BEYOND SILENCE AND VIOLENCE:

Engaging Men in Advocacy Against and Prevention of Domestic Violence

FATHERS INCORPORATED
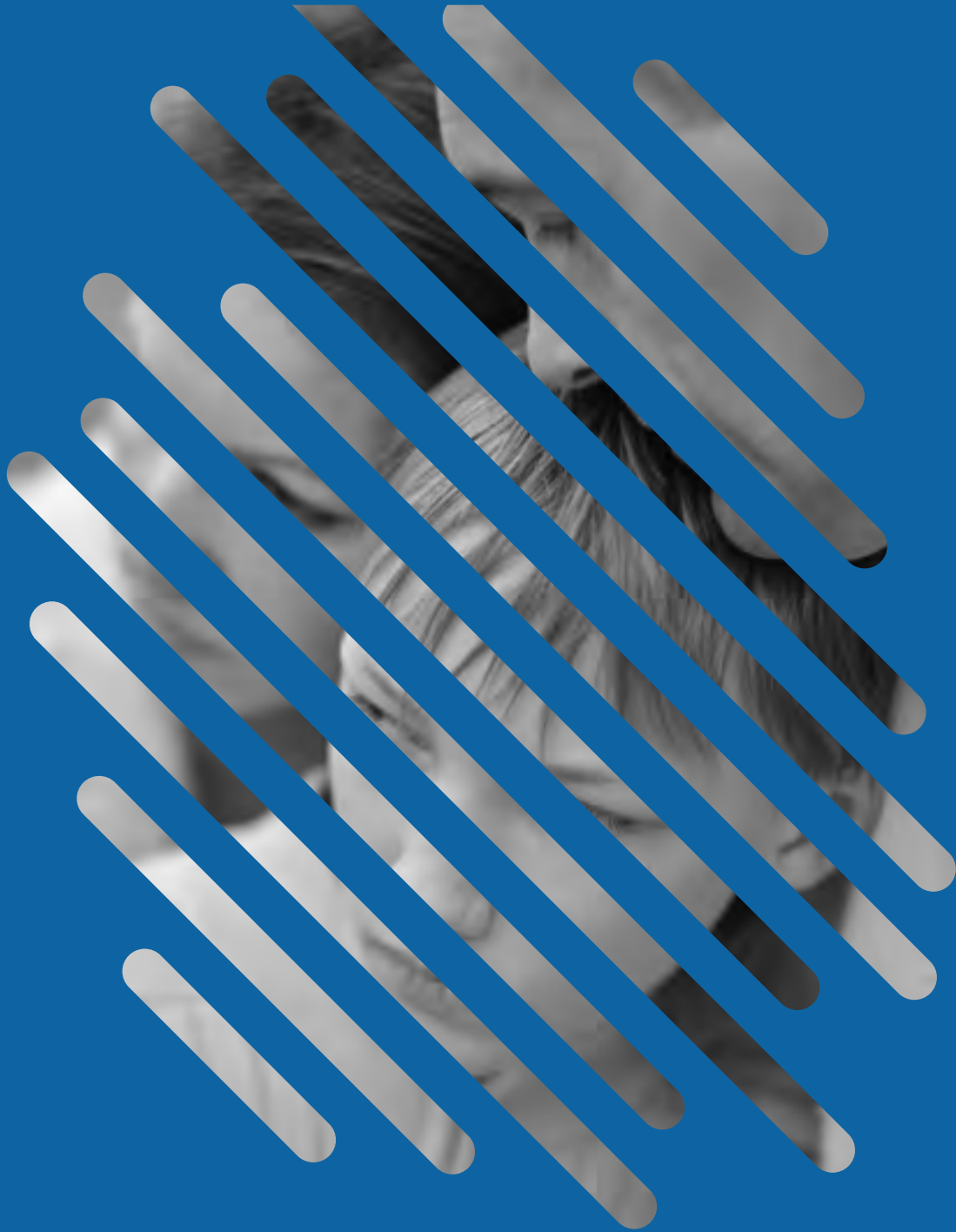
March 2015

By Stacey Bouchet, Ph.D. and Kenneth Braswell

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Introduction

The recent events regarding NFL players Ray Rice and Adrian Peterson have raised the level of public discourse around--and needed responses to--domestic violence. Fathers Incorporated is dedicated to eradicating violence of any kind, but recognizes in order to effectively "respond," we must first change and expand the conversation around domestic violence if we are to ensure safe and loving family environments.

To this end, Fathers Incorporated has collaborated with multiple service agencies and experts to determine how men, and fathers in particular, perpetuate, are affected by, and are victims of domestic violence, the effects on women and children, and ways to engage men in addressing this grave and complex issue facing far too many families. The information presented in this brief is based on those collaborations, a research review, and important questions and issues raised during a Twitter Chat[1] hosted by Fathers Incorporated and Dare To Be King on October 6, 2014, which deepened the conversation around domestic violence.[2]

Changing the Conversation

Discussing the issue of men and domestic violence (DV) often stirs visceral reactions, which deteriorate into a "blame game" or defensive arguments. The discourse in academic literature and popular culture has reduced this deeply complicated and intensely emotional issue to debates centered on who the "real" victims and perpetrators are, the underlying causes of male violence, who are most "deserving" of supportive services, and accusations about the legitimacy and motivations in defining domestic violence as a gender-based issue.[i]

Fathers Incorporated is a nationally and internationally recognized leader in the fields of responsible fatherhood and family strengthening. Through advocacy, expertise, training and technical assistance, Fathers Incorporated serves as a resource for policymakers, government officials, state and local organizations, health and human service providers, and fathers and families.

[1]To see the full Twitter Chat, search for #RealMenLove
[2]This brief also includes findings from listening sessions conducted by Women In Fatherhood, Inc. (WIFI) with domestic violence and fatherhood agencies in Baltimore, Maryland and New Orleans, Louisiana in 2011 and 2012. Those findings were analyzed and summarized by then Director, Stacey Bouchet, with the help and input of WIFI's Executive Board Members, Jacquelyn Boggess (Center for Family Policy and Practice) and Lisa Nitsch (House of Ruth Maryland). These listening sessions were funded by the Open Society Foundations' Campaign for Black Male Achievement, but the results were never published. Please contact Stacey Bouchet for a complete list of participating agencies and/or additional information.

