



Working with Boys on Crime Prevention: Evidence-based Research
Lilian Hu and Moefeeda Salie-Kagee
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Introduction

In South Africa, the normative attitudes toward violence against women, left unchecked, have perpetuated the cycle of violence. An area of particular concern is the socialization of masculinity in boys and their constant exposure to violence and crime, which contribute to the notion that gender-based violence is acceptable and “natural.” Results from a study in Gauteng showed that 8 out of 10 young men believed women were responsible for causing sexual violence and 3 out of 10 thought women who were raped “asked for it” (Human Rights Watch, 2001). National and international organizations have recognized the need to include and target boys as an effective approach to fight for gender equality and reduced gender-based violence.

Although there are many reactive approaches to crime, such as incarceration, it is the preventative approaches that require as much or more attention and resources. Preventative approaches focus on the root cause of the problem and intervene at the primary level. They look at risk and resilience factors and the role of the environment in socialization of boys. For example, a study shows that a boy who has been sexually abused may be more predisposed to abuse others (Bentovim, 2002). An effective intervention, therefore, could focus on preventing the risk factor occurrence (i.e. prevention of sexual abuse) or strengthening of resilience factors (i.e. knowing the individual is at risk and strengthening a sense of hope/self esteem to prevent abuse of others).

Currently, many programs that focus on gender-based violence work primarily with girls and women, but a trend shows a move toward working with men and boys as an approach to end gender-based violence. Barker (2000) noted that “adolescent boys’ health and health behaviours are directly related to the health of adolescent girls” and recognizing this association is an important tool in prevention of gender-based violence. Key findings from a review show that 29% of the 58 programs that work with men and boys in gender equality were

able to change their behaviors and attitudes with a “well-designed program” (WHO, 2007). Well-designed programs are those that take a gender-transformative approach where gender norms and the social construction of masculinity are critically discussed, questioned, and/or transformed (WHO, 2007).

The following are some of the past or current programs that work with boys on crime prevention and have been evaluated and/or show promise in the South African context.

Crime Prevention Approaches

There are several countries whose work may be adapted by South Africa because of the similarities in the extent of the problem as well as attitudes and beliefs toward gender-based violence. These countries include Mexico, Brazil and India. Other programs from Canada and United States are highlighted because of their well-researched approaches and evaluative components. Current local and international programs help shed light on what is working and not working in the area of crime prevention in boys. The following section highlights some of these programs and offers recommendations for adaptation within South Africa.

Mexico

Similar to South Africa, Mexico has been working with issues of gender and domestic violence but has seen a very slow change in its sexist culture (Interagency Gender Working Group, 2003). For example, women have shown increased participation in the workplace while men have stayed relatively stagnant in their domestic sector participation. This trend is analogous to what South Africa experiences according to participant feedback from Connexions’ pilot study (M. Salie-Kagee, personal communication, August 7, 2007).

Salud y Genero, a Mexico-based NGO, recognizes the need to construct “new, gender-equitable identities” to attain better health and quality of life. It has a program tailored to boys as well as girls and mixed groups. Based on Paulo Freire’s social change theories, these approaches aim to “sensitize men to violence as a feature of masculine socialization harmful to men as well as women and to recognize that repression of emotion often underlies violence” (Interagency Gender Working Group, 2003). Workshops begin with a session where each participant chooses a drawing or a magazine photograph and shares what it

means to him or her. Participants then state their best and worst outcomes or expectations from the workshop, followed by specific activities. The workshops stress dialogue between participants and facilitators as its mode of attitude and consequently, behaviour change.

A few of the activities from *Salud y Genero* may be adaptable in the South African context.

