RESEARCH SHOP

Reviewing best practices for gender-based violence prevention education in hypermasculine workplaces

Prepared for

Interval House Hamilton

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By

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Executive Summary

Gender-based violence is a prominent issue across Canada and within Hamilton, being declared an epidemic within the city in 2023. There is a need to engage men in gender-based violence prevention programming. Interval House is an organization that runs gender-based violence prevention programming called Mentor Action. The Mentor Action program has been funded by a Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) grant to provide a gender-based violence prevention training program for men working in skilled trades (Mentor Action Training). In May 2024, Interval House partnered with the Research Shop to conduct a literature review on the following research questions:

- What are best practices in gender-based and sexual violence prevention, education, and/or training in hypermasculine workplaces?
- What work exists pertaining to this topic specifically in the skilled trades?

The literature review examined a range of peer-reviewed articles and grey literature reports on engaging men in gender-based violence programming, particularly in workplace and hypermasculine workplace settings. A set of 16 recommendations to guide programming were developed based on findings and are presented below.

Curriculum
1. Aim to co-create programs with key stakeholders, allowing curriculum to be customized to specific settings.
2. Focus on emphasizing equitable partnerships between men and women, and re-examining traditional views of masculinity.
3. Incorporate activities that suit different learning styles, such as hands-on, theatre or art-based activities. Art and theatre-based activities can help build empathy as well.
4. Deliver programs over multiple sessions, rather than single-session programs, providing an extended period of time for community building and reflection.

Program Engagement
5. Where possible, work with pre-existing networks of men in settings and groups where they already gather.
6. Structure the program curriculum to tailor to men's specific concerns and contexts around gender-based violence (which can be done through co-creation of programming).
7. Create programs that don't just emphasize workplace/institutional goals, but also allow men to set personal goals, making the program more meaningful to them.
8. Create safe and non-judgemental spaces for discussion, where men feel comfortable participating.

Resources for Programming

9. Ensure enough staffing to support comprehensive program delivery. Ideally, program leadership should include those that participants identify with and relate to.
10. Invest in training for program staff on areas such as program delivery, facilitation techniques, and program evaluation methods. Where beneficial, partner with local organizations with expertise in these areas to help build capacity.
11. Include specialized training for staff on gender dynamics and power structures, particularly within male-dominated sectors. Equip staff with the skills to engage men effectively in environments where traditional gender norms are deeply entrenched.

Providing Post-Program Supports
12. Where possible, create opportunities for men to continue engaging in gender-based violence prevention. This can include ongoing activities such as weekly support groups or an online network of current participants and program alumni.
13. Where possible, identify leadership opportunities for men interested in continuing to engage with gender-based violence prevention on a broader organizational or community level.

Evaluating Program Outcomes
14. Gather immediate post-program feedback to assess program experience of participants, the organization, and/or other stakeholders involved in the program. Then, conduct long-term follow-ups, to assess program effectiveness and sustainability of change.
15. Use a combination of attitudinal and behavioural measures to evaluate changes in participant beliefs and mindsets towards gender-based violence. Develop a standard set of measures for consistency and comparability across programs. Include both qualitative and quantitative data in evaluations

Introduction

Interval House of Hamilton is an organization dedicated to providing emergency shelter, safety planning, and support services for women and children who have experienced abuse or violence. (1) In addition to these services, Interval House operates a gender-based violence (GBV) prevention program called Mentor Action. The program engages with men and youth to eradicate gender-based violence through education, mentorship and community participation. Its current target audience is influential male leaders in hypermasculine spaces such as professional sports teams. The Mentor Action program has been funded by a Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) grant to provide a GBV prevention training program for men working in skilled trades (Mentor Action Training).

In May 2024, Interval House partnered with the Research Shop to conduct a literature review on the following research questions: What are best practices in gender-based and sexual violence prevention, education, and/or training in hypermasculine workplaces? What work exists pertaining to this topic specifically in the skilled trades?

This report presents the findings from the literature review, outlining research methods, key insights, and recommendations for gender-based prevention programming in hypermasculine workplaces. It also considers workplaces more broadly that may not be considered hypermasculine. The findings of this report will support and inform an evaluation of the Mentor Action program as part of a deliverable for the WAGE grant.

