



INAUGURAL ASIA-PACIFIC CONFERENCE ON GENDERED VIOLENCE & VIOLATIONS

MASTER CLASS SUMMARY

Date: 10 February 2015

Session title: *Male Peer Support for Violence against Women: Policy and Practice – where do we go from here?*

Presenter: Walter DeKeseredy, Anna Deane Carlson Endowed Chair of Social Sciences, Director of the Research Centre on Violence, and Professor of Sociology, West Virginia University.

Co-Convenors: Libby Davies, CEO, White Ribbon Australia and Jessica Luter, Senior Executive, Programs, White Ribbon Australia

Sponsor: White Ribbon Australia

Summary:

To advance a better understanding of why men abuse women, and to both prevent and control this problem, more than accurate data are required. We need to explain why men sexually, physically, emotionally, and economically victimize their current and former female partners. Thus, a key objective of Dr. Walter DeKeseredy's master class was to examine one of the key reasons for men's abusive conduct.

Of course, it is impossible to simply pick out one 'reason' and announce that it covers all cases at all times. Indeed, woman abuse is multidimensional in nature: Women in a broad variety of situations are harmed in a broad variety of ways by a broad variety of men. Still, over 25 years of international research reveals that male peer support is one of the most powerful determinants of multiple types of violence against women. Originally developed by Dr. DeKeseredy in 1988, this concept is defined as the attachments to male peers and the resources these men provide that encourage and legitimate woman abuse. Dr. DeKeseredy's interactive master class examined theoretical, empirical, and policy work on male peer support.

The class began with Dr. DeKeseredy providing a short history of male peer support theory and then focused on what the quantitative and qualitative data have to say about the relationship between male peer associations and woman abuse. Much of the material he presented is available in his 2013 co-authored book (with Dr. Martin Schwartz) *Male Peer Support & Violence Against Women: The History & Verification of a Theory*. The global research Dr. DeKeseredy shared with attendees confirm what Lee Bower (author of the 1983 book *Beating Wife-Beating*) said 30 years ago:

This is not a subculture that is confined to a single class, religion, occupational grouping, or race. It is spread throughout all parts of society. Men are socialized by other subculture members to accept common definitions of the situation, norms, values, and beliefs about male dominance and the necessity of keeping their wives in line. These violence-supporting social relations may occur at any time and in any place.

What is to be done about male peer support for violence against women? Progressive answers to this question have been repeatedly provided since Dr. DeKeseredy first started work in this area in the late 1980s. However, the main goal of the second section of his master class was to suggest a contemporary, up-to-date, multipronged way of dealing with the interrelationship between broader social forces (e.g., patriarchy), male peer support, and woman abuse in its many shapes and forms. More specifically, Dr. DeKeseredy proposed:

- Using new technologies such as Facebook and Twitter to raise awareness and to increase membership in the international social movement to end violence against women.
- Public protests.
- Boycotting companies, stores, products, and services that contribute to sexism and woman abuse.
- Transforming "well-meaning men" into responders.
- Feminist parenting at home and progressive school-based prevention and education programs.

Recommended resources:

- A Call to Men <http://www.acalltomen.org/>
- Men Stopping Violence <http://www.menstoppingviolence.org/>
- Research Center on Violence at West Virginia University <http://violenceresearch.wvu.edu/>