- *The Story of Andres*
 - In this activity, participants are asked to think and talk about the definition of masculinity. To start the activity, participants are told the story about a man who asks a fairy to grant him a series of masculine traits (i.e. power of the warrior, the king, the wise man, etc.) but he never fully receives his wish. The use of a culturally appropriate story allows the participants to relate to the story and critique the meaning and relevance to modern ideas of masculinity. This strategy is useful because the facilitators do not force the deconstruction of masculinity. Rather, the participants are allowed to share their own definitions and asked to question its legitimacy in the fight for gender-equity. Participants get a sense of how this issue matters to them, which allows them to weigh the cost and benefits of striving for these “masculine traits.”
- *Time Tunnel*
 - Participants are asked to go back in time and share experiences that made them who they are. This activity explores the role of the family, relationships, and friendships that help shape their masculine identity. Specifically for sexual health, the exploration of sexual relationships and marriage is of importance. Participants often focus on stereotypes of masculine sexuality when talking about their first sexual encounters as one associated with “power, immediate gratification, and control,” which has implications in gender-based violence and STIs. Participants are usually asked to orally share their stories. However, the private nature of this topic may not be suitable for the oral exercise and an alternative written exercise may be used. In the written exercise, participants write about a situation where they suffered or carried out aggression.

- This activity shows that the program realizes the influence of interpersonal risk and resilience factors on crime prevention. Some factors to consider with this activity (or any that work at the interpersonal level) include:
 - Risk factors: antisocial, criminal, or substance-abusing parents; poor supervision; single parent families; people living with HIV/AIDS in the household; poor family management; poor relationships between parents/caregivers and children; peer rejection; problematic approaches to gender relations (Artz, Doolan, & Smythe, 2006).
 - Resilience factors: nurturing, close-knit family; positive interactions with parents and other adults (Artz, Doolan, & Smythe, 2006).
- *A Story in Every Scar*
 - This activity explores violence by reflecting on one's scars. Each participant was asked to draw their scar on the profile of a body. The story of the scar was written on a separate sheet of paper and then tacked on the body next to the scar. Participants asked to take turns sharing their stories. An interesting twist to the activity is having boys and girls come together to share their respective stories. Salud y Genero noticed that, unlike boys, women do not bear their scars with pride. When the groups are mixed, men are generally moved by the women's stories.
- *MATEA Exercise*
 - This activity is used to sensitize male participants to their feelings and emotions. In this activity, five emotions are discussed—fear, affection, sadness, anger, and joy. Participants are asked where they feel these emotions in their bodies and then asked to rank the emotions from one to five, five being most difficult to express. The facilitators help put the rankings in perspective. Emotions we have learned to exaggerate are ranked 1 and 2, emotions we have learned to control are 4 and 5, and emotions where no exaggeration and no inhibition are necessary are 3's. The

workshops found that fear and sadness are the most difficult emotions to express. Facilitators work toward deconstructing the stereotypes of emotion as “feminine” and teaching participants to express and understand their anger in a non-violent way.

This program is useful because it does look at gender-equity at an individual and interpersonal level. Also, the program realizes the need to administer these activities with just boys or girls with some intermixing of the two groups in a couple of the activities.

Brazil

Brazil is another country that experiences high rates of violence. Furthermore, males in Brazil share similar attitudes to South African males regarding the “ownership” of sex and gender-based violence. The Brazil-based Instituto Promundo developed Program H to work specifically with boys and men to promote gender equality and prevent crime and violence. The intervention is based on the ecological model as well as social constructionist or interactive theory of gender socialization. A quasi-experimental study was conducted to compare the impact of the different combination of Program H. Three communities were chosen to either receive just the training program, both the training program and a social marketing intervention or a delayed training program. Results show that a significantly smaller proportion of respondents in the two experimental group supported traditional gender norms after the first six months (Pulerwitz, Barker, & Segundo, 2004). A more recent study showed that after one year in the program, these positive changes were maintained (Pulerwitz, Barker, Segundo, & Nascimento, 2006).

