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“The Women, They Maltreat Them...Therefore, We Cannot Assure That the Future Society Will Be Good”: Male Perspectives on Gender-Based Violence: A Focus Group Study With Young Men in Haiti

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of violence against women (VAW) held by Haitian men to gain a better understanding of why VAW occurs. Women in Haiti have experienced significant violence, both before and following the 2010 earthquake. Fifteen men ages 26 to 47 participated in a focus group. The data revealed three themes: men's beliefs about VAW and its context, factors influencing VAW, and recommended interventions. When approaching VAW, men must be part of the collective effort. Their insights are valuable when planning and implementing interventions to decrease VAW in Haiti and worldwide.

Keywords

violence; public health; communication; health education

The most recent global data show that at least one in three women globally experience physical and/or sexual violence by a partner or sexual violence by a non-partner in their

lifetimes (World Health Organization (WHO), 2012). Intimate partner violence is the most prevalent form of VAW globally (Ellsberg et al., 2008; UN General Assembly, 2006) and since men are most often the perpetrators of VAW worldwide (WHO, 2010), it is crucial to understand how men think about women and violence. Cultural norms throughout the world have been shown to affect the prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) (WHO Multi-country study, 2012) and changing cultural norms about abuse of partners have been shown to be effective in reducing IPV (Abramsky et al, 2014). Women in Haiti have experienced significant violence, both before and following the earthquake in 2010. In this study, we explore the perceptions of VAW held by Haitian men in order to gain a better understanding of why VAW occurs in Haiti. We present our results to provide meaningful information that interdisciplinary professionals can use to develop culturally appropriate interventions aimed at addressing, influencing and modifying attitudes and behaviors in Haiti and in other countries throughout the world.

Background

Haiti, a country of nearly ten million citizens, remains the poorest country in the Western hemisphere and continues its challenging path to recovery from the 2010 earthquake. Gender-based violence was problematic prior to the earthquake and, as is commonly seen after disasters, increased after the earthquake (UNFPA, 2012). The 2005 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in Haiti found that 27% of women experienced physical violence and 22% experienced sexual violence sometime in their lifetime, with 19.3% reporting lifetime partner physical or sexual assault (The World Bank, 2013; Bott et al., 2012). After the earthquake, more than one million people were forced to move into temporary camps and reported rapes increased nearly three-fold (The World Bank, 2013).

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines sexual violence as follows:

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life

(WHO, 2013).

and defines intimate partner violence (IPV) as:

Any behavior by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm

(WHO, 2013).

IPV is the most prevalent form of VAW globally (Ellsberg et al., 2008; UN General Assembly, 2006). IPV and sexual violence violate human rights and adversely damage the physical, sexual, reproductive, emotional, mental, and social well-being of individuals and families, significantly contributing to the global burden of disease (Murray & Lopez, 2013). The immediate and long-term health outcomes associated with these types of violence include physical injury, unwanted pregnancies, abortions, gynecological complications, sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/AIDS), post-traumatic stress disorder, and

depression (WHO, 2010). IPV also carries major social and economic costs for governments and communities (Ellsberg et al., 2008; UN General Assembly, 2006). The WHO has recognized that if VAW is not properly addressed, many of the global poverty eradication targets will be compromised (WHO, 2005).

An ecological framework—individual, family, community, and societal—is useful for addressing the multiplicity of intersecting levels of risk for IPV perpetration and victimization (Heise, 2012). Risk factors for women victimized by IPV are as follows: young age, educational disparity between partners, exposure to child maltreatment, harmful use of alcohol, and marital discord (WHO, 2010; Heise, 2012). Risk factors for being a perpetrator of violence include witnessing violence in the family and gender inequality. Overlapping risk factors that increase the risk for women to experience IPV and males to perpetrate partner violence include low educational levels, experiencing maltreatment as a child, use of alcohol, and societal acceptance of violence (Heise, 2012). Societal acceptance of violence and gender inequality operate at the community/societal level while other risks operate at an individual or couple level.

