

Engaging Men and Boys as a Priority Initiative in Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls

February 28, 2012

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WomenNC CSW 2013 Fellowship



I. Research Interest & Significance of the Research

One of the Civil Rights movement leaders, Fannie Lou Hamer, once said, “Nobody is free until everybody is free.” Her words represent the spirit of the Civil Rights movement working towards social equality, and they are still relevant in our modern society where violence against women and girls continues to be prevalent. As a male advocate studying Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, my primary research interest has been the engagement of men and boys in the elimination and prevention of violence against women and girls. This research seeks to echo Fannie Lou Hamer’s words and ultimately seeks to encourage men and boy’s engagement in the work of eliminating violence. It aims to answer two main research questions at the local, national, and global levels: what will be the outcomes of men and boy's determination to be engaged, and what are the responses for needs from glocal (global and local) communities?

This research is significant for three reasons. First, the research seeks to diversify approaches to reducing violence against women and girls. Having a variety of strategies will quicken the changes in the number of violence against women and girls. Second, this research is proactively problem-solving. The research recognizes the problem and suggests potential solutions that have not been prioritized in the past. Lastly, this research connects local to global and global to local. The research study will generate further research studies and discussions regarding cross-national and cross-regional implications in violence prevention and elimination against women and girls.

II. Severity of Violence against Women and Girls

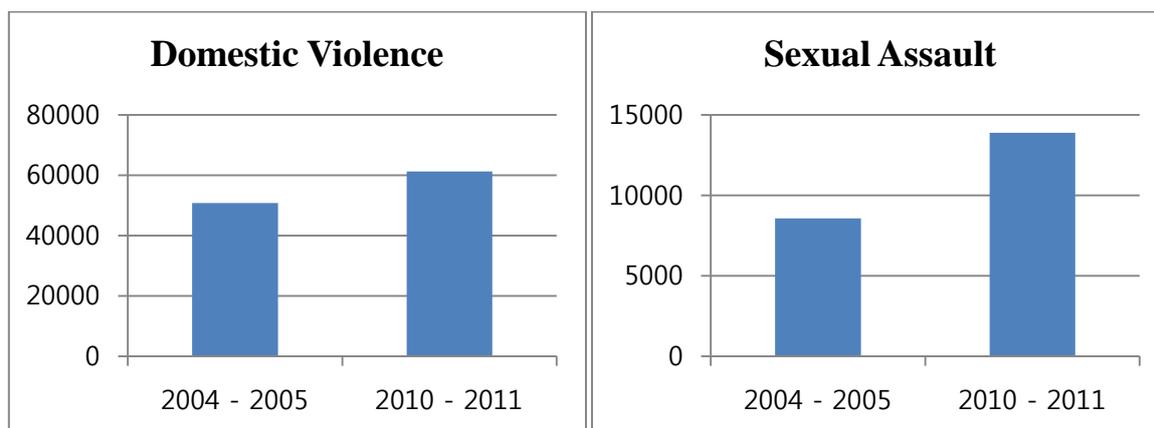
The severity of violence against women and girls has been a global issue for decades. Even though significant improvements have been made in many parts of the world, the numbers show that violence against women still remains one of the worst human rights

violations. According to a video produced by the United Nations Secretary-General's campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women," up to 50 per cent of sexual assaults are committed against girls under the age of 16 worldwide. The video also explains that 603 million women live in countries where domestic violence is not yet considered a crime; furthermore, up to 70 per cent of women in the world report having experienced physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their life. Lastly, it reveals that over 6 million girls worldwide are child brides, married before the age of 18 ("A Promise is a Promise").

The United States, one of six countries that have not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), is not an exception. Almost 2 million women are physically assaulted and approximately another 1 million women are stalked every year in the United States ("Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence against Women"). One-third of women murdered each year in the United States are killed by their intimate partners and 83 per cent of girls, aged 12 to 16, experience some form of sexual harassment in public schools ("Violence against Women Fact Sheet").

