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ABSTRACT
                Violence is a part of daily life in the United
States, which leads the world in homicides, rapes, and assaults.
Violence is also part of the daily reality for many children in
today's society, both at home and in school. The school system can be
a key intervention point in providing students with the information
necessary to understand and prevent violence. Many children do not
have the knowledge or skills to prevent or react against violence in
their lives, nor do they have the skills to act in nonviolent ways.
Schools can, and should, set standards for healthy, violence-free
relationships. This booklet illustrates the links between
gender-based violence and gender stereotypes; describes how schools
can promote and support healthy, violence-free relationships; and
provides guidelines for policies and procedures that discourage
gender-role stereotyping. Articles include: "Definition of Violence";
"Gender-Role Stereotypes and Gender-Based Violence"; "Gender-Based
Violence in Schools"; and, "Creating a Nonviolent School Climate."
Additional information is provided in a "Reading and Resources"
section. (JBJ)

Equity in Education Series

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Gender Stereotypes

The Links to Violence

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2

Gender Stereotypes
The Links to Violence

WEEA Publishing Center

4

❮Contents

◀ Introduction

Violence is a part of daily life in the United States, which leads the world in homicides, rapes, and assaults. It's on our televisions and radios and in our newspapers, books, and magazines. Violence is also a part of the daily reality for many children in our society, both at home and in school.·

We must change the system we use for acculturating our children to society from one that accepts violence as a male norm, to one that assumes male and female norms of mutual respect, empathy, and compassion.

The school system can be a key intervention point. Many children do not have the knowledge or skills to prevent or react against violence in their lives or in the lives of friends and family, nor do they have the skills to act in nonviolent ways. Schools are an important place for students to learn these skills, skills they will use for their entire lives. Schools can, and should, set standards for healthy, violence-free relationships. But how?

We can begin by counteracting the gender-stereotyped models and messages that burden boys with a male ideal that does not include an ability to express emotions, and that burden girls with a female ideal centered around physical beauty. Any approach to dealing with violence among adolescents must have as a goal the breaking down of these harmful and limiting gender-stereotyped messages.

The support for nonviolence as a way to be male or female needs to be incorporated into all aspects of the school culture, ranging from policy guidelines to classroom interaction, to athletics and sports. A nonviolent culture is one in which students can feel safe to move outside of rigidly defined gender expectations.

◀ Definition of Violence

Violence is any action or word intended to cause hurt, emotional or physical, to a person, to groups of people, or to oneself.

Violence is often directed at a person or people because of their gender, race, sexual orientation, or physical and mental abilities.

Violence is often subtle and pervasive, and is often not recognized as violence, which can leave both the victim and the perpetrator without help.

Violence is using power to control another person through subtle and not so subtle ways.

Violence happens on a societal level when the roles for boys and girls, women and men, are based on rigid, limiting, gender stereotypes.

Certain kinds of violence—such as child abuse and battering—are against the law.

Add Your Definition of Violence

Gender-Role Stereotypes and Gender-Based Violence

Violent behavior, emotional distance, and higher rates of drug addiction among men can't be explained by hormones. The problem is cultural beliefs about masculinicy—everything packed into the phrase "a real man."
—A. Diamant, "What's the Matter with Men?"

From birth, children are taught the values and behaviors of their gender, and through this socialization process, they learn the rules for "masculinity" and "femininity." Parents and teachers, like the rest of society, are already programmed to expect certain characteristics of little girls and little boys. Adult expectations play an important part in determining what children learn. Although most teachers and parents are unaware of this subtle process, they often reinforce stereotyped gender-role behavior.

What are we taught? We are taught that males must learn to be competitive, aggressive, powerful, unemotional, and controlling, and that females must be attentive to the needs of others, emotional, passive, nonaggressive, and dependent on men. For young men who have not been taught any other way of being, violence can become a way to verify that they are, in fact, men. Violence can be a way to earn respect, to make an impact, to get what they want.

Violence prevention is one of our major educational and social concerns in the United States today. Yet much of our current violence prevention is geared toward "street" violence, gang violence, and male-on-male violence. Violence or aggression against women or girls, gays, and lesbians is often treated superficially as the kind of violence for the potential victim to avoid, rather than as a social issue with deep roots in how we view one another as males and females.

What Is Gender-Based Violence?

Gender-based violence is fueled by deeply held beliefs that define females and males in rigid, limiting ways. It is violence that is culturally supported by the belief that men should be dominant and have power and control and that women should remain passive and submissive. Society dictates these unconscious, but fairly rigid role definitions of what is appropriately female or male, and most of us accept them, at least to some degree, as "right." When girls or boys, women or men are seen as stepping outside of those definitions—as are gays and lesbians—they can be easy targets for gender-based violence, especially because it seems that the violence is condoned by society.

8

3

Gender-based violence includes sexual harassment, dating violence, rape, battering and abuse, male-on-male violence, violence in the home, homophobic violence, and violence within gay and lesbian relationships. It is not only physical violence, but also the often overlooked psychological abuse that includes verbal abuse, manipulation, threats, and economic control.

It is difficult to deal effectively with the complexity of gender-based violence when its different components are addressed individually. Date rape, sexual harassment in the workplace and in schools, stalking, violence in the home, antigay and antilesbian violence, and street hassling have all been discussed as separate issues rather than as different parts of the same problem. By keeping these discussions separate we are missing the common link—the harm that gender-stereotyped messages can do to our children—and we are not addressing the safety issues that significantly affect over half the school population.

