REACHING OUT & RESPONDING TO MEN WHO ARE RESISTANT OR HOSTILE TO GENDER EQUALITY

The Continuum of Male Engagement

Rus Funk

Consulting

About Rus Funk Consulting

Rus Funk Consulting provides an array of Training and Technical Assistance Services designed to assist campuses and organizations to enhance their services and programming to their constituencies. A primary area of focus is on promoting gender and racial equity and justice within campuses and organizations; and creating environments that support the respect and valuing that people deserve. Promoting equity and justice goes beyond workshops and training. It gets to the heart of an organizational or campus culture, the social environment that exists within a campus or organization and how the campus or organization engages and is a part of its broader community.

A significant part of Rus Funk Consulting services focus specifically on addressing and promoting men's roles in promoting gender and racial equity and justice.

Rus Funk, the principal of Rus Funk Consulting, has been working in the area of men's engagement to promote gender and racial equality and end gender-based violence for more than 30 years. He is the co-founder of dozens of grassroots, community based male engagement efforts including: DC Men Against Rape (now Men Can Stop Rape, inc.), Men for Gender Justice, MensWork: eliminating violence against women, the Own It Initiative and more. Rus was also instrumental in helping to create the Ohio Men's Action Network and Men Against Violence in Malta. Rus is the Co-founder of the North American MenEngage Network (NAMEN), and currently serves on the board of the Global MenEngage Alliance and Secretary of the National Center on Sexual and Domestic Violence.

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Introduction

In the *Continuum of Male Engagement: A Conceptual Model for Engaging men to Prevent Gender-Based Violence and Promote Gender Equality* (Funk, 2018), I introduced the notion that men can be described as being at various "degrees of engage-ability" to efforts to prevent gender-based violence and/or promote gender equality. That is, some men are more ready or willing to be engaged than others. Effective engagement efforts focus on the men who demonstrate some degree of willingness, I argue, rather than attempting to convince those men who are more resistant that this is a real issue, or that *they* should be involved. The second core lesson of the continuum of male engagement is to align the specific invitations to become engaged with men's degree of readiness to take action. Effectively engaging "hesitant" men requires some different engagement strategies and efforts than effectively engaging those men who express some curiosity.

I use the image of a continuum to reflect different levels of readiness to be engaged that men are typically positioned:
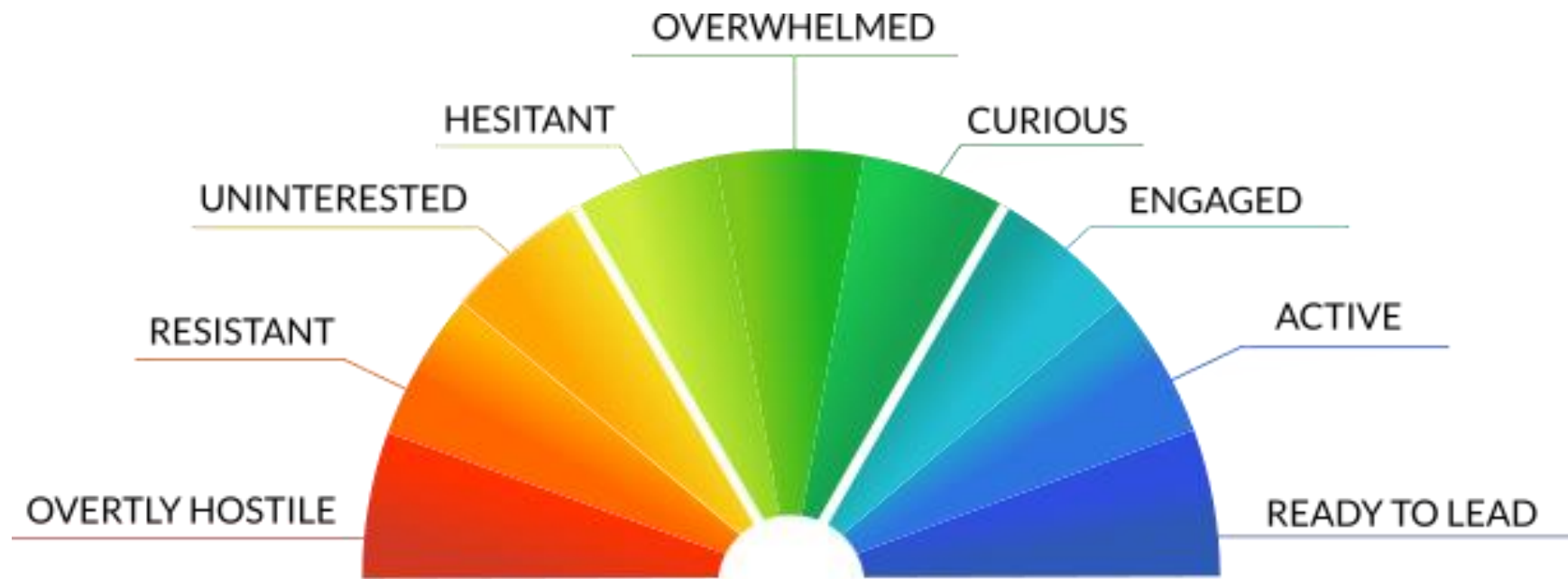
In the *Conceptual Overview*, I describe several categories of men I referred to as "opposed": the three groups of men on the left in the above diagram. These are the men that all practitioners come into contact with who. Practitioners and advocates often feel compelled

to try and convince these men that they need to get engaged, involved, or that our perspective is the right one. Attempting to *convince* someone of something, is inherently different than attempting to *invite* someone to do something. Most folks take on a different tone, mind-set, even body posture when trying to convince than they do when trying to invite. On the receiving end, most folks are much more open to being invited than being convinced. Convincing often takes on a somewhat argumentative tone (albeit usually inadvertent) and is certainly experienced as being argumentative. The result and impact is that in an attempt to convince men, practitioners and advocates tend to push men into defensiveness and inadvertently deepen their resistance. As they get more resistant and defensive, practitioners and advocates tend to re-double their efforts to be convincing. Without realizing it, advocates and practitioners are likely to actually strengthen men's resistance rather than effectively inviting them to participate.

This is not an unusual dynamic. Most folks resist other people's attempt to convince us of one thing or another. An inherent dynamic of convincing is the notion that the other person is wrong about something. There aren't many folks who want to admit when we're wrong. Even if the intention of advocates or practitioners is not to convince men who are opposed of anything, when we are perceived as trying to convince them, this dynamic gets triggered.

The side effect is that those "men in the middle" (men who are hesitant to curious on the continuum), who witness these efforts to convince the men who are hostile, resistant or uninterested, become less likely to be engaged. Their perception, based on their experience of practitioners trying to "convince", may be that practitioners or advocates are intolerant, judgmental or bullying. As a result, they may well side with the men who they perceive as being pressured rather than remaining open and willing (though hesitant) to be engaged. In the *Conceptual Overview,* I suggested that advocates and practitioners focus engagement efforts on those men who are most likely to be engaged, leaving uninterested, resistant or hostile men alone ("for now").

"Just because they are less likely to be engaged, does not mean that they should be ignored."

In this manual, the attention shifts to these groups of men – those who are uninterested, resistant or hostile. Here, I examine men in each category in some detail and provide some suggestions on ways to reach out to and/or respond to these men. Just because they are less likely to be engaged does not mean that they should be ignored. There are reasons to reach out and attempt to engage them as well as strategies that have proven effective. There are also additional and distinct reasons to respond to those men that practitioners and advocates choose not to reach out to. Distinguishing between reaching out and responding, as well as the rationales and strategies to a) reach out and b) respond to are discussed in this current manual.

As a note, reaching out and responding are still different than convincing. The strategies described in this manual continue to position practitioners, advocates and the efforts they engage in as remaining open and inviting to where men are and not enter into mindset of being argumentative. *Reaching* and *responding* are different than *convincing*.

(Social) Context Matters

Effectively reaching and respond to men integrates a recognition of the social context in which they exist. The social context refers to the various dynamics and variables that shape people's perspective, values, understanding and beliefs. The social context includes the attitudes and beliefs of friends and family, the norms that surround men, the messages they receive from social and other forms of media, etc. The social context has a profound impact on how anyone understands their roles, their attitudes and beliefs about social phenomenon, and what they see as their capacity to effect change. A model that depicts the interacts of these factors is the "social ecology"
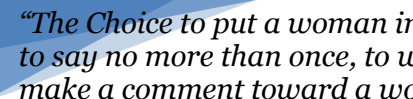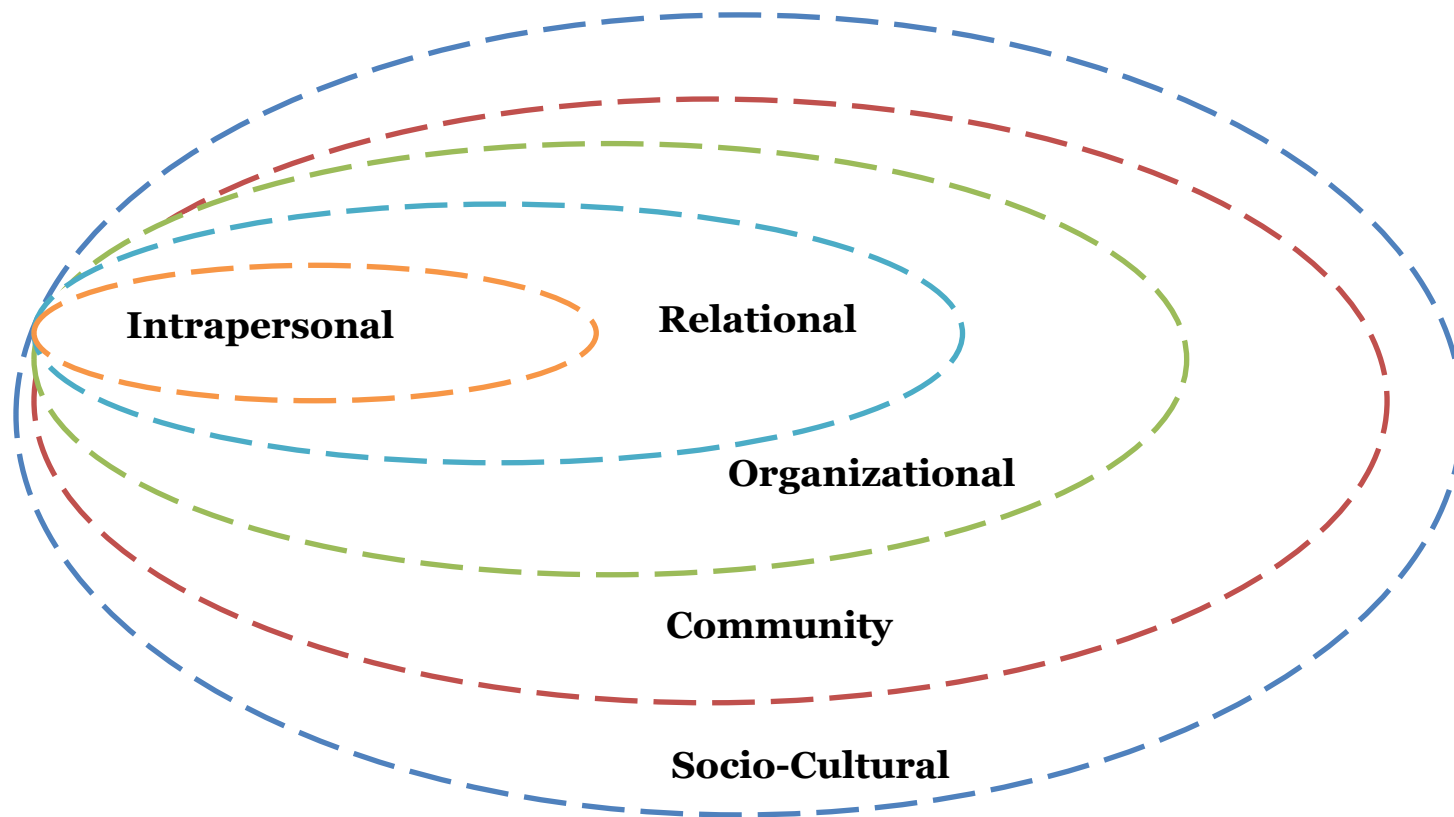