In North Carolina, the research has found that 25 per cent of women have experienced "physical and/or sexual violence during their adult lifetimes, with current or former intimate partners being the most common perpetrators of this violence" (Martin, 2008). These findings are similar to national findings on violence against women, which also showed that nearly a quarter of women experience an act of violence during their lifetimes and that these acts are often perpetrated by men they were familiar with (Macy, 2010). But the question still remains on whether violence against women and girls has increased in the past few years or not. The number of clients for both domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault (SA) has significantly increased over the past 7 years from 2004 – 2005 to 2010 – 2011. For example, the number of dating violence has doubled in 7 years ("Council for

Women”).



The increased number of clients and calls, however, should not be interpreted as a single perspective. It could be an indicator that the resources for domestic violence and sexual assault survivors have become more accessible and approachable. It could also be that women have become more outspoken about their experiences and have better or more opportunities to reach out for help. However, this does not change the fact that violence against women and girls remains a prominent social issue that everyone needs to pay attention to because there is no indicator that the number of these incidents has decreased.

III. Why Consider Engaging Men and Boys?

Violence against women and girls is often perceived as a “women’s issue.” However, a shift from the framework is inevitable in order to accelerate the elimination of violence against women and girls. The notion of a “women’s issue” liberates men and boys as if they were excluded from the production of violence, but they have been significant contributors. Considering that the majority of the perpetrators are men committing violence against women, men and boys must not be ignored in the process of problem shooting. When it is a “women’s issue,” women are expected to take the burden to fix their ‘defects.’ Whereas, when we change the framework to everyone’s issue, it invites both men and women to be

ultimately engaged in the elimination of all forms of violence, including those against women and girls.

IV. Masculinity and Elimination of Violence against Women

There is no doubt that engaging men and boys in eradicating violence against women and girls is a crucial strategy. In reality, however, there are not many men involved in the field. A potential reason might be a simple lack of interest since they were out of the frame of a “women’s issue.” Regardless of the reason, men are hesitant to be engaged.

In men’s perspective, engaging in elimination of violence against women is not an easy step to make because they then would be making a step into “women’s territory.” There can be serious consequences for referring to a man as a “woman” – such as “freshwoman” instead of “freshman” – since the term “woman” still means “lesser” in our society (Kleinman, 2007). Getting involved in a “women’s issue,” brings men down to the level of women. No man wants to be called names or be singled out by a group of men just because they are interested in stopping violence. Potential male allies could lose the sense of “masculinity.” If men don’t appear tough, they can become easy prey for bullies (Miedzian, 1991).

The masculine mystique teaches men to be tough, to repress empathy, and to not let moral concerns weigh too heavily (Miedzian, 1991). Engaging in the elimination of violence, however, makes them feel vulnerable. One of the major vulnerabilities that boys and men seek to avoid is the feeling of shame. The patriarchal masculinity rather calls for silence and bravado rather than admission of vulnerability. The silence of boys and men regarding their victim-hood from others leaves the impression that they are “cool” and have no problems or pain (Stoneberg, 2002).

This notion of such masculinity, however, will not be easily untangled because it has

been developed long throughout the history. Southern masculinity has been shaped particularly ever since the Civil War in 19th century. After the defeat against the Northern states, Southern “crises of masculinity” have occurred when society could not locate a hegemonic masculinity among the challenges raised by femininity, race, class, and sexuality (Friend, 2009). That being said, the common characteristics of the men of the North, such as foppishness, passivity, gentleness, interest in home life, and finding friendship with one’s wife rather than the guys, signaled effeminacy and a threat to southern manhood (Friend, 2009). This potentially negative cultural attitude towards “femininity,” would hinder men, especially men living in the Southern part of the United States, from being involved in the eradication of violence against women and girls.

Unfortunately, American culture has made a significant influence on the rest of the world and their culture through various multimedia. Advanced communication technologies exponentially increased the speed of globalization, which might result in the global tendency of men hesitating to be engaged in the elimination of violence against women.

