Religious Leaders Can Motivate Men To Cede Power And Reduce Violence

Christopher Boyer[1], Jackline Namubiru[2], Tvisha Nevatia, Betsy Levy Paluck, Jeannie Annan, Jasper Cooper, Lori Heise, and Rachel Lehrer

[1] Department of Epidemiology. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
[2] Innovations for Poverty Action

Background

- Violence against women persists, in part, due to strong social norms

- Perceptions of norms around gender roles are strongly influenced by religious doctrine and the church, who have moral authority

- If the church were to shift messaging, behavior may change

- Individual religious leaders can and have historically acted as "norm entrepreneurs"

- Couples counseling or pre-marital courses may be an entry point

Becoming One (B1)

A 12 session counseling program designed to bring couples closer and prevent intimate partner violence against women. The program is delivered by faith leaders, who learn through videos and guide couples through engaging illustrated workbooks that teach communication skills, emotional regulation, shared control over finances and, sexual consent and pleasure.

Communication

Finances

Sex

Our Focus

Consistent engagement of men

Aspirational relationships and immediately rewarding behaviors

Easy to adopt by the church

Why will men cede power?

Becoming One couples reported higher levels of trust, openness and appreciation for their partner and significantly lower levels of depression. We think that the by **increasing the value that couples derive from their relationship,** men were motivated to cede power without backlash.

Relationship Improvements

Increased trust

Increased enjoyment of each other's company

Less frequent arguments

Healthier methods for dealing with arguments

Lower levels of depression

More frequent quality time together

Motivate Men to Shift Power
Men were willing to cede control over finances and sex

Context

- Districts:
  - Kamwenge (pop = 414,454)
  - Kagadi (pop = 430,200)
  - Kakumiro (pop = 473,400)

- 51% reported any violence in last 12 months

- 80% attend religious services on a weekly basis

- 86% rate religion as being "very important" to them

- Many couples attend pre-marital counseling courses

Design

- Pair-matched, randomized trial of 1,680 heterosexual couples

Steps:

- 140 faith leaders recruited 8-14 couples each

- Within recruitment groups, couples were formed into pairs with similar baseline violence levels

- Within each pair, 1 couple was randomly assigned to begin B1 immediately and the other was wait-listed for 1 year

Faith Leader

Cohort 1
(Treat)

Cohort 2
(Buffer)

Cohort 3
(Waitlist Comparison)
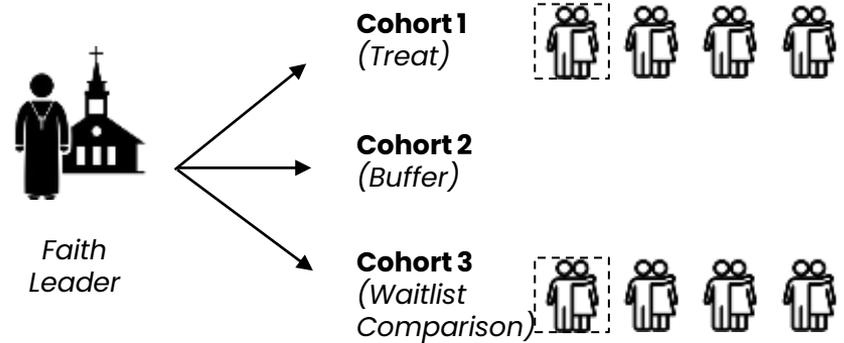
Attrition & Attendance