The social ecological model, based in public health theory and practice, depicts the factors that contribute to a person engaging in a behavior across multiple layers – their own attitudes and beliefs, of course, but also the attitudes and beliefs of their friends and family,

as well as factors that support or encourage those beliefs and attitudes in their organizations, communities, and in the broader society as a whole. Put simply, in order to engage in any behavior, one must first see it as an option that is supported and encouraged. Before youth can choose to smoke, or engage in unsafe sexual behavior, or use drugs, these behaviors must be seen as an option. The degree to which any behavior is an option is a part of the dynamic that is often referred to as "social norms." There are multiple factors that collide suggesting to people that their behavior, and the attitudes and beliefs that drive that behavior are "normal.'

The social ecology exposes the interconnected factors of individual knowledge, interpersonal relationships, community values, laws and the media all contribute to the normalization of gender inequality and gender-based violence (Heise, 1998). It includes the high rate to which girls and women are sexually objectified in general, and the young age at which women begin experiencing this. The nature of social norms indicate that if it is "normal" for young girls to begin being sexually objectified by age 7 – 9, then it is similarly normal for young boys by age 7 – 9 to begin learning that it is "normal" to sexually objectify. In terms of the legal context, the men who perpetrate violence against other men are arrested, prosecuted and convicted at higher rates than men who perpetrate violence against women (accounting for the same forms of violence, degree of injuries received, and other factors) (see, for example, Nowacki & Windsong, 2019). This social environment that both sexualizes and objectifies girls and women beginning at young ages, and systemically devalues the violence and harm perpetrated against women and girls, has come to be referred to as rape culture. If this is the culture in which we are raising our sons, then it should not be a surprise that some of our sons engage in perpetrating violence, and/or are uninterested, resistant or hostile to efforts to prevent gender-based violence.

The social ecology helps to re-positions the problem of men's perpetration of gender-based violence in the social environment as much as the individual's decision-making process. In this manual, I also apply this thinking to help understand and explain some men's disinterest, resistance and hostility to efforts to prevent gender-based violence. Individual men would not perpetrate gender-based violence if they did not first experience sexism, abuse and violence as a viable option. While it is true that men who chose to perpetrate are responsible for their own choices and the impact (both intentional and unintentional) of these choices; it is *also* true that these choices are based upon the options that men see available to them. The choice to put women into a position to say no more than once, to whistle or make a comment towards a woman in the hallway or on the street, to purchase a person to use sexually, to call a partner or lover derogatory names, or to stay uninterested in the context of a global pandemic -- occurs in a social context in which not only are these options available, but in many ways are structurally encouraged and socially incentivized.

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It is this same environment that allows, encourages and supports men to be uninterested, resistant or hostile to efforts to prevent gender-based violence or promote gender equality. In many ways, men's disinterest, resistance and hostility is simply the individual manifestations of our social environment. The social environment that supports, tolerates and encourages men to perpetrate various forms of violence against women and girls is the same social context is one in which men are materially punished for standing up for

women or girls. Practitioners and advocates are significantly more effective in reaching out and responding to men who are disinterested, resistant or hostile by understanding that the problem of is at least as much a problem of the social environment as it is a problem of these men's ideas, attitudes or beliefs.

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Effectively reaching out and responding to men who are disinterested, resistant or hostile, then requires developing strategies and efforts to do so in ways that attend to this broader social context. The problem is not men's lack of interest, resistance or hostility; the problem is the social environment that supports, allows, even requires that men be uninterested, resistant or hostile. They are disinterested, resistant and hostile because, in part, it is normal for them to do so, based on a multitude of factors across the social ecology. By locating the problem in the social environment, rather than in these individual men who are only doing what they understand to be "normal", generally results in practitioners and advocates being much less confrontational towards these men.

Think of the men who are uninterested, resistant or hostile as examples or manifestations of this social environment. As such, efforts to reach out or respond use these men as touch points to challenge the culture. By seeing these men as responding to what they understand and experience as normal for them, means reaching out and resisting in ways that connect with and engage them (or at least, to potentially do so).

Outline

In this manual, I offer an overview of the differences between reaching out and responding, which includes some effective strategies for doing both – as well as responding by reaching out. I then provide a brief overview of basic messaging practice and then touch on the role of beliefs in how people understand or define issues and their relationship to those issues,. This manual will explore not only the strategies for reaching out and responding but will also explore some of the distinctions between reaching out and responding to the different categories of men: uninterested, resistant and hostile.

Overview

One danger of creating these categories is to inadvertently suggest that the men *are* the categories. The categories of men who are uninterested, resistant or hostile are not conceived of as distinct categories but as broad positions. There are uninterested men, for example, who are leaning towards being hesitant, while other men are more like those who are resistant. While there are some clear distinctions between men who are uninterested, resistant or hostile, it is much more helpful to consider these men, their attitudes and their behaviors on a continuum. The intention here is not to label the men, but rather to provide a framework for how to conceptualize where men are in terms of their relationship to and understanding of gender-based violence and/or gender equality and provide practitioners and advocates some strategies and tools to be able to effectively do the work of preventing gender-based violence and promoting gender equality.

Reaching Out or Responding

This manual explores two different strategies: Reaching out and Responding. The previous manual provided an overview of different engagement strategies that have been found to be useful in supporting men into varying levels of activism and leadership in preventing gender-based violence or promoting gender equality. Conceptually, efforts to *engage* men are understood as distinct from *reaching* or *responding* to men. Consider the men who are identified as "engage-able" as men who have already been "reached" in some way. The men who are most likely to be most "engage-able" are men who already recognize, at least to some degree, that gender-based violence is an issue with which they have some kind of connection. Those men who have been defined as "engage-able" don't need to be reached, they need and deserve information, tools and resources that invite them become involved and to take action. "Reaching out to" is seen as a step before "engaging." When advocates or practitioners find that themselves trying to *convince* a man or a group of men, a change of strategies is called for: rather than trying to *convince* them, the focus becomes trying to *reach* them.

"Reaching out refers to efforts aimed at connecting with men in ways that connect them to the issues of gender-based violence and/or gender equality."

"Reaching out" refers to efforts to connect with men in ways that connect them to the issues of gender-based violence and/or gender equality. The goal is to make or strengthen a connection with the man/men and use this connection to explore and define a connection

between him/them and the issues of gender-based violence and/or gender equality. The goal is *not* to convince or argue with men; it is to *connect* with men. This has significant implications for how practitioners and advocates understand and position ourselves in relation with them.

Identifying the methods and strategies for reaching out to men begins with understanding that these men are reachable. Note the difference in your body, your attitudes, your mind-set, between trying to convince someone of something, vs trying to reach them. Most people find that trying to be convincing positions them to be more argumentative, more thoroughly convinced that they are right, and less open to differing perspectives or opinions. All of these attributes, being argumentative, being "right" and being less open to differing positions, generally result in less effectiveness.

Reaching out to is understood as an attempt to create a connection with that person or group of people – creating a connection with them in order to explore and expose their connection to gender-based violence, preventing gender-based violence, or promoting gender equality. Creating a connection is the first step in potentially engaging them.

Responding to refers to the actions and efforts that are meant to counter to the behaviors, messages, or rhetoric espoused by men to undermine efforts to prevent gender-based violence or promote gender equality. When responding, practitioners and advocates are not striving to reach the men who are espousing these views or ideas – there are some men who we cannot reach. Rather, the goal is to respond in ways that counter the message that they have delivered. There is, however, an element of reaching out when responding to negative or hostile messages or rhetoric. The primary focus is to counter the mis-information, but a secondary (and in many ways equally important) focus has to be on reaching the audience. While there is some value in counter misinformation or damaging messages, there is a tendency to do so in ways that come across as dismissive of the messenger. The danger of responding in this kind of way is that practitioners and advocates may also dismiss the audience in the process of dismissing the message or the messenger. The goal advocated in this manual is to respond to these messages and misinformation in ways that can reach and connect with the audience.

> *"Responding to* refers to efforts to counter behaviors or rhetoric to undermine efforts to prevent gender-based violence and/or promote gender equality."

There is some inherent confusion in this categorization – how does a practitioner or advocate distinguish between those resistant men who can be reached, and those who need to be responded to? One answer is to allow the situation to determine this and recognize that it is possible to do both. Practitioners and advocates can respond to mis- or dis-information that is being expressed by men or groups while also reaching out to the men who are making these comments.

The main distinction may also be in the perception. If practitioners and advocates do not believe the men to be reachable – that no matter what they do, they aren't going to be able to connect with or reach these men. That perception, on behalf of advocates and practitioners, defines the strategies and efforts to be focused on responding to those men. If and when practitioners and advocates perceive the men to be reachable, then strategies and efforts can focus on attempting to connect with and reach them.

