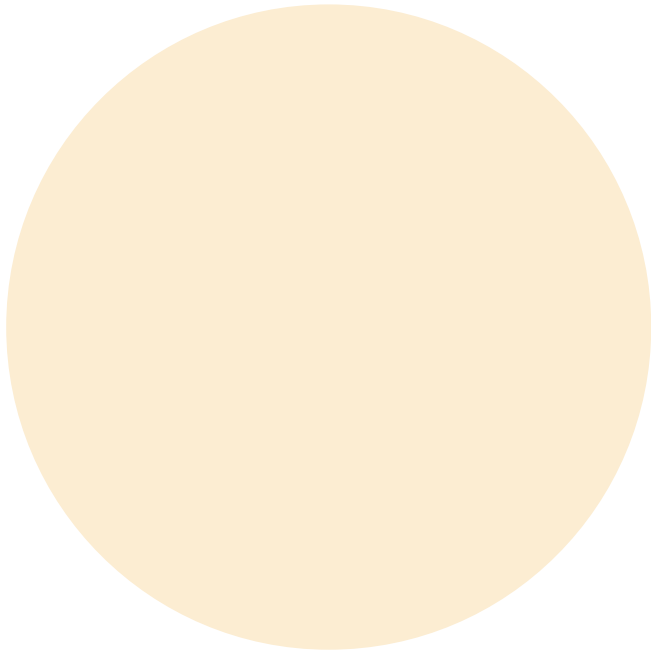
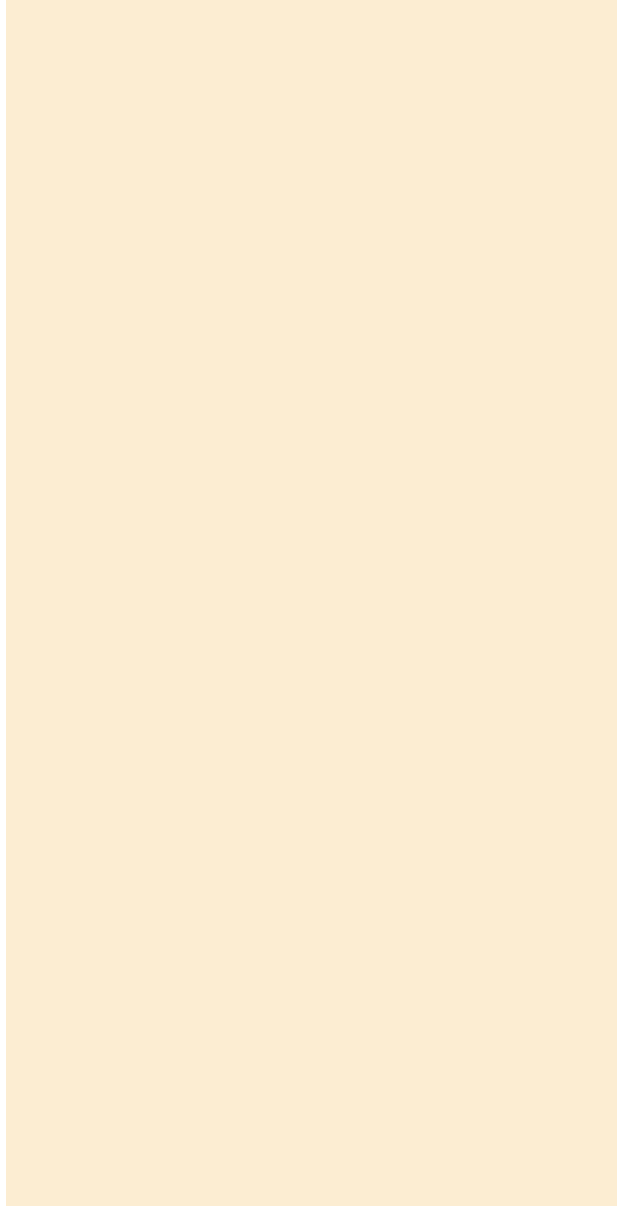




THE PROJECT TO END
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



**High-Level Summary of
Nine Rapid Evidence
Reviews: Innovative
Approaches to Mobilize
More Men to Prevent
Violence and Advance
Equity**

2022



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1.0 Project Overview

Calling In Men: Mobilizing More Men for Violence Prevention and Gender Equality in Canada is a knowledge synthesis research project led by Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence, a primary research hub with the goal to stop violence before it starts and advance gender equality. Shift is based out of the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary (Shift/UCalgary). As part of the *Calling In Men* project, nine rapid evidence reviewsⁱ were conductedⁱⁱ on evidence-informed *primary prevention* approachesⁱⁱⁱ to engage and mobilize men to prevent and disrupt violence and inequalities, with the goal to share these findings with those funding and working with men and male-identified people to prevent violence and advance equity. This is the project to support and advance work to engage and mobilize men, both well-known and emergent approaches that show promise in engaging and mobilizing men were identified for review. This report is a summary of the findings from all nine rapid evidence reviews.

1.1 Rapid evidence reviews: Selection and methodology

The overarching goals of the nine reviews include:

- Synthesize available evidence to better understand what we know and where the gaps are around what is working to engage and mobilize men for violence prevention and gender equality, diversity, justice, and inclusion;
- Contribute to the development of an evidence-informed “behaviour change toolbox” that consolidates concrete examples of existing and emerging approaches that show evidence and promise in mobilizing more men for violence prevention and the advancement of gender equality, diversity, justice, and inclusion.

There were several approaches that were identified through our research and meetings with subject matter experts that showed evidence and promise for engaging and mobilizing men; due to time and budget constraints, a total of nine approaches were selected to conduct in-depth research on.

Rapid evidence reviews were conducted on:

1. Bystander approach

ⁱ A rapid evidence reviews is a process that synthesizes knowledge through the steps of a systematic review, but components of the process are simplified or excluded in order to shorten the length of time required to complete the review. The process includes identifying specific research questions, searching for, accessing the most applicable and relevant sources of evidence, and synthesizing the evidence.

ⁱⁱ Rapid evidence reviews were conducted on: bystander approach, social norms approach, nudge approach, virtual reality, gamification, data science, fatherhood, calling in, and community justice.

ⁱⁱⁱ Primary Prevention approaches means focusing on preventing initial perpetration and victimization of domestic, family, and sexual violence by scaling up interventions that target the structural and cultural conditions that produce and reinforce discrimination, inequities, and violence. For this report, primary prevention is defined as strategies that address root causes driving violence, discrimination, and gender inequality (Lee, L., Wells, L., & Ghidei, W. (2021). *Discussion paper to support the design of Alberta’s primary prevention framework to prevent family and sexual violence*. [Submitted to Government of Alberta]. Calgary, AB. The University of Calgary, Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence)

2. Social norms approach
3. Nudge approach
4. Virtual reality
5. Gamification
6. Data science
7. Community justice
8. Fatherhood
9. Calling in

The two lead authors, in consultation with seven pro-feminist male-identified practitioners working with men in Canada to prevent violence and advance equity, chose these approaches because we wanted a combination of:

- Popular, well-researched approaches already being used in the field of engaging and mobilizing men (e.g., bystander, social norms approach, fatherhood policies and programs), and
- Approaches with an emergent area of evidence that suggests promise in achieving prosocial behaviours and/or norms change (e.g., nudge approach, gamification, virtual reality, community justice, calling in techniques), but are currently uncommon in the Canadian feminist field of engaging and mobilizing men in gender equality or violence prevention.

Given the dearth of research on how to achieve concrete and transformative social and cultural norm change, we chose to focus on approaches that show promise in positively influencing social norms and culture in the sociocultural environments in which men live, work, play, socialize, and worship. In addition, we wanted to better understand how an intersectional approach was being utilized so we could identify how efforts to address racism could be integrated with violence and gender inequality approaches. Thus, we incorporated a focus on equity, diversity, justice, and inclusion into our search criteria and analysis of approaches.

