Research articles

Masculinity matters: using entertainment education to engage men in ending violence against women in India

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Abstract

In this article, R.W. Connell's notion of *hegemonic masculinity* is used to examine the role of male gender norms in perpetuating violence against women. The researchers discuss the implications for entertainment-education (EE) programmes that seek to promote gender equality by modelling alternative forms of masculinity and sparking critical dialogue about gender-equitable masculine norms. First, theories are reviewed that contextualise masculinity and media to establish a strategic foundation for engaging men through EE. Next, a case study is undertaken of media campaigns by Breakthrough, a human rights organisation that has produced a number of media and EE initiatives to address violence against women. The article highlights five specific ways in which men can be represented in media campaigns with EE components: 1) invisible men; 2) men as perpetrators; 3) men as allies; 4) men as agents in challenging hegemonic masculinity; and 5) men as agents in redefining manhood.

Keywords: campaigns, entertainment education, gender norms, masculinity, media, violence against women

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Introduction

On the threshold of a new life, oh bridegroom,
Listen to us, we have something to say
The bride you are marrying is just another person like you
You have to treat her as an equal
She also has a heart, she has aspirations. Don't think you are marrying just a body
Beating up your wife is no indication of your masculinity
Don't think of yourself as a god, and her as your slave.

The above lyrics are from a song performed by Suresh, a Southern Indian, on the occasion of his brother's wedding. Suresh, an outreach worker and performer in the community mobilisation programme of the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Breakthrough's (www.breakthrough.tv) *Bell Bajao* (www.bellbajao.org) media campaign to reduce violence against women, has undergone a personal transformation: Suresh now actively carries out household chores with his mother and sister-in-law, and has even inspired his newly-married brother to do the same. Through songs and his performance of gender-equitable behaviours, Suresh models a new form of 'masculinity' that is non-normative (CMS 2010b) (see http://bit.ly/Sureshstory). Suresh's personal transformation is reflective of what mass media campaigns such as *Bell Bajao*, coupled with entertainment-education (EE) community mobilisation activities, can do to involve men in promoting women's human rights and ending domestic violence.

Based in India and the United States (US), Breakthrough is an NGO which uses media, pop culture and community mobilisation to inspire people to take action for human rights – including women's rights. In the past decade, it has experimented with a number of media approaches to engage men in ending violence against women. This article uses Breakthrough as a case study to explore the various ways in which EE can engage men as advocates for women's rights, paying particular attention to four of Breakthrough's multimedia campaigns: two music video-based campaigns, namely *Mann Ke Manjeere* (2000) and *Babul* (2001); the *What Kind of Man Are You?* campaign in the mid-2000s; and the current *Bell Bajao* initiative (from 2009 onwards).[1]

Violence against women and girls is a global epidemic and one of the most pervasive forms of human rights violations. One in every three women in the world will be beaten, raped or otherwise abused during her lifetime (United Nations Development Fund for Women 2003). The most persistent form of violence against women is domestic violence, which includes not just physical violence, but also emotional violence and abuse perpetrated by intimate partners (Shane & Ellsberg 2002). Worldwide, the lifetime prevalence of physical violence by an intimate partner has been recorded to reach as high as over 60 per cent in certain regions of the world

(United Nations 2006). This is not only a violation of women's fundamental human rights, but is also linked to increased vulnerability to a wide range of health issues, including sexually transmitted disease (STD) and HIV transmission, miscarriages, risky sexual behaviour, substance abuse and mental health problems that further undermine women's rights to health (Shane & Ellsberg 2002).

While the causes underlying violence against women are complex and multifaceted, one of the significant contributing factors is thought to be rigid gender norms, especially those regarding masculinity (Jewkes 2002; Shane & Ellsberg 2002). In this article, the researchers use Connell's (1987, 1995) notion of *hegemonic masculinity* to examine the role of male gender norms in perpetuating violence against women, and discuss the implications for EE programmes that seek to promote gender equality by modelling alternative forms of masculinity and sparking critical dialogue on gender-equitable masculine norms. First, theories that contextualise masculinity and media are reviewed to establish a strategic foundation for engaging men through entertainment education. This is followed by an analysis of four of Breakthrough's media campaigns and EE initiatives that address domestic violence. An examination is done of five specific ways in which men can be represented in media campaigns that include EE activities: 1) invisible men; 2) men as perpetrators; 3) men as allies; 4) men as agents in challenging hegemonic masculinity; and 5) men as agents in redefining manhood.