Even in trying to facilitate partnerships between fatherhood and domestic violence organizations, the theoretical and practical challenges quickly become clear. On a theoretical level, it has been difficult to reconcile the understanding that domestic violence is a systemic problem embedded in broader societal systems influenced by gender, racial, and economic inequities that afford privilege, power, and a sense of entitlement to some groups of people with the reality that the majority of men and male perpetuators served by fatherhood practitioners have not benefited from, or are oppressed by, some of these systems.

On a practical level, many states bar domestic violence programs from providing couples counseling or mediation and often DV agencies are not permitted to use federal funds to serve the batterer, nor is it necessarily their mission to do so.

Meanwhile, the majority of fatherhood practitioners fully recognize the problem of domestic and community violence, but they must contend with the reality of increasing already high rates of participant attrition if they inquire about domestic violence too quickly or refer men to outside intervention programs. They also struggle with the balance of acknowledging and addressing men's roles in domestic violence at the risk of involving men with the criminal justice system and perpetuating stereotypes that all men are violent.

The concerns and challenges that fuel most of the debates and conversations around domestic violence are valid and deserve attention, but it is beyond the scope and intent of this paper to address all of them. We maintain, however, these controversies have contributed to making prevention and intervention services for perpetrators and some[3] victims a "hard sell." Thus, we focus, instead, on shifting the conversation from one that deteriorates into a zero sum gain, to one that acknowledges the realities and looks for solutions that help ensure the safety and support of all family members.
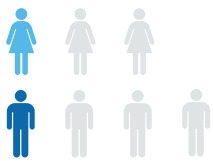
1/3,1/4

More than 1 in 3 women and more than 1 in 4 men in the United States have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

10%

Nearly 1 in 10 women in the United States has been raped by an intimate partner in her lifetime.

1/4,1/7

About 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner.

Source: 2010 CDC Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence

[3]For example, male victims and female victims who choose to stay with a violent or abusive partner.

We propose conversations concerning men and domestic violence should start with an agreement on the following tenants, which are further expanded upon throughout this brief:

1

The safety of individual family members is paramount--violence is never an acceptable way to control or coerce desired or expected behavior, punish, retaliate, or deal with conflict.

2

Not all men are violent and most men do not use violence against women.

3

While any family member can be a victim, violence against women, by men, is more widespread, and the consequences are typically more physically and economically detrimental.

4

Violence and abuse are not one in the same. "Violence is a behavior or action; abuse is a pattern of demeaning, controlling, intimidating action, including violence, within the context of evolving power and control dynamics of an intimate relationship causing psychological (and often physical) harm. "[ii]

5

Male violence is an epidemic—men commit more crimes in nearly every crime category, regardless of race or ethnicity; however, the effects of violence are particularly devastating in poor and urban communities and for men and women of color. [iii]

6

Providing intervention services and support to perpetrators is also a service to victims because, without such efforts, their use of violence is likely to continue with current or future victims.

7

Although domestic violence is at the core of this conversation, the broader issue of prevention strategies at individual and community levels rooted in changing gender- and violence-based norms and attending to the emotional and psychological needs of boys and men, must be incorporated.

8

Men have a positive and vital role to play in helping to stop all types of violence, and fatherhood organizations are uniquely positioned and have a responsibility to engage them in these efforts.

Background

As a responsible fatherhood organization, Fathers Incorporated recognizes that the fields of responsible fatherhood and domestic violence service providers are often viewed as having different missions. Since most identified domestic violence victims are female, and the goal is to protect the victim from an abusive partner, some see anti-violence, or domestic violence organizations as anti-male.

"When the inevitable question is raised, 'But what are you doing for the men,' the answer with power, the answer that represents our political framework is NOTHING."

Kathleen Carlin,1982[6]

Conversely, some responsible fatherhood organizations and programs are viewed as pro-father involvement without enough regard for mother or child safety concerns.

In actuality, both fatherhood and domestic violence organizations are largely serving the same or similar families, but usually from different perspectives. However, partnerships and solutions that address the needs of the entire family system are rare.

The majority of DV perpetrators are also fathers or stepfathers who typically stay connected to their children and sometimes their victims. Without effective services, they are likely to abuse again. A deep understanding and, ultimately, a coordinated community response[4] to domestic violence that includes prevention and intervention services for men and fathers would be ideal. However, this would require a coordinated effort and commitment from responsible fatherhood programs, domestic violence agencies, and other family strengthening programs and systems.

Many efforts like this are currently underway[5], but more needs to be done. Unfortunately, public will, policy, and practice regarding domestic violence typically do not reflect the critical understanding that abuser interventions are also a victim's service. This is confounded by limited knowledge, mutual misunderstandings, stereotypes, and legitimate fears. While challenging, none of these barriers are insurmountable, and pale in comparison to the benefits for programs, families, and communities when they are dismantled.

[4] A "coordinated community response" is an intervention strategy developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP). This strategy, often called the "Duluth model," is a "system of networks, agreements, processes and applied principles created by the local shelter movement, criminal justice agencies, and human service programs that were developed to protect victims, hold batterers accountable, and enforce the community's intolerance of domestic violence."
[5] See http://www.vawnet.org/special-collections/EngagingMen.php#700 for examples.
[6] http://www.menstoppingviolence. org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/ Kathleen-Speech.pdf

Definitions

Types of Organizations

- **Domestic Violence:**

When discussing domestic violence organizations, we mean, broadly, service and advocacy organizations whose mission is to prevent, stop, and help people recover from domestic violence. Within that group, the more common domestic violence service organizations provide various supports to female victims and their children, including emergency shelter, counseling, legal support, peer support groups, and transitional housing. Some also provide general, community-level education and prevention outreach.

