

**TRANSCULTURAL
MASCULINITIES:
ENGAGEMENT OF MEN
IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
PREVENTION –
KEY ISSUES**

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Abstract

This paper outlines some key principles and practice issues enabling the engagement of men in domestic violence prevention interventions. Contextual issues will be examined, and cultural issues of race, class and gender will be discussed. Implications for interventions targeting men will be presented, and dilemmas for domestic violence work with men outlined. Examples will be given from a range of cultures, including white Australian working class men, remote Australian Aboriginal men, African American men and Mongolian men.

Introduction

It has been said the world has changed after the horrendous events of 11 September 2001. That may well be true. However 11 September is itself part of a larger world change: Globalisation.

Dale Spender, the respected feminist author, has said: “The world is undergoing the biggest social and technological change in history. It is out of control, and no one knows where it is going” (Spender, 1996).

There seems plenty of evidence for concern. There is growing concern that the rich and poor gap is widening. There are global concerns for bio-diversity, climate change and the environment, and indeed for the sustainability of life itself.

On the cultural front, “globalisation as a culturally homogenising and environment-devouring force is coming on so fast, there is a real danger that in just a few decades it could wipe out the ecological and cultural diversity that took millions of years of human and biological evolution to develop” (Freidman, 1999 p 278).

Fundamental aspects of the human experience are undergoing tremendous change. “In a globalising world, time and space themselves take on different meanings, and no aspect of life remains untouched by global forces” (Altman, 2001 p 15).

While the above may be deeply disturbing, even more concerning is that it is not a neutral process.

Globalisation and Americanisation

Globalisation is very much about the Americanisation of the global political economy.

“The driving idea behind globalisation is free market capitalism” (Friedman, 1999 p 9). As Altman puts it: “ American policy, particularly in the post-Cold War world, has adopted a triumphalist view which sees capitalism and democracy as mutual prerequisites, arguing that liberal economics and politics cannot be separated” (Altman, 2001 p 25).

In addition, “although they appear to be gender neutral, the institutional arrangements of global society are very much gendered... (representing)... in general the attributes and interests of a male entrepreneur” (Greig et al., 2000 p 16).

Globally, ordinary people are feeling the crunch. “While the winners can do incredibly well in this global market, those with only marginally inferior skills will often do much less well, and those with few or no skills will do very poorly. These inequalities are becoming one of the most disturbing by products of this system” (Freidman, 1999 p 309).

Global Gender Change

In addition, a global gender sea change is under way, pioneered by the women’s movement. Increasingly men’s behaviour and traditional

masculinities are coming under question. “ It is not that patriarchy is dead in first world / industrialised countries, but its legitimacy is dead. It has to be argued for” (Connell, 1995). This questioning has now spread beyond first world countries.

Global changes to masculine culture of work

A crisis of masculinity has arisen partly because of the women’s movement, but also because of the global social and technological revolution. This has impacted particularly heavily on working class men, who (along with working class women) have borne the brunt of these changes. Low education and mere labour power don’t cut it much any more. Unemployment and under-employment have become entrenched and endemic in many of these communities.

It is important to remember that in most cultures, “To be a man is to work... paid work is a major element in men’s sense of who they are, including their sense of sexual identity... For men, the very concept of self is structured around work as an activity... ‘Worklessness’ involves a feeling of ‘worthlessness’ (Webb, 1998 pp 130-131). To many men the question “What do you do?” is synonymous with “Who are you?” (Brooks, 1998 p 15).

Men who lose employment (and hence a sense of control of self) are particularly vulnerable to mental health problems including depression, physical illness, drug and alcohol abuse and homicide/ domestic violence /suicidal issues. Freire saw this in the Brazilian peasants. “The peasant is a dependent. He can’t say what he wants. Before he discovers his dependence he suffers. He lets off steam at home, where he shouts at his children, beats them, and despairs. He complains about his wife, and thinks everything is dreadful... Lots of times, the peasant gives vent to his sorrows by drinking.”

A common view in Mongolia is that the rising violence¹ and drinking in Mongolia during transition has been directly linked to the men’s unemployment, and their loss of role in the society. There is also a widespread understanding in Australian Aboriginal communities that the loss of culture, role, and identity for men, plus unemployment, have created the

¹ Male to male, male to female, familial and non-familial.

conditions for widespread violence and alcohol abuse. Clearly these and other factors intersect with gender issues in complex ways.

