Hall as a highly visible symbol of anti-violence norms. All city-owned vehicles, such as buses, utility vehicles and fire trucks display anti-violence messages that read "Peace Begins at Home – Help End Family Violence". All city staff, including elected officials, receive training to help raise awareness of family violence and the role city officials can play in prevention. City employees are considered ambassadors for the prevention of family violence. The Mayor of Charlottetown engages the community in many events throughout the year such as a Fathers and Sons event in which men and boys built a gazebo in a central city park symbolizing family violence prevention with supplies donated from a local building supply store. This model of leadership recently has been replicated in the City of London, Ontario with the Mayor's Task Force to End Woman Abuse. Evaluations are needed to know the impact of these initiatives on changing attitudes and norms toward violence.

Conclusion

Achieving success in the prevention of violence against women is a complex and challenging task. While violence prevention programs have shown promise in changing attitudes supportive of violence against women, at least in the short term, efforts to change attitudes at the individual level can easily be undermined by societal-level norms and cultural contexts. Comprehensive strategies are needed that involve social institutions, cultural norms, attitudinal change at the individual level, and supports for victims. They must incorporate a gender perspective. In order to achieve change in attitudes and in rates of violent behaviour, it is important to address familial, organizational, community and societal norms, traditional gender role attitudes, and structural relations and social practices (Flood and Pease 2006: 58).

It is also important at this juncture to more fully integrate efforts to prevent violence against women into mainstream violence prevention and to reduce the current separation between actions aimed at preventing intimate partner violence and those targeting women's safety on the street. As recommended by the US National Research Council (Kruttschnitt et al 2004: 3):

> At this point in its development, some level of integration of research on violence against…women with the larger literature on crime and violence would enrich the former research intellectually, increase the amount of attention it receives, extend the lessons that can be learned about violence against women, and provide a sounder basis for prevention and deterrence strategies. … the research agenda …on violence against women would benefit from its integration with efforts to determine the causes, consequences, prevention, treatment, and deterrence of violence more broadly. Moreover, we believe that the government's research agenda should encompass forms of violent victimization of women other than intimate-partner violence.

A more fully integrated conceptualization of all forms of violence against women into crime and violence prevention initiatives, and an expanded program of evaluation is recommended in order to address this problem in a more comprehensive way. Good evidence exists on the risk factors for the perpetration of violence against women and about the elements of successful prevention strategies. Resources are needed to ensure that these strategies are integrated into school curricula and other training and education forums and are subjected to long-term evaluations. In addition, general violence prevention programs should be evaluated in order to understand the potential impact of these programs on preventing various forms of violence against women.

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