EE and masculinity

EE is the planned design and implementation of media programmes that both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members' knowledge of a particular issue, create favourable attitudes, shift social norms and change behaviour (Singhal & Rogers 1999, 2002). EE can be a powerful medium for addressing masculinity and challenging gender norms.

Women's equality and violence against women have been recurring themes in EE programmes the world over. Various EE programmes across the globe have addressed themes of women's empowerment and domestic violence, including early EE interventions such as *Hum Log*, India's first television soap opera that ran in the mid-1980s (Singhal & Rogers 1999); *Soul City* in South Africa, one of Africa's largest health education initiatives that has been on-going since 1992 (Usdin, Singhal & Shongwe et al. 2004); and *Life Gulmohar Style*, a BBC Media Action radio programme in India in the late-2000s (Lapsansky & Chatterjee 2011).

A number of studies have shown the advances in women's social standing that can result from such entertainment programmes (Chesterton 2004; Papa, Singhal & Law et al. 2000; Singhal & Rogers 1999; Singhal, Harter & Chitnis et al. 2007; Usdin et al. 2004). Conversely, however, evaluations have shown that the hegemonic

masculine norms that contribute to women's subordination can sometimes be unintentionally perpetuated by such programmes, ultimately undermining long-term social change goals. For example, *Naseberry Street*, an early EE programme from Jamaica promoting family planning, featured a male character named Scattershot who, as the name implies, had numerous sex partners and a number of illegitimate children. While the programme producers intended this character to be a negative role model, an evaluation report indicated that not only were male audiences more likely than women to like the character, but many men stated that they viewed him as a *positive* role model (Singhal & Rogers 1999).

Likewise, an EE programme in Zimbabwe to promote family planning led to a significant increase in the use of modern contraceptive methods, but was accompanied by an increase in the likelihood that men would unilaterally make family planning decisions without involving their wives (Piotrow, Kincaid & Hindin et al. 1992). The evaluation concluded that '[t]he campaign's reliance on traditional masculine images may have reinforced stereotypes about male decision-making and blurred campaign messages about the value of joint decision-making' (Kim, Marangwanda & Kols 1996). Mohan Dutta and Iccha Basnyat (2008), reviewing an intervention in Nepal, noted that while promoting the importance of joint decision making in family planning, the programme did not pay adequate attention to the traditional gendered communication practices and patriarchal hierarchies that entrench men as the head of the household. This made it hard for women to broach topics related to family planning and contraception, let alone influence the decision-making process.

These examples indicate that in efforts to promote short-term project goals, programme content may unintentionally reinforce gender power hierarchies. Whether or not an EE programme specifically aims to address gender inequalities, gendered depictions and cultural gender norms communicated in the programme may impact on, or even pose a barrier to, efforts to promote women's equality and end violence against women. Given the powerful role that entertainment media play in shaping gendered identities, attention needs to be paid to the ways EE programmes construct male and female characters and the influence this has on constructing gender norms – especially those related to masculinity (Lapsansky & Chatterjee 2011).

Social construction of gender and power

EE programmes can benefit from the application of a sharper lens that is not only focused on women's gendered roles or on relations between women and men, but also on male identities. Interventions that seek to address gender equality and masculinity can find valuable theoretical grounding in a social constructionist gender perspective on masculinity, inspired by Connell's (1987, 1995) theory of gender and power. The social constructionist view has already influenced a number of successful projects.

Studies show that programmes that encourage men to question gender norms and redefine cultural meanings attached to masculinity result in positive attitudinal change (World Health Organisation [WHO] 2007).

A social constructionist approach holds that gender identities (and the related norms associated with masculinity) are not biologically determined, but are social constructs shaped by cultural forces such as the family, religious institutions, education policy, political debates and – most importantly for the topic at hand – the media. Gender identities, however, are fluid, not monolithic. In any society there are multiple constructions of gender identities. There could be, for example, a number of ways of 'being a man' (Connell 1987, 1995). A cultural ideal of masculinity, however, or a *hegemonic masculinity* often achieves dominance through cultural institutions, practices and discourses which come to define 'what it means to be a man' in a particular culture (Hanke 1990). Hegemonic masculinity is often closely associated with virility, dominance, male honour and toughness. Studies show that pressure to conform to these norms encourages men to use violence in intimate relationships (Barker 2000; Kaufman 1993; Keijzer 1995; Kimmel 2000; Rivers & Aggleton 1998).[2]

Hegemonic masculinity is entrenched through 'practices that institutionalise men's dominance over women' (Connell 1987: 187). It is thus complicit in maintaining hierarchal social relations that marginalise women. While boys and girls often internalise these hegemonic gender ideologies early in life, individuals can challenge, subvert or redefine these norms, instead choosing to adopt alternative beliefs about what it means to be a man or a woman. Such alternative models of masculinity can exist alongside the hegemonic norm, yet are typically not granted the same salience or power (Connell 1987, 1995).