The program has many components, but of particular interest is a set of activities in *From Violence to Peaceful Coexistence*. It aims to take a proactive approach rather than reactive approach, which the authors argue to be counterproductive. In this section, violence is addressed in several activities. The activities most pertinent to the goals of RAPCAN’s Connexions are as follows.

- *Talking Stick Activity*
 - This culturally tailored activity aims to promote communication and respect among the participants, which have been identified as resilience factors for crime prevention (discussed below in the

theory section). In many Latin American countries, talking sticks represented the power of the tribal chief or leader. Participants are asked to sit in a circle while the facilitator first holds the stick and tells the story of the talking stick to the group. The stick is passed around for each participant to hold. The facilitator then asks the group their opinion about the use of the stick as a way to start a discussion. Whoever wants to speak must ask for the stick from the person holding it at that moment. The idea of the talking stick helped participants listen when someone else was in possession of the stick. This activity is used to start workshops and serve as way for participants to set ground rules. This is also a good way to start discussing cases of violence with the participants. Facilitators found that after about 6 months, the practice of listening and taking turns when speaking became routine. At that point, the talking stick activity was no longer needed.

- *Violence Clothesline*
 - This activity helps participants think about different forms of violence. Each participant is given four sheets of paper to respond to the four titles placed on a clothesline—“Violence practiced against me,” “Violence that I practice,” “How I feel when I practice violence,” and “How I feel when violence is practiced against me.” Participants are asked to share their responses and discuss. Promundo recognizes that this activity may be too personal at times and suggests alternative activities if it seems fit.
- *A Live Fool or a Dead Hero: Male Honor*
 - The purpose of this activity is to talk about how male honor is associated with violence and alternative means to address insult other than violence. This activity engages participants in role-play. Participants are divided into smaller groups and given a scenario to complete and act out. One scenario begins with “a group of friends go dancing. One of them, Leo sees that some guy is staring at his girlfriend. A fight begins with Leo...” Discussions questions follow each play and the activity ends with a discussion of the Resource Sheet, “Where does ‘Male Honor’ come from?”

- *Violence Around Me*
 - This activity allows the participant to discuss violence that occurs in our daily life. Participants are given a worksheet or notebook to write down any form of violence they see. This could be what happens in the street, home, school, workplace and in the media. They are given a week to do their “field work.”

Note: A creative alternative is to use “photovoice” and give participants a disposable camera to document the violence they see and are exposed to in daily life.
- *Diversity and Rights: Me and Others*
 - This activity teaches empathy with persons from different backgrounds. Participants are asked to sit in a circle and randomly given a sheet of paper with a word or phrase such as “I am HIV positive” or “I am a criminal (member of a gang or drug trafficker).” Participants are asked to reflect what they would do if they were in that situation. The paper is then taped in front of his shirt. Participants are asked to walk around, read other people’s phrases and greet each other without speaking. Participants are then asked to impersonate that character and come up with a story about the character to share. While retaining their characters, the activity ends with participants asking others questions about their lives, their current situation, and the problems and realities they face.
- *Risk and Violence: Tests of Courage*
 - In this activity, participants are divided into small groups and asked to complete an unfinished scenario and act it out in a skit. Each of the scenarios talks about tests of courage and exposure to risk and danger. This activity questions why young men feel they have to prove their courage or masculinity.
- *Sexual Violence: Is it or isn’t it?*
 - In this activity, participants are encouraged to discuss the definition of sexual violence, what conditions fosters it, and how to prevent it. Facilitators are asked to research cases specific or relevant to the community. Before the start of the activity, the facilitator puts up three sheets of paper with the following labels—“It is sexual

violence,” “It is not sexual violence,” and “I don’t know.” The participants then read the case studies and put them under the corresponding labels. This activity serve as a “myth buster” by condoning cases that the participant might not consider sexual violence or are not sure about.