Focus on Norms

In both reaching out and responding to, a crucial point is that the focus of efforts to prevent gender-based violence or promote gender equality is the social norms rather than focusing on men's behaviors. The problem is the social norms that allow or encourage gender-based violence, or the norms that allow or encourage men to be uninterested, resistant or hostile.

Noting Your Own Responses

Before exploring some strategies and efforts to reach out and respond to men, it's important to spend some time attending to how you, as practitioners and advocates, respond to men who are uninterested, resistant or hostile. These reactions and responses have as much to do with the effectiveness of reaching out or responding to as the actual efforts to reach out or respond – even and perhaps especially the non-verbal reactions and responses.

Men who are uninterested (or apathetic), resistant or hostile tend to generate a host of responses and reactions from practitioners and advocates. As you read this section, you are encouraged to reflect upon how you experience men who are or seem uninterested, resistant or hostile, and the ways you may express your responses.

Uninterested, resistant and hostile men tend to engender a host of responses in practitioners and advocates including:

- o Feeling a need to try to *convince*
- o A desire to engage them by trying to change them
- o Protecting women from them
- o "Rescue" them from themselves
- o Desire to convert ("fix") them

While these initial responses are understandable, using these as a basis for reaching out to men is not effective. Few men would be comfortable being on the receiving end of any of these efforts: being convinced, changed or rescued; being positioned as someone that women need to be protected from. While these responses are not uncommon in working with men in general, they seem to be particularly heightened when faced with men who are uninterested, resistant or hostile. Recognizing how these reactions get expressed (even if perhaps *especially* if expressed unconsciously) is an important factor in the effectiveness of advocates and practitioners in reaching men. Noticing when these reactions are triggered and redirect the responses in more connecting ways will prove much more effective.

Confronting men's disinterest, resistance and/or hostility can also generate a host of emotional responses: frustration, exasperation, anger, discouragement, disappointment, sadness, and probably more. It takes a high degree of self-awareness to be able to notice how these emotional responses are expressed in the midst of a presentation or conversation. If these emotions are being felt, they are likely

being expressed. When practitioners or advocates are attempting to reach men, and are feeling frustrated, exasperated and/or angry, the man/men they're reaching out to are likely picking up on the frustration, exasperation and/or anger. If these emotional responses aren't explained, then the man/men will likely create their own reasons why an advocate or practitioner is frustrated, exasperated and/or angry. The explanation they come up with will, in most cases, discount or dismiss the advocate/practitioner and their arguments. The point is not to suggest that practitioners and advocates minimize or squelch their own feelings. Many of these situations are indeed frustrating, aggravating and enraging. The point is to suggest that practitioners and advocates are likely more effective when they can acknowledge and explain that they're feeling these feelings and why their feeling these feelings rather than push through with the argument or continue to make the key points as if they weren't having any emotional responses.

These men to whom practitioners and advocates are reaching out (not so much the men being responded to) are likely men who can allow for and even respect advocates and practitioners who honestly and authentically share their passion.

Reaching Un-Interested Men

As described in *The Continuum of Male Engagement: A conceptual model for engaging men*, men who are uninterested may better be described as apathetic. As a first step in reaching them, it's important for practitioners and advocates to be willing to allow men to be uninterested or apathetic. It may seem counter-intuitive, but the more practitioners and advocates can be okay with someone being uninterested, the more effective they're likely to be in connecting with them. Practitioners and advocates who can accept some men being uninterested tend to become less engaged in feeling a need or having a desire to convince them that they *should* be interested and care about preventing gender-based violence. When uninterested men don't feel pressured, they tend to be more open to engaging in efforts to examine or explore the issues and may be willing to become interested.

A part of reaching men is to move them in some direction away from being un-interested.

A part of reaching them is to move them in some direction away from uninterested. Triggering the interest of someone who is not interested can be challenging and time/energy consuming. That being said, men who are initially uninterested can be reached. By tying issues of gender-based violence or gender equality to issues or concerns that they *are* interested in, or by connecting the issues of gender-based violence or gender equality to them – gender-based violence or gender equality can be "brought home" for them. Effectively doing so requires recognizing that men who are uninterested believe that gender-based violence does not affect them or anyone they know or love. As noted above, this is a *belief* – as such, it can't be effectively countered with knowledge or facts. Countering beliefs is most effectively done by providing a different experience which provides a foundation for different beliefs to emerge.

There are two main ways to connect with men who are uninterested: either by connecting gender-based violence or gender equality with *what* they are interested in, or in *who* they are interested in.

Michael Flood (2019) suggests several ways to "inspire men's support for gender equality" (Flood 2019, pg. 325):

Content
- Make it Real
- Draw on culturally appropriate materials
- Personalize women's disadvantage
- Make analogies to other forms of inequality
- Substitute race for gender
- Appeal to universal values
- Expose false parallels
- Address men's own experiences of gender

Process
- Acknowledge one's privilege
- Document inequalities
- Imagine walking in women's shoes
- Listen to women
- Make the familiar strange
- Bring men into intimate dialogues

For more information about these suggestions, please read Flood's article directly.

An example of a way to both support men to "imagine walking in women's shoes" is the "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" activity (https://www.walkamileinhershoes.org). This event, which many communities utilize as a way of reaching and engaging men, invites men to literally walk a mile in women's (high heel) shoes. Care must be given when organizing A Walk a Mile event for several reasons: 1) men who participate may not make the connection between walking in high heel shoes and the lessons of women's vulnerability, 2) ensure that men don't use the experience to make light of women's experience, and 3) that cis-gender men who participate do not use this as a means to make fun of transgender men or gender nonconforming people.

An alternative activity that also provides men an opportunity to "imagine walking in women's shoes" attached as an appendix to this document: "Walk a Mile in her Shoes (sort of)."

Both of these activities can prove to be both a way to reach men about women's experiences *and* use this experience of reaching them to engage them further into deeper levels of involvement. Through organizing men to participate in a Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event, as well as strategically reaching men during the walk itself, organizers can both reach and engage men in one effort. The second opportunity, which requires a facilitated processing of men's experiences, similarly provides an opportunity to simultaneously reach and engage men who might have been initially uninterested or resistant.

Both of these examples suggest that one way to effectively reach men is through experiential opportunities rather than attempting to reach men through purely educational type efforts (such as workshops or presentations).

Reaching Men Based on *What* They're Interested In

Given how universal gender-based violence is, it intersects with a wide range of other issues. Exposing the ways that gender-based violence intersects with other issues or causes that men are already engaged in is an effective way to reach these men. As an example, several years ago, in Louisville, Kentucky, there were active efforts to combat police brutality. The main focus of these efforts appeared to be based on the ways that men experience police brutality (more physical, more visible, more likely to result in visible injuries, etc.) All available evidence suggests that when police brutality is being perpetrated, it is perpetrated, roughly equally to both men and women. The ways police brutality is perpetrated on women is generally different than the ways it is perpetrated against men – resulting in police brutality against women being largely hidden from public view in ways that police brutality against men is not. Women tend to experience police brutality more often in more sexualized ways, behind closed doors, less often with weapons, and the injuries are often less visible. As a result, it is far easier for police who brutalize women to hide their brutality than when they brutalize men. As such police brutality can be understood not only as an issue of racial justice, but also as a form of gender-based violence.

Exposing the ways that gender-based violence intersects with other issues or causes that men are already engaged in is an effective way to reach these men.

When this was brought to the organizers and advocates of the efforts (who were largely male), they started to increase their interest in addressing gender-based violence. Police brutality was given a gender lens through and as such, the issues of gender-based violence were connected to what these organizers and advocates were already invested in addressing. The result being that they become differently and more engaged in addressing and combating gender-based violence more broadly. This is also an example of the ways an intersectional approach was used, in practice, to understand the issues of police brutality and effectively engage men.

Reaching Men Based on *Who* They're Interested In

A second strategy for connecting with men is to connect the issues of gender-based violence or gender equality with *who* they're interested in. There are lots of ways that many practitioners and advocates are already likely aware of to encourage and support men to connect gender-based violence or gender equality with the women they are interested. Doing so, however, in a way that does not also engage men's protectionism or desire to rescue women is a challenge. One great example of ways to connect with men who may not be connect the issues of gender-based violence or gender equality to the women in their lives is a project of Men Stopping Violence in Atlanta, GA, called Because We Have Daughters (http://menstoppingviolence.org/programs/because-we-have-daughters/). Because We Have Daughters brings dads and their teenage daughters together for a day-long facilitated conversation. The program is marketed to men as a way to support their daughters to be "strong and empowered women" and encourage them to maneuver through the dating experience. What these dads are then also exposed to is the ways that their daughters are growing up in a sea of misogyny and ways that, as dads, they can work to not only raise their daughters to be strong empowered people, but the ways they can also work to counter the misogynistic sea that their daughters are growing up in.

The messaging here is quite brilliant – what father does not want his daughter to be a strong and empowered woman?!? Of course dads want that (note how this messaging reaching to the belief held by dads). The invitation then is about supporting these dads to do what it is they already believe they want to be doing. Once they are reached in this way, Men Stopping Violence is able to engage them in other kinds of efforts to promote gender equality.

Dads with sons have a parallel experience. While there is not currently any program specifically for dads of sons, reaching dads of sons with a parallel message can be an effective way to reach them. Dads of sons also want their sons to be strong and empowered men, who also respect and value women and girls. It is not just daughters who are swimming in a sea of misogyny; sons are swimming in this same sea. The impact and effects of growing up in a sea of misogyny is different for sons than it is for daughters, but a sea of misogyny is toxic to boys, girls, trans and non-binary kids.

The men who perpetrate rape, domestic violence, stalking, sexual harassment or any of the forms of gender-based violence were, at some point, somebody's son. Men who rape are not born rapists. At some point, nearly all boys were kind, gentle, caring children. Numerous factors from a variety of positions converge for boys to become the kind of men who are willing and able to perpetrate these forms of violence. It seems safe to assume that the vast majority of dads of sons do not want this for their son. At the same time, few dads recognize (or are willing to admit) that their sons could grow up to be men who would make such a choice. In this way, many dads of sons may be positioned as uninterested – "I don't have a daughter, I think rape and domestic

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violence are atrocious but I don't know what this has to do with me." Reaching these dads with a message that encourages them to consider that because they are the fathers of sons, and don't want their sons to be the kind of men who perpetrate rape or domestic violence, *is* the reason why this is their issue. In short, connecting the issues of gender-based violence to the fact that they are connected to their sons.

Reaching Resistant Men

Resistant men are further away from being engaged than uninterested men. Strategically, the same efforts to reach uninterested men can be applied to resistant men, but additional efforts and strategies are also needed, as resistant men tend to be less inclined to respond to these efforts to reach them.