Nine rapid evidence reviews of the academic and grey literature were conducted between April - December 2021. Rapid evidence reviews are “a form of knowledge synthesis that follows the systematic review process, but components of the process are simplified or omitted to produce information in a timely manner.”¹ The process includes identifying specific research questions, searching for, and accessing most applicable and relevant sources of evidence, and synthesizing the evidence.

1.2 Limitations

While the research conducted offers many valuable findings, it also has limitations. Rapid evidence reviews do not provide systematic assessment of the strength of evidence in each publication. As such, while publications were carefully reviewed against the inclusion criteria for each review and discussions of the limitations and gaps of many of the publications are included throughout the reviews, an overall assessment of the strength of the evidence reviewed was not completed. Additionally, for each review, keywords were carefully selected and reviewed by experts where possible; however relevant keywords for each of the approaches may have been missed, resulting in

the omission of potentially applicable literature.

Furthermore, these reviews helped to surface some of the problematic fragmentation in the sector, including that violence prevention and gender equality work are often siloed, but also that there is very little work directly engaging men around issues of racism and the promotion of diversity, justice, and inclusion. The methods and analysis for all of the reviews took an intersectional approach, however the analysis of how to engage and mobilize men for equity, diversity, justice, and inclusion may have shortcomings as the authors continue the process of learning and unlearning in relation to their own positionality and context in this work. Moreover, the relevance of many of these approaches is context and community-specific. Approaches such as gamification and virtual reality, for example, require substantial upfront cost which may not be available in low-resource settings or where funding is limited, and also because of their cost may not resonate with those in these settings where daily challenges such as poverty and insecure housing strongly feature. Community justice and calling in approaches hold impressive transformative potential, but they tend to be time consuming and can be incredibly challenging for those who have histories of trauma and abuse.

A comprehensive analysis of all tensions around each of these approaches was also not feasible, given time and budget constraints. For example, although the use of virtual reality to immerse users in perspective-taking can have positive impacts on attitudes and behaviours, perspective-taking may also create an overly confident sense of “knowing what it’s like” that can perpetuate problematic behaviour, and there are ethical questions for both virtual reality and gamification around what stories are used and how they are shared.

2.0 Key findings from each rapid review

This section provides a summary of evidence and findings for each rapid review. See the table below for an overall summary of the approaches, with specific attention paid to what focus areas are covered and whether any studies took place in Canada.

| Approach | # of studies/ interventions | 1 or more (1+) study explicitly engaged men | 1+ studies focused on gender equality | 1+ studies focused on violence prevention | 1+ studies focused on JEDI | Other focus areas | 1+ studies took place in Canada |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|--|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Bystander | 30 interventions (10 literature reviews) | √ | X | √ | X | X | X |
| 2. Social norms | 6 interventions (3 literature reviews) | √ | X | √ | X | X | X |
| 3. Nudge | 5 studies | X | √ | X | √ | Academic performance | √ |
| 4. Virtual reality | 8 studies | √ | √ | √ | √ | Empathy & prosocial behaviour | X |
| 5. Gamification | 17 interventions | X | X | √ | √ | Substance use, HIV prevention and management | √ |
| 6. Data science | 5 studies | X | √ | √ | √ | X | √ |
| 7. Calling in | Voices of eight Black and Brown social change activists/writers | X | √ | √ | √ | X | √ |
| 8. Community justice | 4 interventions | X | √ | √ | √ | X | X |
| 9. Fatherhood | 15 (documents) | √ | √ | √ | √ | X | √ |

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In summary: Nine approaches to engage men

2.1 Approach #1: Bystander approach

Definition of the bystander approach: Bystander intervention occurs when a person observes a potentially harmful situation or interaction and takes action to mitigate or prevent someone else’s language and/or behaviour that is inappropriate, hurtful, abusive, or dangerous. Bystander-based initiatives are usually based on building bystander self-efficacy to take bystander action, based on situational model of bystander behaviour.

2.1.1 What does the evidence say?

The bystander approach is an evidence-based approach that can have positive impacts on attitudes, intentions, and behaviours. However, while it can be effective at increasing bystander action, *the bystander approach has not been found to be effective at preventing sexual assault or violence and on its own is not an effective primary prevention approach.*

Ten literature reviews, ranging from systematic reviews to a “state of the science” research brief, were included in the final assessment. Across all of the literature reviews, approximately 30 bystander intervention programs that included men in their target population were reviewed. The bystander approach is the most frequently used and researched of the approaches we reviewed. However, evidence on bystander interventions is limited primarily to violence prevention, particularly in post-secondary environments in the U.S. No literature reviews were found on the use of the bystander approach to advance gender equality, diversity, justice, or inclusion.

Bystander interventions must build individual skills to:

1. Notice the event
2. Recognize the given issue (e.g., sexism, as a problem)
3. Acknowledge and understand personal responsibility to assist
4. Know what to do to disrupt or stop the violence
5. Take action²

To do this, evidence suggests the following is required:

- Prosocial changes to:
 - Attitudes and beliefs.
 - Social norms (both perceived and actual).
 - Perception of individual’s capacity to act as a bystander (e.g., to prevent violence and/or support gender equality, diversity, inclusion, and/or justice).
 - Intent to act as a bystander, including in response to others' expressions of violence-supportive, or gender inequitable attitudes and behaviours.
 - Actual behaviour, recognizing that there is a weak relationship between intention to act and actual behaviour change (and thus it is insufficient to only increase intentions to act).

- It is imperative to couple bystander action with addressing systems change to support bystander action, such as through organizational policies as well as culture and social norms change.

The most evidence-based and well-researched bystander programs are:

Positive impacts on attitudes, intentions, and behaviours:

- *Bringing in the Bystander*^{3 4 5 6 7 8}
- *TakeCARE*^{9 10 11 12 13 14}
- *RealConsent*^{15 16 17 18 19}

Positive impacts on attitudes and intentions:

- *The Men's Program*^{20 21 22 23 24 25}
- *Green Dot*^{26 27 28}
- *Mentors in Violence Prevention*^{29 30 31 32 33}

2.1.2 Insights from research on bystander interventions

Research shows that although the bystander approach has some positive impacts, it is ineffective as primary prevention. As such, bystander interventions should always be implemented within a comprehensive multi-level strategy. For example:

- In violence prevention efforts, research supports combining bystander interventions with social norms-focused approaches, as well as empowerment-based rape resistance education programs for women.
- Nudges could be integrated into a bystander intervention, and both virtual reality and gamification show promise as mechanisms to create effective bystander programs.
- Individual bystander action needs to be supported at the institutional/cultural level, such as:
 - Mandate bystander trainings. Like adopting something similar to the U.S. Sexual Assault Violence Elimination Act in Canada.
 - Embed support at organizational and institutional levels. Includes developing and implementing multiple processes for bystanders and survivors to report and investigate and respond to complaints in a timely way.

Cautions and considerations in taking a bystander approach

- More research is needed on how to take a trauma-informed approach within bystander interventions. For example, evidence shows that people's past experiences influence how they respond to a bystander intervention, particularly for those who have already experienced or perpetrated violence. Given that so many will unfortunately experience or witness some form of violence before the age of 18, it is imperative to develop bystander interventions that explicitly address and respond to people's past experiences of violence and trauma.
- Evidence shows that the link between changing perception/intentions and actual behaviour change remains weak, and more work is needed to understand the implications of this in bystander research. It may be prudent to test bystander approaches that prioritize behaviour change over first changing attitudes and intentions, such as through nudge

approaches. It is also imperative that bystander interventions include longer post-intervention follow up to measure longer-term behaviour change.