Most efforts to address and mitigate these factors have focused primarily on women (WHO, 2010; Heise, 2012; WHO, 2013). Since men are most often the perpetrators of VAW around the globe (WHO, 2010), understanding how men think about women and violence can provide meaningful information that can be used to develop culturally appropriate interventions aimed at addressing, influencing and modifying attitudes and behaviors. The Agreed Statement of the 48th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2004 and the Expert Group Meeting on the Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality in 2003 (convened by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women) affirmed the need to engage men and boys in questioning prevailing inequitable gender norms. A growing number of programs are doing this (WHO, 2007). For example, Partners for Prevention, a UN Development Program, stresses the need to include men and boys at all levels when working toward prevention of IPV (Fulu et al., 2013). Our focus group (FG) study contributes to those efforts.

Method

Study Design and Setting

Our study is an adjunct to a mixed methods study (collecting, analyzing, and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem) that sought to develop, implement, and evaluate strategies to prevent violence against women and girls in Haiti following the 2010 earthquake. We used an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach. We report here on one part of the qualitative work of the study and concentrate on men's perceptions about VAW in Haiti based on a FG conducted in Haiti, August 2012.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol was approved by the University of the Virgin Islands Institutional Review Board and by the Ethics Board of the University of Haiti. Prior to the FG,

participants were informed of the purpose of the study. Consent forms were reviewed and signed.

Participants

A purposive sample of 15 Haitian men participated in the study. Participants were university students who were informed of the study by their university professors and voluntarily decided to participate in the study. Inclusion criteria were as follows: adult (>18 years old), male, and country of birth and residence is Haiti. Exclusion criteria: children (<18 years old), female, and not born, raised or currently living in Haiti.

Procedure and Data collection

We explained our purpose for this study to participants, telling them we wished to learn about the perceptions of VAW held by young men, since young men are the most likely perpetrators and little is known about what men in Haiti think of VAW.

We developed a semi-structured interview guide based on a comprehensive literature review and on a situational analysis of the main mixed methods study. Through this interview guide we sought to gain insight from the men on their experience and opinions regarding VAW in Haiti in a focus group (FG). Examples of interview questions are in Table 1.

The principal investigator (PI) conducted the FG interview at a time and place convenient to the participants. The Haitian men spoke French and Haitian Créole. Some also spoke English. The FG was conducted in Haitian Creole. One Haitian Creole translator, as well as the PI, who spoke Haitian Creole and English, participated in the discussion so that clarifications and interpretation could be done during the FG session as needed. The FG lasted approximately two hours. The interview was audio taped, saved electronically, and transcribed verbatim.

Verification of translation: Although the interviews were conducted by the PI and assisted by the Haitian Creole translator, further accuracy was ensured when portions of the audiotapes were heard by a third translator who verified the transcription.

Data Analytic Strategy

We analyzed the data in three stages. In the first step, we analyzed and assigned in vivo codes (line-by-line) to the words of the participants; these codes were then grouped under more abstract (axial) codes (the process of relating categories to their subcategories) by the themes that emerged from comparing shared characteristics and meanings of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2012). Coding reliability was established by three researchers independently coding the FG interviews separately. Two of the researchers used Atlas Ti 7. The third researcher coded the data by hand using multiple readings and identification of codes and themes. This combined effort generated 12 distinct codes and three main themes (see Results section).

In the second step, we merged the results of each coding into one Atlas Ti hermeneutic unit (contains all the documents, quotations, codes, memos, and associated files that make up our project). The merged units were used for all analyses and checked by the entire research

team. We produced a validity assessment of the final dataset by double-checking to ensure that codes were appropriately grouped under the thematic categories and by double-checking to ensure that themes were appropriately grouped under the axial codes.

In the third step, we organized the themes under higher-level constructs; the research team read the data and all agreed on the higher and lower level codes (themes and subthemes) for understanding of the VAW experience.

Results

In our analysis, three major themes emerged: the beliefs about violence and the context within which it occurs, the factors perceived to influence violence, and recommended interventions to prevent violence. We also identified subthemes. The subtheme of public accountability and personal responsibility appears twice, under factors influencing violence and recommended interventions. See Table 2 for a summary of the results.