Research on gender equity has amply documented the picture of gender bias in the classroom. While girls are trained to be cooperative and silent, boys are the center of attention and continue to learn they get attention by being aggressive. In so many subtle ways, schools reinforce the outdated concept of opposite sexes:

- We discourage girls from taking part in sports and in areas traditionally male dominated such as math and science.
- We discourage boys from taking traditionally female dominated courses such as home economics.
- We don't openly confront and discuss peer or teacher to student homophobia and harassment.
- We rarely give students a forum for discussing together what they do or don't like about the rigidity and impact of gender stereotypes.

Violence as an Accepted Part of the Culture

Violence is not a universal human function; most people go through life without committing violent acts against another person. However, there is a level of historical acceptance and support within any culture for or against an array of violent acts. This acceptance of violence, particularly among males, is something we teach our children.

The roots of violence—gender stereotypes, power imbalance, racism—are deeply embedded in our ways of socializing our children, and as a result the stereotyped perceptions of what it means to be appropriately male—to control, to be powerful—have become part of our national mythology, glorified in the media.

Television and other media influence all aspects of life and people of all ages and overwhelmingly reinforce gender stereotypes—men as macho, violence as sexy, and women as sex objects. Because women are portrayed as sex objects, and violence is portrayed as sexy, women and sexual violence are linked. Women are seen also as appropriate objects of violence.

However much we would like to lay blame on the media, we must remember the media is us—groups of individuals who were raised in the same

cultural context as the rest of the nation. In many ways they are acting as mirrors for ourselves, a way to examine what we as a society believe about women, men, and violence.

The Hidden and Evaded Curriculum

Some of our social conditioning is slowly changing, and we are becoming more aware of the effects that school violence has on our children. *Failing at Fairness, We've All Got Scars: What Boys and Girls Learn in Elementary School*, and *How Schools Shortchange Girls* all point out the persistent problem of equating certain behaviors with maleness or femaleness and highlight the strong role education and schools play in it. By the second grade, this hidden curriculum

> taught little girls to be helpful and nurturant. It taught little boys to distance themselves from girls, to look down on them. . . . Through its insistence that boys learn to be boys and girls learn to be girls . . . we make inordinate demands on small boys to become instant men, to live up to macho criteria they are as yet unprepared to meet.[1]

Females are excluded from texts and curricula, males receive more teacher time and attention than females, and there are differences favoring males in task assignment, teachers' expectations of student behavior and achievement, and overall curriculum design, classroom activities, and educational tracking (particularly in math, science, vocational courses, and extracurricular activities).[2]

These practices send very different messages to males and females about their worth, their abilities, and their potential. It is not surprising then that males learn to reject supposedly "feminine" qualities of cooperation and sensitivity in favor of competition and objectivity. This kind of socialization lays the foundation for gender expectations based on male domination and female subordination:

> Boys' feelings of misogyny, if allowed to develop unchecked, can bear bitter fruit in adulthood. Men who view women as worth less or as objects of scorn and submission may act on those beliefs.[3]

Schools also reinforce gender-role stereotyping and potential violence through what is called the "evaded curriculum."[4] This term refers to those issues, such as violence, and gender and race bias, that greatly affect the quality of students' lives, but are rarely discussed within schools. Given the already documented evidence of abuse and violence in adolescents' lives, we know that when we avoid addressing these issues in school, we reinforce the message that such matters are private and individual, rather than societal and widespread. This silence serves to cover up the extent of the abuse and reinforce the shame that victims often feel.

The peer pressure for boys and men to act out the version of maleness that defines them as aggressive, in control, and unemotional is enormous; those who choose not to can find themselves the subject of homophobic harassment—especially during elementary and secondary school years. For many young

men, violence has evolved into a culture that anthropologist Clifford Geertz says should be thought of as "the extrinsic gene" because of its deep hold on habits and hearts.[5]

Homophobic Violence

Boys and girls—gay or straight—who are the targets of homophobic violence can be especially afraid of reporting any abuse because the subject of homosexuality and gay culture is taboo in our society and is especially invisible in our schools. Boys are twice as likely as girls to be targets of homophobic harassment, and they are the least likely to report the abuse due to the intense pressure for them to conform to male gender-based stereotypes of not asking for help, and of not being vulnerable in any way.[6] And as gender equity researchers Myra Sadker and David Sadker have found:

> Of all the cruel epithets boys hurl at one another, none is more devastating than being called a "girl," "woman," "sissy," "fag," or "queer." So boys work hard to purge themselves of any taint of femininity.[7]

Anyone can be the target of homophobic harassment, but boys who do not fit the status quo of what is considered masculine behavior—tough, unfeeling, and invulnerable—may be more at risk. Since nurturing is not perceived as valuable for boys and men and is considered a female trait, those boys who do exhibit caring abilities may put themselves at risk for being called gay.

The Role of Sports

One of the most overlooked arenas for violence within schools may be the environment that surrounds athletics and sports. From Little League games, where parents and friends sit on the sidelines and encourage aggressive behavior, to the college or professional arena where brutality is cheered, the message is clear. Violence can be sport:

> Social conditioning—the way boys are taught to be competitive, protective, physically heroic, and emotionally stoic—is the most widely cited reason for male violence.[8]

School athletics and competition can be healthy and can teach values of respect and fair play, but too often school athletics only serve to reinforce traditional male values that do not include nurturing or cooperation.