- Teaching people to *take* bystander action is also about *how to take such action* in a way that maximizes a positive transformative opportunity for all parties and minimizes defensiveness and/or retaliation. More is needed to understand where and how calling *in*—as opposed to calling out—could positively contribute to bystander interventions.

2.1.3 Bystander example: Bringing in the Bystander & Know Your Power

Bringing in the Bystander is one of the most well-evidenced violence prevention bystander programs.^{34 35 36 37 38 39} *Bringing in the Bystander (BITB)* is a workshop-based intervention designed for university students and has been implemented on college and university campuses across the U.S., U.K., Canada, Sweden, Australia, and New Zealand. BITB views everyone as a potential player in ending violence, harassment, and discrimination, and focuses on increasing participant knowledge and skills related to bystander action so that everyone has the capacity and motivation to safely intervene before, during, and after witnessing risky behaviours. BITB employs a combination of discussion, lecture, interactive exercises, small group work, opportunities to practice skills, and role play scenarios to achieve the program’s learning goals. Studies assessing *Bringing in the Bystander* found improvements in bystander behavior, attitudes, efficacy, intent, willingness to help, rape myth acceptance, engagement in sexually coercive behaviors, and egalitarian attitudes,⁴⁰ and both in-person and modified versions of *Bringing in the Bystander* program showed significant findings.⁴¹ *Bringing in the Bystander* is owned by the University of New Hampshire and distributed by Soteria Solutions.⁴²

Know Your Power, which was designed to be used in conjunction with *Bringing in the Bystander*, is a well-evidence social marketing bystander campaign focused on violence prevention.^{43 44 45} Studies have found that *Know Your Power* increases bystander awareness, willingness to be involved, and actual involvement of both men and women as prosocial bystanders. Together, these interventions address both individual attitudes and behaviours as well as the norms that so heavily influence them.

2.1.4 Example of integrating gamification into bystander interventions: *Mindflock & Ship Happens*

Two video games, *Mindflock* and *Ship Happens*, were designed and piloted in collaboration with students at a U.S. university⁴⁶ and identified through Shift’s gamification rapid evidence review.⁴⁷ Both video games taught bystander skills in situations of sexual and relationship violence and stalking. *Mindflock* was a multi-user trivia-based game which also encouraged collaboration through assisting one another in trivia questions. Questions were designed to “set positive norms for bystander intervention by teaching methods of intervention and portraying antirape culture models in gameplay.”⁴⁸

Ship Happens was a more interactive game, presented as a comic book style narrative game in which players followed a college-aged male named Zyke and his alien companion named Balthazar

in outer space. The player had to achieve certain game objectives (challenges) and were presented with bystander situations (mini games) where the player had the opportunity to directly intervene, thereby practicing bystander behaviours and changing the outcomes of the narrative. Both games showed significant impact on participant bystander efficacy and attitude scores. *Ship Happens* was particularly effective in improving male attitudes towards bystander intervention.

2.2 Approach #2: Social norms approaches

Definition of social norms approaches: Social norms are the implicit and explicit “rules or expectations for how to behave that are shared by a particular group of people and are maintained by social pressure (i.e., social punishment or rewards).”⁴⁹ A social norms approach recognizes that social norms are a powerful driver in people’s behaviour, that people often misperceive norms, and works to adapt norms in order to bring about positive change in the community or group.

This is done in two ways. The most common of social norms approaches corrects misperceptions about norms by making them visible and making clear the value in the actual healthier norm. The second approach works with key influencers to disrupt harmful norms and promote more adaptive ones.⁵⁰ Both types of social norms approaches can be present within a single intervention.

There are two key types of social norms targeted: descriptive (what you think others do), and injunctive (what you think others approve/disapprove of). For example:

- *“Men shake hands instead of hugging, so I also expect a handshake when I meet another man.” (descriptive norm)*
- *“People will think I’m gay if I hug another man, so I offer my hand to other men when I meet them.” (injunctive norm)*

2.2.1 What does the evidence say?

There is strong evidence to support a social norms approach for violence prevention. Specifically, social norms-focused interventions have been shown to:

- Decrease negative gender inequitable attitudes.
- Improve men’s perceptions of their peers’ attitudes and beliefs.
- Increase prosocial intervening behaviors and, in some cases, actually reduce and prevent violence.

Research also shows that a social norms approach for violence prevention can be gender transformative even when not explicitly situated within a gender transformative approach, as they “give men permission to act differently by revealing the true, healthy norms of their male peers, which in turn can transform men’s attitudes and behaviors about masculinity, sexism, and men’s violence.”⁵¹

Six social norm interventions were included in this review, gathered primarily from three literature reviews that documented social norms-focused violence prevention interventions. There was no available evidence on using a social norms approach for gender equality, diversity, justice, or inclusion, and no research took place in Canada (all studies took place in U.S.).

2.2.2 Insights from research on social norms-focused interventions

1. The length of the intervention matters: Interventions that are a minimum of three years are most promising for lasting impact.

2. Expect non-linear change. For example, the studies found there was change, then backlash, then change again.
3. Make new/ revised norms sufficiently believable, relatable, and relevant so that shifting to this new norm feels reasonable to one's target audience.
4. Target both types of norms within the intervention: Social norms change is most likely to occur when both *descriptive* (perception of what people actually *do*) and *injunctive* (perception of what people think, i.e., what people approve/disapprove of) norms are targeted.
5. The most successful norms interventions integrate different approaches from a variety of disciplines to reinforce desired change. For example,
 - Combine social marketing and peer to peer engagement and/or skills-building to reinforce the new/desired norm.
 - Integrate social norms, bystander, and risk reduction approaches as this combination shows promise for violence prevention.
 - Integrate other evidence-based approaches, such as a nudge approach, to undermine the biases and undesirable social norms in ways that make it easier for individuals to adopt the desired social norm (i.e., make the new/ revised norm the preferred mental shortcut). For example, in an effort to increase equity and diversity in workplace opportunities, coach managers and directors to reverse the typical process for assigning opportunities (i.e., where we make a mental list of who would be qualified). Instead, create a list of *all* subordinates and then eliminate based on who is not qualified).⁵²

2.2.3 Social norms example: 5-year social norms sexual violence prevention marketing campaign

A 5-year social norms sexual violence prevention marketing campaign at a U.S. university sought to positively change attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of men related to sexual violence. They focused on four overarching themes, and messages around each theme reinforced the desired norms from the other themes. For example:

- Consent-related message: "Most men understand the importance of getting consent before sexual intimacy."
- Bystander message: "Most men would intervene to prevent sexual harassment or sexual assault."
- Rape myths message: "Most men agree that blaming sexual assault victims is wrong."
- Sexual activity message: "Most men are not as sexually active as you might think."⁵³

The intervention successfully:

1. Improved the actual norms to be less sexually aggressive and more positive and prosocial.
2. Changed the perception of norms related to sexual violence (with men on campus) to be closer to the actual norm.

2.3 Approach #3: Nudge approach

Definition of a nudge approach: Nudge theory starts from the recognition that no design is “neutral” in the contexts in which people work, live, play, and socialize, and that small and seemingly unimportant details within our environment can heavily influence human behaviour. A nudge can be defined as a means of encouraging or guiding behaviour in a predictable way without mandating or forbidding any options—for example, putting fruit at eye level in the grocery store would be considered a nudge, while banning junk food would not.⁵⁴ This is also called “choice architecture.”

Equity and inclusive nudges seek to provide positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions which stop the less-than-helpful (or downright harmful) biases present in our minds from driving our behaviour and help us develop more inclusive mental shortcuts to rely on.

