



Using Interactive Theater to Create Socioculturally Relevant Community-based Intimate Partner Violence Prevention

Purpose To describe the use of interactive theater, audience response assessment, and peer educators to development of socioculturally relevant approaches for bystander interventions to prevent intimate partner violence (IPV). The authors use a case example of an ongoing community-university partnership in diverse local Asian communities called New Visions to illustrate such an approach and detail the results.

Background Research shows the tolerance of IPV among Asian men and women in the U.S. appears to be high when compared to the attitudes of other racial/ethnic groups; and the prevalence of physical and/or sexual IPV among Asian women in the U.S. ranges between 18% and 52%, which is comparable to or slightly higher than those of the general U.S. population. Despite the high rates of IPV and tolerance, there is a scarcity of socioculturally relevant programs for this growing community and even less have been evaluated for effectiveness.

Methods New Vision's IPV prevention programs engaged community members as peer educators, helping design and deliver prevention training. Additionally, the program used interactive theater (*i.e.*, forum theater) to encourage audience involvement, elicit sociocultural-relevant bystander responses, and generate discussion. Authors worked with peer educators to create a skit that depicts abusive and controlling behaviors of a partner in an intimate relationship. After a performance, audience members were invited on stage to try out their approach to resolve the problematic situation as a bystander. Hand-held clickers were used to learn which audience members identified with the story and characters depicted, and the perceived effectiveness of the intervention.

Key Findings Using peer educators in the design and performance of a skit resulted in audience identification with a scene, and thus, IPV prevention messages. Interactive theater and audience response systems (*e.g.*, clickers) helped engage a wide range of community members in the creation and discussion of socioculturally relevant bystander intervention to prevent IPV.

Implications

The script and scenes created by peer educators provide a realistic and familiar setting where community members can try out various sociocultural-relevant prevention strategies.

Using audience response systems helps generate more inclusive dialogue, often from those in the audience not willing to perform or engage in discussion of the alternative bystander responses.

Citation

Yoshihama M, Tolman R. Using interactive theater to create socioculturally relevant community-based intimate partner violence prevention. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 2015;55(1-2):136-147. doi:10.1007/s10464-014-9700-0.