Violence against Girls and Women with Disabilities

There is a great lack of prevention, intervention, and support services for students with disabilities. As with much of education, the issues and needs of girls and women with disabilities are largely absent. However, recent U.S. research reports that the number of children with disabilities who were abused physically, sexually, and emotionally was 1.7 times higher than the rate for children without disabilities.[9]

11

People with disabilities may be seen as easy targets for victimization, and violence against girls and women with disabilities is often overlooked, denied, or ignored. Often this violence is not reported for many of the same reasons it is not reported in the larger population—girls and women with disabilities may feel no one will· believe them, they may have limited ability to communicate with people outside their immediate environment, or they may depend on the abuser for many of their needs.

Social and Educational Costs

The costs of violence differ by race, gender, and class. Homicide is the leading cause of death among African American males, and A ·rican American females are at greater risk of being raped or murdered than any other group of women.[10] Youth from Latino or Asian families, students from recently arrived immigrant families, and students who have physical or emotional disabilities all face significant levels of violence.

By the time students reach middle and high school, schools need crisis management programs to cope with conflicts that climax in violent aggression. Girls are afraid to go to school. Because students' often sit in class with their abusers, girls and gay and lesbian students drop out rather than face daily interactions with their persecutors. School systems are facing serious lawsuits stemming from sexual harassment and safety concerns. The educational and social costs for children are enormous and include

- *A Diminished Education.* Children facing violence in the home, street, or school cannot actively participate and learn in class—they are denied their education. An environment filled with intimidation, fear, or health/safety factors is an obstacle to concentration and learning. Students who are harassed have a difficult time concentrating on school work and other activities and will instead be preoccupied with feelings of anger, hurt, and fear. They can simply "tune out" in class and not talk as often, or engage as much in activities or conversations with their peers.
- *Increa 'd Isolation.* Students who are being harassed or who are experiencing dating violence will put a great deal of energy into avoiding their harasser. They may skip school, feign illness, or truly become ill or depressed to the point where they are listless and unable to participate in classes or activities. When students do not feel safe enough to report the abuse to school officials or family members, they never learn what it feels like to ask for respect or acknowledge for themselves and others that they deserve it. Nor do they learn how to take action to protect themselves. Without these skills, and without a clear sense of their own self-worth, they may begin a debilitating lifelong pattern of hiding their feelings and denying self-respect.
- *Loss of Self-Esteem.* Victims often blame themselves for the abuse and feel embarrassed, humiliated, and unsure of themselves. These feelings, if left unresolved, can result in their being more vulnerable to abuse in the future.

- *Vulnerability at Work.* If students leave school still believing the messages that tell them violence and aggression toward women, and gays and lesbians are okay, they will enter the workplace unprepared to cope with everyday situations. The rising demand to reduce sexual harassment in the workplace reflects the need to train our young men and women to interact in peaceful ways or to deal with conflict in a mutually respectful way.

13

Gender-Based Violence in Schools

Most school-based violence is commonly expressed in various ways: through dating situations, or by different forms of harassment, including homophobic remarks or gestures. Teaching girls and boys how to recognize and respond to harassment and dating violence can help them understand what kinds of behavior are appropriate in what situations, and what would always be inappropriate and considered violent. *These forms of violence all have the following characteristics in common:*

- *Gender.* Although both males and females can be victims, in most dating violence, sexual harassment, and battering situations, females are the primary targets. In homophobic violence, adolescent males are the primary targets, and the perpetrators are overwhelmingly male.
- *Invisibility.* Young people rarely talk about or seek help for gender-based violence. They are silenced by feelings of shame, isolation, or fear. Whether it is defined as sexual harassment, dating violence, rape, battering, or homophobic violence, adolescents may not ask for help because they feel they caused the violence, deserved it, are responsible for stopping it themselves, or because they are afraid of retaliation from the abuser, or being blamed themselves for the abuse.
- *Minimization.* Adults have a tendency to minimize the intensity of relationships and the potential for violence among adolescents. Schools may send a very clear message they will not tolerate verbal and physical violence. Yet at the same time dozens of small incidents—sexual remarks or innuendos, brushing up against another student, staring, or stalking—happen daily, and while these incidents may seem subtle to witness, they nevertheless leave a significant and lasting mark on the victim. When students get the double message that says school violence will not be tolerated, and yet see it tolerated, they will not trust that their complaints will be taken seriously if they do come forward.
- *Confusion about What Violence Is.* Many adolescents do not define relationship violence as a problem; instead they may interpret some kinds of violence as "love," because it is so common and expected that it seems normal. The pressure to have a boyfriend or girlfriend at any "cost" is also pervasive.
- *Diversity.* Gender-based violence is not unique to any one race, class, or ethnic group, or to heterosexual girls or women. It is prevalent in all communities, and it differs from one community to another by race. For males, African Americans (81 percent) are more likely to have been sexually harassed than whites (75 percent) and Hispanics (69 percent), and for females, more whites report they have been sexually harassed (87 percent) than do African Americans (84 percent) and Hispanics (82 percent).[11]

Sexual Harassment

Females and males agree that women are more often the recipients of demeaning treatment and agreed that this included not having your ideas and thoughts taken seriously, respected or listened to by others. They also agreed that women were often treated as sex objects and the victims of physical and sexual assault, resulting in more fear and less freedom for women.

—L. Riley et al., *My Worst Nightmare: Wisconsin Students'*
Perceptions of Being the Other Gender

One form of gender-based violence is sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is any threat of having your education affected by being asked for sexual favors in exchange for grades, or activities such as a part in a play, or a spot on a sports team (quid pro quo). It is also any *unwanted and unwelcome sexual behavior* that interferes with a student's right to study, work, or achieve in any environment. The abusive intent of harassment is to demean, control, embarrass, or humiliate another on the basis of their gender or sexual orientation. Flirting is different from sexual harassment because the intent is not hostile.