Theme one: Beliefs about violence and the context within which it occurs

Responses to the question, “What is your definition of violence?” revealed three subthemes that help explain beliefs about violence and the context within which it occurs: (a) a definition of violence, (b), where/how people learn violence, and (c) the consequences of violence. The participants' definition of violence included several components: violence is an abnormal behavior; it appears in different forms, including physical, mental, emotional, and verbal; violence is a form of aggression perpetrated against another individual without consent; it also occurs voluntarily or involuntarily, with or without a predetermined objective. Last, the basic purpose of violence is to cause harm.

I think that violence is all abuse, aggression ... a person with the end point of cutting the person, because the real end point of violence is to cause another harm. Violence is something abnormal that an individual does to another individual. It could be corporal, physical, mental.

Where and how violence is learned was an important subtheme among the men in the FG. When presented with the question of where violence is learned, some participants were confused. Some reacted as though the question were ridiculous. How could one actually learn violence? Other participants took the question very concretely: How could one actually learn how to do violent acts? Most participants said that they learned about violence from school or at home. They explained that a person could be influenced to commit violence. In homes, children may internalize the same behavior they observe among adults. One participant said that people who experience violence may become “carriers,” by continuing the violent behaviors and exposing these behavioral patterns to others. Others believed that a person cannot actually “learn” how to commit violence. It is something seen in the environment, an example of not being peaceful. Teaching violence, or other acts of violence, or methods of committing violence was believed to be abnormal. The learned aspect of violence is illustrated here:

Violence can have a hereditary aspect. A little boy who is four years old who tells his father he needs a woman or a wife. The father is shocked. A four year old? Why

do you need a wife? It's understood that the boy had seen his father beat his mother ... that he felt he needed a wife to beat, too.

Influence from school, your neighborhood, in your family. As it follows, the father used to beat the mother, and then you will see in time when the child gets older, has a wife, he will beat her. It's normal.

Participants reported that the main consequences of violence ranged from psychosocial such as misery and suicide to the debilitation of the society. They explained that violence against a person had psychological ramifications that are experienced by the perpetrator and the person receiving the violence (the victim). Repeated over time, the victim could develop physical and mental/emotional problems. Those involved might also learn that violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflicts. To illustrate:

I think that one of the consequences [from violence] is that this can drive suicide [thoughts and behaviors]. A woman who is continually subjected to violence will start to lose her self-esteem.... "Why am I living? I should just die instead." That is a consequence.

The women, they maltreat them, they [use] them, therefore, we cannot assure that the future society will be a society that could be good. If she feels maltreated, she will feel like she has no importance, she is living in a humiliating situation. These [reasons] will make the person feel as though she has no value. The children will have to live the same situation she has.

The first consequence is the repercussion on the children. The mother, and the father who is beating her, will be the children in return. That is clear ... it will permit that we have a dysfunctional society. Why? Because [women are] the motor of the society. Once the women have some form of abuse against them, they will become frustrated, the society itself will become dysfunctional.

Theme two: Factors influencing violence

FG participants generally accepted that an individual could be influenced to commit violence, especially if constantly exposed to violence, directly in the home or in the neighborhood. Participants explained personal, community, and societal environments that influence one to become violent. Examples included poor communication, substance/alcohol abuse, changing roles of women, culture, education, family characteristics, poverty, and interpersonal/intrapersonal perspectives.

First, regarding poor communication and substance/alcohol abuse, none of the participants believed that men are ever justified in hitting a woman, but some explained why it could happen, such as poor communication between partners and substance/alcohol use. Jealousy and poor communication between partners were noted as possible precursors to violence. One participant explained: after drinking alcohol or ingesting drugs, people do things that they would not normally do, due to the substances, not as a result of their own volition.

Second, the roles of women are changing. More women are attaining more education and are employed. Women are also working more hours and gaining more power. This shift in roles

and power threatens the existing patriarchal society. They emphasized that women work more hours because they take responsibility for providing for the needs of their families. To illustrate:

Whatever a man does, she can do it, too. There is no reason she should have to stay at home, and not be independent.... The woman, she doesn't stay in the home.