Michael Flood (2019) suggests that a part of reaching men is understanding where their resistance is coming from. He identifies three roots for men's resistance:

- *Attitudinal*: reflecting men's attitudes and beliefs. For example, they believe violence against women to be the problem of only a tiny minority of "pathological" men.

- *Emotional*: reflecting men's identified or subjectivities and emotional investments in gender. For example, they feel angry or uncomfortable with the notion that they are somehow implicated in women's subordinated status.
- *Practical*: reflecting men's habituated practices and relations in the world. For example, they participate in taken-for-granted practices of power and domination in their relationships and families.

(Flood 2019, pg. 323)

Integrating this "roots of resistance" into strategies to reach men who resist increases the effectiveness of these efforts to. While this may seen to complicate the efforts, addressing these roots as a part of reaching men strategies is not a terrific stretch. For example, attending to men's emotional roots (as identified by Flood) would suggest developing a strategies for reaching men that focus on the ways that men can be a part of the solution, rather than emphasizing that men are a part of the problem. Developing messaging that focusing on the impact that men can by being a part of the solution, focusing on accessible ways that men can take action, can be a method to reach resistant men by attending to these emotional roots.

In this same piece, Flood also describes how attitudes are driven by men's beliefs (the focus on beliefs as a foundation for reaching and responding efforts is examined in more detail below) and as such, the attitudes that men ascribe to in order to position their resistance is based on their beliefs. Men's emotional responses that lie as a root to men's resistance also tend to be driven by these beliefs. By addressing the beliefs that lie at the foundation of men's resistance, one can effectively address these attitudinal and emotional roots.
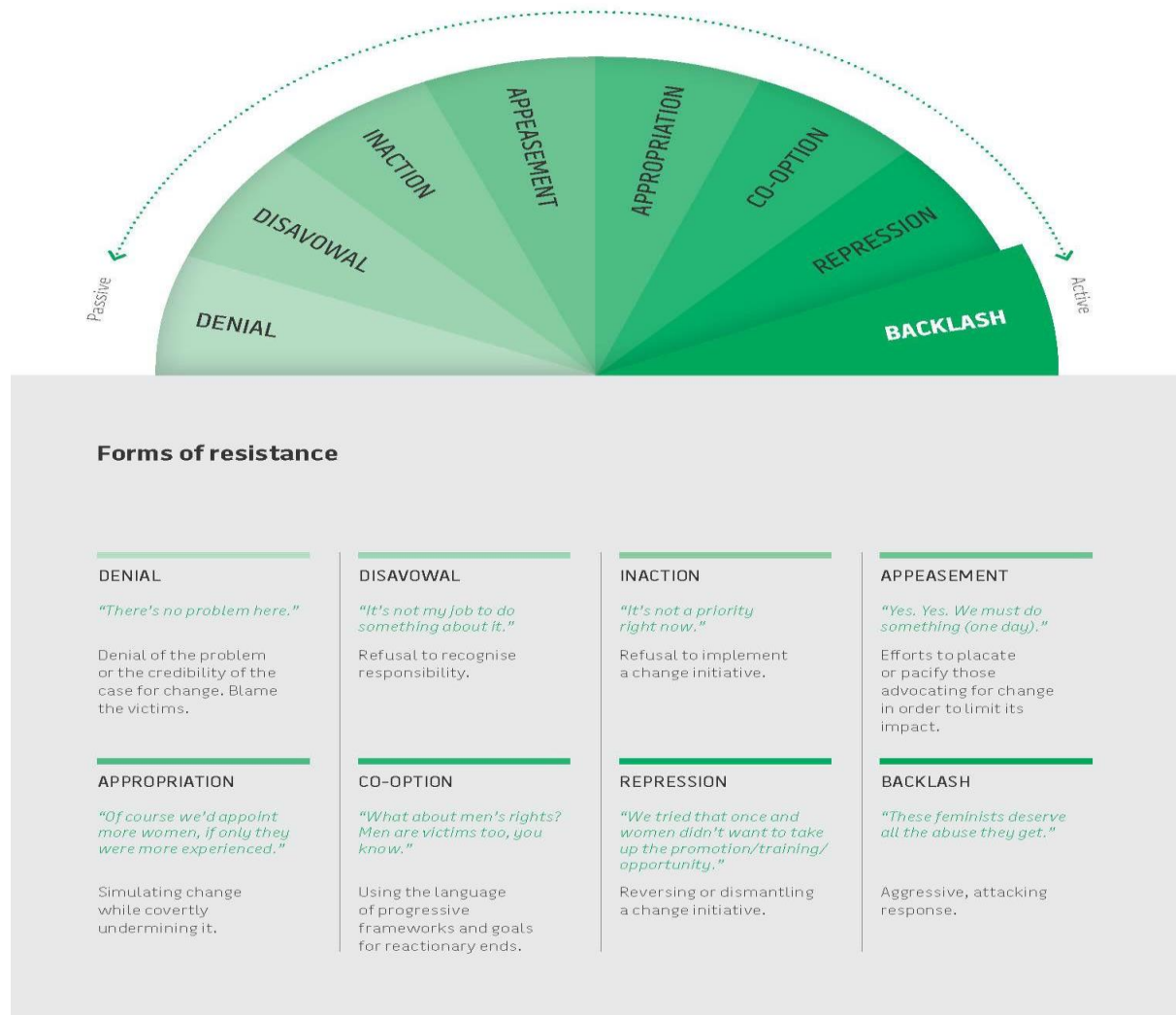
Just like men's relative degree of engagement can be understood as existing on a continuum, so can men's degree of resistance. VicHealth (2018) depicts the various forms of resistance that men take to preventing gender-based violence or promoting gender equality that is based largely on the degree to which men are passive or active in this resistance (see next page).

Just as practitioners and advocates are most effective overall in terms of engaging men by strategically aligning these engagement efforts with the degree to which men are engage-able, so to reaching resistant men is most effective when aligning the reaching our efforts to the kinds of resistance. Effectively reaching men who are in denial differs from efforts to reach men who are appeasing. Somewhere along this continuum, practitioners and advocates need to determine for themselves, and for their organization as a whole, if the time and energy is best spent continuing to try and reach them, or if these efforts are better served by responding.

Before taking on efforts to reach resistant men, practitioners and advocates are encouraged to note their responses to these forms of resistance. The more pulled one feels to argue, convince or debate, and the more one feels angry, frustrated or hostile, the less effective will reaching our efforts be. A typical reaction, for example, when faced with resistance is to dismiss the claims and every part of the argument. If someone is denying the incidence or prevalence of rape, for example, it is easy to get frustrated with this denial (especially if this is the fifth time in a day that a practitioner or advocate has faced these doubts as to the veracity of the research) and dismiss both the question and the questioner. One of the benefits from the "Forms of Resistance" depiction (below) is that it provides a frame for advocates and practitioners to use when checking responses to men's resistance. By having a more nuanced way of viewing and understanding men's resistance, advocates and practitioners can be more nuanced in how they respond – it's likely that the response of advocates and practitioners to men who are repressing is different than the respond to men who are disavowing.

The more frustrated, angry, and/or discouraged an advocate or practitioner feels, the more this suggests that his/her energy would best be directed at responding to the resistance in a way to reach the audience, rather than attempting to reach the resistant man/men directly.

Reaching men who are resistant involves exploring what might be driving their resistance and attempting to reach to these beliefs is the core of these tactics. Perhaps, for example, the resistance of denial can be because men just can't fathom that domestic and sexual violence is as common as it is. For men who are struggling with coming to terms with this, the implications can seem huge – and can strike to the core of their beliefs about the world being a safe place, the role of men in protecting women and children, or others. In *The Continuum of Male Engagement: A Conceptual Model*, I used the example of radio interview I had. The host flat out refused to accept the incidence and prevalence data that I shared. There was a belief system that was driving his denial. I didn't have the time or inclination at that time to attempt to explore or understand his belief system and how that was driving his denial.

Forms of resistance

DENIAL	DISAVOWAL	INACTION	APPEASEMENT
"There's no problem here."	*"It's not my job to do something about it."*	*"It's not a priority right now."*	*"Yes. Yes. We must do something (one day)."*
Denial of the problem or the credibility of the case for change. Blame the victims.	Refusal to recognise responsibility.	Refusal to implement a change initiative.	Efforts to placate or pacify those advocating for change in order to limit its impact.

APPROPRIATION	CO-OPTION	REPRESSION	BACKLASH
"Of course we'd appoint more women, if only they were more experienced."	*"What about men's rights? Men are victims too, you know."*	*"We tried that once and women didn't want to take up the promotion/training/ opportunity."*	*"These feminists deserve all the abuse they get."*
Simulating change while covertly undermining it.	Using the language of progressive frameworks and goals for reactionary ends.	Reversing or dismantling a change initiative.	Aggressive, attacking response.

VicHealth (2018) *(En)countering Resistance* P. 4.

As we continued the interview, it became clear that while he was in denial about the data, he did not deny that rape is a significant problem in our community and that it was important to increase our efforts to prevent it. While his belief system didn't allow him to believe in the incidence rate, his belief system *did* allow him to recognize that rape is a social problem. By connecting with him on that, I was able to reach him. Just as importantly, I feel quite confident that I also reached his audience. Some (perhaps most) of his listeners probably had the same skepticism as he did about the data, or in other words, shared the same denial as to the degree to which rape is a problem. But when they heard me reach with this host about rape being a social problem (regardless of the degree to which it is a social problem), then they likely were reached as well.

Reaching men who are resistant includes similar strategies – reaching to the beliefs that lie beneath their resistance, and identifying how those beliefs align with reasons for being active to prevent gender-based violence...

It would have been easy to get into an argumentative tone with him about the data and why the Centers for Disease Control is a legitimate source for our data, or why even this data is probably an under-reporting, or whatever the other arguments that I was feeling at the time. But getting into any of these arguments with him would have likely only resulting in having him become more entrenched in his position, us becoming stuck in our opposition, and me failing miserably in reaching his audience.

Reaching men who are resistant includes some similar strategies – reaching to the beliefs that lie beneath the resistance and identifying how those beliefs align with the reasons for being active to prevent gender-based violence or promote gender equality. It is again critical to remember the goals of these efforts. It is not to convince men who are resistant to become active in efforts to prevent gender-based violence; the goal is much less profound. The goals are to reach them (and/or their audience) in order to move them to potentially being engage-able; or to reach them to stop being in the way of efforts to prevent gender-based violence or promote gender equality.