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome

- *Physical touching*, such as brushing or rubbing up against, shoving, pinching, bumping, pushing, patting, or pulling at clothing, or sexual advances such as hugging or kissing
- *Talk that is sexual in nature*, such as requesting sexual favors or spreading sexual rumors; commenting on body parts, or commenting sexually on clothing; telling dirty jokes, singing obscene songs, or telling stories that are sexual in nature; teasing about body development; or making noises such as whistling, howling, or cat calling
- *Name calling*, such as fag, slut, bitch, queer, honey, sweetie, or any other name that is intended to humiliate, embarrass, intimidate, or harass a person
- *Nonverbal threatening activity* that could include obscene gestures such as inappropriate body or hand movements, facial expressions, or exposing of body parts; stalking; staring or leering; sexual graffiti or notes; reading and/or displaying pornographic material; or physically prohibiting free movement in any way, such as blocking or cornering

Who Is Being Harassed? Who Harasses?

The 1993 American Association of University Women (AAUW) survey on sexual harassment in America's schools, *Hostile Hallways*, found that four out of five students (81 percent) say they have been harassed in school. A 1995 project examining sexual harassment describes some findings:

Although we observed that verbal harassment or the fear of harassment touched almost everyone, three types of students reported more harassment than did others: girls who are viewed by their peers as physically unattractive or who do not dress stylishly, girls who are physically well developed, and boys who do not fit a stereotypic male macho image.[12]

Harassers can be students or adults, although peer harassment is most common (79 percent of those who say they have been harassed). Just as harassment can and does happen everywhere—in restaurants, on the street, in meetings, on public transportation, and in church—school sexual harassment happens everywhere in, around, and on the way to and from the school environment. That can include playgrounds, sports facilities that are run by the school but not physically on the school grounds, school buses, and in the hallways, bathrooms, study halls, lunchrooms, and classrooms of the school.

Dating Violence

More than one in ten teenagers experience violence in their dating relationships.[13] Given what we know about the invisibility of violence and the silence of victims, this statistic undoubtedly underreports the number of girls experiencing violence in dating relationships. Dating violence, when there is no intervention, can for the victim be the beginning of a way of life centered around fear and shame, and for the perpetrator be the beginning of a lifelong pattern of abuse.

Unique Aspects of Violence in Teen Dating Relationships*

The power differential between young boys and girls may not be as great as when they are older (fourteen and older), when physical and social power imbalances between men and women become more pronounced. In early adolescence, neither may possess the capability to physically dominate the other. As a result, incidents where girls abuse boys probably happen more often at earlier ages.

Due to a lack of experience, teens may be especially susceptible to the overwhelmingly stereotypical and unequal gender roles presented in society. And, also due to a lack of experience and information—combined with confusing and contradictory societal messages—they may feel a lot of confusion about what is appropriate behavior in intimate relationships. This can undermine a girl's ability to judge if her boyfriend's behavior is the norm, out of line, or abusive.

Many teens resist seeking help from their parents and other adults, especially authority figures like police or court officers. Teens are typically struggling for independence and want to solve problems themselves, or with their peers. They fear, rightly or wrongly, that if told of the abuse, their parents would curtail their newly gained independence and control future decisions about their relationships.

In some dating violence situations, friends or brothers of the girl may beat up the abusive boyfriend or warn him to leave her alone. This kind of intervention may protect the immediate victim, but probably does little to

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*Adapted from *The Curriculum Project*, Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, 1619 Dayton Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104. Used with permission

16

change the abuser's behavior in future relationships where he may continue to use violence. (Sadly, the "rescuers" have also used violence to achieve what they wanted.)

Early Warning Signs for Victims and Perpetrators*

Young men who physically and sexually assault their girlfriends don't often fit our common stereotype of the bully or macl.o male. There are literally-all types of perpetrators. Many are popular students from "model" families. The victim may not be believed when she reports the abuse, because violence doesn't fit the picture others have of the perpetrator.

Teenagers may learn to accept physical violence because of their exposure to it in their homes (either as victims or witnesses) or in the media. Given this early learning, it is critical for school personnel to recognize and respond to the early warning signs.

Victims
- *Truancy, Failing, Withdrawal from Activities, Dropping Out of School.* An abusive relationship drains the victim of energy. What energy she has will be spent trying to make things right for the perpetrator. Victims may withdraw from friends because of shame or jealous accusations on the part of a violent boyfriend.
- *Sudden Changes in Mood or Personality.* These changes may include depression, withdrawal, acting out, secretiveness, increased insecurity, or feelings of inadequacy. Victims may be anxious about making independent decisions because they need to get "permission" from their boyfriends.
- *Physical Bruises or Other Signs of Injury.* Keep in mind that victims will be embarrassed and will often try to hide their injuries with dress and make-up, as well as with explanations that seem out of character.
- *Use of Alcohol or Other Drugs.* This may be in response to pressure from her boyfriend, or as an attempt on her part to numb her emotional pain.

Perpetrators
- *Possessive or Jealous Behavior.* Possessiveness often precedes and follows violence. An abusive boyfriend will attempt to isolate his girlfriend by forbidding her to see or talk with others, or by accusing her of infidelity, which forces her to limit her social life in order to appease him.
- *Suicide Attempts or Threats, or Changes in Mood or Personality.* Suicide threats can be intended to manipulate a girlfriend into staying in the relationship. Extreme agitation, depression, or aggressiveness can be tip-offs to relationship conflict or abuse.
- *Public Displays of Anger or Ridicule toward Women,* or sexual harassment ranging from suggestive comments to uninvited touching.