But, when we speak of culture, the problem this creates at certain times, generally, when women work, and if by chance they were to make more [money] than their husbands, honestly, that would create problems in the family. You would find that the woman would take the place of authority. Therefore, it is she who makes decisions. And besides all that, she is at odds with the culture because she is being paid money.... But right now, it is more or less acceptable [in the culture for women to work].

The participants provided several explanations of other contributors to or causes of violence. Some connected violence to cultural influences, poverty, delinquency, and a lack of education. A participant explained that the acceptance and use of VAW stems from a personal mind set, and that this mindset is believed and applied by thousands of men in Haiti. This is most likely due to deeply entrenched beliefs and subsequent behaviors held by prior and current generations of men and their persistent views about women, their role in society, and their perceived rights. Participants stated:

The violence itself becomes a part of poverty; for example, poverty can rend, can indicate it to be true.

Another source of this problem is delinquency [juvenile]. When delinquency [occurs], the result is violence. For example, there is a young woman who is pregnant early, and will bring a child into the world, and won't have in a sense, education; consequently, won't be able to give education, therefore, that could create violence in the child's home.

The FG participants were resolute in their beliefs that those who lived outside of Port-au-Prince [the capital] were less educated and, consequently, more likely to experience violence. Participants highlighted the positive influence of education on a person's awareness about preventing violence. However, one participant made it clear that in his view education does not completely eliminate one from being violent, "... the more you are educated, it reduces the possibility of you to be violent, but it is not totally reduced."

Another participant commented on the willingness of bystanders to intervene in Port-au-Prince in contrast to outside the city.

If you see a man hitting a woman, you will see other people come to intervene and you will see others counseling the woman immediately to go to the Ministry of Women for her to file a complaint against the man—that's the reality in Port-au-Prince. But the reality in the provinces, the people don't know that ... if the woman were unfaithful, if he were unfaithful, the people will hide it under the table. Two, three days later ... and the man returns and hits her—this is the reality of the rural areas.

Participants agreed that interpersonal perspectives and family influences do correlate with violence. Some said the role of interpersonal violence in families and communities was a method of learning and this behavior is often used against women. So if a woman acts violently, that might be a reason why some men react violently against women:

Normally, there isn't a reason, and there will never be a reason for men to hit women, but vice-versa, a woman shouldn't lay hands on a man.... Very often he was used to habitually seeing women getting beaten/hit and he reproduces [that behavior]. Same for the women. Very often you find that the women who used to see their mothers habitually take beatings wish that to be reproduced [in the relationship].

There is a sort of reciprocity.... There are some women who are, how can I say, brutal, who use brutal means; there are those who use cups, bottles, to hit the men, and at times the men react and act reciprocally.

Theme Three: Recommended Interventions

The participants were asked about the participation of the Haitian government, non-governmental agencies, and the police in addressing and dealing with VAW. Their responses reflected their perceptions of the effectiveness and efforts made by these organizations. A few participants mentioned officials who they believed could reduce VAW: the chairperson of the Haitian government cabinet, commissions, and the Ministry of Women. One participant expressed his distress at the lack of attention towards VAW, though laws exist. Conversely, a participant stated that efforts were being made by the Haitian government, but that the efforts seemed minimal:

There is an effort on behalf of the State, since the [amount of violence] is reduced, thus, the effort is being made. But it looks insignificant. One of the principle reasons is the lack of effectiveness by the Haitian police.... But efforts are made. They severely punish people who commit violence against women.

The participants described the pattern of violence that can ensue, and linked violence to the family and to the larger society. Children and adults within the family can model this same maladaptive behavior. Regarding legal changes, participants suggested that police can and should provide more protection to protect women against violence. They also suggested that increased public awareness and enforcement of the laws would help ensure that perpetrators would be punished under the law.