Minority cultures in a global world

Many minority cultures and communities are facing enormous strain in surviving in this globalised, homogenised, urbanised, brave new world where McDonald's, Coca Cola, MTV and Hollywood² make inroads into every culture on the planet. Teenagers are potentially lucrative targets globally, and some communities are concerned the teenagers are leaving the family, community and culture behind via television, movies and mainstream global popular culture.

Domestic violence movement and globalisation

The domestic violence movement has also gone global in recent years. In increasing numbers of countries the women's movement has led the way in placing violence against women by men on the public agenda for change.

Like all other areas of globalisation, the domestic violence field is also not a level playing field. The USA has historically led the way in developing legislative and institutional responses to domestic violence, changes designed to provide safety, protection and support for women and accountability through the criminal justice system for men. Such changes were necessary, given the historical failure of institutions to protect women from men's violence.

The USA responses to domestic violence targeting men, have, by and large, been mainly developed through the criminal justice system (Hurst, 1995).

American perspectives on men, masculinity and violence that have facilitated a very American response to this problem have dominated the men's programs emerging. The USA culture of polarisation around a 'good guys'- 'bad guys' focus is indicative of this, and reflected in mandatory programs that approach men as 'the other'.

Common in the domestic violence literature and the field is the use of labels of stigma and marginalisation such as 'batterer', 'perpetrator', and 'violent

² To name a few most visible American international cultural brand exports.

men'. These labels make someone into the 'other', and less than human. These terms have emerged from an American cultural context, and have been adopted by the USA domestic violence field, to be picked up in some other countries and cultures.

In my experience and those of many colleagues across a range of countries and cultures over a number of years, many men report feeling extremely alienated by such language and approaches. Men will often go to great lengths to deny and minimise identifying with these labels. This in turn is often interpreted by some men's program providers as evidence that 'violent men will never seek help', 'do not want to change', 'can never change' etc.

Necessity of criminal justice reform

There is a clear and urgent need for continued criminal justice reform in the area of domestic violence. Criminal justice systems have historically clearly failed to protect women and children from men's violence. This must change, and men being held consistently accountable for criminal violence is an essential component.

Legislative change and effective implementation of laws, in all levels and areas of the law, are needed to protect women from men's violence, including in the family (UNICEF, 2001 p 2).

However criminal justice reform and violence prevention are not just about building more prisons and enhancing arrest rates.

It may equally be said that criminal justice systems have also failed men. They have all too often become cost-expensive places and institutions of violence, oppression, further trauma and little hope, where men come out with a worse character than when they go in.

As well as holding men accountable for their criminal violence, what must also change is the criminal justice system's ability to effect positive social change. It needs to do this by finding ways to effectively engage men in a rehabilitative dialogue and thus create change about their behaviour and attitudes as men, on both an individual and collective level.

Weakness of the purely criminal justice response which fails to engage men

Weaknesses of a purely criminal justice response to domestic violence include:

- It is usually a post event, downstream intervention;
- It is extremely cost expensive;
- It is mainly concerned with criminal violence – much violence towards women by men is non-criminal (e.g. emotional, financial, social and spiritual abuse);
- It often disempowers victims;
- It increases resistance from men, particularly poor and working class men and minority men who have prior individual and collective experiences of the criminal justice system;
- There is often little emphasis on rehabilitation, and is often experienced by men as punitive, not rehabilitative; and,
- Often women do not want men in prison (e.g. working class and minority women).

Global domestic violence movement and partnerships with men

It is now understood in a growing number of countries and cultures in the global domestic violence movement that one critical strategic task is the engagement of men in societies in partnerships to prevent and overcome men's violence.

There is a growing international recognition that men must be engaged as part of the solution, and not just seen as the problem. "Across a range of development issues and institutions, there is an increasing interest in men as potential agents of change and not merely objects of blame" (Greig et al., 2000 p 6.).

This approach of seeing men as part of the solution, has only recently been gaining wider acceptance in mainstream industrialised countries. However this approach reportedly fits much more comfortably with many minority cultures, indigenous cultures, and wholistic Asian approaches to social problems. These cultures have always understood men must be part of any wholistic solution, unlike western perspectives often operating from a western polarising perspective.

Currently in many countries an increasing number of men are engaged in working alongside women to question, challenge and work to overcome the worst aspects of traditional masculinities.