There are four main types of nudges:

1. Physical environment nudges: Nudges that change design features in a physical environment.
 - a. Example: Lighting at bus stops to deter violence.
2. Organizational environment nudges: Nudges that target organizational processes, structures, policies, procedures, and guidelines.
 - a. Example: Blinding recruitment procedures so that an individual’s race, gender, or other attributes do not trigger unconscious bias in the hiring process.
3. Symbolic environment nudges: Nudges that focus on any visual or audio marker that is associated with something else (an abstract idea, a process, an object, etc.), such as uniforms, graphics, logos, or a fire alarm. Text and language are also symbolic, and so framing nudges are included in this category, with the focus on changing the words used and the way communication is framed.
 - a. Example: Assess the framing, language, and images on a police service recruiting website from an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens for gender-coded language (<http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/>), hypermasculine images and text, and diversity.⁵⁵
4. Sociocultural environment nudges, or social nudges: Focus on targeting and influencing social norms and group dynamics and subtle cues that come from the way people interact and behave. Social norms (including bias) are often the core target of nudge interventions.
 - a. Example: Like a social norms approach, obtaining real data from men in a particular community/social network about their attitudes about violence against women (e.g., most do not condone violence against women), and then sharing these actual attitudes in a public way (marketing campaign) in order to nudge men to shift towards a more non-violent, gender equitable norm. In cases where people’s beliefs and the social norms *are* aligned, a social norms approach would focus on disrupting harmful norms and leveraging key influencers to promote adoption of more prosocial norms.

2.3.1 What does the evidence say?

Nudge interventions show promise for positively changing beliefs, behaviours, and shows potential for positively changing systems and social norms. Our review found evidence to support the testing of nudge interventions to advance gender equality, diversity, justice, and inclusion among populations that include men, and specifically as a way to engage and mobilize men.

Five studies were included in this review, with two of those studies taking place in Canada^{56 57} (both at University of Toronto, focused on student retention and success). There was *no evidence available* on the impact of nudge interventions on violence prevention, or on the impact of implementing a nudge intervention specifically to engage and mobilize men for violence prevention and/or advancing gender equality, justice, diversity, and/or inclusion. Overall, nudges are a low-cost, often “low hanging fruit” option that lead to positive and substantive changes in beliefs and behaviours, and show potential for changing social and cultural norms.

2.3.2 Insights from research on nudges

The nudge approach minimizes defensiveness by working in a subtle way to shift beliefs and behaviours versus head-on awareness- or education-focused interventions that often create a boomerang effect. Examples of promising nudges include:

1. Organizational environmental nudges:
 - Information-sharing policy nudges—e.g., publish percentage of women in leadership positions in organization, or parental leave policies can inform consumers and prompt individuals and organizations to take action.
 - Process nudges—e.g., pre-commitment strategies that encourage people to commit in advance rather than focus on naming and shaming after the fact.
2. Symbolic and sociocultural nudges:
 - Framing nudges—changing/simplifying wording can significantly impact behaviour.
 - Nudges that target social norms—changing norms is central to VP/GE/JEDI efforts.
 - *Feel the need*/motivational nudges—helps people “*see and feel* the need for change (in the unconscious mind) and not when we rationally understand the need for change.”⁵⁸ Storytelling is a powerful example.
 - Nudges via peer networks—we are heavily influenced by *who* communicates information.

2.3.3 Nudge example: Increasing diversity in a U.K. police force

Study overview:

This promising nudge intervention with a U.K. police force sought to increase diversity, namely by increasing the number of minority applicants who passed a test (the Situational Judgement Test, or SJT) in the recruitment process that historically led to a disproportionate drop in minority applicants.⁵⁹ The SJT is a scenario-based assessment test taken online that is meant to “capture how potential recruits would react to different realistic situations in which they may find themselves as a police officer.”⁶⁰ The nudge intervention, which was a randomized controlled trial (RCT) specifically

sought to improve performance among minority groups on the SJT by reducing anxiety.

Methods:

Half of the applicants included in this study got an email that was structured to reduce anxiety, framed positively with the aim to prime success, and had a question to make participants think about their presence/belonging in the police force. The other half of participants received emails that had more unnecessary words and phrases that could increase anxiety. Examples of changes in the intervention email: "Please note there is no appeals process for this stage" was removed to limit stress; "Congratulations!" and "Good luck" were added to make the email more positive; and, to get participants to think of their presence in the police force, they added, "Before you start the test, I'd like you to take some time to think about why you want to be a police constable."

Results:

The U.K. police force study⁶¹ found that nudging applicants through a positively-framed and supportive email prior to the SJT had a positive and significant effect on minority applicants, with non-white applicants gaining 12 percentage points in their percentile ranking, and white applicants a two percentage point increase. As noted by the authors, "This simple intervention, imposing neither selection risks nor significant costs, managed to increase the probability that a non-white applicant passed the SJT by 50 per cent, closing the gap in pass rates between non-white and white applicants who reached this stage in the process. The results suggest that reduced anxiety and feeling more comfortable with one's role in the community may be driving the results."⁶²

2.4 Approach #4: Virtual reality

Definition of virtual reality: Immersive, virtual, and simulated environments that provide sensory information for users to see, hear, and feel as if they are in a physical world, thus creating a sense of “being there” in the virtual environment. Immersive storytelling uses cutting edge technologies to “create a compelling sense of presence”⁶³ in order to impact behaviour.

Other related terms: virtual reality perspective taking, 360-degree videos, immersive storytelling, cinematic virtual reality.

2.4.1 What does the evidence say?

Virtual reality (VR) interventions show promise as a tool to engage and mobilize men for violence prevention, gender equality, and/or diversity, justice, and inclusion. However, this research is still in its infancy and there is still much to learn about this approach, particularly as it relates to engaging and mobilizing men. None of the studies reviewed measured for or were able to provide evidence of impact on VR interventions on social norms and/or culture and/or systems change.

Findings suggested that virtual reality was able to:

- Increase empathy (e.g., towards racial minorities, victims of sexual harassment).
- Decrease violent attitudes.
- Positively influence beliefs.
- Raise awareness (e.g., about gender inequality).
- Behaviour changes:
 - Improve communication.
 - Prevent male-identified anti-social behaviours that occur due to group pressure.
 - Increased likelihood of showing support for social change initiatives (e.g., signing a petition to support housing initiatives for those living unhoused).

However, some studies did not find that VR significantly increased empathy and changed attitudes, and one study found that the increase in empathy from the intervention did not result in increased prosocial behaviour.

2.4.2 Why is virtual reality effective?

VR can be considered a priming strategy, which is a form of nudging, as it can direct people’s behaviour to certain sights, words, or sensations that can alter their subsequent behaviour. For example, research demonstrates that when VR shows people future negative consequences of their present behaviour, it can lead people instead to choose more desired behaviours.

VR, particularly immersive and perspective-taking VR, also offers an opportunity for people to practice prosocial behaviour in a safe environment so that they are better prepared to do so when situations arise in daily life.

VR can also prime people by helping them become more attuned to another’s experience. Research shows, for example, that EVR (immersive embodied virtual reality, or the experience of embodying another individual in an immersive VR experience) has resulted in a decrease of implicit bias, significant plasticity of empathic abilities, increase in altruistic intentions, and shows promise in building skills of empathy among participants.

2.4.3 Insights from research on virtual reality

1. The positive impact of VR could be maximized by integrating VR into broader violence prevention or equality interventions as way to build skills and reinforce desired behaviour and/or social norms.
2. VR interventions can be brief, but still result in substantial impact.
3. This approach shows promise in being replicable and translatable to addressing a variety of prejudices, biases, and discrimination, including homophobia, transphobia, and ableism.