- *From violence to respect in intimate relationships*
 - This activity incorporates role-play. Participants are asked to act out scenes of violence between intimate partners and conflict between partners but based on mutual respect. If boys are uncomfortable playing a female role, flip-charts are used to describe the scene instead. This activity allows participants to discuss the differences between a healthy and an unhealthy relationship.
- *What do I do when I’m angry?*
 - This activity helps participants realize non-violent and constructive ways to express their anger by listing negative and positive ways of reacting when angry. Boys are often unwilling to show their emotions and think that anger and violence are the same.
- *Community action: what can I do to promote peaceful coexistence?*
 - This activity is different because it takes the program to a new level by engaging the community. The responsibility is on the participants to make the necessary changes and to make a difference in their community and their future. Efficacy is stressed by pointing out successful interventions started by youths.

Program H is attractive because its activities are adaptable to different communities and cultures. The program is also carried out over a long timespan, which helps build rapport between the participants and the facilitator and have a greater dosage-effect.

Another program in Brazil, Fight for Peace, offers local children and youths in high risk areas alternatives to crime and employment in the drug trade. Participants are offered boxing and wrestling activities as an incentive to join. Each participant is then offered an integrated and personalized six point plan based in sports training, education, life-skills training, promoting a culture of peace, access to the formal labour market, and the development of youth leaders.

The idea of integration of activities such as sports into the curriculum could be adapted in South Africa. One defining feature of this program is its stress on youth leadership and direct participant involvement in the Youth Council.

The program's employment component was considered to be successful in the process of preventing violence as well as educative and recreating activities such as the sports activities (Gomes, Minayo, Goncalves, Njaine, & Schenker, 2006). According to Sherman et al., indicators of success on an individual level include increase in "social competence, self-control, strengthening of moral values and critical awareness and care in the relation of others and with oneself" (cited in Gomes, Minayo, Goncalves, Njaine, & Schenker, 2006). Fight for Peace was able to achieve some of the indicators such as social competence and self-control.

India

As mentioned earlier, one promising aspect of Program H is its adaptation in other countries such as India. *Yari-Dosti: Young Men Redefining Masculinity* was developed in New Delhi in collaboration with organizations abroad including Instituto Promundo. It aims to promote gender equity and address masculinity as a strategy for HIV prevention. This could be further extended to crime. Applying a gendered perspective to working with young men implies two major points:

"(1) Engaging boys to discuss and reflect about gender inequities in their socio-cultural set up. This includes reflecting on the way that women have often been at disadvantage and that women have often been expected to take responsibility for things like child care, sexual and reproductive health matters and domestic tasks.

(2) Reviewing the specific needs that boys have in terms of their health and development because of the way they are socialized. This means, for example, engaging boys in discussions about substance use or risky behavior, helping boys understand why they may feel pressured to behave in those ways." (Population Council, 2006)

This program is particularly promising for South Africa because both countries share similar gender issues and ideas of masculinity. A study conducted with young men in urban slums of Mumbai showed that they described

a “real man” as someone who was physically attractive, dominant, aggressive, and sexually powerful. Controlling women and behaving violently were important parts of the “real man” definition and many thought that young women sought this type of real man. Young men stated that it was important to “prove one’s manhood, and that proving manliness was characterised by violence against women, risky sexual behaviour, and alcohol and drug use” (Population Council, 2006). Preliminary evaluation of Yari-Dosti suggests that there was a significant change in the attitudes of program participants. When asked if “it is okay for a man to hit his wife if she won’t have sex with him,” the percentage of respondents who answered yes decreased from 27% in the pre-test to 13% in the post-test (Verma, Pulerwitz, Mahendra, Singh, Das, & Nura, 2007).

In addition to Yari-Dosti, *Masculinity for Boys: A Resource Guide for Peer Educators* offers information on the socialization of boys, myths of gender and masculinity and understanding “natural” masculinity. This resource guide is based on ten years work with male youth in India on issues of gender and sexual health and complements interventions that work with adolescent issues.