Men's programs, for both adult and younger men are have emerged as a mainstream component of broad-based responses to men's violence against women. Such programs do not, of course, overcome the need to also engage in long-term institutional and cultural change to overcome and prevent violence against women. However such programs offer local men an immediate opportunity to engage with a change process designed to assist them to overcome the use of violence to women. Programs also provide accountability, central to overcoming violence against women. As such, they open the door on engaging individual men and men collectively. They are in many ways ideally placed, given the crisis of global dominant masculinity emerging discussed earlier, and many local men's reports from varying cultural contexts in my experience of a need to make sense of what is happening in their world.

It must also be remembered overall that, "It is in men's interests to eliminate gender-based violence, which affects them in a number of ways: as witnesses, as direct victims, as those using violence, and in socialization according to definitions of masculinities that define aggression and violence as part of the norm for boys and men" (UNICEF, 2001 p 2).

Contextual issues regarding engaging men

As this work develops, it also seems clear we need to go beyond one-dimensional analyses of men's violence to women. A simplistic reliance on solely a gender analysis to the exclusion of race, class, ethnicity and culture seems likely to place significant barriers in the way of men accessing and engaging with opportunities to stop and change violent behaviour.

The challenge is to do this in a way that also remains focussed on the urgent need to intervene to stop and prevent violence against women in the short term as part of an overall strategy, and to hold men accountable for criminal violence.

It is also crucial to undertake these interventions in a way that enhances the engagement of men as part of the process.

To do this, we need to see more of the whole man than just his violence and abuse. We need to see him in his full socio-political context, and be able to understand what elements will enable us to engage him to overcome violence, particularly violence against women. What will work for this Aboriginal man in remote northern Australia? What will work with this man in Mongolia? What will work with a man in your part of the world? How do we motivate and mobilise this man, and men collectively, to stand together with women to end all violence, and violence against women?

Of course we must always bear in mind that there is no 'one' man out there. Men vary greatly, as well as often having elements in common.

Community based approaches

In addition to enhanced criminal justice responses, there is a need to develop approaches to engaging and working with men that go beyond just criminal violence responses. It is important to remember that much of men's violence, abuse and neglect are not, and never will be, criminal.

There is a clear need for the development of community-based options and alternatives for men to access help to change violent behaviour, before the criminal justice system becomes involved.

Cross cultural approaches with men

Cross culturally most men are required to live up to impossible ideals of traditional masculinities. These often involve central rules regarding men being in control, of self and others at all times; being strong; being entitled to power and privilege; not crying; and to not expressing vulnerability. Violence is often used to maintain this power and control.

It is easy to be distracted by the sheer similarities of traditional masculinities between cultures and to assume they are all the same, and attempt to intervene in the interests of non-violence with generic, standardised programs. Many of these have originated in the USA. The Duluth Model is perhaps the best example of this 'one size fits all' approach. These 'McPrograms', (looking and approaching men the same all over the planet), often involve little understanding of national, regional, local, cultural, racial, ethnic and class differences. As a result, they would seem to present limited

opportunities to understand and engage men at the local level around local issues.

Since they also come from a dominant culture often seeing offenders as 'bad guys', which is implicit and explicit in program design and approach, they also often have a limited perspective or ability to engage local men. Some workers have reported high resistance and drop out rates in many of these programs in a range of countries, including the USA (Hurst, 1995).

However there are also key differences amongst men and cultural contexts that make cross-cultural approaches both possible and essential. This moves away from a 'one size fits all' mentality, with standardised programs. Just importing programs from another culture and assuming it will work in another cultural context is simplistic and sets programs and men up to fail.

What seems needed is the development of programs suited to the local context, where local cultural issues of masculinity and engagement can be understood and worked with.

We are just starting to map and understand the many facets and layers of masculinities in any culture, and the attached values, attitudes, and beliefs. We are also just beginning to appreciate the variety of contradictions and possibilities for engagement and change they contain.

We are recognising that there are many kinds of men out there: some who will respond to culturally appropriate invitations to engage in stopping their violence; others who still require a criminal justice sanction in order to be held accountable.

The following are examples of some transcultural practice issues regarding masculinities and overcoming violence. They demonstrate some of the issues in my experience that need to be addressed if we are going to engage men to work with us to develop sustainable interventions to overcome men's violence.

African American men

In regard to African American men using violence, Williams has written that "in addition to cultural awareness and ethnic sensitivity, practitioners who work with African- American men must understand how culture, ethnicity and domestic violence intersect and interact" (Williams, 1992 p 588). This, of course, can only be done by talking to the men themselves.

