

## **THEory into ACTION**

A Bulletin of New Developments in Community Psychology Practice

### **Working with Communities to Prevent and Reduce Intimate Partner Violence**

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With the recent national concerns about violence, it's important to remember that much violence takes place not among strangers, but rather between intimate partners. According to the 2010 The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, Merrick, Chen, & Stevens, 2011), in the United States, about 35.6% of women and 28.5% of men have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Furthermore, based on the survey's findings, in the United States "on average, 24 people per minute are victims of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner" (Center for Disease Control (CDC), 2013). This is an area where community psychologists can make and are making a significant contribution to violence reduction. Dr. Eric Mankowski, a community psychologist at Portland State University, conducts research on Intimate Partner Violence in Oregon. Dr. Mankowski's work with Intimate Partner Violence reflects his interest in anti-sexist men's work and desire to change society's definition of masculinity. His work is widespread and ranges from program evaluation to advocacy.

Dr. Mankowski works with many different populations in order to reduce and prevent intimate partner violence. He currently teaches a capstone class wherein high school students look at county-level policies in an anti-violence committee. Students attend a youth summit, create violence prevention programs, and are given a voice in county policies. The second youth summit will occur this year and involvement is planned to increase from 300 students to roughly 600 students. Last year, the youth summit attained a \$100,000 grant to bring violence prevention and conflict resolution projects that were conceived at the summit into local middle and high schools.

Dr. Mankowski would like to see more programs like these that are developed and run by youth because they are more cost-efficient and sustainable. He also sees a great need on college campuses to identify the problem of violence against both males and females and is trying to start a movement for campus-based centers that would engage men in prevention of violence. Another area Dr. Mankowski is focusing on is the workplace. Moreover, he is focusing on the labor sector by providing knowledge and developing training to educate people about domestic violence, how to recognize it, and methods of intervention.

Furthermore, Dr. Mankowski has spent the last 15 years working to develop a collaborative relationship with programs that provide domestic violence interventions to men who have been convicted of domestic violence assault and have been mandated to receive education through a domestic violence intervention program. He has helped streamline and centralize domestic intervention programs by creating a directory that is updated annually and includes recent information about programs. The idea of the directory emerged from the disconnect between the Criminal Justice System, men who

are convicted of domestic violence assault, and domestic violence intervention programs. The directory is a collaborative effort defined by a reciprocal and power-sharing relationship and has increased general knowledge about domestic violence interventions throughout the state. Dr. Mankowski believes that this is in part due to his research team's work.

Dr. Mankowski is also a member of a committee for the State Attorney General. This committee is tasked to create a standard of practice for domestic violence intervention programs. While there is not an efficient method of disseminating the standard of practice, Dr. Mankowski's research team has been able to monitor programs' compliance to standards using survey methods. Dr. Mankowski and his research team are working to help ensure practice does meet standards by conducting research on program effectiveness and giving these programs feedback. This work is reflective of the ecological model because Dr. Mankowski and his team are considering an individual within their social context by determining if education provided in the programs and the context of the programs are affecting an outcome of future violence prevention on an individual level.

This work, of course, has not been without challenges. Intimate Partner Violence is a difficult topic to effectively study because most abuse is unreported and a lot of abuse is not considered illegal. The field mostly relies on criminal recidivism data and often cannot attain reports from previously-abused partners. Furthermore, a challenge Dr. Mankowski and his team face is working in partnership with both domestic violence victim advocacy groups and domestic violence intervention programs involved in the coordinated community response. There exist differing viewpoints on the nature and

value of education, services, preventive intervention, and criminal justice responses to address intimate partner violence. Dr. Mankowski believes that continued dialogue, exchange of information, and research that incorporates multiple perspectives can facilitate effective working coalitions.

Some believe that men who are convicted of domestic violence assault should be put in prison instead of in educational intervention programs. Dr. Mankowski believes we need something beside prison—we need prevention. Further, relying on incarceration and other criminal justice interventions, we can unintentionally recreate patriarchal and class- and racially-biased responses to Intimate Partner Violence. Prevention and other community based methods would be less limited and not as costly to the long term goals of many feminist analyses of gendered violence.

#### References

Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Center for Disease Control. (2013). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS). Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/>

*This is part of a series of bulletins highlighting the use of community psychology in practice. Comments, suggestions, and questions are welcome. Please direct them to Bill Berkowitz at [Bill\\_Berkowitz@uml.edu](mailto:Bill_Berkowitz@uml.edu).*