

ANTI-RAPE ON THE ROAD: MEN HIT THE HIGHWAYS TO SHARE A POWERFUL MESSAGE

Several years ago, John Foubert was asked to counsel one university's male students on the truth of rape. Today, he and other men are taking that truth on the road—in a used RV.

By John D. Foubert

A KNOCK at the door breaks the silence in which four recent college graduates sleep in peaceful exhaustion while sprawled across the space they call home. Not all of the locals are pleased with their visit. As luck would have it, their ideal parking space, found late the night before, is getting in the way of business. One of the four recent graduates hops off the dining-room-table-turned-bed, starts up the RV, and drives it away, so that the librarians can park in their reserved spaces on campus that morning. "One in Four" emerges from their slumber as they prepare themselves to waken the sleeping giant of men on campus who might otherwise make a mistake that would affect others, and themselves, forever. Today is another day on which the men of the One in Four national tour will work to end rape on yet another college campus. The day, the adventure that lies before them, and the path of others who are sure to follow in their tracks is just getting started.

Soon after I was hired for my first full-time student affairs position in 1992, a small group consisting mostly of women asked me to advise their sexual assault peer education group. At the time, they were desperately seeking an effective way to reach men. They had even added a popular guy on campus to their group, but that didn't work. After noticing a new male administrator who could relate to many of the guys on campus, they figured maybe he could find a way to reach what seemed an unattainable goal: to get men to listen to a program about rape.

Not one to turn down a request for help nor to reinvent the proverbial wheel, I accepted the challenge

to co-advise "Stealing Home" and led their efforts to reach men on the campus of our small, private university. After reviewing the literature, talking with colleagues, and looking into resources at national conferences, I found that most approaches overtly or subtly beat men over the head in hopes that their behavior would change. By sheer luck, I came across a video that was used by police departments to educate men about rape. After watching it, I felt like I had just been walloped in the gut.

It's simultaneously a sense of dread and awakening when you first experience something that helps you understand what rape really is. After seeing the police rape training video, I still did not know firsthand what such an experience was like, but I had a much deeper appreciation for the emotional and physical violation that rape represents. I then used and later revised that video as a centerpiece for what came to be known as "The Men's Program." Even today, a dozen years later, I still feel like things are just getting started.

IT IS EASY to feel like you are in the beginning of something when you confront an immense problem. In 2000, a U.S. Department of Justice study authored by Bonnie Fisher, Francis Cullen, and Michael Turner confirmed one of the most replicated findings in research: that roughly one in four college women have experienced either rape or attempted rape. A national sample of thousands of college women were asked if they had experienced rape or attempted rape in the previous year or in their lifetime. The results were that 3 percent reported rape or attempted rape that academic year, 11

percent more reported a lifetime incidence of rape, and 10 percent more reported a lifetime incidence of attempted rape. It seems fitting that this statistic be the chosen name of the peer educators who fight so ardently to change that alarmingly high proportion of women (and, indeed, some men, too) who experience the ultimate physical violation.

When I wrote the first script for The Men's Program in 1993, its goal was, as it remains today, to educate college men about rape in such a way that they will develop a deeper understanding of rape, making it far less likely that they will commit such an act. Intentionally constructing an educational environment that engages men in this learning process is a tremendous challenge. When men are empowered to be part of the solution rather than blamed for being the problem, they can feel more engaged in the learning process rather than feeling as though they are being scolded with a condescending message. Men are taught that if a woman comes to them after being raped and asks for their assistance, they need to know more about how it might have felt to be raped in order to best help her recover.

After thus setting a nonconfrontational tone and going over some definitions, a group of peer educators, who are usually male, introduces a videotape that describes a rape experience. This is where the wallop I described earlier comes in. In our new video, which is based on the original rape awareness video for police, a police officer asks men to imagine being a police officer who stumbles into an everyday situation that goes horribly wrong. In this scene, they envision themselves confronting a situation in which they react by freezing in fear of a gun pointed at their head and are overcome physically by two male attackers, who then use rape and battery to exert power and control.

John D. Foubert is president of the National Organization of Men's Outreach for Rape Education (www.nomorerape.org) and assistant professor in the higher education program at the College of William and Mary. His e-mail address is nomore@wm.edu.

We love feedback. Send letters to executive editor Marcia Baxter Magolda (aboutcampus@muohio.edu), and please copy her on notes to authors.