Williams argues that the practitioner's stance is a key one, with many practitioners and agencies demonstrating cultural resistance and cultural colour blindness, rather than cultural sensitivity (1992).

The collective experience of African American men must be taken into account in any programs, and the importance of the program building trust with these clients. Without this, men are more likely to resist. Low participation rate may not simply reflect minority males' resistance to help: other factors may serve as barriers to participation e.g. trust in program providers. "Minority clients past negative experiences with institutions may cause them to resist treatment all the more vigorously" (p 591).

It may be important to have a person from the same ethnic group leading programs This builds trust and also act as role models.

Significantly, it is critical to see the whole man, not just his violence. Williams (1992) identifies a key question as: "A man may be abusive, but what else is he?"

Language and labels such as 'abuser', 'perpetrator', 'batterer' and 'wife beater' may create treatment barriers amongst African American men who batter. Men may experience stigma, and such terms as punitive, and see their condition as unchangeable (Williams, 1992).

Mutual sharing of expertise is important in African American culture, and needs to be supported by program design and process. It may, for example, be necessary to include minority clients in the treatment process. African American men prefer to see a helping relationship as more of a partnership. (Gunnings & Lipscomb, 1986).

These insights highlight the key significance of taking into account the cultural needs of men being engaged by programs aiming to reduce men's violence.

One practice example may illustrate further the need for hearing African American men's voices:

Some years ago I was sitting in a mandated men's violence program in the USA with predominantly African American men and a white, young, female, middle class, professional, group leader. She stated to the group women were never violent except in self defence. The African American men present were amazed at this statement. While acknowledging their own violence, they tried to explain their view of

what happened in their neighbourhood, and the violence they had experienced at the hands of women. Some showed her serious bodily scarring from old wounds they claimed were inflicted by women. The leader seemed to struggle in how to respond to this challenge by the men, but tried to maintain the program line, which did not encourage men to offer alternative viewpoints. In the end one man responded: "Look, we understand, you don't live down our way, we know you don't know." Some men withdrew from interaction in the group at this stage, clearly disengaging from taking any further part.

However some other men pressed their case, pointing out that there were overriding issues facing their communities that added to all the problems e.g. lack of jobs and housing. As one man said, "Down our way it is not about black or white, it is about survival."

At this point, it seemed a rich and fruitful dialogue may be possible, if the program had been able to allow men to describe their reality, and to understand the forces they were trying to navigate. This process of engaged dialogue with men using violence is precisely what offers the potential for attitudinal and behaviour change, on the one hand, and resistance and non-change on the other, depending to some extent on how it is approached.

None of this means, of course, the responsibility and accountability for violence should be weakened or diminished. The program was quite right to focus on men's responsibility for their behaviour, but seemed unable to go beyond this in the moment described, due to perhaps it's own ideological blinkers.

In working with men, it is both necessary and possible to hold both realities in mind of men as both possible oppressors and oppressed. This is particularly the case in regard to minority men. It is this dual understanding we must have if we are to more effectively engage men. As Freire said, "critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever their stage of their struggle for liberation... to substitute monologue, slogans, and communiqués for dialogue is to attempt to liberate the oppressed with the instruments of domestication... Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects... and transform them into masses which can be manipulated" (Freire, 1992 p 52).

Many USA workers have reported to me that African American men, once they had confidence a program would treat them with respect and allow them to share their voices, would often recruit friends and brothers to the program. They would bring them in as a form of early intervention and prevention.

Working class white Australian men

Similar insights were gained in the 1990s in Victoria, Australia, where it was found that working class men would come for help in the local community to stop their violence if material was presented to them in a culturally acceptable manner.³

Part of the strategy adopted was to see working class masculinities as culture, requiring culturally specific responses. As Brooks says, “we must understand and appreciate the culture of men and masculinity, and begin to entertain the idea that therapy with traditional men is a form of cross cultural counselling” (Brooks, 1998 p 64).

Further, it is important to remember any work with men is cross cultural, even though it may not be an ‘exotic’ or highly ‘visible’ culture.

For example, language is a key part of engaging working class men. This use of language needs to take account of: class; traditional masculinity; and men’s personal experience.

In class terms in Victoria every effort was made to not use middle class professional jargon. Plain local language was used. Information was also given to men using simple, easily remembered diagrams. Complex concepts were translated into plain language.

Paperwork done by men attending the program was kept to a minimum, since many working class men historically had an ambivalent relationship with the world of books, paper, schooling and education.