Responding

There are those men who cannot be reached, either because they are so resistant or hostile to the calls for preventing gender-based violence or promoting gender equality that reaching them is beyond the capacity of practitioners or advocates; or because practitioners or advocates simply don't have the time, energy or inclination to attempt to reach them. Reaching men can be a drain on limited energy and resource, and it may require more than what practitioners, advocates or their organizations are able to spend. There are times when something that men say or do requires a response even in the midst of ongoing efforts to reach them or others.

Practitioners and advocates should in no way feel compelled to try and reach out to men who are resistance or hostile. There are a host of valid reasons why practitioners and advocates may choose to focus their energy and attention on engaging and responding to men, and leave reaching men altogether. If practitioners or advocates are forced to choose, the recommendation is that they focus efforts, attention and energy on engaging men, and responding to the messages and behaviors of resistant and hostile men.

Responding here refers to efforts to challenge, counter or refute the message that is presented about gender-based violence or gender equality. Men who are most actively resistant or who are hostile, be they in presentations or in the public realm tend to also be the most verbal in presenting a narrative that counters efforts to promote gender equality. The point of responding is two-fold:

1) To publicly counter the statements that have been made, and
2) To attempt to reach to some portion of the audience that heard the message being responded to.

This is a "both-and" situation – meaning that responding should be aimed to achieve both of these goals. Efforts to effectively respond need to be every bit as strategic as efforts to engage men (as described in *the Continuum of Male Engagement: A Conceptual Approach*) or reaching men (as described earlier in this manual).

Men who Resist

For the purposes of considering responding to resistant men, refer to the spectrum depicted on page 16 and consider responding to those men who are most active in their resistance (that is, roughly, men who attempt to appropriate and beyond). Men who are most actively resistant are best understood as men who are taking a political position in their resistance to efforts to prevent gender-based violence or promote gender equality. They may not be part of an organized group (which distinguishes these men from those who are hostile) and may not necessarily define any overt or defined political position, but their actions and efforts belie a political agenda. It is a particular political position, specifically, a position in support of maintaining male dominance and supremacy, that drives their words and deeds. Supporting a system of male domination, which at its core undermines gender equality and justice (even when it is in the guise of individual level references) *is* a political position. For example, the argument is periodically made that efforts to create systems responses that are based on supporting women or men who have experienced sexual assault (especially if such efforts are demonstrating some effectiveness), are creating an environment that is "hostile to men." As efforts to prevent gender-based violence on college high-school campuses, or to prevent sexual harassment in the business sector, have become more widespread, mainstreamed and effective, there are those who attempt to argue that our campuses and businesses have become hostile to men. In many ways, this is similar to the arguments against affirmative action that these efforts are somehow discriminate against white people. Such claims are inherently political! It doesn't really matter so much if the men who are making them understand the way that these arguments are political, it is critical that practitioners and advocates do – and respond to them as such.

Hostile Men

Before focusing specifically on responding to hostile men, it's important to acknowledge that, to a large degree, efforts to promote gender equality currently exists in what can be accurately described as a hostile environment. As described above in "(Social) Context Matters" section, gender-based violence exists because it is part of our environment, as is men's willingness and ability to be uninterested, resistant or opposed. Hostile men exist within the environment that is hostile to the efforts to promote gender equality and gender justice.

"Hostile" men refer to those men who are a part of an organized group – either formally or informally. This includes well organized so-called men's rights or father's rights organizations (such as the National Organization for Men, A Voice for Men, Fathers and Families or others) or more informal loosely organized networks (such as "incels" - involuntary celibates, or "Men Going Their Own Way").

Regardless of how well organized or funded these groups may be, they pose a significant force and have some significant impact on the efforts to prevent gender-based violence and promote gender equality. Their impact is largely due to the degree to which elements of their messaging that resonate and reinforce the values and beliefs that reside in the social environment where men's violence is so prevalent and severe. In other words, the words and actions from men who are hostile come from the environment that is hostile to gender equality and justice.

Regardless of how well organized or funded these groups may be, they pose a significant force and have significant impact on efforts to prevent gender- based violence and promote gender equality.

The better organized groups often engage in formal lobbying and have been known to file suit against states or communities in their efforts to provide comprehensive services. For example, there are national efforts of men to oppose the Violence Against Women Act because they argue that it discriminates against men. On a more localized level, these kinds of organizations have filed lawsuits against domestic violence coalitions in Minnesota and West Virginia because "battered women's shelters discriminate against men".

The point, for our purposes, is that the information and messaging that these groups are presenting *must be* responded to. The effort and energy it would take to reach these men and groups is insurmountable. While reaching hostile men is likely fruitless and beyond the capacity of advocates and practitioners, it's critical to respond in some way to what they are saying and doing. Advocates and practitioners working to promote gender equality and justice are duty-bound to be sure that a part of the agenda is to effectively respond to their dis and mis-information. Their messaging is reaching an audience -- some portion of which is ambivalent about or disagrees with their message, even if they can't articulate what their disagreement is. By not responding to these kinds of messages, advocates and practitioners allow a space that this messaging has disproportionate impact.

Responding Strategies

Both men in resistance and hostile men promote dangerous messages and often provide misleading information. The dangers that men in both these positions pose can't be understated. Their message and information *does* have a reach and an impact. The reach and impact that they have is far beyond what their numbers represent.

It's easy to get distracted by the (often) inflammatory nature of what their rhetoric or behavior, but effectively responding means fining the element within their message that is reaching their audience and creating a counter-narrative that speaks to this same element. This is where a delicate and elusive balance is called for: holding enough of the passion and emotional fire to make your message resonate, without too much passion and emotion that the message comes across as discounting, dismissive or combative.

Knowing that you'll meet resistance and what it looks like is a great start to being prepared.
VicHealth, 2017

It is also easy to feel drawn into a debate (particularly when these perspectives are present in live presentations or workshop). The "debate stance" often involves a desire to "win" the argument or convince them that they are wrong. Before acting on these feelings, its critical to assess your situation and determine if this, strategically, is the best way to respond or if there may be more value in side-stepping the invitation to debate in order to focus on other strategies designed to address the points made and reaching the audience.

Michael Flood (2019) outlines three key strategies for responding to men's hostile messages:

- Offer alternative analysis of the issues on which hostile men focus
  - Acknowledge and respond to area of male pain and disadvantage
  - Offer alternative male voices
- Critique and discredit the organized hostile or anti-feminist backlash efforts
- Show that the hostile efforts are actually harmful to men

<div align="right">(Flood 2019, pg. 339)</div>

The goal of responding is *not* to convince the men or these groups that they are wrong. They, in fact, are not the focus of effective response efforts. The goal of responding is to reach their audience (or at least a portion of their audience). When considering how to most effectively respond, it is critical to consider the continuum of male engagement and consider how to respond in a way that specifically focuses on and is designed to reach a portion of the audience. For example, responding to hostile men's message aimed at curious men will be a different kind of response then one aimed at men hesitant men, and will also be a different kind of response than one aimed at "engaged" men.

Once the audience for the response is clarified, developing a response includes identifying the core points of their argument. Rather than responding to the argument as a whole, it is more effective to focus on two or three core points. Doing so creates an opportunity to be more focused and to develop these two or three core points much more fully. As a result, the response can be at least as equally compelling than the message that is being responded to.

A common point to many of these arguments is that expanding women's human rights, promoting gender equality or engaging men in is somehow bad for men. They tend to operate as if human rights are a zero-sum – if one group gains in rights, another group must lose in rights. They confuse privilege or entitlement with rights. While it's true that men lose some access to male privilege and male entitlement as we continue making progress towards equality and justice, entitlements are not rights. They may *feel like* rights, but they are not. To borrow from another human rights movement, there is no inherent right to "drive while white." There is a long history of black and brown people facing more frequent and severe scrutiny (including police stops, ticketing, and searches) simply for driving while black. Since white people do not face this kind of scrutiny while driving, driving while white has become a privilege that white people are granted in a white-dominated environment. Similarly, there is no inherent right for men to have access to women's bodies or to flirt.

A foundational understanding of any human rights-based movement is that advancing human rights for some expands human rights for all (although to different degrees).The emerging and growing evidence, however, is demonstrating that these kinds of feminist agendas and working to promote women's human rights not only benefits women and girls, but by nearly every indicator, improves men's lives and well-being as well. The evidence clearly suggests that preventing gender based-violence and promoting gender equality is significantly more effective in enhancing men's lives than are the efforts called for by the so-called men's rights agenda.

Here's what we know – based on the available evidence, promoting gender equality and gender justice is better for men, women, and the environment than is reinforcing male privilege. It *feels* more satisfying for most men to have their experience validated, but it does little to benefit men.

Any response to men or men's arguments need a clear call to act. One of the goals of responding is to reach the men who heard the message that is being responded to. Including a call to action increases the likelihood of reaching the intended audience (folks tend to respond better to a call to act than they do to general information or opinion). Some evidence suggests that this increased willingness to respond to a call to action is even greater for male audiences. Furthermore, including a call to act provides practitioners and advocates with a way to measure the success of a response.

Michael Flood and his colleagues at VicHealth (2018) have produced a powerful and useful tool for developing a comprehensive approach to responding to hostile men. They base their framework on how to effectively respond by outlining a four-part approach that consists of:

➢ **Framing strategies**
Articulating or communicating the initiative, explains why it's important and the core concepts, and creates an emotional connection.

➢ **Organizational strategies**
Involving leaders, individuals and groups; and addressing policies, practices and organizational structures.

➢ **Teaching and learning strategies**
Teaching processes, the learning environment, the content and the educators.

➢ **Individual strategies**
Identifying allies, promoting self-care, and focusing efforts on those you can influence

Developing a strategy for responding that includes all of these elements is a means to craft a response that is most likely to be most effective.

For example, business professor Mitchel Langbert, PhD, wrote an article in the fall of 2018 in which he said, "If someone did not commit sexual assault in high school, then he is not a member of the male sex," (Sept. 27, 2018. I name him here understanding the risk of granting him increased publicity).

There is a LOT in this statement (never mind the rest of the article) that warrants a thorough response. It is easy for advocates and practitioners to get overwhelmed, and it is even easier to overwhelm the audience(s) if the focus of a response is to unpack the entirety of this statement and all that is problematic and harmful herein. A first step in crafting a response to this statement is to determine if this professor is someone that can be reached (or that we want to attempt to reach). While most men can be understood to be reachable in some way, this statement suggests that he is so entrenched in his position that efforts to reach him would be extremely time and energy consuming.