Later, men imagine themselves not being believed by fellow officers who arrive on the scene to help, enduring a painful hospital visit, and suffering from the blame they feel inside, which is so readily reinforced by their friends and colleagues, who wonder whether the whole thing was either made up or just a consensual event that got out of hand. After experiencing this rape-by-proxy video, peer educators break the stunned silence in the room by making a very important distinction between the different kinds of rape that can occur, then reinforcing that the video showed the most common type of male-on-male rape—one with a presumably heterosexual attacker.

This is done to meet one of the program's goals: to dismantle the connection between homosexuality and male-on-male rape. Peer educators then set the tone for a discussion of how a male police officer's rape experience would closely resemble those of women before, during, and after rape.

Next, peer educators review the importance of discussing the survivor's medical and safety needs and of listening, believing,

and accepting the survivor's decisions, even if one disagrees with them. In addition, the peer educators urge the participants to resist the temptation to ask for details about the rape, to avoid suggestions of further violence, and to recognize his and the survivor's limitations. The final section of the program focuses on what men can do to help prevent rape. During this program segment, men are encouraged to communicate openly during their intimate encounters, to recognize that cooperation does not equal consent, and to stop, ask, and clarify when any uncertainty exists. Peer educators discuss the deleterious effect of rape jokes, the importance of confronting sexist behaviors, and the need to condemn the abuse of women. The peer educators conclude the program by encouraging the participants to share their reactions to what they have experienced, taking questions, and reminding men of the prevalence of rape in American society and how likely it is that someone close to them has experienced or will experience rape.

THIS PROGRAM has now been experienced by thousands of men nationwide, and substantial published research indicates that it is effective (see

.....

MEN WHO EXPERIENCE THE
PROGRAM REPORT A SIGNIFICANTLY
LOWER ACCEPTANCE OF ATTITUDES
THAT CONDONE RAPE. THEIR
SELF-REPORTED LIKELIHOOD
OF RAPING ALSO DECLINES.

.....

http://jdfoub.people.wm.edu). Men who experience the program report a significantly lower acceptance of attitudes that condone rape. Their self-reported likelihood of raping also declines, as shown by lower mean scores on a scale designed to measure their likelihood of committing sexual assault. Both of these effects are found in equal magnitude on the day of the program and on a seven-month follow-up. Among the proportion of men who indicate some likelihood of raping, 75 percent report a lower likelihood of raping after seeing the program—an effect that lasts for the same seven-month period. Research such as that of Scott Boeringer has shown that both fraternity men and male student athletes are at higher risk for committing sexual assault than other men. A focus-group study of twenty-four fraternity men and student athletes found that all of them experienced either attitude or behavior change after exposure to The Men's Program that lasted until the five-month follow-up. In particular, they noted that they understood better what rape is and how to help a woman recover—effects they tied directly to experiencing the program, particularly the police video. For example, one participant stated, "I now have a much greater understanding for what it must feel like to be in a sexual assault or rape situation. Just from watching the video I was frozen like they said young women are in those situations. I was utterly speechless and shocked. I now understand the importance of being a listener and not trying to make the victim do anything she doesn't feel comfortable doing."

More recent research shows that men report an increase in empathy toward female rape survivors after seeing the program, even though the video describes the rape of a man. In addition, a campus that had ten years' worth of consistent baseline data about rape on their campus instituted a One in Four chapter and made the program a mandatory part of their first-year student orientation program. Within two years, the rate of rape reported on anonymous campuswide surveys of women declined by 31 percent.

Men also describe a greater understanding of how to help women recover from rape. For example, one

man reported: "I definitely learned, you know, just about what to do if somebody does come to you in that kind of situation. I mean, I've never been faced with a situation like that before, but if I was, before I don't think I would have known how to deal with it properly. And this really showed you what to do and some things to really avoid."

WORKING TO END RAPE on one campus was never the complete goal. Putting the most effective tool possible in the hands of as many knowledgeable professionals on as many campuses as are interested continues to be the focus. In time, it became clear that we needed a manual for campuses that wish to institute the program as well as a nonprofit organization to support these campuses. This led to the first, second, and now third edition of *The Men's Program*, a step-by-step manual for recruiting, selecting, training, and advising all-male sexual assault peer education groups. It also led to the formation of the National Organization of Men's Outreach for Rape Education Inc., a 501(c)(3) public nonprofit organization that was founded in 1998 for the purpose of supporting educators who sought to use this research-based approach on their campuses, in their high schools, in their military units, and in their communities.