Traditional masculinities place a lot of constraints on men’s behaviour. These are often not recognised unless we get men to identify and explain them to

³ This was despite predictions by some in the field that men using violence would never come for help voluntarily. While voluntary men are often motivated initially by self interest, (e.g. ‘wanting to get her back’), it is also the case that many of these men are also reporting wanting the violence to stop. It is important to remember that men are not one dimensional, and may have conflicting and contradictory attitudes that enable engagement. Even a man that wants her to come back may also want his violence to stop. Part of the art of engaging these men is to be able to tap into the common desire many men have to change.

us, and how they operate in this particular man's life. To ask men to 'get help', for example, goes against most traditional masculine imperatives for men to be in control, and to not seek help. Many men globally feel uncomfortable seeking help from medical and welfare systems for precisely this reason. However, changing the language and inviting men to 'seek independent advice' in advertising in Victoria led to a huge increase by working class men pro-actively seeking help to stop their violence and abuse.⁴

Men were also targeted via their personal experience. Using community education campaigns to speak *to* men, (not *at* them, as so often happens), resulted in many men coming forward to stop the violent behaviour. If men's feelings of guilt, shame, confusion and desire to stop the violence were included as part of education campaigns speaking to men, many more men felt motivated to respond. This seemed much more effective than appeals to morality ("Violence is wrong"), or the common portrayal by the USA influenced domestic violence field of men as 'bad guys'.

The use of metaphors appropriate to the man's class, culture and context has also proved useful. Many men respond well to hearing metaphors familiar to them, and with which they can identify. Australian truck drivers, for example, respond well to metaphors from the world of machinery, vehicle maintenance, long distance hauls, etc.

The use of language for engagement also extends to avoiding using stigmatising language (e.g. 'perpetrator', 'violent men'). Combining respect for men and an uncompromising stance against the use of violent behaviour by such language as 'men using violence', or 'men choosing violence', seems much more effective in engaging and not alienating men.

Men also seem to do well when the issue of their strengths is not overlooked by programs. Deficit models and programs with a negative view of men as lacking in motivation, willingness to change, social skills, interpersonal skills etc. often miss the reality of men's lives as they report them. They fail to appreciate that many men do not use violence all the time. Men often report times when they feel angry, but do not resort to violence. Enhancing these

⁴ E.g. The Men's Referral Service, a Victorian men's hotline for men to call to get help regarding their violence before the criminal justice system is involved, has just reported taking its 15,000th call from men seeking help.

existing strengths to achieve consistent, sustainable use of non-violence has proved very useful for many men.

The history of individual men's experience of actively protecting women is also a key lever for change overlooked by deficit / 'bad guy' programs. Often men have reported to me trying to protect their mothers when they were children, and also when teenagers. Some men report wanting help to change because they feel they are becoming like their father. Men need to be affirmed and acknowledged for times when they have protected women.

Once engaged with a program where they felt heard and understood, many working class men would engage more heavily with becoming non-violent.⁵ They also would recruit other men, their mates and brothers, to programs and wanted to assist other men to change.

The demand by men for support groups to assist them to consolidate changes to non-violence and the subsequent development of these groups in Victoria was another example of men being heard, and programs being flexible enough to respond to this identified need.

Those men in Victorian programs that went on to become group leaders also further enhanced programs capacity to respond to men in culturally appropriate ways. Having another local, non-professional man who had also overcome violence and abuse helped many men identify and become more hopeful and motivated to change, as reported by them.

South Asian men

The need for cross-culturally sensitive programs for men of differing cultures is also illustrated by the needs of South East Asian men living in Canada. It is reported that the sense of self is different for many of these men compared to Anglo Saxon white men. The individual sense of self is more diminished compared to a stronger familial and community sense of self.

Western men focus more on how they feel. Indo-Canadian men focus on how they are seen in the extended family and larger ethnic community (Singh, 1994).

This differing sense of self can lead to program leaders misunderstanding the downplaying of personal experience by these men as more 'resistance' on the part of the man. It also has important implications for the engagement of

⁵ This was often reflected in partner reports.

these men, both through any community education strategies and also in the presence of the program leaders.

In contrast to Western men, Indo-Canadian men look to the leader as a moral model and are curious about the leader's personal and family life. They want to know about his marriage, drinking habits, children, parent extended family, etc. A leader's self disclosure in these areas may increase trust even more than it would mainstream groups. Leaders establish credibility through this disclosure. The men do not automatically respect qualifications (Singh, 1994).