Discussion

In the post-earthquake context of Haiti, many social changes took place that increased stress levels and acts of violence, similar to what has been found in retrospective studies conducted after other disasters around the globe (Kenerson, 2014; Rahill, Ganapati, Clerisme, & Mukherji, 2014; Silove et al., 2014; Stige & Sveaass, 2010), although an increase in IPV is hard to clearly demonstrate. The literature includes identification of possible related, predisposing factors and recommended interventions. The evolving legal status of women

and public sentiments regarding the societal roles of women are important factors worldwide.

Health care providers of women and families and health care program planners must understand men's points of view regarding the emerging new roles and responsibilities of women. Key elements that the participants identified as needing intervention included transforming the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of men regarding gender equity. The majority of the men reported that VAW involved physical and psychological harm. Their perceptions are supported by numerous studies (Antai, 2011; Engnes, Liden, & Lundgren, 2012; Gavey & Schmidt, 2011) as well as the ecological theory of gender-based violence which posits that lack of gender equity is a societal level factor that increases risk of IPV. Participants noted that changes in equity (increased female power) and roles contribute to IPV and will persist until men's attitudes are transformed. This has also been observed theoretically (Counts, Brown & Campbell, 1999) and in intervention evaluations (Abramsky et al., 2014).

Researchers and theorists have posited that violence is learned through interpersonal exchanges in families and communities (Antai, 2011; Fordyce, 2009; Heise, 2012; Wright, Kim, Chassin, Losoya, & Piquero, 2014). Many FG participants stated that violence was learned at school or seen in one's environment. As a result of continuous exposure to violence, women could be at high risk for maltreatment by men (Baldacara et al., 2014; DePrince, Welton-Mitchell, & Srinivas, 2014; Warner & Swisher, 2014). For instance, the participants commonly discussed antisocial and aggressive behaviors, but stated that Haitian women victims, at times, fought back in self-defense with violence perceived by men as mutual. This finding concurs with many studies among low resource settings (Emery, 2011; Hamby, 2009) although not in all other parts of the globe (Misganaw & Worku, 2013).

This idea of reciprocity was remarked on by a few of the men who understood this as a justification for men being violent. Some people think of abused woman as weak, defenseless, and fearful, although many researchers have noted women's resistance to violence including fighting back (Campbell, Rose, Kub & Nedd, 1998). Rarely do we hear of women in violent relationships being labeled "brutal" or initiating violence themselves. These participants spoke of women who violently engage a man, almost instigating him to react, though such demonstrations do not warrant the man reacting even more violently. A participant claimed that some men react violently to a woman because she was violent first. Such accounts are occasionally found in other reports (Emery, 2011).

FG participants reported several factors that they believed influenced the acceptance of VAW in Haiti: the environment, social exposure to violence, and the culture. Their report of poor communications between partners, substance/alcohol abuse, the changing roles of women and their increasing power base that may influence violence against them have been reported in recent studies (Antai, 2011; Catala-Minana, Lila, & Oliver, 2013; Fisher, 2013). The 2010 earthquake caused massive familial displacements and the loss of income and opportunities for making a livelihood for all. (Stige & Sveaass, 2010; Weiss, Kirsch, Doocy, & Perrin, 2014). The resulting stress for the Haitian people, added to the ongoing poverty, low educational levels, and enduring family responsibilities can be expected to link with

violence, as was found by other researchers in other settings (Antai, 2011; Conroy, 2014; Silove et al., 2014).

Trauma related to natural disasters requires immediate screening and treatment (Ferrell, Melton, Banu, Coverdale, & Valdez, 2014), but communities lacking resources cannot fully respond to this urgency. Public accountability and responsibility include providing emergency services for people in disaster areas—which was nearly impossible for Haitians since such services were lacking even before the earthquake. Additionally, families and communities can come to realize that violence need not be a necessary component of the culture, but rather that such violence can be rejected as an inappropriate response as was seen in South Asia (Ali, Ali, Khuwaja, & Nanji, 2014; Brown, 2012; Fisher, 2013).