Canada

Canada has been at the forefront of crime prevention. One program was especially sensitive to cultural differences with its tailored strategy to that individual community. The Outdoor Classroom project includes an outdoor camp, a breakfast program and an in-school program involving elders, life skills, communications programming, and traditional learning. This strategy acknowledges the importance of community involvement, the built environment and a multifaceted approach to crime prevention. The project was found to be successful in changing the pro-social skill development of boys aged 9-12 when compared to a comparison group.

Project Early Intervention is another program that focuses on strengthening resilience against risk factors and reduction in violence and anti-social behaviour. This four-part program worked with children ages 6 to 12 and included a life skills training program, sports and recreation programming, and homework club program. Its social skills component used role-play activities, videos, discussions and games teaching children about impulse control, anger management and conflict resolution and avoidance.

United States

Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RIPP) is a sixth grade curriculum that was taught in the Richmond Youth Against Violence Project. Although this program does not directly focus on boys or gender-based violence, it does work with students who may be at risk for violence and criminal activity. It also has an evaluative component with positive results that are worth noting. Some of the strategies and theoretical framework could be adapted to a boys-only program.

RIPP was designed for students with high rates of suspension, low grade-point averages, absenteeism problems, and a history of violent behavior. About 90% of the students in the intervention were African American, and many came from low-income, single-parent households in neighborhoods with high rates of crime and drug use. The curriculum focuses on conflict resolution and combined “behavioural repetition and mental rehearsal, experiential learning activities, and didactic learning opportunities” (Thornton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer, 2002). Early sessions focused on team building and expanding students’ knowledge about nonviolence; later sessions focused on skill building and critical analysis. An evaluative study by Farrell and Meyer showed that the skills taught in the sixth grade were reinforced by a school-wide peer-mediation intervention and by seventh- and eighth-grade curricula implemented by teachers (as cited in Thornton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer, 2002). The initial results from the intervention showed that participants had significantly fewer disciplinary code violations, carried weapons less often, and were suspended less frequently than controls. Furthermore, participants improved their knowledge of intervention material, used their school’s mediation program more frequently, and reported fewer injuries from fighting. A six-month follow-up study of RIPP showed significant treatment effects for the frequency of violent behaviors, suppression of aggressive behavior, knowledge of the intervention material, and improved impulse control among boys. A subsequent study by Farrell, Meyer and White revealed that school disciplinary data from the first semester of the seventh grade showed that RIPP participants had significantly fewer suspensions than the control group (Thornton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer, 2002). Again, the limitation of the study and intervention is that it did not focus on social

construction of masculinity and issues of gender. However, the promising results may be a useful addition to a crime prevention program for boys since it accounts for risk factors and strengthens resilience factors.

South Africa

In 1998, EngenderHealth along with the Planned Parenthood Association started the Men as Partners (MAP) program in South Africa. This was a consequence of the recognition that men's attitudes and behaviors contribute to sexual and reproductive health. MAP realizes that men are equally capable of taking a stand against gender-based violence in their communities. Many interventions from this program are worth mentioning.

MAP realizes that educational workshops would have a longer and wider lasting effect if other types of interventions were used to reinforce their messages. This was supported by a recent review of men and boys programs that showed integrated programs that combine group education with community outreach and mobilization and mass-media campaigns are more effective at changing behaviour than group education alone (WHO, 2007). In accordance to these findings, MAP has integrated art and drama into its interventions.

One intervention from the Youth Channel Group incorporates gender issues and domestic violence into drama, dance, rap and poetry. The goal is to keep youth's attention through these performances. A similar form of intervention used "ambush theatre" to spur debate and discussion by staging scenarios on gender-based violence in busy public spaces.