However requests by men for such leader self-disclosure in programs which see men as 'bad guys' may be resisted by program leaders. They may only see the emphasis as being on the man's accepting responsibility and not deflecting away from this. From this position any questioning by the man of the leaders experience may be interpreted as resistance, to be met with even more direct challenge and confrontation. This of course may have the unintended consequence of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. The more they are challenged in this way, the more some men will resist. This is again misinterpreted. In my experience this resistance may be rooted as much in class and cultural origins as in some innate unwillingness by the man to engage with any responsibility.

This problem is particularly compounded if the program and leaders have little interest, awareness, training or skills in strategies to engage men.

Since the spiritual self for many South Asian men is greater than for many Western men, an emphasis on culture and religion as elements to be introduced into the group along with family provides greater leverage for change (Singh, 1994).

In Indo-Canadian families the concept of a "Noble Family" is very strong. Culturally and historically this draws from the caste system. Everyone would like to believe that they have a "noble family". The use of violence and intimidation can then be seen as going against strong cultural norms of nobility. As violence is uncovered throughout the family history, the clients' efforts to address that can be defined as a historic restoration of nobility in the family. In this way programs sensitive to cultural differences between men can more effectively engage men to be more motivated to change (Singh, 1994).

I had an experience in Singapore a few years ago when a mandatory men's program was struggling to engage the men. The model had been imported from the USA, was not adapted to the local cultural environment, and did not emphasise engagement. The men felt angry and resistant. The workers were angry and frustrated trying to work with these men who did not want to cooperate.

However when changes were made to how the men were approached and engaged, and when the men were invited to express more of their experiences, anger, ambivalence and confusion, the level of engagement went up significantly. This was evident to all involved in the program. The group continued with high engagement from the men, such that at the end of the time when they were mandated to attend, the men decided to continue to meet as a voluntary group.

In one sense, what group facilitators discovered was that by creating a space in which men can be engaged about their violence can lead to fundamentally different outcomes. What the group discovered was that to feel respected and motivated to talk about being a man, and what is a healthy (non violent) man, are key, engaging questions for many men. Part of 'doing traditional masculinity' is that men just do it; they don't critically talk or think about it. Clinical experience has taught me that many men in a variety of cultural contexts are both anxious and curious to talk about being a man, particularly given current global and historical changes.

Australian Aboriginal men

Aboriginal communities suffer not only the legacy of their past history of colonisation, dispossession and loss of land and culture, but they continue to suffer from a lack of infrastructure, social capacity, services and culturally appropriate responses to community problems. Men have suffered a loss of traditional role and identity with tragic results.

This in turn is reflected in higher than mainstream average statistics for imprisonment, drug and alcohol abuse, violence, ill health and suicide/homicide. Aboriginal men die on average 20 years earlier than white males. Aboriginal men are four times more likely to die a violent death than non-Aboriginal men, and women are six and a half times more likely to die a violent death than non-Aboriginal women (Dept of Premier & Cabinet [Qld], 2001).

CULTURAL ISSUES REGARDING PREVENTING MEN'S VIOLENCE

It is critical to note several key aspects of culture for Aboriginal people that have implications for interventions and treatment regarding violence. The central role of family, kinship and community ties and obligations are paramount to Aboriginal people's sense of self, and self in relation to others in the community.

Wholistic program approaches addressing the whole of individual, family and community and addressing mind- body – and spirit are key elements in the Aboriginal worldview and in designing interventions aimed at engaging Aboriginal men.

INDIGENOUS MEN'S PROGRAMS

At the micro level of men's programs, this basic cultural awareness has implications for the delivery of services designed to facilitate engagement of Aboriginal men in the program. Programs need to be sensitive to cultural issues that can act as barriers to Aboriginal men engaging. Programs need to work within the frame of reference of the men attending:

For example, in the work of the AMEND program in northern NSW, which works with Aboriginal men, the program has discovered:

- Rigid structure does not work with Koori⁶ men, it repels them because it reminds them of all the time that they had to mould themselves to fit into a white oriented system;
- Aboriginal people have strong cultural patterns about being relaxed. Therefore programs need to be culturally appropriate e.g. be relaxed, relatively unstructured, and flexible with format and process;
- Women's violence needs to be addressed as well as men's;
- Language used is important; and,
- Father / son camps are a key strategy to engage men and pass on knowledge transgenerationally (Anderson & Telford, 1999 p 62).