A substantial body of media research has demonstrated the ways in which the mass media construct and maintain gendered social hierarchies and reinforce notions of hegemonic masculinity (Consalvo 2003; Darling-Wolf 2004; Hanke 1990, 1998; Palmer-Mehta 2006; Soulliere 2006; Trujillo 1991). While much of this research focuses on the negative impact of mass media and popular culture, a social constructionist perspective that recognises the existence of multiple masculinities (not just the hegemonic one) also implies the possibility of changing dominant norms, thus suggesting a point of intervention for EE programming. Indeed, an ethnographic study of male audiences' engagement in the Indian radio serial drama, *Taru*, demonstrated how EE can prompt reflection on hegemonic gender identities (Sengupta, Harter & Singhal 2008).

Why hegemonic masculinity matters to EE

A social-constructionist approach to understanding hegemonic masculinity suggests two ways in which EE can helpfully engage the issue of masculinity. First, grounding EE strategies in an understanding of masculinity as a fluid social construct (as opposed to an unchangeable natural construct) presents the opportunity to use such programmes to prompt audiences to critically question idealised conceptions of masculine behaviour. Second, the notion that alternative masculinities exist alongside dominant hegemonic masculinities implies that these alternatives can be used to model new behaviours and that EE can contribute to this process.

Challenging, redefining and re-imagining masculinities

One powerful effect of EE is that it sparks dialogue about critical social issues among audiences (Chatterjee, Bhanot & Frank et al. 2009; Frank, Chatterjee & Chaudhuri et al. 2012; Papa & Singhal 2010; Rogers, Vaughan & Swalehe et al. 1999; Singhal & Rogers 2002; Usdin et al. 2004; Valente, Kim & Lettenmaier et al. 1994). Such dialogue not only reinforces key campaign messages, but can also bring previously invisible issues into focus in the public consciousness, encouraging them to be interrogated or re-examined. EE that intentionally challenges traditional expectations of masculinity can thus be used to spark both personal reflection and interpersonal dialogue, which in turn might lead to a critical examination of the definitions of manhood that are otherwise so easily accepted as natural and invariable. Questioning and debating hegemonic masculinity as a socially constructed set of norms is a critical first step towards changing these norms.

For instance, Breakthrough's *What Kind of Man Are You?* campaign (see details in next section) engaged and critiqued the typical standards of what it means to be a man, and then left it up to the viewer to decide whether these patriarchal behaviours are truly the mark of a man. In India, such patriarchal norms are the accepted male standard. Hence, the campaign started from an acknowledgement of culturally prevalent hegemonic norms of masculinity, but challenged the audience to question the logic of these norms. Studies suggest that the media environment in India – including movies, television, print and street dramas – models masculine behaviors and is an important factor in the construction of Indian masculinity (George 2006). Analyses of Indian media show that films, for example, tend to eroticise male dominance and female submission, thus perpetuating a hegemonic norm that masculinity and male sexuality are linked to violence and the control of women (ibid.). In fact, the effects of media representations of masculinity may be somewhat more pronounced among young men in India, because most Indian boys come of age

in a male-dominated cultural context that affords little contact with young women and virtually no sex education (Verma & Mahendra 2004).

Stereotypical portrayals of men and women can be so ingrained in a culture that they can even colour the perspective of creative team members who are recruited to design a campaign for women's rights. Breakthrough has found that substantial gender sensitisation is often necessary before creative teams from mainstream advertising agencies (which usually rely on stereotypical gender portrayals to sell products) can effectively create media messages that challenge prevailing norms. The initial creative concepts for *What Kind of Man Are You?*, for example, emphasised a woman's role as a mother and homemaker in ways that could have dangerously reified existing unequal gender dynamics. In response, Breakthrough conducted gender sensitisation activities with agency officials so that the revised messaging could instead challenge hegemonic representations of masculinity.

The second way in which a social constructionist perspective on masculinity can be helpful is that it allows for the recognition that alternatives to hegemonic masculinity already exist within the relevant community and can be given greater visibility. Many men already hold and promote alternative notions that 'real men' support the rights and wellbeing of the women in their lives, and are allies to other men who question and redefine hegemonic masculine norms. Hence, a recognition of the plurality of masculinities allows for the possibility of identifying and celebrating these existent alternatives and offering them as potential models for re-envisioning masculinity.