V. Benefits of Engaging Men and Boys

Because men and boys find it difficult to be part of ending violence against women, it is not easy to initiate engaging them. Yet, approximately 50 percent of the world’s population is male and they have not been approached as much as they should be. That being said, there is immense positivity that lies under men and boy’s engagement in this issue.

First, engaging men and boys help building healthy masculinity from generation to generation. Craig Friends, the author of *Southern Masculinity*, writes:

In 2003, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Paige Patterson identified a “war against boys” as “America’s No. 1 problem.” American culture, said Patterson, pressed parents “to make little girls out of your little boys.” Feminist-

inspired developments, including the vilification of superheroes and the eradication of playground games, threatened to eliminate differences between sexes. He encouraged fathers to provide their sons with “a big dog” and “a real gun.” Only the strong response of men could staunch the feminization of the next generation. And nothing, according to Patterson, was more worthy of men’s attention (Friend, 2009).

Patterson’s approach defines femininity as a threat to masculinity. The idea of “us versus them” puts them in a box or category that they are not supposed to escape. Patterson’s idea, therefore, is one of the reasons why men are afraid to confront violence against women. But what needs to be taken away from his claim is the importance of father’s role and early education. Garbarino writes that, “we must acknowledge our disconnection from each other, from our sons and other boys in the community, and especially from ourselves” (Garbarino, 1999). The idea of engaging men and boys is cross-generational because the notion of healthy masculinity will travel within their friends group, social media, and the communities, but most likely within family first through embodying positive role modeling.

Men are afraid to be emotional and vulnerable because those are not characteristics of “masculinity.” However, Gabarino claims that, “a first step in men stopping violence toward women will need to be men breaking through their own denial regarding the violence they themselves have experienced from these same socially controlling mennorms” (Garbarino, 1999). When they do not confront the violence they experienced, they are giving in to the violence as it were “supposed to be.” The action justifies violence and eventually the violence is repeated to them or by them to another. Engaging men and boys helps eradicate violence against women because it challenges men to be vulnerable; this can be done among group of guys, but most importantly in a father and son relationship. When fathers model empathy in their interactions with others and with their sons, it has a profound effect on their offspring (Gabarino, 1999). Fathers are the role models of their sons. When fathers educate

and show their sons that violence against women is not right, projects of engaging men and boys have done its job cultivating healthy masculinity among men because it will be passed to the future generations.

Engaging men and boys not only foster healthy masculinity but it also makes a positive impact on other social problems that are connected to violence against women and girls. For example, Jackson Katz writes that, “gender violence contributes to a wide range of social problems that include youth violence, homelessness, divorce, alcoholism, and the transmission of HIV/ AIDS” (Katz, 2006). This is why violence against women and girls is not just “women’s issue.” If men are willing to pay attention to one of the gender-violence related social problems, and not the violence against women itself, they are being hypocritical. But if men understand the dynamics of those issues and what violence against women is capable of engendering, the notion of engaging men and boys will allow them to be aware of their actions, thoughts, and their way of life in terms of eliminating violence against women. Ultimately, engaging men and boys is a strategic method to approach the problem in multiple directions.

Last but not least, engaging men and boys is a key to the expansion of allies. Men and boys take up 50 per cent of the world’s population. That being said, engaging men and boys to eliminate violence against women is not an option but a must. As there are few men actively working for elimination and prevention of violence against women, those men are easy targets. They are often considered as a traitor or automatically excluded from being a “real” man; the sense of exclusion makes men silent. It is “wimpy to confront other men’s sexism,” or to even “question men’s enjoyment of women as sex objects” (Katz, 2006). However, with the expansion of allies among men, this can be changed. In a big picture, two allies can make a big difference than one; they have more power and agency within the group. The real change can only happen when there are needs inside. Of course, outside sources can

make an influence on men's action but the change cannot be made when there are no men who take this problem as their priority. Engaging men and boys is beneficial in stopping violence against women and girls because it is an instrumental tool to build and expand the networks of allies, particularly among men and boys.