- **Batterer intervention programs (BIPs):**

These programs, usually attended by court-ordered male abusers (aka "batterers"), are designed to educate men in a peer group setting on the causes of domestic violence, the effects their behaviors have had on themselves and their victims, and ways to cease violent behaviors.[iv]

- **Fatherhood:**

There are various types of organizations that focus on, or have ancillary programs for, fathers. The responsible fatherhood organizations and practitioners we discuss and refer to in this brief are either national advocacy or community-based social service "type" agencies that provide education, workforce development, support, trainings, and case management services for low-income, often non-residential, fathers.

Types of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is broadly defined as a systematic pattern of abuse using violence, the threat of violence, and other coercive behaviors and tactics, to exert power, to induce fear, and to control an intimate partner or family member.[v]

Research over the past few decades has asserted that domestic violence is not a "one-size-fits-all" phenomenon[7] and that various forms of DV can be identified with a deeper understanding of partner dynamics, characteristics, challenges, the context in which the violence occurs, and the consequences of the behaviors.

• **Domestic Violence/Abuse/Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)/Intimate Terrorism/Battering:**

With this type of violence, offenders exert control over their victims by using physical, emotional, sexual, and/or economic abuse, which may include isolation, threats, intimidation, and/or maltreatment of partners and children.[vii] While incidents of DV differ in terms of their severity of the abuse and the offender's choice of abusive strategies, his/her primary goal is for power and control.[viii] These behaviors are typically what most people think of when they hear the term "domestic violence." Likewise, this is a model used in the majority of DV shelters and support groups to explain violent behavior. See Figure 1, which depicts the characteristics of IPV.

• **Violent Resistance/Reactive Violence/Self-Defense:**

Violent Resistance is the recognition that victims may react violently in an attempt to "stand up" for him- or herself (or another family member) to stop being battered or terrorized.

• **Situational Couple Violence/Common Couple Violence/Conflict Motivated Violence/Family Conflict Violence:**

These are all various terms that have been used to describe partner violence that does not have its basis in the dynamics of power and control. It is described as violence that occurs when a disagreement or conflict is experienced that escalates into violence or violence is used as a way to address the conflict.[ix] Much emerging research has identified this as the most common form of domestic violence and suggests that Situational Couple Violence (SCV) is almost as likely to be perpetrated by women as by men; however, women are significantly more likely to be seriously injured when it occurs.[x]
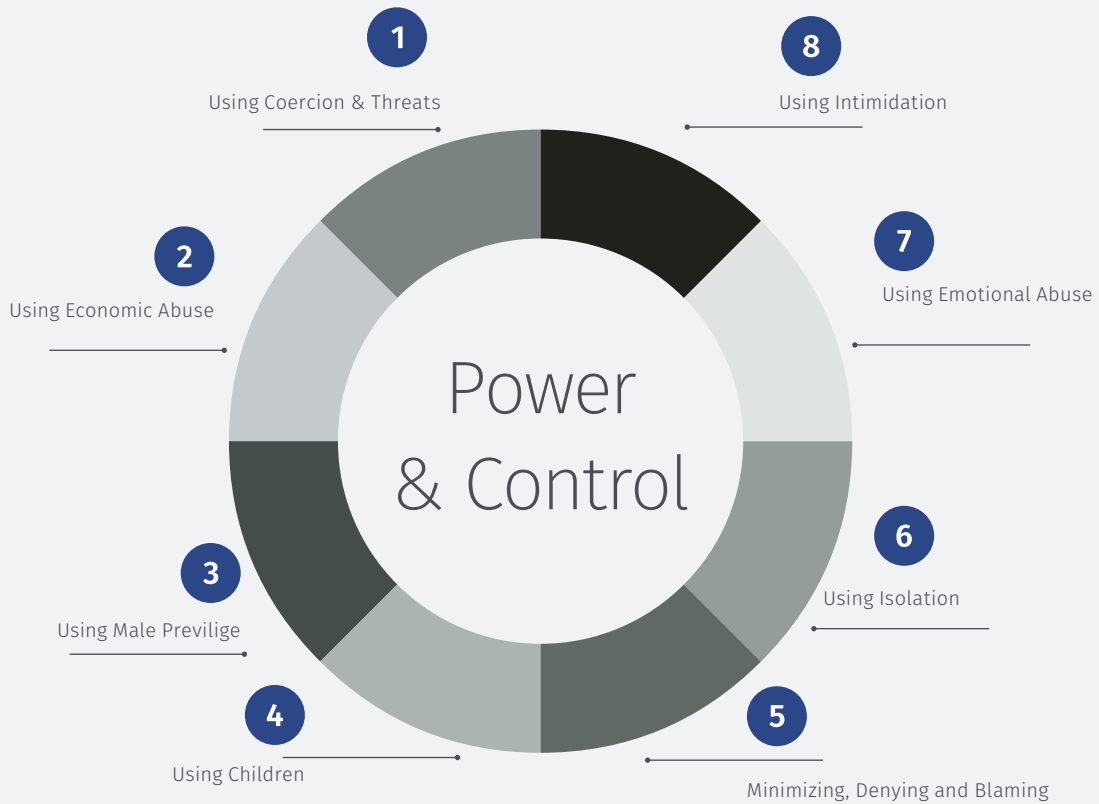
• **Child Maltreatment:**

This encompasses the physical or sexual abuse of a child, and "child neglect," or failure of a caregiver to meet the physical, emotional, medical, or educational needs of a child.

> It is critical to note that regardless of the "type" of violence being analyzed or addressed, ALL violence is dangerous, and potentially life threatening, particularly because of the tendency for it to escalate in frequency and severity and lead to abuse. Prevention and interventions are needed to address all types of violence.