Effectively reaching him would require an advocate or practitioner who is located at least relatively close to him – both in terms of proximity and relationship. Someone in close proximity to and who has a fairly strong relationship with him would be in the best position to reach him. Barring that, efforts to reach him can be best achieved by identifying and focusing on those who have influence on him. There are likely people who have influence on this professor who *can* reach him, who are also people that practitioners or advocates can reach and support to use their influence to reach him.

Responding to this statement (and/or the entire article) is a different focus and warrants a different strategy. Applying some of the lessons from messaging theory and practice (see below) provide some guidance to frame a response. I unpack my response to his article as a means to identify some effective efforts as outlined in this section.

As the father of a son who is not yet in high school, I consider my position as a basis for framing my response and choosing my audience. Based on the premise reaching men by making a connect (outlined above in the Reaching section) I considered framing my response in my role as a father of a son as a way of connecting with that sub-part of the audience that read his article who are also fathers of sons.

In preparing my response, I considered these men to, generally, be in the mid-section of the Continuum of Male Engagement. That is, likely overwhelmed, and also curious and/or hesitant about being engaged in efforts to prevent gender-based violence. I assumed that most of them were opposed to sexual assault, but that they may have some questions or concerns about now wanting to somehow implicate their sons as "potential rapists" (what parent wants to hold this image of their child?). So while most of the dads I aimed my response at were likely anti-rape, I assumed that they also were not active in any way and likely felt some anxiety and fears about becoming actively involved.

Responding to this one line could have gone in many varied directions. Speaking as a dad of a young son (and as such, speaking to him as a dad and to his audience of dads), seemed to me to be the best focus. I used this position and voice, combined with my intended audience, to identify and respond to three main points (two of which were inherent but unstated in his article). Perhaps the main point that I focused on was his argument (unstated but inherent) that the behavior of high school aged men pushing women to have sex up to and including using coercive or forceful tactics is normal, and as such we shouldn't be calling out men who engage in this kind of

normative behavior. A cornerstone of his argument being that this normal is acceptable. I agree that this is very much the current normal, but argue that this normal is *not* okay.

Framed in this way, I introduced the audience to the notion of social norms – beliefs that lie beneath what we consider normal. By redefining the behavior he describes to be a social norm provides the audience with a way to recognize how both of these ideas can have some truth: that this kind of behavior is indeed normal, and that the normal is problematic. Further, framing normal as social norms provides a means by which the normal can be impacted and changed.

Discount the Message, not the Messenger

Responding often means discount all or part of the message. It's critical to do so in ways that do not necessarily discount the messenger. Discounting the messenger often has a "rebound effect." That is, the person who attempts to discount the messenger often ends up discounting him/her-self in the eyes of the audience. It is far too easy, when attempting to discount a messenger (even when doing so inadvertently) to be disrespectful and come across as insolent. Further, the messenger is effective as a messenger precisely because their audience (or some portion of their audience) values them as a messenger. Attacking or discounting the messenger generates this audience to support or defend him from this "attack." As a result, when we discount or attack the messenger the focus tends to be on the discounting, not our message – our key points get lost.

Best efforts at respnding focus on the message but pay careful attention to the ways that the responding to and countering the message may come across as discounting the messenger. To some degree, this is beyond the concern (or should be) of advocates and practitioners. The primary focus should be on responding to and countering the mis and dis-information that is contained in these messages. Still, the focus of any counter message is to pivot from the message being countered, and towards the message. The point is *not* to argue about what is wrong with the message being responded to.

Responding to Gender-Neutral Arguments

One of the most common, frequent and persistent messages made is that gender-based violence is not gender-based. These particularly arguments have become somewhat mainstreamed and are made with alarming regularity. The main two arguments tend to be: a) that men are victimized too, and that b) women are as abusive or violent as men. It's important, in this manual, to briefly discuss these arguments and strategies to respond to and address these arguments

Men are Victimized Too

A feminist analysis and framing of gender-based violence includes the fact that men are victimized too (see, for example, Meger, 2017). Historically, it was the feminist rape crisis and domestic violence movement that first exposed the issues of male victimization and continue to be the most active and effective in advocating for the needs of men and boys who are victimized. It is worth noting that while these men's efforts often argue that "men are abused too", they rarely actually advocate for the needs of men and boys who re

victimized and have been tremendously ineffective in advancing any policy or skills that actually benefit men and boys who victimized. Their energy and efforts are primarily if not exclusively focused on resisting feminist led efforts and a feminist analysis of rape and domestic violence.

To say that rape, domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse and violence discussed here are "gender-based" does not ignore that men can be and are also victimized. The dynamics, in fact, remain consistent. Regardless of the gender of the person being victimized, the words used by men and women who perpetrate are remarkably consistent. And this consistency reinforces the degree to which people who perpetrate recognize (though not necessarily consciously) that that assault is at least in part gender-based.

> *To say that rape, domestic violence, stalking sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse and violence discussed here are "gender-based" does not ignore that men can be and are also victimized.*

Furthermore, men who are victimized, again, regardless of the gender of the person who assaulted them, respond by experiencing their gender as being under attack.

Women are as Abusive/Violent as Men

The other key argument that is made with frustrating regularity is that women are as abusive or violent as men.

While there is some evidence that women use some forms of abuse and violence at roughly the same rates of men, this data is very limited. It only pertains to relatively low levels of violence within dating or marital relationships. Once other forms of abuse or violence are included, such as sexual assault, post-relationship violence, sexual harassment, stalking, and/or sexual exploitation then the degree to which these forms of violence are gender-based becomes glaringly apparent.

Another way to point out the ways in which gender-based violence is gender-based is to notice what we already know to be true – and point it out. Some questions to ask that get to some of this include:

- How often are boys men afraid of girls and women?
- How often do boys and men do "safety planning" before going on a first date?
- What do boys and men think about when they think about dating someone new?
- What do girls and women think about when they think about dating someone new?
- In what ways do girls and women adjust their lives as a result of the threat of men's violence?
- To what degree do men adjust their lives as a result of the threat of women's violence?

The data, both in the US and internationally, could not be more clear. All forms of what is referred to in this document a "gender-based violence" is indeed gender-based. The vast majority of those who are victimized and negatively affected are women, women who are

victimized experience more significant and longer-term impacts than do men, and the perpetration data consistently demonstrates that it is men who are the perpetrators.

Michael Flood provides an extensive overview of this data as of 2019. He concludes:

> "…women are more likely than men to be subjected to frequent, prolonged, and extreme violence; are far more likely than men to be sexually assaulted by an intimate partner or ex-partner; are far more likely to sustain injuries and fear for their lives; women experience more severe and longer term negative consequences such as psychological harm. Women do not show higher levels of fear in the context of domestic violence because they are more willing than men to report fear, but because the violence they experience is worse." (Flood, P. 22)

Gender dynamics also come into account when examining men's experiences of being victimized by gender-based violence, as well as women's perpetration. In terms of dating and domestic violence, men "identify instrumental reasons for their aggression, with their violence directed towards particular goals. Male perpetrators are more likely, and more able, to use non-physical tactics to maintain control over their partners." (Flood, P 23). Women who use physical violence in their relationships are much more likely to be in self-defense (DeKeseredy, Saunders, Schwartz and Alvi, 1997; Swan and Snow, 2002).

Gender dynamics also come into account when examining men's experiences of being victimized by gender-based violence, as well as women's perpetration

On a more macro scale, the gender dynamics become even more apparent. Most women who date men, from the very first stages of their dating "career" practice what can only be described as safety planning while preparing for a date -- planning for their own safety against the threat of men's violence. This includes such tactics as meeting at a neutral place, letting a friend know of their plans, doing a google or facebook search on the man they're meeting to date, having a code word or phrase, etc. The fact that they feel compelled to do so, and that this is a nearly universal pattern (at least in the US), indicates the degree to which the threat of gender-based violence is so profound and normal.

The degree to which men plan for a date with a woman tends to be how to get her no to a yes, and ensuring they have a fresh condom available. Men do not plan for their own safety when dating women.

The threat of gender-based violence is also experienced by women and men in different ways. Most, if not all, women know the "drill" of crossing the street when walking to avoid a lone man who is walking down that same street. It is almost unheard of for men to cross the street as a result of the threat of women's presence, even when a lone man is confronted with a group of women. The degree to which men do any kind of efforts to reduce their risk of violence is almost always in response to the risk of violence by other men, not by women.

An Overview of Messaging

"Messaging" refers to how we communicate what it is that we're attempting to say. "Messaging" refers to how the main points are conveyed – it's more about the *how* to communicate as opposed to the *what* is communicating (with a little bit of the what included). Whether practitioners or advocates are reaching out to connect with men, or responding to some things that men have said, *how* we convey our point is critically important.

Clarifying the goal here is important. It is not the goal to be "right" and convince others that a feminist analysis of gender-based violence is the correct one. Once practitioners and advocates are settled that their analysis is correct, it's not as important to convince others that this is *the* correct analysis. The goal is either to reach out to and connect with men or respond to what has been said in a way that reaching out to and connects with an audience. As such *connection* is the goal more than convincing others that this is the right analysis. This undergirds all of the efforts to effectively reach out and/or respond to men.

"Messaging" refers to both public and constructed messaging such as op-eds, editorial statements, position papers, and the like – "formal" messaging if you will – and comments that may be made during a presentation. Thinking about comments as a form of messaging means that practitioners and advocates can apply some of what has emerged from the theory and practices of pro-social messaging. Doing so can increase the effectiveness in responding to these comments and reaching the audience.

Messaging Theory and Practice

There are a host of questions worth considering when thinking about the message that is being delivered. In most cases, efforts to reach out or respond to men is going to include messaging. By messaging, I mean how it is that you communicate your most salient points, in ways that are most likely to be received by your audience(s).

Effective messaging isn't about *convincing* men, but rather focuses on either making a connection with them on some level or reaching the "audience" who is listening/reading the message. Referring back to the Continuum of Male Engagement, those men who are defined as "engage-able" can be understood as having already been reached – that is, the connection has already been made for and with them about the issues of gender-based violence or gender equality, and/or the need for men to be engaged. Connecting with or reaching is significantly different than convincing – both on the part of the person(s) who are attempting to connect with or reach and on the part of the person(s) who is being connected with.

"Effective messaging isn't about convincing *men, but rather focuses on making a connection…"*

The four main aspects of effective messaging include:

1) Identify the audience or audience segment
2) Clearly define the problem and the solution
3) "Framing" the message. That is, what do you want the identified audience to think or feel in response to the message, what key concepts do you want to communicate?
4) Develop the message.