In 2001, Aboriginal men from the Tiwi Islands (northern Australia) began meeting to begin to address the issue of family violence and the role of men

⁶ 'Koori' is an Aboriginal word used to describe South Eastern Australian Aboriginal people.

in Tiwi society and culture.⁷ A community development approach was adopted, since it fitted with the cultural needs of the community.

On going discussions around key themes of problems affecting the Tiwi community, family violence, men's roles and responsibilities, strengthening of traditional culture, practical non violent strategies for men to use, and the need for men to take their family and community responsibilities seriously has occurred. This has happened in a culturally appropriate manner in keeping with the cultural needs of the participants, and in a way to maximise opportunities for men to attend and engage.

The group is now developing men's places on each island where men can go to talk to other men regarding a range of men's issues and business, including social, emotional, health, and mental health and wellbeing issues. Issues of traditional culture and lore will also be addressed by the men, as strengthening of traditional culture is seen as a key to strategy to enhance community healing and wellbeing.

Men have also requested training in a range of areas, including family violence. There is a recognition by men of the need for men in the community to support other men who are at risk of hurting themselves or others. Tiwi men are also developing a men's bush training camp, where men can look at men's business and traditional cultural issues, away from the distractions of community life.

Again, the engagement of men in violence prevention and wholistic healing is made possible by allowing men to undertake leadership and identify key local priorities and needs and to address these in a culturally appropriate manner.

Mongolia

Mongolia is a landlocked independent country between the former Soviet Union and China that became communist in 1924. In 1989 with collapse of the former Soviet Union the country began it's transition to democracy and free market capitalism.

Employment for men went from 100% to almost zero overnight.

Culturally there exists a pre-communist Mongolian culture heavily influenced by Buddhism, a communist culture, and a post-communist capitalist culture.

⁷ Tiwi women also decided to meet to deal with women's business issues

In gender terms, traditionally the man is the head of the family, and makes the decisions. Men are also expected to be patient, kind, and a good provider. Regarding help seeking behaviour, men traditionally talk to men about men's problems, not to women. It is seen men can understand men.

Currently the country is extremely poor, propped up by foreign aid. Women have effectively gained most economically recently with most jobs held by women except at the highest levels.

Poverty, unemployment, urbanisation, rising crime, alcohol abuse and violence, child homelessness have all risen to alarming levels. Men are centrally involved in these social problems. There is also reportedly widespread sympathy and understanding for the men's historical situation.

The National Centre Against Violence in Mongolia has been developing a range of services for women suffering men's violence. As part of this they also are developing a range of men's services and interventions, as part of a culture with a strong wholistic philosophy.

The police force is undergoing transition from a Russian style, based on fear and intimidation, to a more community focussed, partnership approach. Police are being trained to understand and intervene in domestic violence more effectively. Police are being trained to enforce the law, provide protection for women, and engage men to stop the violence. The NCAV is also advocating for legislative change to develop more effective laws to protect women.

In police training it has emerged that while a variety of cultural values exist regarding men and women's roles in Mongolia, (some old, some modern), it is the process of dialogue about these that seems critical. Like many traditional cultures, Mongolia under transition is being bombarded with western culture, models and values. Like many cultures in an increasingly global village, Mongolian people have a range of views about the role of traditional local culture, and the changes it is undergoing.

Police have been engaged via training to examine their own behaviour and contradictions in current Mongolian cultural values regarding gender issues, and the implications of this in regard to effective intervention in violence against women. Participants report finding this training extremely useful, both personally and professionally. For example, one policeman announced in front of the training group that he would not beat his wife any more as a

result of attending training. Others reported changes in how they behaved in their family. One policeman's wife reported to local police that her husband had changed significantly as a result of attending training.

Prisoners in local detention centres for crimes of domestic violence who have been involved in assisting training for police also report a desire and willingness to learn how to stop their violence. Many also report great shame for their behaviour.

Initial anecdotal feedback from police regarding their 'success' rate in engaging local men to stop violence against women is cautiously positive, given the extreme lack of resources and infrastructure throughout the country. Several police in local communities report many men changing behaviour as a result of police engaging them in talking about the violence post arrest and detention. Police also report short-medium term (to 12 months) non-recidivism rates for many of these men local.⁸ There are also reports of men approaching one NCAV branch in the countryside and asking for assistance to stop their violence, since they have heard it is possible to get this. In turn the branch workers reported 7 out of 10 men requesting assistance were prepared to accompany them to the police station to seek further help from local police who had been trained to talk to and engage men in stopping the violence.