Media studies show that audiences make use of available role models in the media to construct gendered identities (Bussey & Bandura 1999; Morgan 1982; Smith & Granados 2009). Therefore, if the range of male behavioural models is expanded, it can enable individuals to consider other non-hegemonic identity constructions. EE programmes can use alternative norms that already exist in the culture as the basis for role models to promote more widespread social change. Formative research can play a key role in uncovering existing gender-equitable practices, behaviours and attitudes among men in the target population, and these can be both celebrated and modelled in EE media.

Breakthrough's formative research for the *Bell Bajao* campaign, for instance, showed that few people took action when they witnessed domestic violence, but of those who did, well over half were men (CMS 2008). With *Bell Bajao*, Breakthrough decided to reinforce this positive role by portraying men's willingness to intervene to protect the rights of women. This portrayal of a new 'manly' behaviour reinforced what Breakthrough's research had found to be a prevalent, albeit unrecognised, practice among many men.

Despite the clear role that norms of masculine behaviour can play in contributing to the vulnerabilities of both men and women, men have, until recently, largely

been either ignored or demonised in violence against women advocacy. Service and advocacy programmes tended to emphasise making women less vulnerable to violence, along with highlighting the provision of services to potential female victims. Men were often seen as obstacles to gender equality, as perpetrators of violence, or as 'vectors' who propagate the spread of sexually transmitted infections through sexually aggressive and irresponsible behaviour (Sternberg & Hubley 2004).

This perspective, however, does not acknowledge the diversity in the lives of men and the various positions of power or powerlessness that influence their enactment of masculinity. A recognition of these factors, on the other hand, can help to better understand how to work with men as potential allies and promoters of alternative masculine ideologies that place greater emphasis on equality and non-violence.

In summary, the social construction perspective leads to an understanding of masculinity as something that is ever-changing, providing opportunities for EE programmes to challenge audiences to deconstruct dominant notions of masculinity, and to model different alternatives that are otherwise ignored in the media.

Representing men in women's rights campaigns: the Breakthrough experience

Since it was founded in 2001, Breakthrough has been committed to involving men in ending violence against women through the use of popular culture and media. It has experimented with a number of forms of EE and behaviour change media interventions, including music videos, public service announcements, print campaigns, street theatre, music, comics, puppetry and dance – each with distinct pros and cons. The evolution of these approaches is evident in the organisation's four multimedia efforts mentioned earlier: the music videos *Mann Ke Manjeere* and *Babul*; the *What Kind of Man Are You?* campaign; and the current *Bell Bajao* initiative. The lessons Breakthrough learned in more than ten years of experience since *Mann Ke Manjeere* are valuable to other practitioners who seek to challenge hegemonic masculinity in their EE initiatives.

In the preceding section, the researchers described how acknowledging the plural constructions of masculinity, challenging hegemonic gender norms and modelling alternative masculine norms provide a strong foundation for the creation of EE programmes aimed at transforming gender norms. Yet, translating these theoretical orientations into message strategies is challenging and requires creativity. In this section, the researchers employ Breakthrough's experiences to illustrate some of the ways in which male audiences can be engaged and male characters constructed. Specifically, they put forth five modes of representation that have been used in women's rights campaigns: 1) invisible men; 2) men as perpetrators; 3) men as

allies; 4) men as agents in challenging hegemonic masculinity; and 5) men as agents in redefining manhood.

Each of the five modes is different in terms of the degree to which it grants men agency in defining their own gender norms and in serving as participants in promoting social change. For instance, portrayals of men as one-dimensional characters who unquestionably follow hegemonic norms do not represent men as active agents in defining their own behaviour, nor are these men seen as proactive agents of social change. At the other end of the spectrum, the position of greatest agency is that in which alternative norms of masculinity are modelled and celebrated. This not only invites men to question existing social norms, but also provides additional, non-hegemonic male role models that invite them to be active agents in constructing their gendered selves.

The struggle for women's rights is aimed at increasing women's agency, autonomy and visibility – especially in sites where women's voices have typically been silenced (popular media, for example). Hence it is critical to ask: When increased agency is given to men, do we run the risk of relegating women's voices to the margins once again? As Sonali Khan, India Country Director of Breakthrough, noted: '*When we engage men, what kind of space do we give them? And in the process, do we then lose our own* [women's] *voice – which is anyway so limited?*' (S. Khan, pers. comm., 14 March 2010).

