Rus Funk
Consulting

Engaging Men
Across the Social Ecology[1]

Knowledge, confidence, comfort

"Male Peer Support[1]"

"Behavioral Design"

Community Organizing

Social Marketing & Media

Individual

Relational

Organizational

Community

Social

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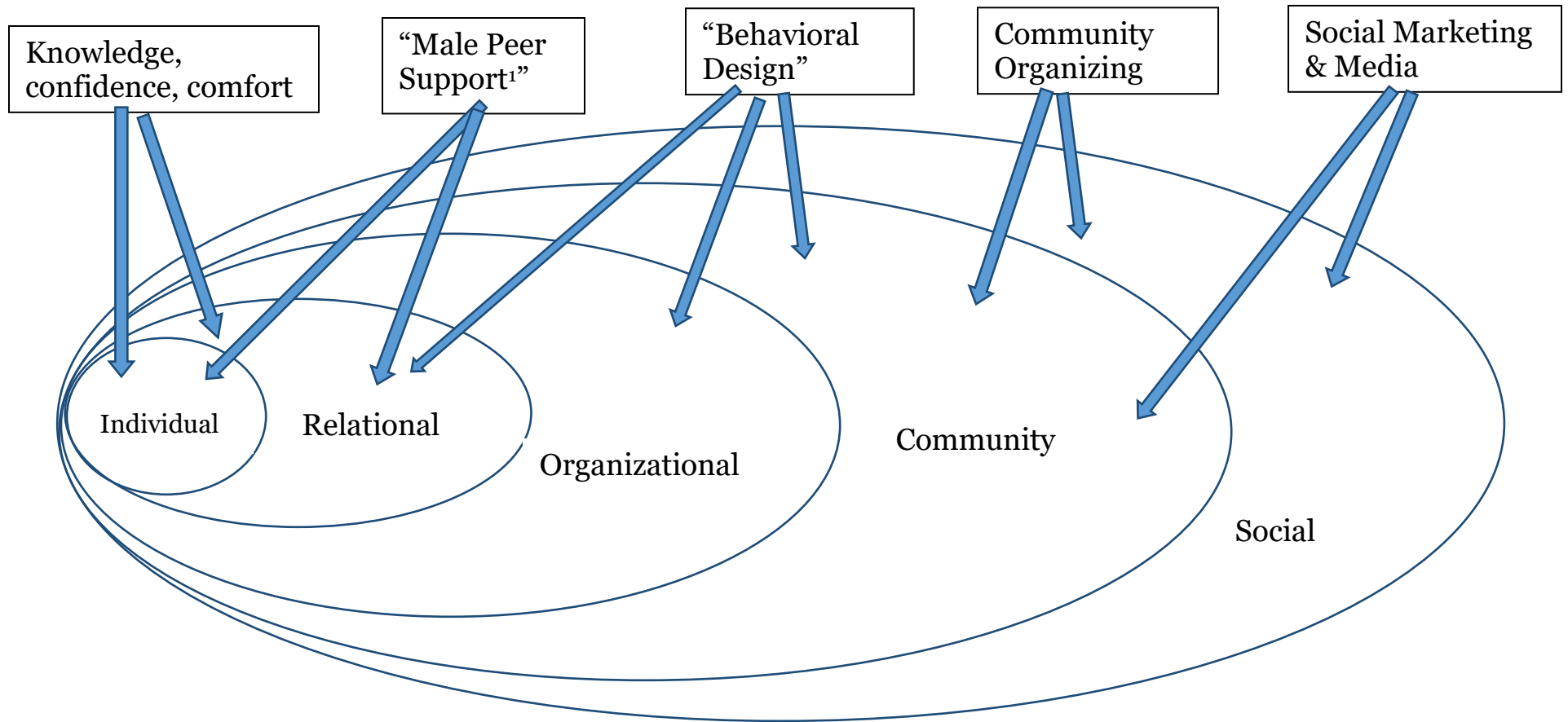
Effectively engaging men requires a strategic approach that involves more than helping to develop individual men to have the confidence, comfort and competence to be actively engaged in preventing gender-based violence or promoting gender equality. In addition to training individual men on ways to act as an ally, for example, effective engaging men strategies need to develop a campaign approach that reaches across various layers of the social ecology in order to create supports necessary for men to be and stay engaged.

In another document, I outline the barriers to engaging men and locate those barriers across the social ecology. Effectively engaging men means developing efforts to counter or undermine those barriers.

Men's peer groups have significant impact on their behavior – not only while men are in those peer groups, but also when men are on their own (depending on the strength of the relationship of those peers). In order effectively engage men, some effort needs to be made to encourage their sense of being a part of a peer group that supports their level of engagement. In the process of being engaged and taking action, many men experience some degree of disconnect from previous peer groups, friends and even family. Without a counter-support network, many men will find this to be too much of a cost to bear even if they convictions and confidence otherwise are quite strong.

Men often are invited to demonstrate their alliance to end gender based violence within organizations: at work, in school, at university, at church or synagogue, at the bar… Organizations can do a lot to create an environment that supports male activism and engagement. If organizations are not actively demonstrating their support for male engagement however, the default is that many men likely feel these organizations to not be of support. Using strategies like "behavioral design" is a way that organizations can "build" an environment that supports men to act in ways they feel called to act.

Similarly, communities (both geographic communities and "felt" communities) create and maintain some social norms. Using community organizing strategies, engaging men efforts can create environments that support male engagement and activism.

Finally, some attention by engagement initiatives includes a social media, social marketing and attending to other forms of media messaging. The media is a powerful tool that does impact on attitudes and behavior. We can use this to our advantage.

This is not meant to be a call for engagement practitioners to "do it all." Rather it is a call on ways we can expand our attention and be more effective with the skills and resources we do have. Contact www.rusfunk.me for more information, resources and supports on how to do these!

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[1] Adapted from Jewkes, Flood and Lang (2014) *From Work with Men and Boys to Changes in Social Norms to Reductions in Social Norms: A Conceptual Shift in Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls*.

[2] DeKeserdey, W & Schwartz, M. (2013). *Male Peer Support and Violence Against Women: The History and Verification of a Theory*. Northeastern University Press.

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