VI. Local Responses

Understanding the benefits of engaging men and boys, in North Carolina, there have been instrumental efforts to embrace men in the movement of eradicating violence against women and girls. Prime examples are Sexual Assault and its recent project, Reclaiming Rites of Passage and Human Rights Activist Slater Newman.

A. North Carolina Coalition against Sexual Assault (NCCASA)

According to their website, the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCCASA) is an inclusive, statewide alliance working to end sexual violence through education, advocacy, and legislation. NCCASA, as a statewide non-profit organization, works on a local level through providing resources to individuals and local rape crisis programs and on a state and national level through educating North Carolina legislators and developing sexual assault protocol for allied professionals. ("NCCASA"). For over 23 years, NCCASA has served the surrounding communities to make North Carolina a safer place to be.

Tony Jones, the coordinator of engaging men and boys, seeks for increased awareness through having these young men in the conversations of preventing violence against women. Their new program, Reclaiming Rites of Passage, spark active involvements not only from the men and boys, but also from diverse community members who are not part of the program. The participants are aged from 13 to 17 year olds. There are 13 mentees, 12 mentors (paired with the mentees) and 2 facilitators. Mentors have prior trainings before the sessions but they attend the sessions with their mentees. These mentees are selected through

interviewing the parents and mentees with the facilitators. During the interview, Jones mentioned that there is no program in North Carolina exclusively focuses on engaging African American men and boys who make the significant population in North Carolina. He explained that he “knew there were needs in his own community,” and he “wanted to start from there” (Jones, 2013). Reclaiming Rites of Passage program, therefore, serves as one of the first local attempts in North Carolina to foster systematic male allies.

Reclaiming Rites of Passage operates under uniquely developed curriculum (approved by Office on Violence against Women) that is in fusion of traditional African rite of passage and sexual violence against women. The program lasts 10 months, one session per month. At the end of the program, crossing over ceremony will be hosted by the elders and publicly claim that these boys earn the rights to be in manhood (African piece). This group of old men (elders) is not necessarily engaged in the activities the program carries; however, each session cannot be started without the elders’ approval. With this unique element of the African communities, elders are responsible for boys’ proper understanding of what manhood is to be an advocate to end violence against women. In addition, there is a group of women called “Nest,” works for the support for the meals and providing women’s perspective on the curriculum if needed.

The project has diverse partners on this grant. Partners include college campuses, service providers (such as rape crisis centers) for the victims, and faith community partners. The reason why they have the mixture of various community partners is because those are the areas that connect us with community at large where African American males and boys intersect. The program is focused on four counties including Durham, Wake, Johnston, and Forsyth County.

The project particularly values the connection between generations through using a model of older men guiding young men and boys (which align with what Gabarino claimed

in his book) to healthy masculinity and manhood. Although this program is particularly designed for young African American men, Tony Jones, the director of the program, claims that the curriculum can be framed differently to target specific group of interest. As he emphasized how the liberation of men is tied to the liberation of women, Tony Jones said that the potential motivation of men's engagement originate out of their "personal (direct or indirect) experience of violence against women and girls." However that is not a "sustaining reason," as the sustaining reason should be "rooted in bringing about equality and mutual respect for both genders" (Jones, 2013).

B. Dr. Slater Newman

Engaging men on an individual level, Dr. Slater Newman has been an essential role model for many men in North Carolina. Dr. Slater Newman is a human rights activist in Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area in North Carolina. His involvement in human rights activism starts as he joins American Civil Liberty Union (ACLU). Dr. Newman also helped establishing ACLU chapter in North Carolina.

In the past 30 years, Dr. Newman has made state-wide and international achievements. In 1999, he spearheaded North Carolina for the ratification of UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This initiative ended up pushing North Carolina House of Representative to draft a bill to encourage the United States Senate to ratify the international treaty. Dr. Newman revised the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights with gender neutral language and the copy of the revised document is featured in the Human Rights Coalition of North Carolina website.