A balance must be struck so that both genders are portrayed as having agency in their choices, including how they construct their gender identities. This agency is a critical prerequisite to the enjoyment of human rights. Yet, as the quote demonstrates, determining how to craft such a balanced media message is a negotiated process for the producer, just as developing an agentic gender identity is a negotiated process for the audience.

Invisible men and men as perpetrators

Until a few decades ago, many media efforts aimed at addressing domestic violence focused on women either as victims or as empowered survivors, and gave visibility to men only as perpetrators of violence. Men's agency as actors in promoting human rights – especially the rights of women – was either ignored by rendering them invisible, or outright denied due to their portrayal as mere perpetrators.

A case in point is Breakthrough's 2001 inaugural project, *Mann ke Manjeere* (2001), which not only successfully raised awareness about violence against women in India, but also underscored the potential of mainstream music videos as a powerful EE format. *Mann ke Manjeere*, which held the number one spot on MTV India for more than six weeks, tells the true story of Shameem Pathan, a woman who left her abusive husband to take a job as a truck driver – a traditionally male occupation. As she drives across the country in the video, she picks up other women fleeing abusive

relationships, and they sing and dance in celebration of a new life free from violence. This video was particularly successful in showing women in the empowering position of survivors (not just victims) of domestic violence.

Here, men were largely absent from the story. Other than the abusive husband, seen in a flashback to the main character's memories of abuse, other men, while supportive, are only shown fleetingly. Clearly, the video was a celebration of women's agency, especially in the context of surviving and moving on from domestic violence. It did not communicate the possibility of agency among men.

It is worth noting, however, that while men did not feature much in the video itself, they played an important role in the production of *Mann ke Manjeere*. The album and video were made in partnership with lyricist Prasoon Joshi, composer Shantanu Moitra, and director Sujit Sircar – all prominent men in the arts industry. The decision to have an all-male creative team initially attracted criticism from other women's rights activists, but the men, through their creative and visible involvement with the campaign and beyond, went on to act as spokesmen against domestic violence. Their involvement reflected Breakthrough's conviction that men must be part of the solution. The educational curricula, along with outreach and community engagement associated with *Mann ke Manjeere*, emphasised working with men and boys to end violence. Yet this orientation was not communicated in the media component – it took some time for the organisation to develop strategies to better articulate this commitment in its media output – an embedded contradiction which Khan (Pers. comm., 14 June 2010) readily acknowledges:

> *I think we* [Breakthrough] *have been trying to engage men and bring men into the conversation through the way we use media for quite a while now. Yet I think in the history of Breakthrough, when we did* Mann ke Manjeere*, man was still seen as the perpetrator. We gave the agency to women.*

Men as allies

Breakthrough's second mainstream hit music video, *Babul* (2001), afforded much greater visibility to men, in both positive and negative ways. Much of it highlighted men as abusers. The video was effective in uncovering the reality of domestic violence across social strata and in revealing the ways in which women suffer secretly. It was especially significant in demonstrating that domestic violence is multifaceted, and that it includes emotional and sexual abuse as well as physical violence. *Babul*'s visual representation of men as uncaring, violent perpetrators did not allow for much engagement with the complexity of the role of men in the cycle of violence.

In contrast, *Babul*'s lyrics told a different story, and brought the role of men to light in a more proactive manner. The song expresses a young girl's request to her

father, evoking an off-screen male character who plays not the role of an abuser, but an agent who can help prevent violence:

Father, my heart is afraid
But I must speak with you…
Father, don't marry me off to a goldsmith,
I am not interested in jewellery,
Don't marry me off to a trade,
Money has never made me happy.

Don't marry me off to a king,
I have no desire to rule.
Father, my heart is afraid.
Father, I beg you,
Father, are you listening?
Marry me to an ironsmith
Who will melt my chains.

This song, based on a traditional folk motif, is a symbolic call to men to prevent domestic violence within their family by playing an active role in choosing grooms for their daughters or sisters. This is an important message in a society where arranged marriage and traditional kinship practices grant male householders a prominent role in selecting spouses, and, hence, the possibility of reducing their daughters' and sisters' vulnerability to violence. While the message called on men to intervene, *Babul* still preserved men's familial authority, thus upholding their position of power, and failed to question the link between these gender roles and violence. In the next campaign – *What Kind of Man Are You?* – Breakthrough found a way to critically engage the very structure of these patriarchal norms.