[7]There is much debate about the classification of different types of "domestic violence," but it is not the purpose of this brief to explore or discuss these contrasting ideologies. We report on the typologies described by Johnson, Michael P. (2006). Violence and abuse in personal relationships: Conflict, terror, and resistance in intimate partnerships. In A. L. Vangelisti & D. Perlman (Eds.), Cambridge handbook of personal relationships (pp. 557–576). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Figure 1: Duluth Model Power and Control Wheel.

1 Using Coercion & Threats

8 Using Intimidation

2 Using Economic Abuse

7 Using Emotional Abuse

Power & Control

3 Using Male Previlige

6 Using Isolation

4 Using Children

5 Minimizing, Denying and Blaming

Source: http://www.theduluthmodel.org/training/wheels.html

1. Using Coercion & Threats

Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her, threatening to leave her, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare, making her drop charges, making her do illegal things.

2. Using Economic Abuse

Preventing her from getting or keeping a job, making her ask for money, giving her an allowance, taking her money, not letting her know about or have access to family income.

3. Using Male Privilege

Treating her like a servant, making all the big decisions, acting like the "master of the castle," being the one to define men's and women's roles, societal privilege in general.

4. Using Children

Making her feel guilty about the children, using the children to relay messages, using visitation to harass her, threatening to take the children away.

5. Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming

Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously, saying the abuse didn't happen, shifting responsibility for abusive behavior, saying she caused it.

7. Using Emotional Abuse

Putting her down, making her feel bad about herself, calling her names, making her think she's crazy, playing mind games, humiliating her, making her feel guilty.

6. Using Isolation

Controlling what she does, who see sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes, limiting her outside involvement, using jealousy to justify actions.

8. Using Intimidation

Making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures, smashing things, destroying her property, abusing pets, displaying weapons.

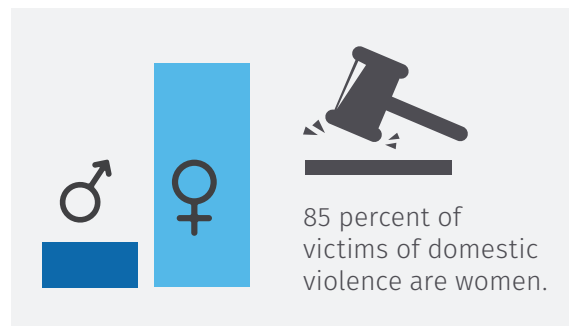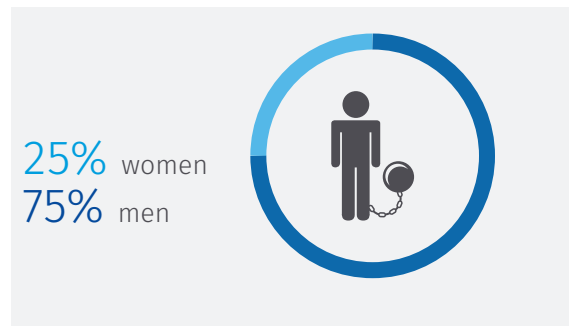# Effects of Domestic Violence

While domestic violence statistics are alarming, they do not capture the full extent of the effects on families and communities. Domestic violence effects more than the direct victims; it affects the victim, the children, the perpetrator, and the community as a whole.

Impacts on Victims:

Men commit violent crimes more than three times as often as women (75% male versus 20% female) and approximately 85 percent of victims of domestic violence are women.[xi]

Men will often attribute and justify their use of violence against women to self-defense or retaliation (i.e., "She started it."), overlooking or disregarding the larger context of domestic violence and the history of power and control in the relationship.[xii] However, even when women initiate (or respond) in mutual or situational couple violence situations, because men, on average, are larger, stronger, and better skilled at fighting, women are much more likely to be severely injured, require medical treatment, and suffer fatalities than men are.[xiii]

Nonetheless, violence by women should never be ignored or dismissed. Men do not need to represent fifty percent of all victims to deserve access to supportive services. Regardless of gender, victims can exhibit emotional withdrawal and disturbances, including anxiety or hyper-vigilance, anger, fear or helplessness, substance abuse, depression, suicide and post-traumatic stress disorder.[xiv] These negative outcomes can affect every aspect of a victim's life, such as parenting and employment.

25% women
75% men

85 percent of victims of domestic violence are women.

Impacts on Children:

Children who witness domestic violence are more likely to exhibit behavioral and physical health problems including depression, anxiety, and violence towards peers.[xv] They are also more likely to attempt suicide, abuse drugs and alcohol, run away from home, engage in teenage prostitution, and commit sexual assault crimes.[xvi]

Children from homes where domestic violence occurs are physically or sexually abused and/ or seriously neglected at a rate 15 times the national average.[xvii]

Children who witness domestic violence exhibit behavioral and physical health problems

62%
of children were hurt
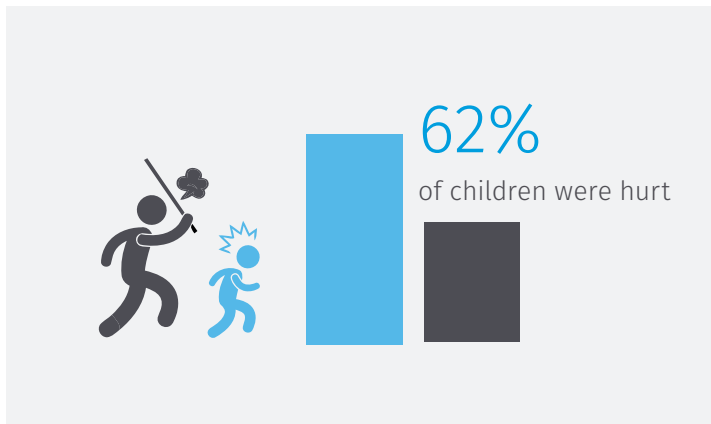
A 36-month study of 146 children, ages 11-17, who came from homes where there was domestic violence found that all sons over the age of 14 attempted to protect their mothers from attacks, with 62 percent reporting being injured in the process.[xviii]

Impacts on Communities:

Domestic violence impacts all communities as it spans across all socioeconomic levels. Incidents of domestic violence typically represent the beginning of a process that often engages health care, criminal justice, social services, child welfare, and mental health care systems. This is particularly true and problematic in poorer communities, where families experiencing domestic violence depend more on public resources such as police response, shelter programs, and other social services.[xx]

80- 90%
of children are aware of violence at home [xix]
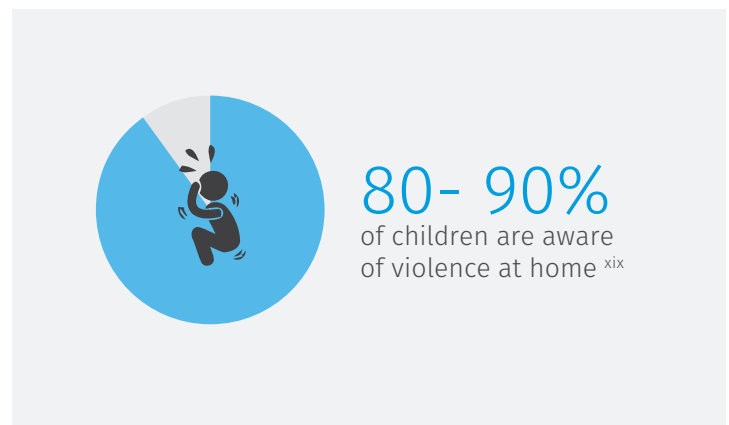
Impacts on the Perpetrator:

An often-overlooked effect of domestic violence is the impact it has on perpetrators. Behaviors of men who batter can lead to

- **loss of employment**
- **involvement in the criminal justice system**
- **incarceration**
- **separation from their partners and children**
- **public anger and scrutiny**
- **shame and embarrassment**

As such, the attempts of fatherhood programs to assist fathers with employment, money management, parenting and an array of other support services will undoubtedly be thwarted if they do not identify and address domestic violence.

Batterer Intervention Programs

Perpetrators of IPV need specific services provided by qualified abuse intervention programs to discontinue their abusive behaviors, along with group sessions to hold them accountable for their actions. This has most often been accomplished through batterer intervention programs (BIPs).

BIPs are educational intervention programs for largely men who have been abusive or controlling towards an intimate partner. With over 1500 BIPs across the country, they are typically part of coordinated community responses to domestic violence that includes victims' advocates, the police, and courts.

The majority of program participants are men who are court-ordered to take part— approximately 80 percent of batterers are referred to a BIP.   Court-ordered intervention is typically viewed as a better alternative to incarceration, which has been shown to further hamper men's abilities to become productive members of their families and communities and does not extinguish men's use of violence.[xxvi]

Although considered part of an overall coordinated community response to domestic violence, BIPs have not been supported as such. They have long been treated as a "stepchild" to such responses, reflected in their consistently meager funding, which does not match the increasing demand for their services.[8]

Controversy around support and funding for BIP's as an intervention strategy stems from the overwhelming publicly held view that male batterers can't change, and lack of agreement around whether BIPs are effective in producing change.

Batterer intervention programs have shown some very promising outcomes, particularly when they are state certified and work in partnership with a larger network of health and human service providers.[xxvii] In terms of reducing violence, evaluation outcomes have

been mixed and fraught with methodological problems including invalid measurement instruments. An often-cited meta-analysis of 22 BIPs found a 5 percent decrease in batterer violence that could be attributed to these programs. While this has been used as a criticism of BIPs, the effect size is comparable to, and in many cases better than, some widely accepted interventions and behavior change programs (e.g., addiction, diet, smoking cessation, etc.).

The researchers also note, "A 5% decrease in violence may appear insignificant; however, batterers treatment in all reported cases of domestic violence in the United States would equate to approximately 42,000 women per year no longer being battered."[9]   Research also indicates that BIPs are adaptable to specific target populations and BIP practitioners have culturally competent and trauma-informed views of the men in their programs.

A meta-analysis of 22 BIPs found 5% decrease in batterer violence

5%

A 5% decrease in domestic violence =

Approximately 42,000 women per year no longer being battered[xxviii]

[8]See for example http://www.hruth.org/aid-to-abusers.asp
[9]http://www.theduluthmodel.org/pdf/CounteringConfusion.pdf

Stable public funding sources are needed to support BIPs, as well as rigorous, well-designed program evaluations and replication of effective interventions. The understanding that batterer interventions are also a service to victims is critical to ending the cycle of violence. BIPs also respond to what many survivors are asking for--solutions and services beyond their own immediate safety needs that focus on services for abusive partners.

Most fatherhood service providers and practitioners are not trained to provide IPV intervention work with their clients.[10] As such, it is essential to screen for domestic violence and make referrals to the appropriate agencies when incidents are disclosed. Establishing a relationship with local DV agencies and BIPs will help provide your program and agencies with needed information and resources in identifying and responding to domestic violence. Research has demonstrated that fatherhood agency staff who receive training from DV partners are significantly more likely to inquire about it with clients.[xxix]

Potential domestic violence program partners in your state can be found by contacting the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (www.ncadv.org) or the National Network to End Domestic Violence (www.nnedv.org).

Understanding Male Violence

Violence does not occur in a vacuum. There are societal, community, relational, and individual mechanisms that perpetuate violence in our society. Dismantling these influences is not easy and requires attending to factors present on every level.

The ecological framework presented in Figure 2 shows the different levels of influences and examples of risk and protective factors that can be addressed.

