

Engendering a Culture of Prevention on Campuses: the Bystander Intervention Model (a summary)

Personnel Involved and Order of Events

Puja Kapai, Director of CCPL and WSRC, conducted an introduction on the situation of sexual violence in Hong Kong first. She presented a general summary of recent survey on sexual violence issues in Hong Kong, and the effort that HKU has made through various campaigns, including effort from HeForShe, the Women's Foundation in Hong Kong, etc. Su-Mei Thompson, CEO of The Women's Foundation, gave a brief speech on the spirits the foundation advocated shortly after. Professor Peter Mathieson, Vice Chancellor of HKU and HeForShe UN Ambassador, produced opening remarks with an introduction for Dr. Jackson Katz. A video excerpt from the Hunting Ground was showed to skim through sexual violence in U.S. campus. Dr. Katz further addressed experiences and examples from the U.S. and introduced the Bystander Model.

Major themes of the Bystander Intervention Model

Stereotypical ideas on gender violence have occupied mainstream cultural and social life all along the history. Typical stereotypes include understanding issues of gender violence as only “women issues”, and conceptual misunderstanding touching the fundamental level of right and wrongs (e.g. the illegality of rape within marriage). The Bystander Model aims to start the change of attitudes and culture from the dominant males and the majority of the society, on the ground that they are the potential groups to initiate an atmosphere in the whole society to take actions against potentially harmful behaviors.

The approach of bystander prevention model tackles sexual violence incidents from altering the central issue of core values and notions underlying those incidents. It is inspired by Boston government's resolution of racial problems through sports culture in 1994. The bystander approach attempts to train athletes, especially football players, at university level to speak up for gender violence issues, as they are one of the representative groups dominated by a male culture neglecting gender violence problems. It thereby goes to the roots of gender violence issues, initiating changes not from the margins but from the center.

Dr. Katz then conducted an interactive workshop with the audience, challenging them

to confront sexist abuse and explore what it would take to become an empowered bystander. Similar experiential programs are the main approaches to promote the Bystander Model in campuses. Specific scenarios are presented to participants to put them into real life scenarios and help them go through the moral thinking.

The Bystander approach and the leadership approach are two sides of a coin. Women leadership is considered beneficial not only to young females but also young males. The problem of the leadership is lack of funding and time due to its lack of priority among all societal problems. On the other hand, the bystander approach has the advantage of engaging people from different backgrounds and from a young age with low costs. It can also make up for the missing part of male leadership on sexual violence issues. A bystander to a leader when he takes action. This approach intends to create a climate of support for victims and among bystanders.