Men as agents in challenging hegemonic masculinity

In 2005, Breakthrough launched a campaign to ask male audiences the challenging question '*What Kind of Man Are You?'*. This campaign, which included a mainstream music video *Maati* (2005), print ads, radio and television public service announcements (PSAs), community outreach as well as street theatre, addressed the harsh reality that the majority of HIV+ women at that time in India had contracted the infection from their husbands/partners (Pradhan & Sundar 2006). The PSA makes the audience privy to a woman's inner monologue, which is directed at her husband: 'Are you man enough?' she asks. 'Gulping down three pegs more than you can handle in front of your friends does not make you a man. Bashing up a bystander who has the audacity to look at me with more than passing interest does not make you a man either … .' After raising similar questions, the PSA concludes with a narrator addressing the male viewer: 'Today in India, 2 000 000 women are infected

by HIV/AIDS, mostly because their husbands are the kind of men who don't think it's important to wear a condom. What kind of man are you?' This campaign is an effective example of the way media can be used to confront norms of masculinity. As Khan observes: 'What Kind of Man Are You? *unpacked masculinity in a very interesting way.* [It looked] *at men actively participating, either in the sense of taking responsibility, or being accountable*' (S. Khan, pers. comm., 3 June 2010).

Hitting the right tone for this challenging PSA was no easy task. The message could not be so confrontational as to alienate audiences. The original tagline suggested by the creative-agency was 'Are you man enough?' This was intended as a direct challenge to patriarchal culture, but Breakthrough felt that its aggressive tone could provoke a backlash, leading some men to dismiss the message. The tagline was reframed as a question to create more opportunity for the audience to answer the question with alternatives. Nonetheless, focus groups still found the tagline somewhat confrontational. Breakthrough however observed that the confrontational tone led to lively discussions in the focus groups. The organisation made the creative call not to soften the message, instead aiming to use their discomfort to force the audience to ask difficult questions (Unpublished formative research 2004).[3]

While the reality of men as perpetrators was still front and centre, the open question left open the possibility that being a man does not necessarily mean subscribing to hegemonic norms, and that men have the agency to critique norms. As Khan (Pers. comm., 3 April 2010) states:

> *We decided to go ahead and open up the issue of what kind of a man would actually be sensitive to the requirements of women, and to try to deconstruct the typically masculine image ...* [yet] *there was agency for the woman: she was actually asking for the man to be responsible ….*

Thus the campaign still retained space for women's voices to be heard.

Men as agents in redefining manhood

While *What Kind of Man Are You?* highlighted the social-constructionist perspective that gender norms can be challenged and debated, it did not put forward a proactive alternative. Tackling such hard-hitting questions is critical groundwork, but it is necessary to use later messaging opportunities to then go beyond the critique and model possible alternatives. Breakthrough did this in its next campaign, *Bell Bajao*, which sought to engage men more directly in not only the issue of violence, but also finding solutions.

In this campaign, mass media ads and community-level EE programmes seek to model the ways men can put new forms of masculinity into practice. The *Bell Bajao* PSAs featured a strong call to action, asking men to ring the doorbell when they heard domestic violence, so as to interrupt the abuse. One ad (*Bell Bajao* 2008)

features a group of teenage boys enjoying an afternoon game of cricket, until they are interrupted by the shouts of a couple fighting in a nearby apartment. As the sounds of struggle and the women's screams escalate, the four boys approach the apartment and ring the doorbell. At the ringing of the bell, the sounds of abuse stop. A surprised man comes to the door, at which point the boys ask him to return their cricket ball which, they explain, must have landed in his apartment. After searching the house the man returns empty-handed. He starts to tell the boys there is no ball in his house, only to see the eldest boy bouncing it in his hands as he holds the man's gaze. The seriousness in the boy's eyes indicates that the youngsters are no longer playing, but are purposefully intervening to show their awareness and disapproval of the violence. The screen goes blank, and the audience is asked to 'Bring Domestic Violence to a Halt. Ring the Bell.'

Bell Bajao thus critiqued hegemonic norms, but it did so in a positive, non-confrontational style. As Khan (Pers. comm., 13 June 2010) observes: '*The man who goes and knocks is not in any way worried that in the process he is going to lose his dignity*. [As for] *the abuser, his back is not against the wall either. He still has a chance to change his ways*.' Hence, all the male characters have potential agency in ending violence. The boys have already exercised their agency to intervene, and the abuser has the agency to stop the violence after the intervention.

