

# **FEMALE AND RELATIONSHIP DEVALUATION AMONG AFRICAN- AND LATINO-AMERICAN YOUTH: FINDING OUT WHAT TO TARGET IN TEENAGE MALE ABSTINENCE EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS**

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## **Introduction and description of the program**

Fifth Ward Enrichment Program, Inc., (FWEP) is a male-youth empowerment and leadership development program targeting Latino- and African-American adolescent boys, ages 12 to 19 years, in the Fifth Ward community of Houston, Texas, to support norms against engagement in premarital sexual activity. To develop an intervention against such norms, a series of focus groups have been convened. A recurring theme which emerged during the course of the initial focus groups was acceptance of the sexual devaluation of females. With the intention of intervention generation, additional focus groups were held to further explore this theme and the beliefs and perceived social norms regarding this issue and its relationship to sexual abstinence.

## **Methods**

Focus group methodology suggested by Krueger was used. All of the interviews were audio tape-recorded. A male researcher with over fifteen years experience in conducting qualitative research conducted all of the focus groups which were all subsequently transcribed verbatim, coded and subsequently abstracted to identify themes related to beliefs and perceived norms concerning female and relationship devaluation.

Questions asked were: (1) Do your friends feel it is cool to be called a pimp? Why? (2) Do you believe that women are devalued or treated badly by men in relationships? Why? (3) Do you have important male role models who have devalued or treated women badly in relationships? How? (4) Do you have important female role models who have devalued or treated men badly in relationships? How? (5) Do you think that your important role models have affected the manner in which you look at intimate relationships?

## **Results**

In the present study, 57 Latino and African-American males from FWEP consented to participate. Of that number, 30 young men were Latino American (all of Mexican descent) and 27 were African American. Participants' ages varied from 15 to 17 years old: 15 (n=10); 16 (n=17); and 17 (n=30).

Regarding the social approval of being called a pimp, all participants considered the term favorable and viewed it as complimentary. All participants who reported exposure to female devaluation stated that their fathers or step-fathers physically abused their mothers. Most Latino males felt that women are devalued in relationships because they like to be physically or verbally abused. In addition, many participants felt that their temperament in relationships is influenced by their fathers' behaviors. Among African-American male participants, many felt that women are devalued because they are not trustworthy. Among those who were exposed to male role models who devalued

women, most felt their male models were also untrustworthy, involved in cheating and multiple relationships. Most African-American male participants felt that their important female role models devalued men in relationships through verbal abuse.

## **Discussion**

These results will be used to enhance the present interventions used in the FWEP Adolescent Family Life project. Culturally and linguistically appropriate abstinence education and female valuation campaigns and interventions for Latino- and African-American adolescents will be developed.