As a leader who has "high regards for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and the "United States Bill of Rights," he said that "his strong in equality in whatever dimensions are" (Newman, 2012) pushed him to do what he did. Although his work was not

exclusively directed towards elimination of violence against women and girls, his achievements have influenced many North Carolinians as he serves as a prime example of men who are engaged in bringing gender equality.

VII. What Can Be Done Nationally and Internationally?

North Carolina is not the only state that is making efforts in engaging men and boys. There are many projects in the United States that have been working with men and boys to eliminate violence against women. If the United States is committed to end injustice against women, the country needs to make two contributions to these local efforts to make the goal reality.

First, the government should consider engaging men and boys as their priority. According to the website of the Office on Violence against Women (OVW), in 2012, the office awarded 12 grants (\$3,380,011) on Engaging Men Program (“Office on Violence against Women”). Out of 21 programs, Engaging Men Program was the 16th most funded program. In 2011, the office awarded 23 grants (\$6,900,000) on Engaging Men Program (“Office on Violence against Women”). Considering that there was no category for engaging men programs before 2011, the OVW has made a significant achievement including it as one of their focuses. However, there is no indication that the government is taking engaging men and boys as their priority for ending violence against women. As many local programs work under small amount of budget, it is inevitable for the government to assign more awards for the programs that engage men and boys.

Second, the United States government needs to ratify the international treaty, Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (or CEDAW), which will serve as the guideline of gender equity for the national and local government. WomenNC claims,

CEDAW Creates a local, national, and international dialogue between the public, governments (local, state, and national), and the international human rights framework. The Convention specifically provides for two means of enforcement: (1) State Parties are required to submit to the United Nations a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative, or other measures adopted to give effect to the treaty's provisions (report submitted every four years); and (2) create a procedure for Inter-State complaints (where one nation can report convention violations by another nation directly to the United Nations) ("WomenNC").

The United States is one of few nations in the world that has not ratified CEDAW although the international treaty was introduced in the United States Senate since 1980s (Newman, 2012). The ratification of CEDAW in the United States will validate the country's commitment to eliminate violence against women and deliver the message to other nations the importance of it.

When Tony Jones, the director of NCCASA's Engaging Men and Boys, was asked about the outcomes of his project, he said, "The major outcome would be the partners that we work with continue the work beyond the end of grant" (Jones, 2013). This indicates that the Reclaiming Rites of Passage program is the product of collective efforts of local organizations. The collective efforts of local organizations can be featured in international networks of engaging men and boys for gender equality, such as MenEngage. MenEngage is a global alliance of NGOs and UN agencies that seeks to engage boys and men to achieve gender equality ("MenEngage"). Working towards the "fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals", MenEngage also stands as a network of the organizations with similar goals through "information-sharing, joint training activities and national, regional and international advocacy" (MenEngage). This international network can play an instrumental role as a medium for local efforts to share their curriculums for engaging men and boys.

When local works are connected internationally, the worldwide collective efforts for engaging men will gain the momentum to make the goal reality.

VIII. Conclusion

Jackson Katz wrote, “most people think violence against women is a women’s issue. [...] but it is a mistake to call men’s violence a women’s issue. [...] Less than 1 percent of rape is committed by women. [...] but we call rape a women’s issue?” (Katz, 2006). If the notion of treating violence against women as a women’s issue does not get dismantled, the violence will continue because the majority of perpetrators will not even second guess the consequences of their actions. The notion can be dismantled, however, as we reframe the problem and engage men and boys as part of the movement to end the problem.

When he was asked why it appears as if men are not as heavily involved in the movement, Tony Jones responded, “I don’t think men understand that there is a space for them and that they are want to. If they know that there is a desire for the presence and there is a place for the presence, it will be different” (Jones, 2013). Engaging men and boys will cover this defect by not only educating men and boys on elimination of violence against women and girls, but also by including and embracing their presence in the collective work to eliminate and prevent any forms of violence against women and girls.

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