Identify the Audience or Audience Segment
A part of effective messaging is considering and clearly defining the audience that is the "target" of the message, and strategically crafting a message to reach them. Messages that reach and connect with disinterested men, for example are likely going to be different than messages that reach resistant men. Messages designed for adolescent or young adult men are likely going to be different than messages designed for older men or fathers. Messages designed for coaches are likely going to be different than messages designed for male faith leaders.

Part of identifying the audience also includes understanding the social context that drives their position. As Louise Dunlap states, "Words cannot change minds unless we understand what is already going on in those minds" (Dunlop, L. 2007, page 7). Effectively reaching out or connecting with people (which in this case, can be understood to include both the uninterested men we're trying to reach, or the "audience" of the resistant or hostile men we're responding to) is precipitated by trying to understand what is driving their position. Effective messaging includes connecting with the values, and beliefs that are driving the mind-set (opinion, perspective, etc.) of the men who are the focus of these efforts.

"Words cannot change minds unless we understand what is already going on in those minds."
Louise Dunlap, 2007

The audience is not necessarily the person who is speaking, making the comment, or trying to make a point. He (or they) is the messenger. In this kind of situation, the audience – the people you are really trying to reach – is the people who are listening in or who are also the audience of the resistant or hostile man. If you're giving a presentation, for example, and one of the participants makes a hostile statement, a messaging perspective suggests that an advocate or practitioner is most effective by responding to his statement by speaking to the other participants, rather than speaking directly to him. Similarly, when responding to a social or main-stream media statement by a man who is resistant or hostile, rather than speaking directly to him about why he's wrong, directing a counter message to the audience is likely going to be much more effective.

Clearly defining the audience, particularly when it is not the person(s) speaking, makes practitioners and advocates more likely to be effective for a couple of main reasons. First, by shifting our focus away from the speaker and to the audience, practitioners and advocates are less likely to take a defensive or offensive position. When speaking to an audience, practitioners and advocates can focus more clearly on making the point that is most crucial as opposed to defending a position.

The second reason speaking to the audience is more effective is that it allows practitioners and advocates to focus on the main points that are being raised. With time, it's also possible to determine *which* points to focus on.

There are men and women who are observing these conversations and the points being made by both (or all). Practitioners and advocates *can* and likely will reach them (at least some of them) if the focus of the message is on connecting with them (rather than arguing with or convincing the speaker(s).

Clearly Define the Problem

In the process of developing and fine-tuning the message, its vital to clarify what the problem is.

Doing so starts with reiterating what the problem is not. The problem is *not* the men. As soon as practitioners and advocates define the problem as the men, we undermine our ability to effectively communicate. There are reasons (based in the social ecology) that men are disinterested or resistant, and reasons why men are expressing the attitudes that they're expressing. This is not to excuse the problematic or harmful attitudes or beliefs that men are expressing, it is to focus the attention and the message in ways that are most likely to be received.

The problem is what these men are saying, or the reasons that they are disinterested or resistant. When practitioners and advocates attempt to reach past the men who are disinterested, resistant and hostile; to understand and counter the reasons that men are disinterested, resistant or hostile, we create more common ground and increase our effectiveness in making connections with the audience.

Frame (or Re-Frame) the Message

The "frame" can be understood as the container for the message. They are also the cognitive shortcuts that people use to make sense of complex information (Burgess, 2017). Framing helps the audience to interpret, relate to, and find meaning in the message. Framing both triggers and influences the audiences' attitudes and opinions about the message.

Much like a frame holds a picture, and a good "framing" draws the viewers eye towards the parts of the picture that are intended to be the focus (think, for example of the difference between your experience of seeing a picture in a black frame, vs a white frame). The message conveys the key point(s); the frame is the underlying philosophy, theory or perspective that makes the message makes sense. The messages that practitioners and advocates feel compelled to respond to have a frame – it is the frame that triggers our emotional response (it's the same frame that triggers the emotional response of the intended audience of the message). Part of responding effectively requires noting the frame of the original message, and then re-framing the message in a way that also emotionally resonates with the audience.

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Referring back to the example above (page 22), one frame was that none of us want to see our sons as potential rapists. This is undoubtedly true. Consider their sons to be potential rapists is for many parents, at least as terrifying as thinking about the risk of their daughters to being raped. Furthermore, while it is normal to fear what some man might do to their daughters, it is far less normal (as such, much more foreign) for most parents to consider that their sons may be the kind of man who perpetrate this kind of harm. Part of the message I crafted related to this same frame – as a caring father of a son. By holding a similar frame, I was able to re-frame his message and point out some of the absurdity of what he was saying.

Before framing any messaging to men, it's important that practitioners and advocates attend to the core principles that are emerging for engaging men efforts. These principles have emerged from the global engaging men movement, for example, provide a "frame" for crafting the message. The core principle[1]s include:

- Feminist based
- Gender-Transformative
- Human Rights Based
- Intersectional
- Accountable to women and girls

<u>Develop the Message</u>

Once the audience is defined, the problem clarified, and the frame created, the message development becomes much easier. Remember to stay focused on one to three key points and that the message needs to have a clear goal in mind.

Effective Messaging

Part of what makes for effective messaging has to do with:

a) The relevance of the message to the audience's wants and needs,
b) The quality of the message, and
c) The number of positive exposures to the message

(adopted from Levinson and Horowitz, 2016, P.#42).

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[1] For a more detailed exploration of the core principles for engaging men and boys, see http://rusfunk.me/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Principles-of-Engaging-Men.pdf. For additional resources, go to http://rusfunk.me/engaging-men

Relevance, here, refers to the degree to which the content relates to the lives and experiences of the men who are the intended audience. If, for example, the men who are the intended audience don't believe that gender-based violence has anything to do with them or anyone in their lives, then any message focusing on men's roles or opportunities to be a part of preventing gender-based violence will fall short.

A second aspect of relevance has to do with the messenger – can the intended audience relate to the messenger? How able is the messenger to convey a human-ness to the message?

The quality of the message begins with being trustworthy. The intended audience needs to know and *believe* that they can trust the message and the messenger. Facts and statistics are generally discouraged as a part of a message, but if they are being used, they need to be easily verified.

Quality also refers to the perceived value of your message, and the experience of the intended audience to the message -- "the interplay of your copy, visuals, audio and useability" (Levinson & Horowitz, P #42).

The number of positive experiences is perhaps the most challenging for efforts to message about gender-based violence. Gender-based violence is generally experienced as an emotionally charged, negative topic. Most people (and this, of course, includes men) have extremely negative, painful, even harmful associations to rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, stalking, sexual exploitation, etc. These topics are disgusting to most people! It is critical, therefore, to find a way to message the content

It is critical to message the content in ways that emphasize the positive resonance for the intended audience, without resulting in minimizing.

in ways that emphasize the positive resonance for the intended audience, without resulting to minimizing. Messages such as "You can be a part of the solution" do exactly this. "You can be part of the solution" provides an opening for men and boys to be involved and engage themselves, that don't require them to necessarily highlighting the problem.

By attending more carefully to the core lessons that have come from messaging theory and practice, advocates and practitioners can more effectively avoid the invitations to try to convince or argue with the men we're reaching out or responding to.

Ask for Action

The last point about effective messaging is to be sure to add an action request. Messaging to men about ending gender-based violence, be it direct messaging (in terms of engaging or reaching them) or indirect (in terms of responding to other messages or information) is not to just relay information. While providing accurate and meaningful information is key, it is just as important to include a specific and accessible call to act. What would you like them to do with the information you're sharing? What would you like them to do to respond to the issues? What would you like them to do to help promote women's human rights or promote gender equality? Encouraging the intended audience to *do something* can have a great impact, not the least of which is to reach and engage them in a different way. The best way to know if you're having an impact is to ask men to do something and then see if they follow through.

Below is an example of part of a social marketing and engagement campaign developed by MensWork: eliminating violence against women inc. (now defunct) to reach out to and engage dads. Using this as an example of messaging, the audience defined as dads, both dads of daughters and dads of sons (as a note, there were and are few campaigns that explicitly reach out to dads of sons and daughters – most either reach out to dads generically, reach out to dads of daughters or to dads of sons). The primary problem as defined by this effort is dads silence. There is some reference to the broader problem of dating violence. And the "frame" is that dads have a natural emotional connection to wanting to both end dating violence and promote gender respect. As is stated in the post-card, as dads we all want "our daughters to be women of strength, and our sons to be the kind of men that we want our daughters to date." Further, this example mentions the problem "dating violence" but quickly pivots in a way that focuses the message in a much more pro-social way that men in general, and dads in particular, can easily access and get behind. The experience of MensWork is that this campaign not only worked for reaching dads, but also men who were not fathers.

The action that is asked for is pretty explicit: sign the pledge and send it back in. There is also an implicit action, inviting dads to become more verbal and visible as standing "against dating violence and for gender respect."

The pledge card was a part of a broader community organizing effort that included a Father's Day Rally where dads were brought together to take speak out against dating violence and for gender respect, as well as training dads to speak to youth-groups and engage adolescent boys.
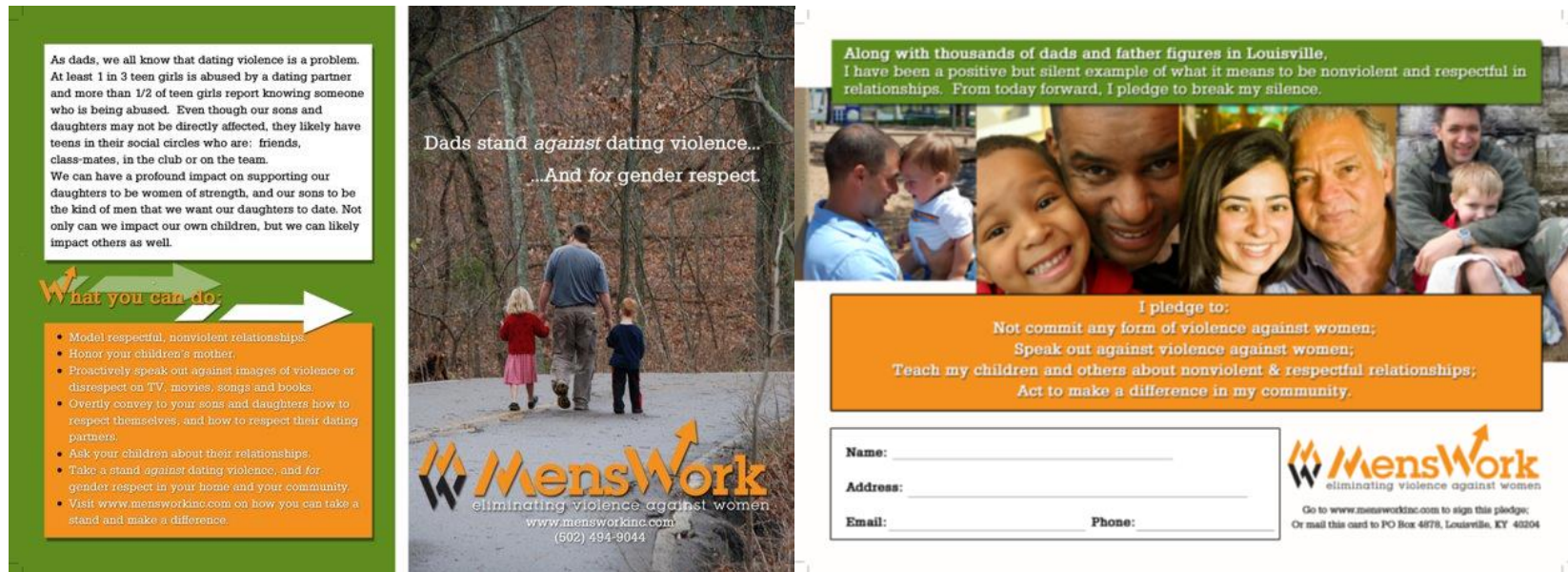
The Role of Beliefs