For a while, it seemed sufficient to work toward putting the manual in the hands of everyone possible. But in time, many schools expressed the need for greater levels of support in getting their efforts off the ground. They needed to see the program in person and needed people on their campus who could energize their men to be part of the solution. Therein lay one of the many seeds for what is now the national tour.

Building on the success of the sixteen campus chapters of One in Four who are affiliated with NO MORE, the One in Four national tour is being undertaken by four men who chose to devote their post-graduation year to presenting The Men's Program to college students nationwide. Their hope is that the tour will not only lead to attitude and behavior change among those who experience the program but also inspire men on each campus to start One in Four chap-

.....

A STUDY OF FRATERNITY MEN AND
STUDENT ATHLETES FOUND THAT
ALL EXPERIENCED EITHER ATTITUDE
OR BEHAVIOR CHANGE AFTER
EXPOSURE TO THE MEN'S PROGRAM
THAT LASTED UNTIL THE
FIVE-MONTH FOLLOW-UP.

.....

ters that will continue for years to come. In its first semester, the tour reached three conferences and sixteen campuses. Several of these campuses are now in the early stages of developing a chapter.

Oddly enough, finding four guys willing to travel was the easy part. I was fortunate enough to see that four of the graduating seniors in my One in Four chapter at William and Mary had "RV tour" written all over them. An athletic team captain, a fraternity president, the class valedictorian, and the leader of the senior class gift campaign each added their experience, energy, spice, and unique talents to the team. All of them were willing to put off otherwise noteworthy plans for the following year to be the first to do something big, again. Earlier, all four had helped found William and Mary's chapter of One in Four. The thought of being the founders of a national tour and setting out to change men nationwide, with plans for the tour to be replicated year after year by new men, was just too good to pass up. The four men on the road share a common passion for ending

rape, although each has a unique reason why he wants to devote a year of full-time effort to the cause. Matt Roosevelt, one of the men currently on the RV tour, notes that after helping a good friend recover from rape and working so hard to establish a One in Four chapter at William and Mary, he couldn't imagine passing up the opportunity to help others do the same. He states, "Now, it is my goal to bring the Men's Program into the lives of as many men as I can. Of course, I am doing this trip for women like my friend who was hurt so badly. I am also doing it for guys like me who have watched in agony as their loved ones tread the treacherous road to recovery. I want to let men know that rape is, in fact, relevant to their lives. More importantly, I want to let them know that there is something positive that they can do to prevent it."

NOT SURPRISINGLY, the biggest challenge was and continues to be funding. After experiencing repeated rejections from government agencies and foundations, we were able to convince about sixty-five peo-

ple we knew to donate a total of \$100,000 (including an unsolicited gift of \$50,000) to make the tour possible. After hiring a staff and acquiring a very large recreational vehicle, we began limping along with speaking fees from schools to meet the rest of our budget.

Building enough momentum on a campus in just a day or two to bring men out to presentations and get them interested in starting a One in Four chapter proved to be a challenge. We learned quickly to give schools specific publicity advice to help boost attendance. We also learned that longer visits and return visits allow our work with the institutions bear the greatest fruit.

So what is in our future? We hope it includes a One in Four chapter on every college campus, a dramatic reduction in rape nationwide, and, consequently, a dramatic improvement in relationships between men and women on college campuses. For now, we are managing with a five-year-old used RV, hand-to-mouth donations and speaking fees, and a whole lot of passion and energy. Each day, the goal is

to visit a college campus to educate whatever group of men will listen, to find new places to travel, and to seek out new sources of funding to keep us on the road. In time, we hope for a fully staffed national office for chapter support and several RVs on the road providing on-site programming and assistance. For now, we take it one day, one road, and one man at a time, confident that with our passionate drive to end rape, brighter days are ahead.

WHEN MEN ARE EMPOWERED TO BE
PART OF THE SOLUTION RATHER
THAN BLAMED FOR BEING THE
PROBLEM, THEY CAN FEEL MORE
ENGAGED IN THE LEARNING
PROCESS RATHER THAN FEELING AS
THOUGH THEY ARE BEING SCOLDED
WITH A CONDESCENDING MESSAGE.

NOTES

- Boeringer, S. B. "Associations of Rape-Supportive Attitudes with Fraternity and Athletic Participation." *Violence Against Women*, 1999, 5(1), 81-90.
- Fisher, B. S., Cullen, F. T., and Turner M. G. *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, 2000.
- Foubert, J. D. *The Men's Program: A Peer Education Guide to Rape Prevention*. (3rd ed.) New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005.