Breakthrough's studies indicated that *Bell Bajao* increased awareness about domestic violence among its male audience and prompted the willingness to intervene to stop domestic violence when men witnessed it in their communities (CMS 2010a, 2010c; Silliman 2011). Through the life of the campaign it reached more than 130 million people and recorded positive changes in knowledge, and in both individual and community attitudes towards domestic violence (Silliman 2011). Part of *Bell Bajao*'s success in bringing to light positive alternatives of masculinity may be attributed to its grounding in bottom-up practices. The idea to model male intervention was based on the reality that men were already active in preventing violence, and was grounded in the desire to make this truth more visible.

Bell Bajao's community mobilisation activities also purposely include female drama troupes that further challenge traditional gender norms by performing *Yakshagana*, an art form previously deemed the exclusive domain of men. Women's visibility in these new cultural spaces helps to reinforce Breakthrough's overall message about shifting gender norms and creates a wider context from which to deconstruct hegemonic norms and suggest alternatives. These community-level activities are supported by Breakthrough advocates who travel with a mobile video van from which they screen the PSAs in small towns or semi-rural areas, after performing street plays.

The mobile video van emerged as a very important dissemination strategy for involving local voices in reaching male audiences directly. *Bell Bajao* mobile video

vans travel through small towns and villages with a troupe of 15–20 mixed-gender youth community leaders and street theatre performers. These young people use song and interactive contests to draw crowds, and then perform street theatre on issues of domestic violence and male involvement. The performances are followed by video screenings of the *Bell Bajao* PSAs. The performers then interact with the crowd, often giving advice and providing resources to community members who want to know more about stopping gender violence. Since the video vans are best equipped to draw crowds to public spaces such as markets, town centres or main roads (areas typically frequented by men), video van audiences are often anywhere between 80 and 100 per cent male. The male members of the theatre troupe serve as models for the ways in which men can become advocates for women's rights. They are often approached by other men with questions, concerns or requests for advice. Female troupe members help to break down stereotypes about the role of women and their access to public spaces. Hence, the video vans have, in Breakthrough's assessment, proven to be highly effective venues for engaging directly with male audiences.

Bell Bajao's emphasis on engaging men in the community helped frame this campaign as a community-level intervention, rather than one which is directed at individuals. As Khan (Pers. comm., 13 June 2010) remarks:

> *When we look at* What Kind of Man Are You?, *its approach is very one-to-one. But* Bell Bajao *was more in terms of a community role for men. It brought to light their overarching social responsibility to intervene when others in the community face violence, not just their own responsibility to not perpetrate violence.*

The focus on men's role as community members further communicates their agency as social actors who can promote gender equality, while recognising that change requires community action. EE interventions are often criticised for placing too much emphasis on individual-level changes. Scholars have called for research that not only addresses knowledge, attitude and practice at the individual level, but also encompasses a broader understanding of social and group-level transformations in values and norms (Singhal, Harter & Chitnis et al. 2007; Singhal & Rogers 2002). A number of scholars have begun to explore the process through which social change arises, with collective efficacy emerging as an important element in these social and collective-level effects (Papa et al. 2000; Singhal et al. 2006; Sood 2002; Usdin et al. 2004). Indeed, *Bell Bajao*'s popularity does seem to suggest that such strategies can resonate and have tremendous impact.

Conclusion

Ending violence against women is critical to ensuring human rights for everyone. Addressing violence against women means rigid gender norms that reify women's

subordination need to be challenged – especially hegemonic masculine norms that celebrate potentially harmful idealised traits such as virility, dominance and violence. While the media are often criticised for their role in entrenching gender stereotypes and perpetuating patriarchy, they also provide opportunities for challenging hegemonic forms of manhood and expanding the variety of male role models. EE, with its potential to spark social change through planned media intervention, is an especially promising medium for challenging these gender norms.

The researchers discussed five modes of representing the role of men in Breakthrough's campaigns: 1) invisible men; 2) men as perpetrators; 3) men as allies; 4) men as agents in challenging hegemonic masculinity; and 5) men as agents in redefining manhood. While it is important to continue to use the media to portray women as empowered agents, it is also vital that men form a visible and proactive part of the journey towards gender equality. The present authors therefore argue that EE should increasingly aim to employ the last three modes. Specifically, EE to promote male involvement should ensure that men are visible as agents of change by, first, demonstrating that they can be allies in ending and preventing violence, then by helping to create spaces for audience members to debate accepted norms of gender behaviour (especially hegemonic masculinity) and, finally, by providing the audience with a variety of culturally rooted male role models that exemplify alternative norms of masculinity and behaviours that promote gender equity.