Examples of promising ways to use virtual reality to engage and mobilize men:

- Perspective-taking, including embodied victim perspective-taking.
- Practicing prosocial behaviours.
- For topics/issues that often ignite tension and defensiveness.
- Building empathy.
- Cultivating and strengthening desired social norms.
- To augment other interventions to engage and mobilize men.

2.4.4 Virtual reality example: Men in embodied perspective-taking

Study overview:

A study in Spain used VR to examine in-group solidarity among men in order to understand possible ways to disrupt the perpetuation of immoral behaviours that occur in group scenarios.⁶⁴ The study used VR to test whether an embodied victim perspective—male participants experiencing sexual harassment from the perspective of a woman being harassed—would break the in-group solidarity with the virtual males.

Methods:

The study used an adaptation of the Milgram’s obedience scenario as an objective measure of behaviour change, which is a famous study in social psychology on group pressure and conformity in which participants were put in the position of “teacher” and pressured to administer electric shocks to a “student” for incorrect answers given. In the Milgram scenario, the “students” were actors who only pretended to receive the shock (unbeknownst to the participant “teacher”) and the study found disturbingly high levels of willingness on the part of the participants to continue to deliver electric shocks as a result of social influence, despite pleas from the “student” to stop doing so.

In the VR study, the sample involved 60 male university students. Participants were placed in an immersive VR experience in one of three conditions:

1. The participant is among a group of males at a bar where a male is sexually harassing a female in a bar; the participant is then embodied as the female victim who got sexually harassed in the bar scenario;
2. The same initial scenario, but the participant is embodied as one of the men who witnessed the female being harassed; or
3. The participant just experiences an empty bar, with no sexual harassment condition.

One week later, participants were placed in another immersive VR experience, this time in a replication of Milgram's obedience scenario. Here, participants were the teacher and were encouraged to give shocks to a female student by a group of three virtual males, the same men as the ones in the bar scene from part one.

Results:

The study found that participants (all of whom were men) who were in the female embodiment condition were more likely to stop administering shocks in the Milgram scenario than those in the male embodiment condition, administering half the number of shocks as those in the male embodiment condition. This suggests that VR may be a mechanism through which to prevent immoral or illegitimate behaviours, including sexual harassment, that occur in group scenarios.

Why? The researchers attributed this effect to the participants identifying with the female learner as a result of embodying a female a week earlier. However, the researchers also note that the perceived plausibility of the shock scenario also impacted participants' decisions, stating that "irrespective of the experimental conditions, there were two classes of people, those who tended to stop giving shocks at the first signs of objections from the virtual woman [student], and those who tended to continue until the end."⁶⁵

2.5 Approach #5: Gamification

Definition of gamification: The application of game design methodologies and techniques into non-game environments (processes, services) in order to engage and motivate towards a specific outcome (knowledge, behaviour, attitude).

Gamification is most effective when it is a “combination of game design, game dynamics, behavioral economics, motivational psychology, UX/UI (user experience and user interface), neurobiology” as well as technology platforms⁶⁶ in order to “create sustained engagement, consider the unique needs of the learners and do more than just use points and levels to motivate players”⁶⁷—for example through using narrative and connection with fellow players.

Key game elements include:

- Story/narrative.
- Immediate feedback.
- Fun.
- “Scaffolded learning” with challenges that increase.
- Mastery/levels (for example, in the form of levelling up).
- Rewards and progress indicators (for example, through points/badges/leaderboards, also called PBLs).
- Social connection.
- Player control.⁶⁸

Other related terms used: serious games, game-based learning, social impact games, and prosocial video games.

2.5.1 What does the evidence say?

Gamification interventions are extremely promising, with all interventions showing positive outcomes in terms of increased knowledge, and/or positive change in attitude and/or in behaviour.

2.5.2 Why is gamification effective?

Key to gamification is to achieve the goal of making learning, reflecting, and changing attitudes and behaviours less threatening and more fun and enjoyable such that players’ intrinsic motivation is cultivated through the right balance of extrinsic and intrinsic motivational appeal.

For example, prosocial video games can influence three types of interrelated internal states—cognition, affect, and arousal—resulting in learning specific behaviours.

- Short term: Puts people in a specific mood.
- Cognitive changes: Activates prosocial scripts stored in memory.
- Long term: Repeated practice can translate these effects into long-term effects, such as new perceptual and decision schemata, as well as changes in beliefs, attitudes, emotional responses, empathy, and personality structures.⁶⁹

2.5.3 Insights from gamification research

Gamification shows great promise in creating engaging and motivating environments that foster learning and positively change attitudes and behaviours and would be particularly strong if integrated into a broader violence prevention or equality intervention alongside other approaches, such as nudges, social norms approach, and bystander approach. The research also tells us:

1. Gamification can be a useful tool to track and evaluate what engages and mobilizes users as well as changes in attitudes and behaviours—this is a super helpful asset that should be leveraged to inform both gamification and non-gamification interventions that seek to change behaviours and norms related to preventing violence and advancing equality, justice, diversity, and inclusion.
2. Gamification is a promising and well-received mechanism to build social connection, and players are motivated by this component of smart games. This is particularly promising for engaging and mobilizing men—e.g., using gamification in peer groups to build male connection around prosocial attitudes and behaviours.
3. Field is still in early stages but has a huge amount of untapped potential, including targeting adults (much of the research is with youth).

2.5.4 Gamification example: *Campus Craft*

Campus Craft was a digital game designed and piloted among university students at a U.S. university.⁷⁰ It was a simulation video game that sought to prevent sexual assault by engaging players in prevention education relating to sexual and reproductive health, consent negotiation, binge drinking, and stress management. Based on a branching narrative, players were tasked to solve a mystery, and in the process “listen to and participate in health-related conversations (e.g., discussions about consensual sex, impact of drinking on sexual behavior), which in turn affect the ensuing scenario development.”⁷¹

In this intervention, players use a customizable avatar to interact with other students on their campus. They had to complete mini-games and, “in the course of the trying to solve the mystery, the player will be confronted with situations in which he or she will decide how best to act in response to examples of rape culture.” The authors specified that “the majority of the rules are decision rules that lead to different outcomes, depending on the choices that the player makes in any given situation.”⁷² *Campus Craft* was found to be feasible and acceptable for the target audience, and results showed a decrease in rape-supportive attitudes including decreased likelihood of endorsing token resistance (i.e., the belief that women do not mean no when they refuse sex) and increased knowledge related to sexual assault prevention.

2.6 Approach #6: Data science

Our definition of data science: Data science is a multidisciplinary field of study that focuses on creating, collecting, handling, and analysing data in order to extract actionable insights from the large and ever-increasing volumes of data that are available across a wide range of platforms and sources. Data scientists use scientific methods, processes, algorithms, and systems to identify patterns and trends in data in order to identify issues, predict future events, reduce risk, and improve programming and outcomes.^v

2.6.1 How are data science methods being used to promote social change?

Five studies were included in this review, with one study taking place in Canada. Studies focused on gender bias in the media, inequities in education, inequities in rental housing decisions, the public's perception of sexual sports violence, and physical intimate partner violence during pregnancy and the postpartum period. However, none of the studies explicitly engaged men in relation to these issues. Two of the studies utilized data science methods for the purpose of portraying what was happening in society, while the remaining three utilized data science methods for the purpose of identifying inequities and/or promoting social justice.

The studies reviewed utilized different methods in data science. These were categorized as data science methods that a) collect and analyze text-based data from publicly available online sources to extract meaning, and b) use predictive modeling to predict risk and/or behaviour. It is important to note that a plethora of other data science methods exist, and the studies reviewed represent only a very small sampling of the methods available.