*Adapted from C. Sousa, L. Bancroft, and T. German, *Preventing Teen Dating Violence*, Dating Violence Intervention Project, Cambridge, Mass.: 1989. Used with permission.

- *Pressuring Girls for Dates or Sex.* Boys who use coercive tactics to win dates are likely to be abusive in order to maintain the relationship. The signs are getting angry when a girl says no, threats, uninvited touching or sexual advances, social ridicule, and refusal to accept "no" for an answer.
- *Alcohol or Drug Use.* Some perpetrators rely on alcohol or other drugs to give themselves the "courage" to become more aggressive toward their girlfriends. Alcohol or other drugs cannot "cause" people to be violent. People who have a tendency to be violent will be violent with or without drugs.

Violence Prevention: Overcoming Silence, Resisting Peer Pressure, and Building Trust

> Preventative training is most effective when it acknowledges that sexual harassment is a cultural problem rather than simply the failure of the school or the individual harasser.
> —S. Eaton, "Sexual Harassment at an Early Age: New Cases Are Changing the Rules for Schools."

Sexual harassment and dating violence can affect victims differently depending on the type and amount of support available for them, the amount of follow-up—both familial and school—given to incidents of harassment, and the overall school climate surrounding gender-based violence.

In environments where violence is not tolerated and students are educated on alternatives to violence that include both how to protect themselves, and how to treat their peers respectfully, victims will be more resilient to incidents of abuse and more likely to ask for help, and perpetrators more likely to choose nonabusive behaviors.

The following are some suggestions for how to recognize and combat some of the greatest barriers to overcoming harassment and dating violence.

Overcoming Silence

Victims are often afraid of reporting abuse because they feel ashamed and embarrassed for being the target. They may feel they invited the abuse in some way, and they don't expect that reporting it will do them any good. They may also feel pressured, by their peers or by a school or home climate that ignores or condones harassment or dating violence, to think, "It's no big deal."

Talk about gender-based violence with students, and provide opportunities for them to discuss violence with each other and with informed adults. Most students will welcome the opportunity to talk about harassment and dating violence in a safe setting—that is, one where the guidelines for respectful communication have already been laid down. Ask students their opinions, listen to what they have to say, and include them in an advisory capacity as you formulate school policy and train staff and students.

Give students as much information as possible about the immediate and the far-reaching negative effects of gender-based violence. If they are being harassed or are experiencing violence in a dating situation they will be able to recognize some of the effects in their own behaviors or feelings, or in those of their friends.

Give them a broader picture. Connect the harassment and dating violence they see in school with the harmful effects of gender-role stereotypes and with other gender-based violence in society such as harassment in the workplace, battering, or rape.

Resisting Peer Pressure

Students think they will be rejected or ridiculed by their classmates if they report harassment or dating violence, especially if the abuser is subjected to any kind of disciplinary action. At a time when adolescents most want to fit in with their peers, reporting harassment or dating violence by a peer can be a very risky thing for a student to do. This is especially true if their peers choose to not define the behavior as abusive, and teachers and other adults have repeatedly witnessed abusive behaviors and ignored them, thereby giving violence tacit approval.

For boys, not harassing may be a risky stance to take—especially in terms of homophobic harassment—if all their peers engage in the same behavior, and none of them recognize it as harassment.

Define what is and isn't harassment, and what is and isn't dating violence. Make sure students understand the differences between flirting and harassment, and between respectful and disrespectful behavior. Encourage them to talk about their own experiences as they try to find the distinctions between the two. Once students can see that their peers share many of their same feelings, they are more likely to talk about harassment or dating violence.

Create an environment where gender-based violence is not tolerated. This includes instituting policies and procedures for dealing with harassment. Discussions and training need to be incorporated into students' everyday experience in school to be effective. Teachers, administrators, and other school personnel need to be trained to respond immediately to incidents of violence. Train students also to respond to gender-based violence—of themselves or others—in ways they feel comfortable with, and that are least likely to put them in danger of being further harassed by their peers, or by an adult.

Talk openly about homosexuality. The invisibility of gays and lesbians helps keep them hidden in the closet, and makes it especially difficult for adolescent gays and lesbians to feel a part of the highly homophobic atmosphere of most schools. You can help reduce that homophobia by talking about gay and lesbian cultures in positive ways, and by including gays and lesbians in all programs you create to value diversity in your student population.

Building Trust

Students may view the school as uncaring and unhelpful, and they may think that reporting violence will not make any difference, or that they will not be taken seriously. It is not unusual for students to feel they will be punished in some way for reporting violence. After all, society sets many examples of violent behavior that go unpunished, and may even be rewarded.

The bottom line is that students are unlikely to report violence if they see and hear that school officials or family members will not be receptive to their complaints.

Institute policies and procedures to educate students about gender-based violence and its short- and long-term effects. When they have been given an opportunity to voice their feelings and think about what they would do in a harassing or dating violence situation, students are more likely to feel empowered and trusting enough to report the abuse.

Create a safe environment. Assure confidentiality, and never imply that a student is at fault for "getting themselves into a sticky situation." Blaming students who report incidents of violence will have a negative effect. They will only learn to trust once they see they will not be punished for coming forward—that is, when their complaints are taken seriously, their feelings of fear, anger, and grief are recognized, and when there are defined consequences for the perpetrator.

Talk with students about why they will or won't report harassment or dating violence. Students need to practice, with their peers and with knowledgeable adults, making decisions about what they would do in an abusive situation. What if the person harassing them is in a position of power, such as a teacher or a popular student? Do they understand the process for reporting harassment. Do they trust that their concerns will be listened to? What are their fears? Needs?