It is not necessary to tackle all of these aims in a single campaign; messages can be sequenced across campaigns. For example, while *What Kind of Man Are You?* challenged assumptions related to masculinity that can lead to violence, *Bell Bajao* focused on proactively modelling a positive role for men in preventing violence. In a sense, then, *What Kind of Man Are You?* posed the question, and *Bell Bajao* offered a possible answer.

Designing EE programmes that communicate these messages effectively to men is a challenge. The current analysis of Breakthrough's efforts has highlighted the following lessons learned, which may be useful to other EE programmers:

Gender portrayals always matter. Examples shared in the beginning of this article demonstrate how stereotypical gendered character portrayals can backfire and undermine long-term goals towards equality. Even if a programme does not have gender-equality goals, but has more immediate short-term public health or social goals, it is important to be cognisant of the potential long-term ramifications of gendered character portrayals;

Use a social-constructionist gender framework to question hegemonic masculinity. This framework allows for a recognition of the ways in which the media help to construct hegemonic masculinity. It can also be of help in developing

strategies to *de*construct it by encouraging audiences to question accepted norms, and by providing them with role models of alternative forms of masculinity;

Provide gender sensitisation for programme and creative staff. All people are raised in gendered environments and have, to some degree or another, internalised dominant gender norms. As Breakthrough's experience with the *What Kind of Man Are You?* creative team demonstrated, if programme designers are unaware of their own biases, these can easily find their way into messaging strategies. This may be especially true when working with commercial ad agencies that rely on gender stereotypes to sell products. It is critical that programme and creative staff receive adequate gender sensitisation, to ensure that campaign messages do not reinforce dominant gender norms;

Craft messages that recognise and model the agency of men as social change actors in the community. It is imperative to move away from messaging strategies that either ignore men or portray them only as perpetrators. Messages that invite men to question the norms of masculinity and redefine these for themselves, offer them greater agency in social change. However, this should not occur at the expense of women's visibility. While not sidelining women's voices, men should increasingly be drawn into the conversation;

Craft messages that are challenging, but not alienating. As Breakthrough's difficult choice regarding the tone of the tagline *What Kind of Man Are You?* demonstrates, striking a balance between a challenging message and an alienating one is as much about creativity and intuition as it is about research. Although Breakthrough's focus group participants expressed some discomfort with the tag line, it provoked introspection and dialogue. Research and pre-testing should be used to refine the tone, but in some cases organisations should also not shy away from a challenging message. Long-term social change goals are not served by avoiding these difficult conversations;

Use research to identify existing gender-equitable role models and behaviours. Just as Breakthrough's *Bell Bajao* formative research helped identify interventionist behaviours existing among the male population, research can be used to identify existing alternative norms of masculinity that can be modelled in ways in which men in a target population are already active in promoting women's rights. Research can also help to identify the most effective channels for reaching the men in a community.

In closing, the potential of EE to catalyse meaningful social change has been demonstrated time and again, and its contribution to promoting the rights of women is unquestioned. But there is a need to more strongly engage men. Through challenging hegemonic masculinity and inviting men to redefine these norms, EE can contribute to long-term and sustained gender justice.

Notes

1 This article is based on a number of data sources, including analysis of the organisation's media content and internal documents, and participant observation of its programme functions. In-depth interviews with the three staff most involved in the media campaigns were conducted between March and September 2010 and informed the analysis. In particular, this article draws most heavily on a series of interviews conducted between March and June 2010 with Sonali Khan, Country Director of Breakthrough's India office, who oversaw the creative production process for many of Breakthrough's media efforts described in this article. Additionally, one of the authors was on the staff of Breakthrough (2002–2004, 2005–2006) and has been associated in other capacities since. However, this article does not draw directly from the author's experience as a staff member of the organisation.

2 Patriarchal norms can similarly limit *men's* ability to exercise their human rights (Connell 2003). Pressure to prove oneself a 'real man', coupled with norms of masculinity that privilege violence and sexual prowess increase the risk of boys and men to contract HIV/AIDS and participate in violent crimes (International HIV/AIDS Alliance 2003), and such beliefs about manhood are the strongest predictors of risk-taking behaviours such as substance abuse and unsafe sexual practices among young men (Courtenay 1998). Further, certain masculine identities enjoy more power and legitimacy than others. Homosexual men, gender-nonconforming men, men from lower economic strata and others who are unwilling or unable to ascribe to dominant norms, for example, often face threats of social discrimination, and physical and emotional violence.

3 In addition to the formative research, unpublished impact data for *What Kind of Man Are You?* are on file with the organisation and were used to inform this discussion of the campaign.

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