2.6.2 Insights from data science research

Data science holds incredible potential to identify patterns and trends in Big Data that can help inform which populations of men to target and how to engage and mobilize them most effectively. Two key ways to use data science in the field of engaging men are to:

1. Increase and improve data collection specific to the agenda of engaging and mobilizing men. In order to use data science methods, we need access to large data sets that are also of high quality. One way to do this is to create and teach a consistent methodology for data collection that is done at scale.
2. Partner with those who already have in-depth knowledge and experience in using data science methods, and work to build capacity in the field of engaging men.

Cautions and considerations in using data science

- Without understanding the limitations of the data sets and/or the analyses, data science may be used incorrectly, perpetuate biases, present false information, and cause irreversible

^v We purposefully created a broad definition to be inclusive of literature, given the relatively nascent state of this research, especially as it applies to promoting social change.

harm. For example, with machine learning, we do something called "training" which means we are teaching the computer to develop a certain model that can be used for prediction. To train, we have to utilize existing data. Unfortunately, the software/analyses/algorithms that are used to analyze the data will be biased if the systems and data (software/analyses/algorithms) they are trained on is biased (i.e., if a data set contains much more data from male participants as compared to female participants). Thus, we need to create data sets that are free from bias (i.e., no differences in representation between males and females) and train the software/analyses/algorithms on the unbiased data.

- The Data Equity Framework created by We All Count⁷³ is a useful tool to help people understand how each and every decision that is made with data (from developing the research question and sampling to analyzing and interpreting) is influenced by people's biases, and can therefore bias results.

2.6.3 Data science example: A prediction model for IPV during pregnancy and postpartum

Study overview:

This study sought to identify the risk of mothers experiencing physical intimate partner violence during pregnancy and/or the postpartum period, with the long term goal of helping to ensure resources are directed to mothers who are most-at-risk of violence.

Methods:

1. Mothers with children under five months were interviewed to collect information on their pregnancy, postpartum period, children, partners, demographics, socio-economic status, lifestyle, and experience of physical intimate partner violence.
2. Authors categorized physical intimate partner violence (PIPV) as follows: no PIPV, PIPV during pregnancy OR postpartum period, PIPV during pregnancy AND postpartum period.
3. Authors examined which factors were significantly associated with PIPV ($p < .05$).
4. Significant factors were included in a multinomial logit model.

Results:

Seven factors significantly predicted PIPV: perception of the child's health, maternal age, maternal schooling, number of offspring under 5 years old, mother's tobacco use, and alcohol misuse of the mother or the partner.

These seven factors could be used to determine a spectrum of risk of experiencing PIPV during pregnancy and/or the postpartum period.

Cautions in interpretations of data and analyses:

Authors were not able to include all relevant factors into the model; for example, there was no information collected on gestational age at the beginning of prenatal care.

The decision of which factors to be included in the final model was driven by significance levels, and not a-priori hypotheses grounded in theory; this practice can lead to both type I and type II errors.

2.7 Approach #7: Community justice

Definition: Community justice is an umbrella term that embraces a number of “crime prevention and justice activities that explicitly include the community in their processes”⁷⁴ and seek to foster community quality of life as a goal. Community justice approaches focus on community-level outcomes through immediate and long-term problem-solving, supporting victims and communities, strengthening prosocial community norms, and reconciling offenders.⁷⁵ Community justice includes alternative justice approaches as well as conflict resolution but focuses on these forms of justice at the community—not individual—level. These practices have long and experienced histories in Indigenous and other Black and Brown communities.

It is important to note that a clear definition for community justice, particularly as it relates to primary prevention, remains somewhat elusive, including a well-defined scope of the types of activities and practices that should be considered prevention-focused community justice approaches. Furthermore, these approaches are emergent or nonexistent within available literature sources such as academic databases; hence, future literature reviews into community justice should focus more primarily on grey literature and include additional search terms relating to community accountability, community reparative boards, and circle processes. This would help to locate more initiatives occurring in the Global North, including Canada, some of which were missed in the literature search for this review.

Other related terms used: alternative justice, transformative justice, innovative justice, reparative justice, restorative justice, conflict resolution, mediation.

2.7.1 What does the evidence say?

The literature identified comprised of:

1. A reconciliation media intervention in Burundi that sought to promote active bystandership and educate the community about the evolution of violence.
2. Community-led land and property rights model in Kenya that sought to reduce women’s risk of HIV by protecting and enhancing women’s access to and ownership of land.
3. Restorative justice via reconciliation in Uganda that used local council courts as opposed to formal courts in cases of domestic violence.
4. The Creative Interventions project in the U.S., a community-based intervention to violence that sought to legitimize community accountability practices as well as build community capacity to intervene in instances of interpersonal violence.
5. An article presenting an evidence-based argument for restorative justice in higher education judicial practices in U.S. postsecondary environments.

Despite all of these interventions working to address male-perpetuated forms of violence, none of them explicitly noted the importance of engaging men or holding men accountable for the purposes of violence prevention, gender equity and justice at the community level.

Of this literature, the following common practices were identified:

- Public education for building community-level capacity to prevent violence and advance equality. In particular, compelling educational methods were noted, such as storytelling via edutainment including radio dramas to raise awareness about root causes of violence, or visual arts and short films to share community accountability stories to help legitimize and normalize these approaches. Educational resources on ways to prevent and respond to violence for the community were also noted.
- Building consensus through an ongoing process. As opposed to the individualized, conventional models in which the ultimate goal is already set by the criminal justice system, community-based interventions promote consensus building between the victim and offender as part of a broader strategy of building community resilience. This is not about a one-off judgement or punishment for offender, but about an ongoing conversation between relevant parties.
- Centering care and dignity in accountability practices. Community justice takes a *calling in approach*, meaning that in addition to inviting people into a conversation (rather than a fight), it utilizes an approach of caring, respect, and restoring dignity that recognizes that harm caused by an individual has a ripple effect in the social networks of these individuals. It is also about finding and restoring the humanity of everyone involved as a part of a longer term goal of creating a just world, rather than plucking off and discarding individuals.
- Valuing diverse and cross-sectoral collaboration. Core to community justice approaches is valuing the multiplicity of perspectives through working in collaboration with diverse individuals and groups. For example, the Creative Interventions (CI) project collaborated with four other immigrant-based domestic violence and sexual assault programs, included both survivors and individuals who have done harm themselves.

2.7.2 Key insights from community justice research

Community justice approaches are largely positively received by the communities in which they are implemented, and many show promise in combining justice with long-term healing and behaviour change. The research also tells us:

1. Given the immense damage that often results in criminal justice system-style punishment, particularly in communities of colour where men are at high risk of being incarcerated, community justice approaches provide a valuable alternative that focuses on individual and community-level healing and prevention.
2. Community justice approaches provide a pathway for community members to regain ownership of their own community, which is particularly important in marginalized communities, including Indigenous communities, where “outside” law enforcement has fomented distrust and fear.
3. More research is needed on evaluation of community justice approaches, including clear definition and scope of terms used.
4. Research and investment are urgently needed on community justice interventions that specifically seek to engage men, in order to prevent both male-to-male and gender-based violence.

2.7.3 Community justice example: GROOTS-Kenya’s Community Land and Property Watch Dog Model

Study overview:

The *Community Land and Property Watch Dog Model* was a community-led land and property rights program implemented across in Kenya, which was examined in this study to understand how it could be implemented as a structural-level HIV prevention program—that is, by resolving property rights violations, it could help reduce women’s HIV risk. The intervention was developed by GROOTS-Kenya, a network of community-based organizations and led by local volunteer women and men, including community health workers, traditional leaders, trained paralegals, and government stakeholders.

Methods:

Qualitative research was conducted in partnership with GROOTS-Kenya to understand key strategies used in Watch Dog Groups to secure women’s land ownership. Data comes from a sample of 50 individuals who were interviewed, including “all of the leaders ($N = 20$) involved in the development and implementation of this program and 30 women and men who mediated property rights disputes (randomly selected from an inclusive list).”⁷⁶

Findings:

Analysis of the data revealed four key strategies that were applied for securing women’s land ownership.

