

CASE STUDY

How Puntos de Encuentro (NGO, Nicaragua) used qualitative techniques to Design a Public Education Campaign with Men on Violence

Background

In 1998, the Nicaraguan NGO Puntos de Encuentro embarked on a study to gain information useful for designing a public education campaign that called on men to renounce violence in their intimate relationships. The study used qualitative research techniques to generate hypotheses about the type of antiviolence messages that men would accept and find appropriate to their needs and expectations.

Methodology

The research included three phases:

- Compilation and content analysis of the workshop transcripts and reports from meetings about men and masculinity in Nicaragua, including:
 1. Men's views about what it means to be a man in Nicaragua.
 2. Images and attitudes men hold about women.
 3. The advantages and disadvantages of 'being a man.'
 4. Men's memories of how they were raised to become adults (socialization).
- In-depth interviews with a sample of 12 nonviolent men. Researchers chose to interview nonviolent men based on the rationale that, rather than looking for 'causes' of men's violence (and then offer a 'medicine' with the campaign), it would be more productive to study what creates 'health', that is, how do we understand men who, in spite of growing up in a violent socio-cultural context, do not become violent themselves? To be considered non-violent, men had to be identified by their peers and pass a series of behavioral screens. Men exposed to feminist discourse were explicitly excluded.
- In-depth interviews with 'ordinary' men.

Selected results

The research revealed that large differences exist between non-violent and 'ordinary' men. For example, ordinary men say that their relationships are best when their partner does not complain, or when she does what she is told. On the other hand, non-violent men held very different expectations for relationships. For them, a good relationship is one where there is mutuality, reciprocity, and mutual support. Non-violent men perceived both benefits and costs to this behavior. Among the benefits identified were greater tranquillity and harmony at home; a 'good reputation' in the community, feeling good about oneself, health and wellbeing of one's children, and a household that runs more smoothly day to day. Among the costs of challenging a machista culture were ridicule and ostracism by other men.

Non-violent men either grew up in very loving homes where they were taught to respect women or in very violent homes, where their own mothers were beaten and they vowed never to be like their fathers.

Excerpted from Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists by Mary Ellsberg and Lori Heise for WHO, 2005, p. 80