The Law

Sexual harassment of any kind—by an adult directed at a student or another adult, or by a student directed at another student or at an adult—violates Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The language of Title IX makes it illegal for any school district receiving federal funds to treat males and females differently or separately. Schools who violate any of the above laws can be forced to pay damages to the person or persons violated by the harassment.

15

◀ Creating a Nonviolent School Climate

Schools, with their enormous potential for teaching nonviolence, can play a significant role in this effort. It is not that teachers and administrators are intentionally ignoring gender-based violence. Rather, it is that we have not yet developed a model for incorporating all we know about the link between gender-role stereotypes and violence into a comprehensive method for addressing it in schools.

Gender-based violence is complex, and must be viewed from an interdisciplinary perspective. What are the key components that should be covered when addressing gender-based violence throughout the system? Schools need to intervene at all points in the circle—preservice, K–12, family connections, larger society—and in as many ways as possible. Violence must be addressed both as a problem affecting students and adults, and as a social issue to be discussed in the classroom. Some specific guidelines, as identified by experts and practitioners, are listed below.[14]

A Systemic Approach

- *Institutional Support.* Effective programs need support from high-level school administrators. Instructors need the support of principals to ensure the effort is a priority for the school system and the appropriate procedures will be followed to help any child who discloses that she or he has been victimized.
- *An Interdisciplinary Team.* Establish a core coalition of teachers and students to guide and implement the approach. This core team would need to reflect not just health perspectives, but teachers from a range of classroom settings, including social studies, mathematics, and civics. Teams also need to represent the diversity within the school. Peer leader programs are often very effective in schools, and peers could be especially helpful for the sensitive areas being addressed.
- *Community Links.* Develop formal relationships with community service providers, such as battered women's shelters, rape crisis centers, local law enforcement, batterers treatment programs, antisexist men's organizations, and other service agencies. Schools should have access to this enormous base of knowledge. Be informed of the services these organizations provide in your community, and potentially to your students. You can invite community providers to conduct workshops and presentations to both teachers and students.

21

- *Family Links.* Involve family members! Family and community support is critical to the success of any effort to reduce violence. Other violence prevention efforts, which may already be supported by families, may be a useful base for building understanding and support for such an effort, as can the national public awareness campaigns about battering. A handbook for parents may help reduce parental concern and build support.
- *Training.* Teachers and peer leaders need to be thoroughly trained in the issues of gender-based violence. Instructors need to be particularly informed on sensitive areas—such as disclosure and legal issues—before talking with any students. The training should include details—for students and teachers—on content, delivery methods, and time frames.

Training that is long-term and is infused into as many subject areas as possible, is best. A truly effective program would draw on the specific content of several subject areas as an entry point for students.

Incorporating a Gender Perspective into Prevention Programs

Both violence prevention and conflict resolution programs need to incorporate some teaching about gender-role stereotyping and gender expectations. Although these programs typically emphasize cooperation and communication, they do not usually address the tension that exists based on gender-role stereotypes and expectations—tension that can leave adolescents vulnerable to sexual and dating violence, and young males vulnerable to male-on-male violence.

You can incorporate this discussion into already existing curricula that address violence prevention, conflict resolution, gender equity, health education, or peer leadership. There are a number of curricula listed in the Resource section of this booklet that specifically address gender-based violence.

- *Know the Laws.* Title IX federal legislation prohibits sex discrimination against students and staff in education. Abuse of a minor is a criminal offense, and beating someone up is assault and battery. The more students and staff know about these laws, and understand how committed the school is to enforcing them, and further understand the likely chain of events if they report an incident, the more likely they are to come forward.
- *Males Are Victims Also.* Gender-based violence affects us all, so it is important to avoid blaming or stereotyping entire groups of people— males or females—based on their gender. Be clear, however, that because of the overwhelming messages we get about being male or female, women are more vulnerable to being victimized, and men are more vulnerable to becoming violent.
- *Personal Issues for Teachers and Presenters.* Some adults who will be asked to teach about gender-based violence may be either victims or abusers, or they may have witnessed some form of gender-based violence, such as "domestic" violence in their childhood home. They may choose to either protect this information, or to share it as a part of the process. It will be important to understand both the benefits and the drawbacks of self-

disclosure as a part of this process, and to begin by giving potential presenters some guidelines within which they can feel comfortable to choose one or the other.

- *Personal Issues for Students.* As with adults, students who have been victims of gender-based violence or who have witnessed such violence may feel uncomfortable discussing violence. Any discussions about gender-based violence need to be addressed in a thoughtful way that gives students a sense of safety and choice about disclosure. Let students know whom to talk with on the school staff, if they want to disclose any information about violence, and make sure those persons are informed about the laws in and out of school, all the school policies that pertain to harassment or abuse, and know generally how to work with victims of harassment and abuse.
- *Policies and Procedures.* Consider the whole school when you are making decisions about what violence prevention policies and procedures to put in place. What policies and procedures either inhibit, or encourage gender-based violence? Do you have any connections to support services or social services outside of the school that work in the areas of school violence prevention or violence against women? These services can be excellent sources of information, and may be willing to provide workshops or speakers.
- *Violence Exists along a Continuum.* It is important to talk about gender-based violence as including a range of behavior that can begin before school (as we internalize the rigid messages we get about how girls and boys should be), continue during the school years (as those messages are reinforced and we are exposed to differential treatment, verbal slurs, harassment, and dating violence), and continue into adult life in the forms of harassment, dating violence, and battering.