1. The intervention aimed to educate community members about women’s land rights because the participants suggested that many members of their communities did not have adequate knowledge about this topic. The education process included raising awareness about the documents needed for securing land ownership such as children’s birth certificates, national identity cards, title deeds, husband’s death certificate, or a written will.
2. Funeral committees were formed to make sure that women were provided with the husband’s burial permit and death certificate. The funeral committees also facilitated any issues related to property grabbing and disinheritance in the absence of these documents.
3. Members of the intervention as well as traditional leaders received paralegal training on how to mediate land disputes.
4. Unresolved cases were referred to the formal legal system when the parties could not come to an agreement. The participants explained that about half of the cases were successfully resolved at the community level, meaning that women returned to their homes and had more secure land ownership.

2.8 Approach #8: Fatherhood as a key entry point for engaging men

Definitions:

Entry point: Shift defines entry points in relation to engaging men as areas of opportunity or engagement where men and boys can become involved in learning, reflection, and action that will increase their potential to be involved in healthy, gender-equitable relationships, and decrease the likelihood that they will be abusive. Fatherhood is one of the top and most influential entry points for engaging and transforming men.

Father/dad: Includes all males in caregiving roles—biological and adoptive parents, stepparents, transgender fathers, father figures, and any other males serving a parenting function.⁷⁷

Positive father involvement: Fatherhood as a key entry point encompasses all programs and initiatives that seek to increase positive father involvement, defined as promoting their child’s well-being and security by taking an active role in caring for their child’s social, emotional, cognitive, and physical health, and by having a respectful, equitable relationship with the child’s mother or co-parent.⁷⁸

2.8.1 What does the evidence say?

The evidence is overwhelmingly clear that promoting positive fatherhood is a key primary prevention strategy, including preventing child maltreatment and domestic violence and advancing gender equality. Engaging men through fatherhood has distinct positive impacts that ripple across the social ecology, including:

- Children with engaged fathers have higher emotional, cognitive, and social well-being, as well as reduced behavioural problems, such as:
 - More resilience; better problem-solving and adaptive skills; greater emotional regulation and social competence; and lower levels of anxiety and depression.
 - Better educational outcomes.
 - Boys are more likely to exhibit nurturing, gender-equitable behaviours if/when they themselves become fathers and are also less likely to use violence against female partners in adulthood; girls have more flexible perspectives of gender and equal relationships.
- Father’s contributions to parenting, and home and family maintenance also fosters greater maternal satisfaction.
- Societies where men carry a more equal portion of unpaid care work have less violence, improvements in mental health and well-being, and women’s greater economic equality through increased labour force participation and occupation of leadership roles.

This review was primarily based on research and advocacy Shift undertook on fatherhood up until 2016 and was then complemented by four academic studies published since 2016, as well as Promundo’s 2021 “State of the World’s Fathers” report.⁷⁹

2.8.2 Best practices for fatherhood programming

- Father-focused programming. Programs that tailor their content to be more individualized and contextually relevant for fathers demonstrate better outcomes.⁸⁰
- Engage fathers early. Fatherhood involvement that starts earlier in a child’s life is more likely to be sustained.⁸¹
- Develop a compelling “why” story. Fathers are more likely to engage in programs and services if they understand the importance and impact of their participation, particularly as it relates to positively benefiting their children, independently of mothers.⁸²
- Meet men where they are at. Take advantage of where men naturally congregate (e.g., work, gym, children’s sporting events), which provides opportunities to engage men and leverage existing social networks of men.^{83 84}
- Build trust and relationships. Programs for fathers are more successful when they make fathers feel safe and establish trust between the program providers and participants.^{85 86}
- Ensure programs are geographically, physically, and psychologically accessible to fathers. This means that the venue location is accessible, schedule is convenient, the building accommodating of different physical abilities, and the service delivery environment is welcoming, creating social and cultural perceptions of accessibility.⁸⁷
- Encourage mothers to support fathers in their participation. Studies show that mothers can be a barrier to father involvement by gatekeeping how fathers engage in their children’s lives.⁸⁸ Leveraging the influence of mothers can help encourage fathers to participate in programs.⁸⁹

2.8.3 Insights from research on fatherhood

Despite a wealth of research highlighting the wide ranging positive impacts of engaging men through fatherhood, resistance to this approach and limited government buy-in remains. There is urgent need to reorient gender norms so that our conceptions of healthy masculinity specifically include an acceptance of care work. We must shift the default around fatherhood from opt-out to opt-in, which requires creating more pathways for fathers to positively contribute to—and role model—care work and to feel a sense of ownership over their role as fathers that goes beyond economic contributions. Here are seven steps to do this:

1. Collect gender-disaggregated data on unpaid care work to monitor progress.
2. Expand evidence-based father-focused and father-inclusive programs at the community level. This includes facilitating and fostering informal support networks for fathers.
3. Engage fathers through the public health system during pregnancy and continue to leverage places where fathers naturally congregate/have potential to be involved—children’s school and sporting clubs and events, as well as where men work, play, worship, and socialize.
4. For service providers of child and family services, conduct father-friendly organizational assessments of organizations’ readiness to provide services to fathers and father figures.
5. Identify and facilitate pathways for men to train and work in paid care work such as early childhood education as part of efforts of normalizing men in care roles.

6. Legislate fully paid, non-transferable paternity leave. There is still a stigma in men prioritizing their family over work, and this is a moment when taking the choice out helps to ensure the path to engaged fatherhood is more equitably open and available to all fathers. Ideally at least some of the paternity leave is also mandated to further encourage men to take it.
7. Reexamine investment in parenting programs: Notice any patterns in proportion of funding that goes to programs that are father-inclusive (as opposed to mother-focused), and also how much goes to secondary prevention (e.g., fathers who have already perpetrated domestic violence) as opposed to primary prevention (engaging non-violent men in fatherhood). Funding for promoting positive fatherhood among non-violent men should be expanded as a key primary prevention strategy.

2.8.4 Fatherhood example: Catholic Family Service works towards becoming father-friendly

Catholic Family Service (CFS) of Calgary, Alberta, Canada launched the Fathers Moving Forward (FMF) program in September 2015. FMF targets biological fathers-to-be between the ages of 16-26 years of infants born to teenagers participating in existing programming offered by CFS. The FMF program utilizes a group format that sees participants complete 12 sessions, with topics that include: support skills (2 sessions), stress management and reduction (2 sessions), de-escalating conflict (2 sessions), problem solving (1 session), acceptance skills (2 sessions), and family planning (1 session). Sessions use a combination of individual tailoring and group psychoeducation, coupled with experiential learning and skill building. Through the program, CFS aims to help improve young fathers' emotional and physical well-being, involvement with their infants, individual parenting skills, ability to co-parent, father-mother relationships, and economic self-sufficiency.

Importantly, FMF is a part of a larger organizational shift at CFS, which recognized that action was required to become a more “father friendly” organization to better serve men and, in turn, better support their clients who are women. In addition to developing and piloting new innovative programming, CFS also identified and addressed organizational structural and cultural contributing factors to limited father engagement across the organization. This included enhancing the physical environment at their organization by making fathers more apparent in the imagery, décor, and language used at the organization. Communications were reviewed to ensure that advertising and other materials specifically names “dads” and not just “parents” and work was done with staff to reflect on potential biases towards mothers, and how those biases show up within an organizational context. Evaluation strategies were revised to develop outcomes and indicators specific to fathers, allowing subgroup analysis to see how these changes are affecting dads. In addition, CFS undertook a policy review to ensure that they themselves were supporting fathers and deployed an organizational readiness assessment that resulted in additional education for staff and board members about the importance of highlighting and serving fathers. One critical outcome, the first male staff member was hired.