Background

What is gender-based violence?
GBV is violence that individuals face due to their gender, gender identity or perceived gender. (2) While gender-based violence can impact anyone, those of marginalized genders, including women are more susceptible. Individuals may experience GBV in a variety of settings, including homes, public settings, and workplaces. Hamilton has declared domestic partner violence to be an epidemic. (3) In fact, Hamilton received over 12,000 emergency calls regarding domestic violence in 2022, while non-police violence against women crisis support lines received over 7,500 calls in the city. (3)

Gender-based violence in hypermasculine workplaces, including skilled trades
Within this review, hypermasculine workplaces were defined as those that are male-dominated or workplaces where exaggeration of male stereotypical behaviour, including an emphasis on physical strength, aggression and sexuality are more likely to take place. (4) Research shows that men in male-dominated occupations, including skilled trades, demonstrate greater adherence to stereotypical ideas of masculine norms, including desire for dominance, control over women, and idealization of violence. (5,6) Given these challenges, it is essential to understand what interventions can be implemented within hypermasculine workplaces to address the increased risk of GBV.

While there are existing foundations of knowledge on best practices for GBV programming, (7) there are currently no reviews on best-practices for programming in hypermasculine workplaces. By addressing the unique needs within hypermasculine workplaces, GBV programming can be better tailored to its context and promote more inclusive, equitable, and safe workplaces.

Methods

The research team developed a search strategy for the literature review in consultation with the community partner and librarian support from McMaster University. In the process of developing this strategy, it became evident that relatively limited literature existed on GBV programming in hypermasculine workplaces, and it was necessary to expand the scope of the project to include programming outside of hypermasculine workplaces as well.

Our final inclusion and exclusion criteria, as determined in consultation with the community partner, are highlighted in the table below. No restrictions were placed based on date of publication, geographic location, or language of publication.

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
- Men over the age of 18 - Program delivery taking place in-person or synchronously online - Literature on programs and interventions focusing on workplace interventions, as well as student athletes and fraternities; literature on primary, secondary and tertiary interventions was included - GBV programs outside of workplaces or literature focused on engaging men in non-workplace programs (e.g., community settings) *ONLY IF they focused on secondary prevention* - Articles exploring measurement and evaluation methods of gender-based violence programs	- Women and men under the age of 18 - Online, asynchronous programs or training modules

The finalized search strategy (Appendix 1) was executed in 5 databases including Web of Science, PsychINFO, Ovid, Scopus, and ERIC. Grey literature was identified through a Google search covering the first five pages of results. Additionally, grey literature was also identified through websites of organizations with similar objectives to Interval

House (e.g., White Ribbon). Reverse citation searching was used to ensure thorough examination of the literature. Title and abstract as well as full text screening of articles took place using Covidence.

Data extraction was carried out by all members of the team. Extracted data included article characteristics (title of article, year of publication, country of publication), workplace context studied (industry and occupation of participants), participant characteristics (age, gender), intervention/program characteristics (curriculum, program length and structure, activities), as well as key outcomes and recommendations.

Limitations of this methodology included the relatively narrow scope of literature that exists on the topic of interest. As a result, our conclusions are drawn from a relatively small pool of literature.

Findings

The findings of this report are presented in the following paragraphs, beginning with an overview of search results, followed by best practices emerging from the literature aligning with five categories: curriculum, program engagement, resources for programming, post-program supports, and evaluating program outcomes.

A total of 18 publications, including peer-reviewed articles and grey literature reports, were identified for inclusion, with publication years ranging between 2012 and 2021 and geographic representation including Africa, Europe, Oceana and North and South America.[8–25] The most commonly represented countries were the USA, [8,9,11,17,18,20] Canada [14–17,20,21,25] and Australia. [13,17,20,22,23] Industries and workplaces studied spanned telecommunications,[8] electronics, mining, [21] garments, [21] the sports industry, [9,12,19] non-profits, [11,17] government and human services, [15,17] health clinics, and schools. [16,17] Programming taking place outside of workplaces in community settings, such as community centres and coffee cooperatives, was also included. [16,18,24,25]

The number of participants in studies evaluating specific programs/ interventions ranged from 29 to 309 individuals, with most being male. Program structures ranged from one-time half day trainings (9) to repeating trainings, (8,18) workshops or activity sessions over the course of up to four years. (8,13,18,22) Most programs studied lasted no more than four months. (9,12,18,19,22) Programming typically included a focus on promoting gender equality, men's engagement in violence prevention, changing attitude and behaviours that support violence and sexism, and reinforcing healthy, respectful relationships.