Content Issues

Because students learn in different ways, you can stimulate their interest and promote discussion by using a wide variety of teaching techniques, including role play, group exercises, small group discussions, audiovisuals, community provider presentations, victim panels, and handouts. Both teacher instructors and student assistants should be involved in the process of choosing the content. Remember to include the following:

- The scope and range of gender-based violence, including violence against gays and lesbians, and people with disabilities
- The culture of school in terms of the part they play in promoting or ignoring gender-based violence
- The roots of gender-based violence that include gender and race stereotyping and labeling
- The legal issues involved, and issues around disclosure, confidentiality, student rights, trust and safety
- The links and similarities between victims and perpetrators of violence
- Procedures outlining the appropriate response for teachers, students, and administrators to disclosure, including access to community resources and referrals designed to assist victims of violence

Teachers and Families: Encouraging Nonviolence

It is not difficult to see the limitations of a sexist world. Until recently, education has not only condoned sexism in the schools, it has even fostered such attitudes; both girls and boys have been missing out on certain experiences that will help them develop into fully competent and caring adults. Although the problem pervades every aspect of society, teachers and family members can begin to make changes in their own classrooms and homes.

In School

Expect the same behavior from boys and girls. Don't tolerate abusive language (swearing, insults) from boys or girls; don't expect boys to move equipment any more than you would expect girls to move it; and require the same level of neatness from boys and girls.

Reinforce the importance of values—without regard to gender—so that both girls and boys learn to express assertiveness and gentleness.

Take the idea of equality and mutual respect seriously. Don't put down girls or boys, women or men, or joke about their abilities, roles, or ethnic backgrounds. Require both sexes to treat each other with mutual respect, and encourage students to include others of both sexes in all activities. Also, don't allow sexist remarks to go unchallenged.

Use gender-neutral language. For example, do not refer to all doctors or lawyers as "he" or all nurses or secretaries as "she;" use the word "man" to mean man, and use the word "humans" to mean both women and men.

Examine your own attitudes and expectations. Do they reflect stereotyped role models? Teachers, like most of us, tend to have different expectations for both sexes. Learn about how you subtly communicate those biased expectations to your students. Avoid perpetuating stereotyped role models. For example, do you compliment both sexes on competencies and strengths, rather than on appearances?

Educate children or other educators about gender bias. Examine some of the ways you can incorporate discussion about the harm of gender-based stereotyping into your classes. Use activities that allow boys and girls together to express their personal views on how they feel restricted by gender-based stereotypes. Provide tools, such as activities, posters, and curriculum, that will encourage students to break out of rigid gender roles.

Physical Education

Avoid comparisons or generalizations of students based on gender. For example, don't say, "The girls are better runners than the boys."

Help students enjoy and explore various interests, not only those traditionally thought to be more easily done by the other gender; for example, encourage

24

girls and boys in ice and field hockey, and in modern dance. Show enthusiasm for all physical education class activities, not only those associated with your sex.

Assign chores or duties without regard to sex. Both girls and boys can carry and set up equipment such as balance beams. Expect experienced performers in a sport to teach their skills to members of either sex.

Use nonsexist printed and visual materials that show women and men of different racial and ethnic backgrounds and that include people with disabilities in a variety of recreational or professional sports. Also, use examples in your teaching that show females and males with a wide range of feelings, interests, and sport preferences.

Teach accurate information about the recreational and professional opportunities of men and women in sports.

At Home

Broaden children's awareness. The work roles and job expectations that families have—still very much along gender-stereotyped expectations for females and males—influence what they want for their children. Point out nonstereotyped work roles outside the home. At home, become more aware of the impact of your own roles, not necessarily changing them, but perhaps emphasizing areas in which you don't assume "traditional" roles For example, women who do repairs or construction projects (as do the majority of single mothers who are single parent heads of households) give a subtle, but important message in involving their children in the project. Fathers make a different kind of statement by asking children to help them in the feeding and diapering of a new baby or in cleaning the house or doing other household tasks.

Become aware of how you set different standards of behavior for girls and boys. What responsibilities do you give your children? With older siblings, does the boy take out the garbage and the girl always help with the dishes? Is more emphasis put on girls dating and boys' participation in sports? Families want their children to be what they think of as normal, and don't want other people to think badly of them. This often leads to subtle—or not so subtle— discouragement of any signs of "feminine" behavior on the part of boys, or "masculine" behavior on the part of girls. The goal is for you to help your children explore all of life's avenues, and to give them the confidence to choose from traditional and nontraditional roles in any and every adult activity.

Think of toys in terms of the skills they help develop, instead of worrying about what's "appropriate" for a girl or a boy. Girls need toys that stimulate manipulation and help them understand spatial relationships—these are factors closely linked to math and science skills in later years. And to become independent, competent, and resourceful human beings, boys need toys that foster their housekeeping and nurturing skills.

Understand the effect of the media, especially television, on how children view the world—which, in turn, influences how they view themselves. Become critical of media portrayals of females and males and use the experience to spark thought-provoking discussions. Fostering critical awareness will not only offset sexist influences, it will help children develop a vital lifelong skill: the ability to evaluate anything, ideas or products, someone tries to "sell" them.

Children whose parents use nonsexist language will imitate the practice. The spoken word influences a child's self-image. Girls who are always complimented on being "pretty," and boys who are told that "boys don't cry" quickly internalize the implications: Females are valued more for their looks than for intellectual qualities or skills; boys are discouraged from expressing— and in the long run feeling—a full range of emotions.