The results of our study are globally relevant and reflect recent findings about determining the roots of VAW and gender inequality. The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), which has been coordinated since 2008 by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and Promundo, investigated the prevalence of sexual violence perpetrated among men and women ages 18 to 59 and the risk and protective factors in five study sites (Heilman, Hebert & Paul-Gera, 2013). The survey revealed that men's childhood experiences were significantly tied to their perpetration of sexual violence; men who witnessed violence against their mothers or were themselves victims of physical or sexual violence as children consistently reported perpetrating sexual violence more (Heilman et al., 2013).

A study conducted by the ICRW and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) examined masculinity, son preference, and intimate partners in several states of India (Nanda et al., 2013). The study focused on influential factors such as childhood discrimination, environment, economic stress, occupation, and education. Men who frequently witnessed violent acts against their sisters or mothers in childhood tended to be more rigidly masculine, meaning these men held weak gender equality attitudes and were highly controlling (Nanda et al., 2013). Men who graduated from secondary school or university were less likely to be rigidly masculine, consistent with the findings of our FG study in Haiti. Additionally, men who lived in rural areas of India were more likely to hold more rigidly masculine views, also similar to our findings (Nanda et al., 2013).

Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the ecological framework which guided our FG discussion and analysis. Individual, family, community, and societal initiatives that address these intersecting levels of risk for IPV perpetration and victimization are needed. Our FG study shows the importance of including men and boys in addressing and mitigating VAW. We believe that the inclusion of men is needed wherever VAW is encountered regardless of culture or place. Men and women alike are at risk due to specific cultural norms and beliefs surrounding masculinity and gender inequality. Researchers and program developers must make efforts to further understand men's ideas about VAW and to creating interventions that address issues of power, entitlement, gender norms, and sexism in society. VAW is not a woman's issue, but a societal issue. Many men who perpetrate VAW were themselves

victims of physical or sexual abuse (Heise, 2012). All people are hurt by this painful cycle, and men in our sample noted that society itself is threatened by partner violence, underscoring the urgency of changing norms and addressing individual and couple risk factors. Including men and boys in the abatement of VAW can help them help themselves and their society aim for a greater goal, a society that is free of any sort of violence and negative consequences including suicide (Burk et al., 2014; Wolford-Clevenger et al., 2014; Zimmerman & Posick, 2014).

Certain programs may help prevent VAW (Hossain et al., 2014; Taghdisi et al., 2014). For instance, “gender-transformative” program approaches that work at multiple levels and address different themes or health areas have the capacity to effectively shift attitudes (WHO, 2007). This can include simply asking men to more carefully consider existing gender norms, helping them realize that current inequitable gender norms adversely affect women, men, and society as a whole. Inclusion of purposeful conversation about gender and masculinity in programs, aimed at altering negative existing gender norms, is more effective than just acknowledging gender norms and roles (WHO, 2007). Our extensive review also found that integrated programs—specifically those that combined community outreach, mobilization, and mass media campaigns—were the most effective programs (WHO, 2007).

Our results echo the need for further political and legal changes to prevent VAW (Antai, 2011; Miller, 2013). The importance of educating and empowering women was supported by the men in our study, consistent with other studies (Taghdisi et al., 2014; Abramsky et al., 2014). Social support was described as an important aspect of preventing VAW, which is well documented in the literature (Hossain, Zimmerman, & Watts, 2014). Finally, preventing VAW would help interrupt the cycle of violence in rural and community settings (Burk, Edmondson, Whitehead, & Smith, 2014; Wolford-Clevenger et al., 2014; Zimmerman & Posick, 2014).

The men in the FG believed that one place where violence is learned is in schools. Public health professionals and educators can use this setting to engage boys, girls, young men, and women in a conversation about VAW and gender equality. The educational system can influence children's norms, behaviors and understanding of gender stereotypes as related to violence. School-based programs aimed at reducing violence and promoting a nonviolent lifestyle can be effective interventions worldwide, and have been shown to be successful in multiple age groups and countries (ICRW, CORO, & Tata Institute of Social Sciences, 2011). The UN Secretary-General's Report on Violence Against Children asserted, “Children spend more time in the care of adults in places of learning than they do anywhere else outside of their homes” (Pinheiro, 2006). The report emphasized the important role that education can play to encourage children to learn self-respect, respect for others, and resolution of differences without using violence.

The Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) program developed by the ICRW offers a revolutionary model for schools in the fight against gender inequality and violence using group educational activities (GEA) and campaigns. GEA uses role-playing, games, debates, and discussions to engage students in meaningful understanding of key issues. A study in India performed in 45 schools showed that students in two GEA intervention groups

reported more positive outcomes compared to those in the control group, consistent with studies that showed GEA to be an effective methodology for bringing about attitudinal and behavioral changes (Achyut et al., 2011; Verma et al., 2008).

Offender intervention programs can also decrease the incidence of VAW, and help change attitudes regarding gender equality. A WHO review of offender intervention programs in 56 studies found that some of the programs were somewhat effective in reducing the likelihood of repeat, further abuse, or VAW among men who participated (Rothman, Butchart, Cerdá, 2003). Only two programs included triangulation with female partners, an important aspect of offender intervention programs (Rothman et al., 2003). A more recent review of prevention programs showed that in low- and middle-income countries, there is promising evidence of the effects of group training for women and men, and community mobilization interventions—both of which are aimed at changing attitudes of men about the acceptability of gender-based violence (Ellsberg, 2014).

Long-term programs must be implemented to address VAW because negative attitudes regarding masculinity and the role of women have been held for centuries. A sustained effort is needed to permanently change these negative attitudes. For programs to have substantial impact on societies, the boys, girls, women, and men in all age groups must be engaged. Lasting, influential change in attitudes about gender relations must start at the root with young families, and fan out to older members of the society who are providing the example for younger members.

Finally, we can consider the approach taken by CARE International, a global confederation of 14 member organizations working together to end poverty, that advocates for ending gender-based violence through social change at the deepest levels and for ignoring concerns about violating the cultural boundaries that lead to perpetuation of VAW and to a weak response (Sprechmann, Christie, Walker, 2013). This approach integrates principles of respect, perseverance, and courage. In accordance with the ecological framework (individual, family, community, and societal), multiple interventions at all levels must be present, including educating partners on how to treat each other with respect, educating youth about respectful relationships, educating communities on the importance of intervening when they see domestic violence, and changing attitudes that support domestic violence.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of our study is that the Haitian men had education at the university level. This decreases the generalizability of the findings to all men in Haiti. Additionally, all of the participants were born and raised in Port-au-Prince, which may skew their view on how VAW differs between urban and rural areas. It is not known whether any of our FG participants had spent time in rural areas and knew this environment first hand, or whether their views reflect general perceptions or rumors. Future research should include men with different educational levels and from varying geographic areas in Haiti to more widely explore men's understanding of the topic and to determine any correlation between the levels of education and VAW.

Conclusions

Our research provides insight for understanding key influential factors, such as the effect of men's attitudes surrounding VAW in Haiti, and will contribute to the international, multidisciplinary dialogue on women's health issues. The results of this study pave the way for more exploration among the general male population in Haiti and around the globe, and inform social policy. Further information about how men think about women and how men and women should treat one another can be incorporated into programming that ensures that upcoming generations of Haitian men, women, boys, and girls thrive in an environment without VAW and its consequences. We recommend similar comprehensive VAW program development and implementation worldwide. We trust that the men involved in this study and all men globally will carefully reflect on VAW and make adjustments in their daily lives that promote respectful treatment of women.

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Table 1
Sample Questions used in Interview Guide

Interview Question	
•	What is your definition of violence?
•	Do you think violence can be learned by being influenced by your community or family?
•	Do you think the more educated you are, the less likely you are to [commit] violence?
•	Do you know of any groups, like government, police etc. who are working to fight...against VAW?
•	What do you think are the lasting consequences of VAW?

Table 2
Summary of the results

Themes	Subthemes
The beliefs about violence and the context within which it occurs	Definition of violence How/where people learn violence Consequences of violence
Factors Influencing Violence	Poor communication Substance/alcohol abuse The changing roles of women Education Family Poverty Public accountability and personal responsibilities
Recommended Interventions	Legal changes Public accountability and responsibility