Issues re engagement of men across cultures

From the above practice examples, it is possible to identify several key factors both enhancing and acting as barriers to engagement of men across a range of cultural contexts.

Facilitating engagement across cultures

- Need to identify local opportunities for engagement of men
- Need to develop local, culturally and class appropriate programs and interventions

⁸ Obviously anecdotal reports by police are only an initial start to monitoring the effectiveness of change by men, in a difficult to measure area. Longer-term sustainability of behaviour change is a clear goal. Longer term plans in Mongolia include not only offering women partners enhanced support, but also gaining feedback from them as to any effective behaviour change by men. Plans also include more effective legislation, and enhanced police effectiveness.

- Need to explore contradictions in local views of masculinities
- Need to have training/ discussion amongst workers re engagement of men
- Need to talk to men not at them
- Need to take into account a wholistic view of men: “What else is he?”
- Need to separate conceptually the man (the person) from his violence (his behaviour)
- Need to remember that many men are not having a good time out there doing the violence
- Strength-focussed approaches to preventing violence seem acceptable and useful to many men across cultures
- Men report needing to feel heard and respected by programs
- Men need to be engaged by use of local metaphors, and culturally appropriate language
- Allowing men to input to program design helps strengthen engagement
- Working in partnership with men strengthens engagement

Barriers to engagement across cultures

The following seem to act as barriers to engagement in a variety of cultural contexts:

- Need to identify local barriers to engagement of men at the local level
- Using deficit approaches to men (e.g. seeing him as of ‘bad character’, e.g. assuming he has no skills, capacity or willingness to be non violent)
- Using stigmatising language (e.g. ‘perpetrators’, ‘batterers’, ‘violent men’)
- Taking one dimensional approach to men
- No awareness/ discussion/ training/ skills by program to engage men
- Imported programs from culturally different contexts
- Generic, standardised programs (‘one size fits all’ mentality)
- Talking at men
- Not inviting men to express their views
- Not hearing men when they do express opinions
- Always interpreting criticism by men of programs as ‘resistance’

- Using professional jargon and language
- Not allowing men to have input to program design
- Not working in partnership with men

Dilemmas for Domestic Violence workers

The above experiences in a range of cultures and contexts raise a number of dilemmas for those working with men in the domestic violence field particularly those influenced by USA based programs. Dilemmas operate both at the level of individual workers and at the level of programs.

In order to more effectively engage men individually and collectively to overcome and prevent violence, workers and programs need to clarify where they stand in regard to not only men's violence to women, but also men's violence to other men and women's violence to men and other women.

Where do workers and programs stand around the issue of men as both perpetrators of violence, and victims of violence?

Where do workers and programs stand around the question of allowing men to have a voice, and feel heard and acknowledged, in the service of stopping his violence?

In addition to gender issues, workers and programs also need to clarify where they stand around issues of race and class. How are these issues factored in to the work with men? What different worker and program awareness and practices does this lead to?

Does the program listen to the voices of men, particularly those who say they want services, and that current services often do not meet their needs?

Where does the program stand around the need to engage men to overcome and prevent violence? How is this stance reflected in program policies, procedures, practices and standards? How is this reflected in program stance towards these men, use of language (e.g. 'violent men', 'perpetrators', versus 'men using violence').

Where does the program stand in regard to strengthening the local (particularly, minority) community? How does the program strengthen the community? How does the program let the community drive the process in developing ways to overcome and prevent violence in the local context, as

opposed to the program imposing social engineering from outside the community?

Where does the program stand in regard to the USA-based cultural domination of domestic violence responses in the field? Where does the program stand around the question of cultural domination? (e.g. of minority cultural values (e.g. around violence), versus mainstream cultural values).

These are the kinds of dilemmas and questions that seem useful to be considered if sustainable engagement with men in overcoming men's violence is to be achieved.

Conclusion

The domestic violence field has made many gains in the last two decades, and is increasingly globalised. More and more countries and cultures are becoming involved in addressing violence against women by men.

As part of long term, sustainable violence prevention regarding overcoming men's violence, developing engagement and partnerships with men is a critical strategy. This will require greater awareness of the need to pay attention to local culture, race and class issues in order to engage men with cross culturally sensitive interventions.

The concept of men, particularly men from minority cultures as both oppressors and oppressed will need to inform strategies for engagement at both the macro and micro levels. Community development based strategies beyond criminal justice system interventions will need to be evolved in a variety of contexts and refined if violence prevention is to be a key, achievable goal.

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