Through education young men and women can unlearn the tolerance of violence and learn how to achieve violence-free, egalitarian relationships. These skills are as critical to students as reading, writing, math, and the use of computers.

26

Notes

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[4] Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, *The AAUW Report: How Schools Shortchange Girls* (Washington, D.C.: The American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1992).

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[9] S. B. Crosse, E. Kaye, and A. C. Ratnofsky, *A Report on the Maltreatment of Children with Disabilities* (Washington, D.C.: National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1992).

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[11] AAUW, *Hostile Hallways*.

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[13] B. Levy, ed., *Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger* (Seattle, Wash.: Seal Press, 1991).

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"Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment among Students" (30 mins.), Intermedia, Inc., 1300 Dexter N., Seattle, WA 98109 (800)553-8336.

"Heart on a Chain: The Truth about Date Violence" (15 mins.), Coronet/MTI Film & Video, 4350 Equity Drive, P.O. Box 2649, Columbus, OH 43216 (800)777-8100 (education, K–12, and public libraries); (800)777-2400 (all other organizations).

"Media Mayhem: More Than Make Believe" (30 mins.), NEWIST, CESA 7, 1S Bldg., University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, WI 54311 (800)633-7445.

"The Schools' Role in Creating a Violence-Free Society" (60 mins.), Nancy Worcester, Domestic Violence Training Project, 610 Langdon Street, Madison, WI 53703.

"Sexual Harassment: It's Hurting People" (18 mins.), National Middle School Association, Dept. #700, Columbus, OH 43265-00018 (800)528-NMSA.

"Sticks, Stones, and Stereotypes: A Video-Curriculum Module about Namecalling" (26 mins.) ("Palos, Piedras y Estereotipos: Un Video-Curricular Módulo Sobre Nombres Derogatorios"), Appreciating Diversity Program, Equity Institute, 6400 Hollis Street, Suite 15, Emeryville, CA 94608 (510)658-4577; FAX 510-658-5184.

25

Organizations

BrotherPeace Twin Cities
3501 Chicago Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55407
612-929-5713

Center for Women Policy Studies
2000 P Street, NW
Suite 508
Washington, DC 20036
202-872-1770

Dating Violence Intervention Project
Transition House
P.O. Box 530
Harvard Square Station
Cambridge, MA 02238
617-868-8328

Emerge
Batterers Treatment Program
18 Hurley Street
Cambridge MA 02141
617-422-1550

Los Angeles Commission on Assaults
   Against Women
6043 Hollywood Boulevard, Suite 200
Los Angeles, CA 90028
213-462-1281

Media Action Alliance
P.O. Box 391
Circle Pines, MN 55014-0391
612-434-4343

Men Overcoming Violence (MOVE)
54 Mint St., Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-777-4496

National Association for Mediation in
   Education (NAME)
University of Massachusetts
205 Hampshire House, Box 33635
Amherst, MA 01003-3635
413-545-2462

National Coalition Against Domestic
   Violence
P.O. Box 18749
Denver, CO 80218
303-839-1852

National Coalition for Sex Equity in
   Education (NCSEE)
One Redwood Drive
Clinton, NJ 08809
(908) 735-5045

National Education Resource Center for Gay
   and Lesbian Youth
Education Development Center (EDC)
55 Chapel Street
Newton, MA 02158
617-969-7100

National Organization for Men Against
   Sexism (NOMAS)
54 Mint Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-546-6627

National Resource Center on Domestic
   Violence
6400 Flank Drive
Suite 1300
Harrisburg, PA 17112
800-537-2238

Project 10
7850 Melrose Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90046
818-577-4553

Women's Project
2224 Main Street
Little Rock, AR 72206
501-372-5113

Educational Equity List

EDEQUITY (Educational Equity Discussion List) is an international Internet discussion list focusing on theory and practice of equity in education in a multicultural context. To subscribe, send the message *subscribe edequity* to MAJORDOMO@CONFER.EDC.ORG. (Do not use a "subject" line.)

The Equity in Education Series is published by WEEA Publishing Center, located at Education Development Center, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02158 ◆ (800) 225-3088

31
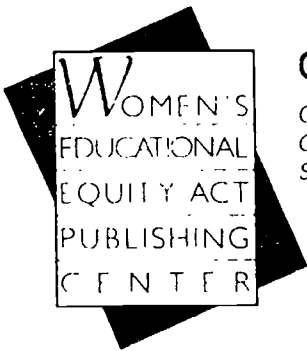
Gender Stereotypes: The Links to Violence

The school system can be a key intervention point in providing students with the information necessary to understand and prevent violence. *Gender Stereotypes: The Links to Violence* helps students learn to act in nonviolent ways. This booklet illustrates the links between gender-based violence and gender stereotypes; describes how schools can promote and support healthy, violence-free relationships; and provides guidelines for policies and procedures that discourage gender-role stereotyping.

An excellent resource for all educators. [Gender Stereotypes: The Links to Violence] *addresses the links between [different] forms of gender-based violence . . . [and] provides an explanation of the ways in which school culture can perpetuate the social divisions in our society. . . . [O]ffers specific and practical solutions toward addressing these issues which, if implemented, will contribute greatly to a more equitable society.*

—Debra J. Robbin, Violence Prevention Specialist

The Equity in Education Series is filled with pertinent information that is sure to assist classroom teachers, administrators, and the general community in understanding the issues surrounding equity in the classroom.

—James P. Heiden, Gender Equity Cadre Chair
Cooperative Educational Service Agency #1, Wisconsin

Other Titles in the Series

Gender Equity for Educators, Parents, and Community
Gender-Fair Math
School-to-Work: Equitable Outcomes

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