Curriculum

1. **Aim to co-create programs with key stakeholders, allowing curriculum to be customized to specific settings.**

Co-creating GBV prevention programs with the key stakeholders in the setting of interest ensures the content feels tailored to the social norms, priorities, strengths and challenges of each workplace. (1) Interventions that work in one context (e.g., an accounting firm), may not work in another (e.g. a policing unit). Stakeholders can include those who work within the workplace, whether at the managerial or individual contributor level. These individuals have an insider's perspectives on elements such as the organizational culture, specific challenges related to GBV the workplace may have encountered before, or even the ideal timing of the program to maximize engagement. (15)

2. **Focus on emphasizing equitable partnerships between men and women, and re-examining traditional views of masculinity.**

The curriculum for gender-based violence (GBV) prevention programs should focus on creating content that questions harmful gender norms while promoting fair relationships. Blostein et al. recommend developing gender-transformative content that promotes equitable relationships. (16) To achieve this, Casey et al. suggest that programs need to closely examine traditional ideas about gender, particularly masculinity, as this can help men develop healthier attitudes and behaviours. (18) The program curriculum should also address everyday harmful behaviours in relationships, as Burrell (2021) stated that subtle actions are often overlooked but can be controlling or intimidating for women. (19) These subtle behaviours, such as certain verbal comments and body language, can reinforce power imbalances and create uncomfortable environments. This often results in men having more control and influence, leading to women's ideas being undervalued or ignored. Addressing these subtle actions is crucial for creating an inclusive and equitable environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

3. **Incorporate activities that suit different learning styles, such as hands-on, theatre or art-based activities. Art and theatre-based activities can help build empathy as well.**

Moskowitz et al. (2019) recommend incorporating alternative activities, such as theatrical or artistic exercises, to enhance engagement in GBV prevention programs. (11) Research has shown that theatre-based interventions and artistic exercises can effectively foster empathy and improve social attitudes by allowing participants to actively participate in scenarios that simulate real-life situations. This artistic approach encourages emotional connections and helps participants understand different perspectives, which is crucial for changing perceptions about GBV (26). Furthermore, incorporating alternative activities help cater to different learning styles, making the educational experience more inclusive and engaging for all participants (26).

4. **Deliver programs over multiple sessions, rather than single-session programs, providing an extended period of time for community building and reflection.**

The structure of a program is key to fostering long-term behavioural changes among participants. Blostein et al. found that longer programs, particularly those with three or more sessions, tend to produce more meaningful changes in attitudes and behaviours compared to single-session programs. (16) This is supported by Banyard et al., 2007, which showed that while both one-session and three-session interventions produced significant changes, the group that received the longer program (three sessions) showed a more significant increase in positive bystander attitudes and lower rape myth acceptance than participants in the one-session group. (27) This highlights the importance of using a multi-session format in prevention programs.

Program Engagement

5. **Where possible, work with pre-existing networks of men in settings and groups where they already gather.**

Research has demonstrated that working with pre-existing networks of men in settings where they already gather (e.g., for work) is more effective than bringing together strangers for gender-based violence prevention programming. (15) In large organizations, this may look like bringing together men from the same department or project teams. It also supports the accessibility of the programming for men, as it is taking place at a time and location they already need to be. This strategy not only sustains higher levels of engagement, but also supports lasting behaviour change. (15, 28)

Rather than changing just individual minds, attitudes and beliefs of men coming from different contexts, developing a shared space for those who work together to develop a common understanding of their responsibilities regarding gender-based violence prevention leads to larger sociocultural shifts within the workplace. This change in workplace culture allows new attitudes and behaviours within individuals to last. (28)

6. **Structure the program curriculum to tailor to men's specific concerns and contexts around gender-based violence (which can be done through co-creation of programming).**

Research has shown that making sure that the program is structured to address men's concerns surrounding the topic of gender-based violence and violence prevention is crucial. Men have felt that the programs implemented at their workplaces have not been applicable to them. (16,18) If they feel that it does not apply to them, this can lead to a lack of engagement and connection. Therefore, to gauge interest and engagement in

the program, it is important to change the perception of men, and tailor these intervention programs to be specific towards the men, and their workplace.