The premise behind many engaging men efforts is that educating men about the issues, dynamics and prevalence of gender-based violence is the way to effectively and meaningfully engage men. This premise spills over into efforts to reach out or respond to men. The assumption beneath these approaches is that knowledge is the answer to men's lack of engagement. Many of these efforts are based on the premise that it is a lack of information or awareness (in other words, knowledge), that drives men's lack of willingness to be engaged. This premise also seems to be the base for many efforts to reach out to men who are resistant – that if we (as practitioners or advocates) can come up with the right configuration of information, this will convince them to be engaged.

"What drives men's attitudes about gender-based violence, gender equality and men's roles is not knowledae. it is beliefs."

A much stronger influence that drives men's position to either support (and thus become engaged in) or oppose efforts to prevent gender-based violence or promote gender equality is his beliefs. Beliefs can be understood as the feelings about truths. Once people create a belief system, they then tend to look to knowledge, facts and evidence that support those beliefs (in some cases, relying on "knowledge", "facts" or "evidence" that are irrational). These beliefs come from a variety of sources, but once adhered to, the tendency is to adhere to those beliefs with rigorous tenacity. Once a system of beliefs has been established, then typically, they interpret knowledge which adheres to or support their beliefs. Knowledge that counters these beliefs is often discounted. When knowledge, statistics or facts don't line up with these beliefs, human tendency is to dismiss the knowledge, statistics or facts; or find knowledge or statistics that *are* in line with the beliefs adhered to. So men who are resistant, who *believe* that women are already equal to men or that gender-based violence is isolated and rare is unlikely to be convinced otherwise by facts or evidence that counters these beliefs or by strategies that rely on awareness raising or knowledge enhancement.

Effectively reaching out or responding to involves reaching through the clutter (opinions, emotions, perspectives, "knowledge", etc.) to identify and connect with the belief that lies beneath it all. Once the beliefs are identified and attended to, then a different conversation can happen. When practitioners or advocates identify and respond to the belief, men who are uninterested or resistant often feel heard in a very different way, which tends to make them less defensive and decreases their level or resistance. Connecting with the beliefs that lie beneath the "clutter" provides another way to create a connection with the men. Some of the beliefs that men who are uninterested, resistant or hostile men hold are similar with the beliefs that practitioners and advocates hold. Men who are uninterested, resistant or hostile may not recognize the ways that promoting gender equality or preventing gender-based violence is based on the beliefs that they hold. It is the job of practitioners and advocates to identify these beliefs and reach out to men in ways that demonstrate how what we're asking of men is grounded in these s

Effectively reaching out and responding to involves reaching through the clutter (opinions, emotions, perspectives...) to identify and connect with the belief that lies beneath it all.

An important note about beliefs: the beliefs we hold (this is true for all of us) are not necessarily conscious. For many, some of the most core beliefs are those that they were raised with and have never had any reason to reflect on or explore. Even if beliefs are not conscious, they still drive attitudes and behaviors much more significantly than to does knowledge. For men who are resistant or hostile, the beliefs that are driving their resistance or hostility may be unconscious. Responding to them in ways that challenge them to reflect on their beliefs is one effective way to use beliefs as a way to reach men.

In addition to being subconscious, it is also possible (perhaps likely) that different beliefs contradict each other. For example, most men believe that women do something that helps to explain the violence or abuse that is done to them. Imbedded within this belief is the notion that men are unable to control themselves when women do or act in certain ways – a belief that directly contradicts a third belief that "real men" aren't controlled by women. Rather than trying to convince men in this case, that women don't deserve what is done to them, it may well be more effective to point out the contradictions of these imbedded beliefs. Allowing these kinds of contradictions to emerge and then pointing out that they are there helps men to identify and recognize the contradictions. As a result, they are forced to figure out how to reconcile this contradiction. Depending on the energy and resources available, advocates or practitioners may encourage a resolution of these kinds of contradictions in ways that suggest that he is/they are not as resistant as they initially considered themselves to be.

To refer to the Dad's Campaign example cited above, this effort strategically focused on the *belief* that most dads hold dear: to "raise our daughters to be women of strength, and to raise our sons to be the kind of men we want our daughters to date." Both of these beliefs are widely held but rarely stated. In the experience in Louisville, many men were consciously aware of the first belief, but were not aware that they also held this 2nd belief until it was presented to them. When they read that second line: "…and for our sons to be the kind of men we want our daughters to date," it was not uncommon to see men physically pause and outwardly reflect on the degree they had or had not been raising their son(s) based on this belief.

> *Attempts to convince tend to push people into a position of defensiveness, thus intensifying their resistance. In order to effectively reach out and respond to men, avoiding these kinds of efforts is critical.*

Attempts to convince tend to push people into a position of defensiveness and intensify their resistance. In order to effectively reach out and respond to men, avoiding these tendencies is critical. Exploring his or their beliefs about gender-based violence or gender equality is likely to be much more productive. This might begin, for example, with an examination of men's beliefs in gender roles, and exploring the impact of prevent gender-based violence or promote gender equality may be on his/their beliefs about gender roles. Many men's resistance and hostility appear to be based on a premise that advancing gender equality in some way diminishes their role as a man. Supporting men to explore what it is about their manhood role that is being challenged is one way to reflect on the belief that may be underlying his/their resistance.

Note the use of the term *explore* here. By maintaining a relatively open and exploratory position, advocates and practitioners are better able to reach and connect to the audience, and encourage the audience to explore their connection to these issues.

Conclusion

Reaching out and Responding to men who are uninterested, resistant or hostile takes as much careful attention, and strategizing as do efforts to effectively engage men. Practitioners and advocates *can*, as many have demonstrated, be effective in reaching men who are uninterested or resistant, and finding ways to move them towards becoming engaged. Practitioners and advocates can also be extremely effective in responding to the counter-messages and harmful rhetoric of men who oppose efforts to prevent gender-based violence or promote gender equality.
We do not, however, have the luxury of ignoring these men.

Practitioners and advocates working to engage men are particularly well positioned to effectively reach out and respond to men and the messages that men convey about ending gender-based violence, engaging men efforts, and/or promoting gender equality.

It is the intention of this manual, indeed, in the whole array of services and resources related to the Continuum of Male Engagement, to assist in developing the skills, knowledge and confidence of practitioners and advocates to effectively reach out and respond to men. It is my hope that as skills, knowledge and confidence is developed; and as additional resources are created, that they are also shared with the growing community of male engagement practitioners and advocates.

Acknowledgements

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Walk in her shoes (sort of)[2]

This activity is designed to provide men with an experience of what women often go through on a daily basis. An experience that few men have any reason to understand or recognize.

It is important to note before suggesting that men proceed with this activity, that as a facilitator, you recognize that this activity is likely to expose men to a host of emotional responses. Before suggesting men to proceed with this activity, be sure you have:

* An opportunity on the back end of this activity to "debrief" and help them to share their experiences

* Have a relationship with these men that will allow them to get honest about their experience of this activity

* Have an opportunity (either yourself or with other people that are known and trusted by the men) to follow up further on an individual level as needed.

Set up:

Tell the men that you are going to ask them to participate in an activity that they will do primarily on their own. If they want to partner up or do this in small groups (no more than three), they can but this is intended to primarily be an activity that they will do solo

Introduce the activity to be something that will help them to gain some insight into what women experience fairly regularly. The intention is to help men gain some insight, and to potentially motivate them to become more actively involved in efforts to combat gender based violence and/or to promote gender equality. (NOTE, use your words that will help make this more inviting for the men to participate in).

Description:

We're going to ask you to partner up with a woman friend of yours. This is a woman you consider a peer (i.e. sister, good friend, cousin, etc.) It's best to do this with your girlfriend/partner, or a much younger sibling.

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[2] I originally developed this activity as a part of an effort to educate adolescent men about the impact of sexual harassment. It has become relatively widely used. This and other tools/resources for reaching and responding to men are available at rusfunk.me/engaging-men.

Explain to her that you are doing an activity to gain more insight into what many woman experience on a regular basis. Agree with her how long you will do this activity (20 – 30 min. is usually plenty).

You are going to follow your friend in a public space (the mall, an outdoor festival, etc.) Ideally this is someplace that is relatively crowded. Your job is to pay attention to how other men look at, interact with, comment about, pay attention to…your woman friend.

Note what you notice. Jot down what you notice about how men behave. Notice too your responses to what you see. What kinds of behaviors from men tend to bother you the most? Which men's behaviors trouble you the most?

Do NOT interrupt the exercise unless you are feeling so strongly that you fear you might harm someone.

After you complete the activity, share your thoughts, experiences and feelings with your friend. Do not be surprised if you notice more things and may be more upset than she is.

De-Brief

Once the men have reconvened, as them, in general, what they're experience was like. What did they find surprising? What was new to them? At what points where they the most uncomfortable? In general, what did emotions did they feel the strongest?

How did their response differ from the woman they were doing this with?

Call to Act

The point of this activity was not to upset you. Many of you may well be very upset, but that was not the point. The points was to give you an opportunity to gain some insight into what women experience routinely.

Now that you've experienced this, what are you willing to do.

Brainstorm ways that they can be actively involved in countering the social norms that allow or even encourage men to behave in these ways.