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[10]For example, professionals often confuse anger management with abuse intervention programs. While anger management is an important tool for many men, it is not an appropriate response to IPV. Additionally, some responsible fatherhood programs and well-intentioned facilitators suggest peer-to-peer responses and positive role modeling to men who self-reported violent behaviors as an adequate response to curtail further violence. Good intentions and peer accountability, however, simply are not enough. Wanting to help is very different from being trained and skilled to handle the unique dynamics involved in abusive relationships. Even experienced facilitators and helping professionals who don't have specific expertise in domestic violence find that they are "in over their heads" when an incident erupts in a session or it becomes clear that the program environment is unsafe for certain participants.
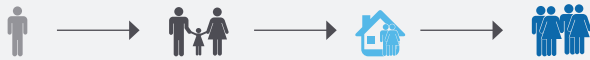
Figure 1

Risks

Protective

Societal

Community

Relationship

Individual

Gender / social inequities

Low performing schools

Violent friends, poor parenting

Child abuse, drug abuse

Socioeconomic equality

High graduation rates

Parent education

Mentoring

SOURCE: HTTP://WWW.ADVANCEMENTPROJECTCA.ORG/?Q=NODE/514

Male Socialization: Silence and Violence

The recognition that men are taught and experience violence on many levels is critical. Boys receive messages from a very young age that masculinity is defined by strength, independence, emotional distance and control, and hypersexuality. Messages about "what it means to be a man" are reinforced through cultural values, media, and family, among others. Additionally, many men become part of systems (e.g., sports, military, prison) where they are further taught to be aggressive or violent. Violence, then, becomes a way for men to interact with and control their environments, women, and other people in their lives.

The Silence/Violence theory proposed by sociologist Thomas Scheff [xxi] further posits that boys are taught that masculinity involves suppressing their fear and emotions in general, but particularly in regard to any childhood trauma they experience. This suppression leads to intense feelings of shame they manage through a silence/violence pattern that extends into adulthood and the ways they behave in relationships. Thus, any feelings of being weak, incompetent, inadequate, rejected, or powerless are ignored, numbed, or expressed through displaced acts of violence and/or rage. Violence, then, can be understood as an attempt at self-preservation in which men "turn the tables" and attack others to protect their own sense of self, loss of control, and further shame. [xxii] In this way, male gender-role socialization also increases the likelihood that male emotions and trauma will go unrecognized, unarticulated, and unhealed.

This is a paradox of men's "power"—that as a society we have failed so badly at attending to the emotional needs of our boys (and hence men), that males are socialized to believe they must be "Supermen" (and females are socialized to expect this from male partners).

When it is not achieved, the consequences are devastating and sometimes deadly for families.
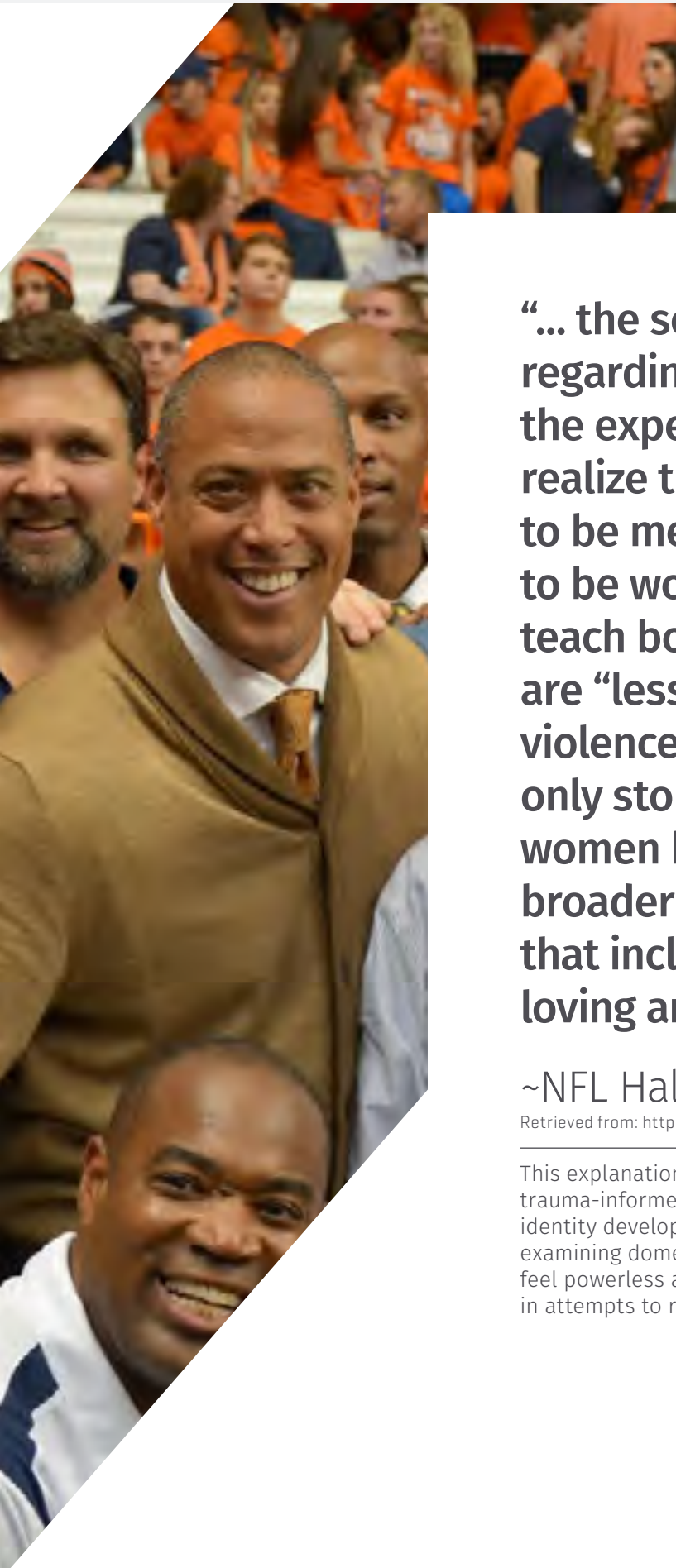
"... the socialization of boys regarding masculinity is often at the expense of women. I came to realize that we don't raise boys to be men, we raise them not to be women (or gay men). We teach boys that girls and women are "less than" and that leads to violence for men to stand up to not only stop men's violence against women but, to teach young men a broader definition of masculinity that includes being empathetic, loving and non-violent."