The case of CFS and the FMF program demonstrates how engaging fathers to become more involved can have positive benefits, but that it often may require more than programming alone—it requires a broader shift towards more gender equal, supportive facilitators and environments.

2.9 Approach #9: Calling in

“I have a vision of movement as sanctuary. Not a tiny perfectionist utopia behind miles of barbed wire and walls and fences and tests and judgements and righteousness, but a vast sanctuary where our experiences, as humans who have experienced and caused harm, are met with centered, grounded invitations to grow.” — adrienne maree brown⁹⁰

Definition: Calling in, a term credited to Ngọc Loan Trần, a Việt/mixed-race disabled queer writer and educator based in the U.S. South⁹¹ as a practice of inviting people/organizations who are causing/have caused harm into a conversation in which learning and growth is the goal, fosters an environment in which people are more likely to become receptive and have an opportunity to grow, provides clear and appropriate feedback in the form of a two-way conversation, and starts from a place of hope that change is possible.

Calling in is considered on the other end of the spectrum to “calling out,” which tends to be a one-way declaration focused on punitive efforts that push people out/away, or “cancel” them, usually through shaming and blaming, and often publicly.

Other related terms used: compassionate accountability

2.9.1 What does the evidence say?

Six key reasons were identified in the literature for why calling in is an essential tool to utilize in social change movements. They are:

1. Current calling out practices perpetuate cycles of harm. By focusing on punitive efforts, the humanity of all involved is compromised, and the root causes of cycles of harm are obscured.
2. People are not disposable. Attempting to remove harm by dismissing or throwing away individuals not only blinds us to systemic patterns of harm, but it raises questions about the harm that gets replicated in doing so as well as the effectiveness of such an approach (it is not very effective, and sometimes even counter-productive).
3. Using shame or creating a culture of fear are ineffective approaches that cause damage. Shame is a dangerous and ineffective tool of oppression, and shame perpetuates cycles of hurt and humiliation rather than achieving justice. Black and Brown activists also argue that these cycles of harm and aggression also contribute to a culture of fear *within* movements, which limits solidarity building and fosters cultures of silence—part of what call out culture historically attempted to change in the first place.
4. Choosing love over hate. Adrienne maree brown often describes this as a choice between destruction and “life-affirming principles and practices”⁹² and activists emphasize the generative possibilities of calling in, and the necessity of healing for all. Calling in advocates also speak to the need to develop and focus on strategies to meet one’s *end* goal (e.g., ending violence against women; creating a loving, just, kind, equitable world) rather than getting bogged down in the short-term goals of punishment and shame. Importantly, calling in proponents also make clear that they are not disavowing justifiable anger, or the potent

possibilities of productive anger and rage, but rather noting the destructive capacity of *only* making space for anger.

5. Meeting people where they are versus where we want them to be. Where one *wants* people to be may differ from where people *actually are*, and in that recognition is the choice to double down on exclusion and shaming or, as a calling in practice would encourage, to identify strategic ways to meet people where they are so that they can hear and become motivated by one's message.
6. In reviewing evidence on the impairments associated with the human threat response, the power of cultivating a sense of belonging, and what we know about how to actually achieve behavioural change, calling in practices are much more adept at navigating people's threat response than calling out, and much more likely to result in sustained prosocial behaviour change. Calling in practices also require the person doing the calling in to be able to regulate one's emotions and other responses to perceived threat.

The review on calling in took a less traditional form than other rapid reviews, and is based primarily on the knowledge and lived experiences of eight voices from equity-seeking populations, and in particular Black, Brown, Indigenous, and LGBTQ+ social justice activists including adrienne maree brown, Loretta Ross, Maisha Johnson, and B.K. Chan.

In conducting this review, our aim was *not* to make excuses for men, or to diminish the necessity of holding men accountable. Rather, we sought to better understand ways to hold men accountable effectively and sustainably for the harm they cause, in ways that engage and mobilize men for the long term so that the harm is prevented in the first place, and men are key allies and welcomed advocates in gender and social justice movements.

2.9.2 Insights from calling in research for engaging men

"It's a tall order, but I refuse to give up on half the population. Women are not going to be able to take down the patriarchy without men backing us. And they need to be clear that they're doing it to reclaim their own humanity, not as a favor to us."—Aya de Leon⁹³

Emergent evidence supports the adoption of calling in practices, and they show strong potential for engaging and holding men accountable. Calling in is a concrete strategy that helps to shift the conversation from men as an inevitable part of the problem, to an essential component of the solution. The research also tells us:

1. It is time to think radically and creatively about how to meet men where they are, rather than doubling down on the exasperation and rage of where many are, even as these reactions are understandable.
2. There is urgent need to take more seriously not only the need to understand where men are, in their various settings, but also to scale up efforts to apply innovative approaches, such as using nudges and gamification and other creative means in order to reach men where they are at, for it is the only place from which they can move forward.

2.9.3 Calling in example: B.K. Chan

Canadian emotional literacy and sex educator Karen B.K. Chan notes that part of the power she has experienced in taking a calling in approach is that it allows her to leave conversations feeling true to herself, and that it means that she doesn't let the situation take the "softness and kindness" away from her.⁹⁴ Chan provides examples of her own experiences calling out and calling in to illustrate this point.

Calling out: Chan describes being at the beach with a group of friends, most of whom were Asian (like Chan), when a white tourist approached them to take a photo of his group but began by asking "Do you speak English?" Chan recounts the rage she felt at perceiving this white tourist to have a stronger sense of belonging in Canada than Chan and her friends and expressed this by an extended episode of shouting a stream of expletives at the tourist. In explaining this experience of calling out, Chan notes that the rage and anger which fueled her knee-jerk response to this tourist were grounded in her cumulative experiences of situations like this one, but that the pain built up from these experiences did not feel healed by responding from this place of rage and hurt.

Calling in: Chan then describes a situation that is rather common for her, in which older white men approach her and mistakenly believe her to be Japanese and embark on a conversation based on this assumption. She notes, "this happened so many times in my life that there were so many opportunities to try out different answers, different ways of engaging, or disengaging."⁹⁵ She explains that she now applies a calling in approach, which she describes in this way: she pauses the conversation and asks the man to recall how this conversation began. Often having a different recollection of how the conversation started (e.g., believing that she responded and that she is Japanese), she will calmly remind them how the conversation actually began, and then she asks them to listen to her experience, explaining the feeling of invisibility when someone comes up and makes assumptions without listening to her at all. When they try to explain themselves (which they usually do, she explains) she pauses them again and tells them, "I just need to know one thing: does it matter to you how I feel? Because so far in our conversation, it has felt like it does not matter."⁹⁶ If they clarify that they do feel she matters, she offers them suggestions of how they can behave so that "their words and their actions match."⁹⁷ She acknowledges that this approach can take longer than immediately shutting the other person down, but that this process allows her to have a better opportunity to walk away with "some trust, and hope in humanity. And I'm asking directly for it," which helps her feel more in control of the interaction⁹⁸

3.0 Conclusion

The findings from these nine rapid evidence reviews, help to advance the state of knowledge in the field of engaging and mobilizing men in Canada by increasing understanding of what works and what shows promise in engaging and mobilizing men not only for violence prevention and gender equality, but also for the advancement of diversity, justice, and inclusion. Each of the nine rapid evidence reviews—on the bystander approach, social norms approach, nudges, virtual reality, gamification, data science, community justice, fatherhood, and calling in - provides an overview of the evidence available, concrete examples of interventions using each approach as well as key strengths, gaps, and approach-specific evidence-based recommendations. Canada has a lot of catching up to do in this field, as less than 10% of studies across all nine approaches take place in Canada.

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