MAP also realizes the benefit of a multi-faceted approach. Working with Artists Proof Studio, MAP first held workshops and reinforced their messages through a mural project with the students and volunteers. Students who participate in the program stated that the experience was "personally meaningful" (Siegfried, 2005). Independent evaluations and experiences suggest that men respond well to MAP's participatory methodology and usually leave workshops with the commitment to reduce risky behaviour (Peacock, Mehta, Tshabalala, Rebombo, Lesetedi, 2004).

Theoretical frameworks

Programs that address youth violence and crime prevention often frame their interventions in one or a combination of the following theories:

- Theory of masculinity
- Social cognitive theory/socio-ecological model
- Risk and resilience factors
- Social change theories.

Many of the previous work looked at theory of masculinity—how boys are socialized to take on the stereotypical male role of dominance, aggression and control.

Most of the approaches incorporate either preventing risk factors or strengthening resilience factors as part of their frameworks. Research has shown that individual risk factors for criminality include experience with trauma, lack of resources/poverty, prior history of delinquent/criminal behaviour, low intelligence and low achievement, truancy/dropping out of school/interrupted schooling, attention deficit disorder, substance abuse, normative use of physical aggression as a means of settling disputes, acceptance of violence as a legitimate response to a threat or as an acceptable activity, carrying weapons, early sexual activity, early pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS (Artz, Doolan, & Smythe, 2006). The approaches discussed above often consider the normative use of physical aggression and experience with trauma as the main risk factors and justification for intervention.

Besides risk factors, many approaches value the strengthening of resilience factors. On an individual level, these factors include personal disposition and attitudes (i.e. sense of morality, respect for and from others, sense of identity and hope), emotional stability, academic success, and individual achievements (Artz, Doolan, & Smythe, 2006).

Another framework worth consideration is the social cognitive theory, which is similar to the socio-ecological framework used in Program H. The theory accounts for the reciprocal determinism of the person, environment and behaviour—how each construct influences the other. RIPP is an example of how a program can strengthen self-efficacy to change, how increased knowledge and skills influenced the participants' behaviors, and how the mediation program changed the school's environment to be conducive to conflict resolution. This framework is especially effective if a multi-faceted approach is taken and inclusive of the three constructs.

One major limitation of social cognitive interventions is that it takes a long time to effect changes (Thornton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer, 2002). Orpinas found that a single curriculum with 10 to 15 sessions is insufficient and suggests at a minimum of half a school year of violence prevention programming (Orpinas, 1995). Furthermore, for the longest term impact, multi-year models with continuity across years should be implemented. Finally, social cognitive interventions should be a permanent part of school curricula, especially for students who come into daily contact with violence outside the school setting.

Some of the suggestions for activities in a social cognitive intervention resonate with the activities discussed above and are as follow:

- “Make the intervention fun, and relate it to ‘real life.’
- Include games and videotape the intervention activities to engage younger children.
- Use articles from local newspapers or magazines to start discussions about violence.
- Have students keep a log of violent images they see in the media and nonviolent examples of conflict resolution; use the log to generate class discussions.
- Ask young participants to share stories that illustrate nonviolent, prosocial behaviors” (Thornton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer, 2002).

Experts in the field of youth violence prevention have identified the following additional suggestions for developing social cognitive intervention materials (Thornton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer, 2002):

- “Involve teachers and principals from the beginning.
- Use the words children use with their peers when they are angry.
- Include role-playing and small-group exercises to help children practice prosocial, nonviolent behaviors and develop automatic positive responses.
- Include training in intercultural understanding so young people can tolerate differences and see others’ points of view.
- Teach students about the risk factors or triggers that can lead to violent confrontation.”

Key trends in the development of crime prevention have shown a move toward integrated strategies and practice (Shaw, 2005). Understanding the social construction of masculinity helps programmers understand the social

environment's role in gender equity and why gender-based violence continues to be a major problem. Knowing about risk and resilience factors allows interventions to make changes from within each individual. As more interventions and programs are evaluated, the benefit of a multi-faceted, gender-transformative approach in the prevention of gender-based violence will be evident.

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