~NFL Hall of Famer Don McPherson
Retrieved from: http://www.jeffpearlman.com/the-quaz-qa-don-mcpherson/

This explanation of male aggression and violence is consistent with trauma-informed and minority stress models. Understanding male identity development through this lens is even more critical when examining domestic violence among marginalized men who often feel powerless and act out in risky, aggressive, and/or violent ways in attempts to regain power.[xxiii]

Domestic Violence and Marginalized Men

Any programs or initiatives that intervene with or engage men must first understand the social and cultural realities of low-income men of color. While domestic violence programs work with many low-income women of color, they may not have a good understanding of the pressures and issues their male counterparts may be facing.

Lower income men have seen their wages stagnate over the last several decades, eroding their ability to support a family. Men with criminal records face additional barriers to employment.

These issues combine to make it very difficult for some men to fulfill what society defines as a primary role of fathering--being a financial provider. Such fathers may feel undervalued by women and their communities. Men of color are also frequent targets of racism and discrimination and are highly stigmatized in the media as violent criminals who are lazy and hypersexual. These negative stereotypes often become internalized and influence how men understand masculinity and themselves, and how they make decisions about their behavior and family.

The processes underlying and influencing male violence should never serve as an "excuse" for those behaviors; however, understanding them is essential in developing effective prevention and intervention strategies that reflect the complex realities of men and women and doesn't put either at risk for additional trauma.

Fatherhood and domestic violence programs have an opportunity to counter some of these feelings and perceptions of low-income men of color by engaging fathers to serve as part of a coordinated response to violence in the community. They can also recognize through partnership and/or publicly (e.g., PSAs, proclamations, community outreach, etc.) the ability of abusive fathers to change their behaviors and be re-engaged with their families in a safe way.[11]

What Fatherhood Organizations Can Do

Preventing violent behavior or the likelihood of it reoccurring is possible, but complex. There is much work already underway that would benefit from evaluations to further inform best practices. There is, however, growing consensus on the need to focus on primary prevention: stopping violence before it begins. There is also emerging evidence that primary prevention programming that meaningfully engages men and boys is successful at reducing violence. [xxiv]

#realmenlove Twitterchat Comment
"Many men don't WANT to give up the little bit of power they feel violence affords them."

Using an ecological model of male violence, the spectrum of prevention can happen on multiple levels, and in multiple ways: intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, and wider society levels.

An Ecological Frameworks for Engaging Fathers, Men, and Boys in Reducing Violence

1. Strengthening individual knowledge and skills that enhance fathers' capabilities of preventing injury or harm.

2. Promoting community education by reaching groups of people with information and resources to promote health and safety and reduce violence.

3.Educating community providers with information and knowledge that will enhance the way they serve men and boys.

4. Fostering coalitions and networks that bring together groups and individuals for broader goals and greater impact.

5. Changing organizational practices that condone, ignore, and/or foster male aggression and, thus, creating new models.

6. Developing strategies to change laws and policies to influence outcomes in male employment, health, human services, education, and justice.

Suggested Steps Fatherhood Programs Can Take to Engage Men in Addressing Violence

Fatherhood programs are particularly well suited and structured to deliver prevention services at every level of the spectrum. However, for some fatherhood programs, serious efforts to decrease violence, include men as allies, and build public and community partnerships will be new, and will require some initial considerations to acknowledge and address before the work begins.

1. Recognize this is an Essential Conversation

• First, recognize this is an essential conversation for your agency and the larger community: The conversation alone helps you and other service providers think more fully about, and better address, family safety.

• You can start by having internal discussions with your staff about what they already know or feel about the issue of domestic violence. You may find some staff members have a deep understanding of domestic and community violence and are very comfortable talking about it. Other staff may be uncomfortable due to their own history or misinformation on the topic.

• Document your efforts from the start. We need models. And, while a phone call to most local DV agencies or batterer intervention programs to inquiry about work being done for men will reveal plenty of local and national efforts, these activities need to be systematically documented, evaluated—both for process and outcomes (when possible)—and centrally located, so they can be readily accessed and potentially replicated. Compiling and disseminating your program's emerging or existing examples, case studies, and promising approaches in compelling ways (data mixed with stories) is essential in broadening the scope of this work.

2. Strengthening Individual Knowledge, Skills, Healing, and Leadership Capacity:

One key strategy for prevention at the individual level is helping men learn alternative ways of dealing with emotions and conflict that do not include violence. Fatherhood programs can provide this support directly to their clients through conflict resolution, skill building, and safe places to share and talk about their own experiences with childhood trauma.

6x

There is an intersection between male violence and domestic violence that needs to be addressed: Men who are physically violent with non-family members are six times more likely to use violence against a female partner.[xxxi]

Evaluations of conflict resolution programs show programs that address and improve impulse control, anger management, decision-making/problem-solving, and communication skills among participants can reduce violence and aggression in their communities.[xxx]

Practitioners suggest that these activities should include:

- Critical reflections about masculinity and gender norms;
- Examining men's own childhood experiences with their fathers (or lack thereof);
- The impact and effects of violent and aggressive behaviors on their children;
- Respectful and non-abusive behavior toward their children's mother; and
- Highlight "what's in it for men" to be nonviolent.

Many practitioners also note that fatherhood programs are natural places to create an "alternative community for men" that connects them with peers and mentors who often manage aspects of the programs themselves. Creating these community spaces by and for men also can serve to reinforce the men's need to redefine masculinity for themselves, their children, and their communities in spaces protected and safe from pervasive, negative community-level influences and stigmas often associated with sharing feelings, receiving help, and healing.

Individually targeted efforts are essential; however, a "one father at a time" incremental approach to preventing violence is not enough. Fatherhood programs can also lead and engage in broader approaches to violence reduction because they have unique access to men in the larger community – both violent and non-violent, which creates an opportunity to engage, inform, and educate them through primary prevention efforts before patterns of violence and control are established. These efforts can decrease community violence as well.

