

Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network Meeting Minutes December 9, 2014

Present: Chris Huffine (Allies in Change), Eric Mankowski (Portland State University), Wendy Viola (Harlem Children's Zone), Rachel Smith (Portland State University), Jen Hopkinson (Clackamas Women's Services), Jacob Hunt (Gateway Center), Tatiana Bondarchuk (Modus Vivendi), Olga Parker (Modus Vivendi), Linda Castaneda (Manley Interventions), Tim Logan (SoValTi), Matt Johnston (Domestic Violence Safe Dialogue)

Minutes by Rachel Smith, edited by Chris Huffine

Topic: Wendy Viola's dissertation research on the social networks of abusive men

Please refer to the attached summary for much more extensive information. This is intended to be more of a summary of the conversation than the full presentation.

Overview

Wendy's dissertation project was looking at how men in BIPs are interacting with each other. There is no real information in the available literature about BIP participants' social networks and the influence of those networks on their perpetration.

Methods

Two focus groups were first met with to develop a survey designed to tap into discrete social network characteristics and behaviors. This survey was then distributed to 107 participants at Allies in Change (all of the male participants at the agency had a chance to participate). Participants were asked to think about up to 8 network members. It was noted that this sample included men involved at every stage of the program—from just starting out in the program to having attended for years.

Findings

Participants showed an average of 3 people in their networks which is smaller than the average in the general population which is not likely surprising to BI providers. No one nominated people who they described as other members of the BIP group, nor did they nominate the group facilitators. A number of participants actually nominated a current and former partner.

There seemed to be more abuse-related interactions (both pro and anti) for men in the criminally oriented groups.

The most frequent communication behaviors among participants were telling network members that they are engaged in a BIP and sharing their story of abuse and intervening behaviors were used most by participants with other members of their networks, not their partners.

It is promising that they are less satisfied with pro-abusive network members than with anti-abuse network members.

Conversations about abuse are concentrated within particular types of relationships. Men in criminally oriented groups, relative to men not in criminally oriented groups, are letting their network members dominate conversations with pro-abusive messages and behaviors (i.e., they're not intervening with network members, but the criminally oriented men are responding to network members with less pro-abusive messages and behaviors than men not in criminally oriented groups).

There was some discussion of how isolated these men seem. It was asked whether they may have felt a bit of social pressure being asked to identify 3 friends - which seems like a lot for a lot of the men we see. It was suggested that Latino men might have listed more since culturally they tend to have more extensive social networks.

One encouraging result is that they went back and were communicating more with their partner, indicating that there is change over time, and they're continuing to process the content of the group outside of the group. One explanation for this is that over time they are finding more commonality with the partner versus people in their networks who are still maintaining pro-abusive attitudes and behaviors.

The word violence did not come up anywhere in the survey, indicating that violence was not something they were thinking about in the context of their social networks, rather the most salient aspects of conversations with network members was discussion around who is to blame for the abuse. That might encourage providers who notice participants having smaller social networks - are they becoming more isolated or are they shifting away from having a pro-abusive social network? Is that helpful?

That men are having an average of 10 instances of communicating with network members about abuse challenges us to examine what kind of communication the men that are doing this work are having and how they are using the group content to engage people outside of the group about abuse. It is hard to know the context of the conversations they are having with the current partner and their social networks. It does seem that BIP's messages are being spread throughout the community - the most frequently used behavior was telling network members that they go to an abuse intervention program. A talking point, then, is that one way that we - BI providers - are effective at ending DV is that we are spreading these pro-social, anti-abuse, messages through the community as a function of our participants' relaying of those messages to members of the community. Which suggests that BIPs are a way of getting these messages into pockets of the community that are more pro-abusive and that are lagging in the broader social change movement happening in the broader society.