7. **Create programs that don't just emphasize workplace/institutional goals, but also allow men to set personal goals, making the program more meaningful to them.**

Furthermore, to raise engagement within these programs, it is essential to create these programs with the objective of developing personal and concrete goals amongst men within hypermasculine settings. (19) Rather than solely focusing on the company or workplace settings goals and improvements, programs should focus on personal goal-setting and development of the participants, which can ultimately lead to positive actions. In addition, it has been noted that prevention programs implemented in workplaces have significantly focused more on negative behaviours, however, focusing on areas of improvements and positive actions can lead to personal development. (11)

8. **Create safe and non-judgemental spaces for discussion, where men feel comfortable participating.**

Creating spaces that facilitate meaningful and productive discussion often involves facilitators demonstrating unconditional acceptance and non-judgemental attitudes. This can decrease shame and allows open space for men to acknowledge feelings of resistance. Some key strategies to achieve this include (15):
- Emphasize that frustration and discomfort can often indicate that the group is working at its bounds, and reinforce that those feelings are valid, and in fact, productive
- Co-develop a set of shared group rules to engage in respectful discussion
- Create space to share and address concerns that men may have in engaging in discussions about gender-based violence
- Facilitators should model courage and vulnerability, demonstrating a commitment to learning themselves, and using language that implicates themselves in both the problems and solutions relating to gender-based violence
- Facilitators should aim to stay curious and compassionate, even if a remark may be triggering. Ask questions to demonstrate a commitment to closing gaps in understanding, and explore their choice of words in a conversational manner.

Resources Required for Programming

9. **Ensure enough staffing to support comprehensive program delivery. Outside of core program staff,, programming could include those that participants identify with and relate to.**

Sufficient staffing is essential to sustaining program delivery, quality and engagement. While there may be formal staff running the program, there should be opportunities to work closely with key influencers from within organizations who have the power to change attitudes, behaviours and beliefs. Some of these key influencers to engage with can be identified through an organizational chart. However, there also may be informal influencers within a work environment – such as peers that lead the comedic tone of the group. Asking questions such as: who is the "life of the party"?; "who do others aim to emulate"?; "whose opinion is highly valued in this setting"? can help identify individuals that participants can identify with and relate to. (15)

Research has also demonstrated the importance of community figures, such as business leaders, athletes, and local politicians as important role models to promote a widespread culture of addressing gender-based violence. Mentors from similar ethnocultural backgrounds were also highlighted as important and influential figures. (25)

10. **Invest in training for program staff on areas such as program delivery, facilitation techniques, and program evaluation methods. Where beneficial, partner with local organizations with expertise in these areas to help build capacity.**

Research has highlighted the importance of staff training to ensure programming success and delivery. This training should include program facilitation, as well as support informing how to carry out program evaluations, along with ensuring enough staffing to support adequate program delivery. Additionally, development of skill and confidence level is vital when working with men, along with building capacity of staff to deliver programming along with ensuring sustainability. (16) Community organizations with experience in the aforementioned areas can be partnered with to build capacity and train staff. Continuous professional development is crucial for the long-term success of gender-based violence (GBV) prevention programs. It is recommended that programs include ongoing workshops, peer-learning sessions, and access to updated research and best practices as essential components of a sustainable training program. These opportunities ensure that staff remain informed about the latest developments in GBV prevention, allowing them to adapt and refine their approaches as needed. (25) Additionally, educating professional and service providers was discussed in a sample outcome framework, detailing the important role of primary prevention communities. (8) Collaboration with community organizations is vital for enhancing the cultural relevance and effectiveness of GBV prevention programs. Partnerships with local experts and advocacy groups can provide essential resources and perspectives, ensuring that the program is tailored to the specific cultural and social context of the participants. These collaborations can also facilitate the integration of complementary services, such as mental health support and legal advice, further supporting participants beyond the scope of the program. (21)

11. **Include specialized training for staff on gender dynamics and power structures, particularly within male-dominated sectors. Equip staff with the skills to engage men effectively in environments where traditional gender norms are deeply entrenched.**

In addition to foundational training, it is essential to include specialized modules that address the complexities of gender dynamics and power structures within male-dominated sectors. Research emphasizes the importance of equipping staff with the skills necessary to engage men effectively, particularly in environments where traditional gender norms are deeply entrenched. This approach is vital for creating an inclusive and supportive atmosphere that encourages participants to challenge harmful norms and adopt more equitable behaviours. (15)

Providing Post Program Supports

12. **Where possible, create opportunities for men to continue engaging in gender-based violence prevention. This can include ongoing activities such as weekly support groups or an online network of current participants and program alumni.**