3. Engage Men and Fathers in the Community:

Fatherhood practitioners recognize that their programs need to do more to teach and role model to men that violence in all of its forms is not valued and should not be accepted behavior. Fatherhood organizations are in well-suited positions to lead these prevention efforts and discussions because they are embedded in the community working closely with fathers and families on myriad issues.

The trust developed through these close relationships can facilitate often difficult and uncomfortable conversations about violence. One way to do this is to "meet men where they are" in community settings through strategic outreach and cause-marketing campaigns.

Outreach

One public health model to consider is the Black Barbershop Health Outreach Program (BBHOP) program designed to improve the health of men and reduce racial health disparities, which conducted its outreach in barbershops, a place known to be frequented and trusted by Black men.[xxxii] Several health studies have documented the success of this approach. Project Brotherhood held screenings and clinics in south Chicago, and began raising awareness by training barbers as community health educators for men in partnership with local medical centers.[xxxiv]

As part of Fathers Incorporated's work managing the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, it built on BBHOP model and established Fatherhood Buzz in 2012, which engages community-based organizations and barbershops to promote responsible fatherhood by equipping barbershops to disseminate parenting information to fathers, families, and the community at-large. This initiative has been very successful.

In Michigan

700 hair stylists were trained to deliver health promotion messages to **14,000** clients

resulting in **60%** of clients reporting taking steps to prevent diabetes, hypertension, and chronic kidney disease.[xxxiii]

As of the most recent Fatherhood Buzz event in September, 2014

207 community partners planned and participated in Fatherhood Buzz:

278 barber shops and salons

Safe and Successful School Year in 278 barber shops and salons across 27 states, showing an example of ways to engage with men outside of your program.

Media and Cause-Marketing Campaigns

Media, public education, and cause-marketing campaigns are another way for fatherhood organizations to reach and influence the larger community of men. With public engagement on social media and smartphone technology, campaigns do not necessarily require the substantial financial commitment they once did. You can also work with schools and colleges in your community to access and promote local talent and engage more people in your efforts.

Research finds that:

Engaging men as allies in DV are most effective when "they allow men to see themselves reflected in anti-violence movements, and that help men make personal, emotional connections to the issue of violence."[xxxv]

Any type of media or marketing campaign should include:

• Clear and positive messages
• Engagement of local boys/men in constructing the messages
• Formative research and testing of messages
• Promotion of shifting norms around violence and male identity
• High quality media
• A duration of at least 4-6 months

4. Foster Coalitions and Partnerships across a Network of Providers

In addition to fatherhood organizations, any agencies and institutions serving boys, men, or fathers should play a role in promoting healthy definitions of masculinity that address issues of violence. Fatherhood programs can facilitate this by partnering with various domestic violence, batterer interventions, school, health, mental health, faith-based, workforce, sports and recreation programs, and businesses as allies to increase targeted times and opportunities to talk with fathers about family violence, healthy relationships, and the ways children witness domestic violence and how it impacts them. This can also increase victim and perpetrator referral to essential services.

The power of coalitions to bring about broader change cannot be understated. When diverse agencies and entities formally unite around a message or goal, they can accomplish things that no one organization could do on its own, and you are much more likely to get the attention of decision-makers and key stakeholders.

Conclusions

There are many compelling reasons for responsible fatherhood programs to address the issue of domestic violence. First, engaging in violence threatens the positive outcomes of responsible fatherhood programming. Child wellbeing, family stability, and positive parental involvement are all diminished when domestic violence affects a family. Fathers who perpetrate domestic violence decrease their opportunities to be active participants in the lives of their children. They are also at risk of arrest and incarceration. Additionally, many men who commit violent acts against women are the victims of previous abuse in their lives and a generational cycle of domestic violence is established. Perpetrators raise children with a far greater likelihood of being victims or perpetrators themselves.

The recent public outrage expressed at high profile domestic violence cases emphasized by the media may serve as triggering events to deepen conversations and solutions to domestic and community violence. To that end, this brief suggests shared principles and possible strategies and recommendations for fatherhood organizations to engage men in domestic violence prevention as a mutual benefit to both fields and, most importantly, to the families they serve. Responsible fatherhood programs work diligently to ensure that men engage in families as healthy and nurturing participants, while domestic violence programs work to ensure the health and safety of family members. Neither of these visions will be fully realized until advocates and programs on both sides can work together cooperatively to serve all members of the family. Ultimately, it is essential for all family strengthening organizations to "stretch beyond their comfort zones" to figure out what prevention, intervention, and advocating for men to end domestic violence looks like in their respective fields and as a coordinated effort.

About the Authors

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Dr. Bouchet is a Senior Consultant for Fathers Incorporated. She is the co-author (with Kenneth Braswell) of Fathers Incorporated's training curriculum, "What About Dad?", that equips health and human service providers to more effectively engage fathers.

Dr. Bouchet is also the Principal Consultant for Bouchet and Associates--Strategic Consulting for Social Change--where she provides expertise in public relations and communications, outreach, coalition building, research, evaluation, policy, practice, and program management. She has provided technical assistance and training to individuals, non-profits, government entities, philanthropic and mission-driven organizations. Dr. Bouchet is the former Executive Director of Women In Fatherhood where she advocated for the removal of structural barriers faced by low-income fathers and developed the Voices of Women and Men Matter media campaigns. She was honored as a Champion of Change for low-income men and fathers by the White House for her work with Women In Fatherhood.

Kenneth Braswell

With more than 24 years of community development experience, Braswell is the Executive Director of Fathers Incorporated (FI) a not-for-profit organization that serves as a leader in the promotion of Responsible Fatherhood and Mentoring.

Since 2004, the agency's main focus has been on the development of support and services for fathers by using innovative social marketing and multi-media platforms, developing research-based products for the field, engaging in intensive outreach, and connecting key stakeholders--all serving to combat father absence in society and help support fathers in their role as parents.

Additionally, Braswell serves as the Director of the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC). The NRFC is a widely recognized national and international resource for fathers, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers.

Add Notes

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