The White Ribbon Campaign emphasized the importance of long-term program support to the original cohort, even after the program had finished its initial intervention. (16) They highlighted the importance of providing follow-up sessions/resources to reinforce learning, along with providing continued support to participants, such as in the form of support groups, counselling, and peer support groups. Continuous check-ins and refresher meetings were also suggested as recommendations, which allowed program staff to review the implementation of the interventions and its progress. Geographic proximity may often pose barriers, therefore, there was also recommendations for programs to mobilize online spaces to create networks of participants to share information and have an existing support base. (16)

13. **Where possibly, identify leadership opportunities for men interested in continuing to engage with gender-based violence prevention on a broader organizational or community level.**

Findings support creating male-ally spaces that men can continue engaging with to take leadership at a broader level within organizations and communities. This could include events and opportunities that bring men together. If possible, this could also include engaging men within leadership roles to deliver gender-based violence programming, supporting recommendation 9 about including those that program participants relate and look up to. Current research demonstrates a need to support infrastructure of male leadership across the country. (25)

14. **Gather immediate post-program feedback to assess program experience of participants, the organization, and/or other stakeholders involved in the program. Then, conduct long-term follow-ups, to assess program effectiveness and sustainability of change.**

Our review has demonstrated the importance of adopting a longitudinal method in order to evaluate program outcomes, ensuring to assessing program effectiveness and sustainability of change. Additionally, a comprehensive evaluation approach is essential for providing an accurate measure of the effectiveness of the program, and address long-term implementation. With respect to program design, a evaluation using cluster-randomization and longitudinal design is recommended, as this approach allows for a more precise understanding of program effectiveness as we are comparing different groups under similar conditions. (12)

15. **Use a combination of attitudinal and behavioural measures to evaluate changes in participant beliefs and mindsets towards gender-based violence. Develop a standard set of measures for consistency and comparability across programs. Include both qualitative and quantitative data in evaluations.**

In designing evaluations, it is recommended to use a combination of attitude and behavioural measures, which will allow program administrators to capture shifts and mindset and action over time. Blostein et al. subsequently highlighted the importance of ensuring that program evaluation includes qualitative and quantitative data collection during evaluations. (16) Interestingly, research discusses and recommends measuring the effectiveness of programs by looking at the program's engagement in three domains: outreach, attitude, and behaviour change- all of which will help better inform future efforts engaging men in preventing gender-based violence. (18)

Conclusion

This literature review set out to investigate best practices in gender-based and sexual violence prevention education/training in hypermasculine workplaces. It also aimed to understand the literature pertaining to this topic specifically in the skilled trades. Our findings revealed recommendations across five key areas related to programming: curriculum, program engagement, resources for programming, providing post-program supports, and evaluating program outcomes.

In order to invite open conversation, gender-based violence programming needs to acknowledge the difficulty of having these conversations, and reframe frustration and feelings of resistance as a key step towards progress. Co-creation of programming to ensure it is tailored to specific contexts, concerns and learning needs is key in improving the cultural and organizational relevance of the programming. Leveraging

existing networks of men in spaces where they already gather and engaging those that they look up to – whether those are leaders within organizations or in the community, such as athletes and business leaders – can influence long-term change in behaviours and attitudes. Sustained engagement over long periods of time, included through repeated sessions and post-program action opportunities, also demonstrates increased effectiveness in long-term change. A key point underscored in the literature is the need for sufficient funding to support education and leadership to address gender-based violence across the country. Although this review faced limitations in the extent of available literature on the topic, it does elucidate several recommendations that may support Interval House in better supporting men through the Mentor Action program.

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Appendix 1: Search Strategy

	Key Concepts	Terms
1	Gender-based violence	Gender-based violence, gender-based discrimination, gender-related violence, sexual violence, sex discrimination, sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, domestic violence, misogyny
2	Prevention/ programming Mandated programming	Violence prevention, Secondary prevention, early intervention, secondary intervention, early response, secondary response, risk reduction, education*, curricul*, pedagogy, instruction*, training, prevention, program*, initiative*, intervention*, campaign*, project*, referral, referred, at risk, at-risk, high risk, high-risk
3	Boys/men (target population)	men, male*
4	Workplace	Workplace*, work environment*, job site*, job*, company, organization*, industr*, sector*
5	Hypermasculine	Hypermasculine, masculine, male-dominated, maschismo
6	Skilled trades/specific occupations	Skilled trades, construction, electrician, journeymen, auto* industry, auto* sector, athlet*, sport*, union*, mechanic*, technician*, blue-collar, mechanic*, carpent*, policing, truck*