Attrition

- Response rate during 6 month and 12 month follow ups was 97.8%

- No evidence treatment affected response rate (P = 0.621); or that non-respondents were different than respondents (P = 0.345).
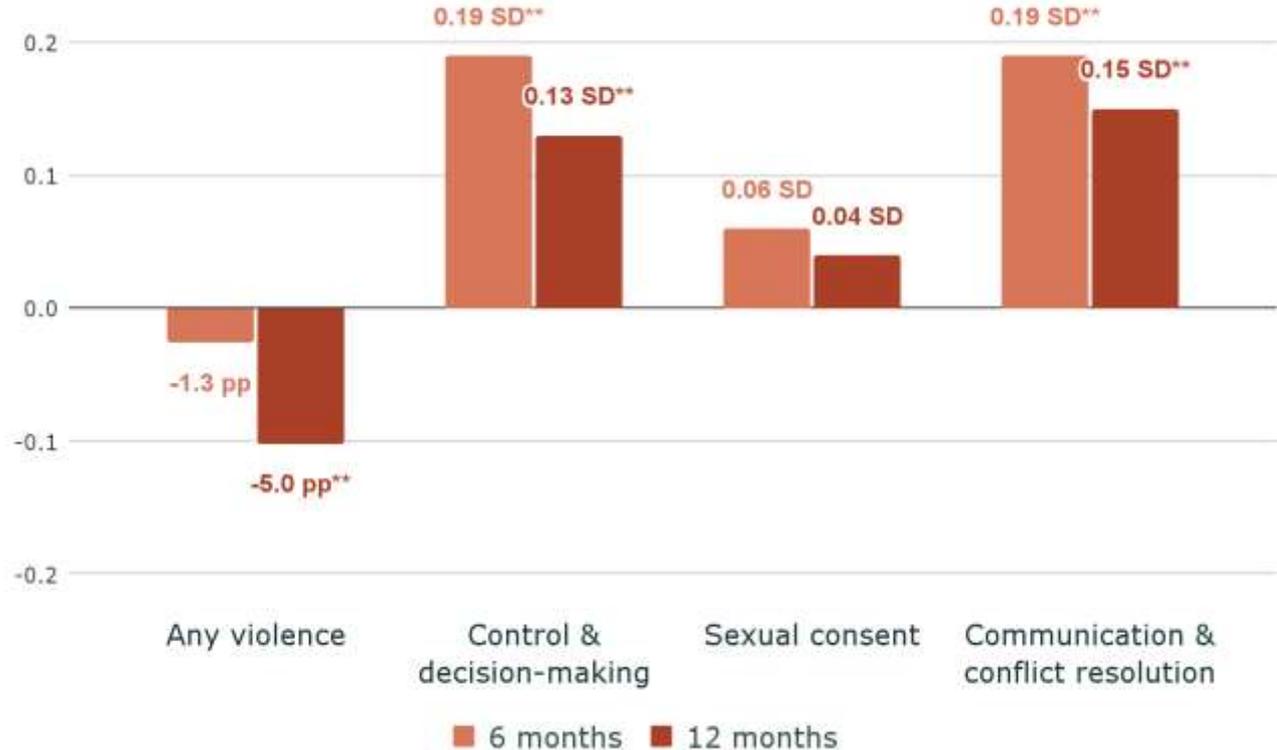
Attendance

- "Adherence" definitions (pre-specified).

  - <u>Treatment group:</u> 83% attended **at least 50% of sessions**.

  - <u>Control group:</u> 99% attended **no sessions in 2018-2019**.

- Women's attendance (78%) was slightly higher than men's (75%)

Primary Findings - ITT

Four pre-specified outcomes:

↓ Violence reduced*

↑ Increased control & decision-making*

✖ No *significant* change in consent

↑ Improved communication & conflict resolution*

* Robust to multiple comparisons correction

0.19 SD**
0.13 SD**
0.06 SD
0.04 SD
0.19 SD**
0.15 SD**
-1.3 pp
-5.0 pp**

Any violence | Control & decision-making | Sexual consent | Communication & conflict resolution

■ 6 months ■ 12 months

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Relationships Improved

Becoming One couples reported higher levels of trust, openness and appreciation for their partner and significantly lower levels of depression. We think that the by **increasing the value that couples derive from their relationship,** men were motivated to cede power without backlash.

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Motivate Men to Shift Power
Men were willing to cede control over finances and sex

Power shifted from men to women

- Index of women's control and decision-making improved by ~0.2 SDs (24 items)

  - Driven by increased involvement of women in decision-making around *men's finances*

- Shifts in power were *zero-sum*: men experienced a *loss* while women experienced a *gain*.

- Reductions in income hiding (both), more joint financial planning.
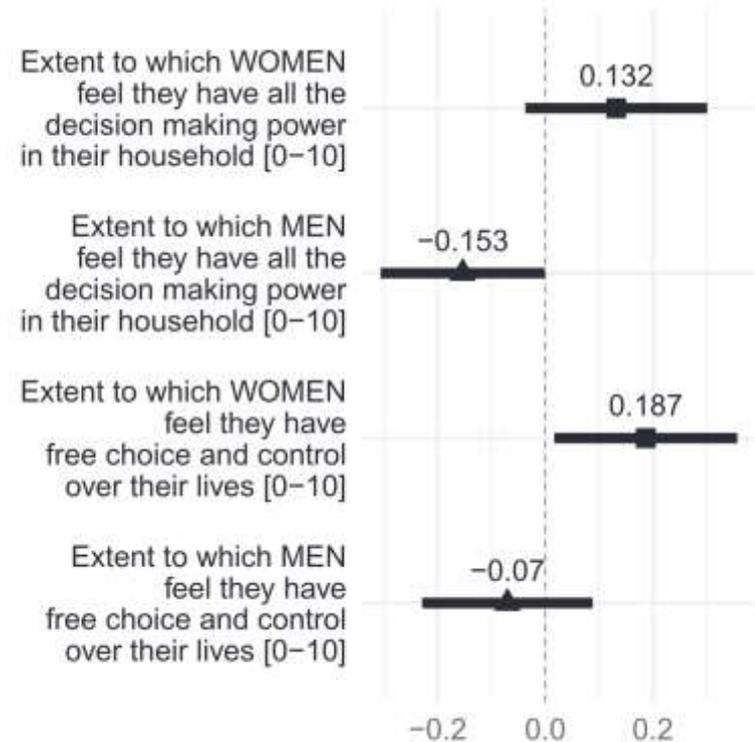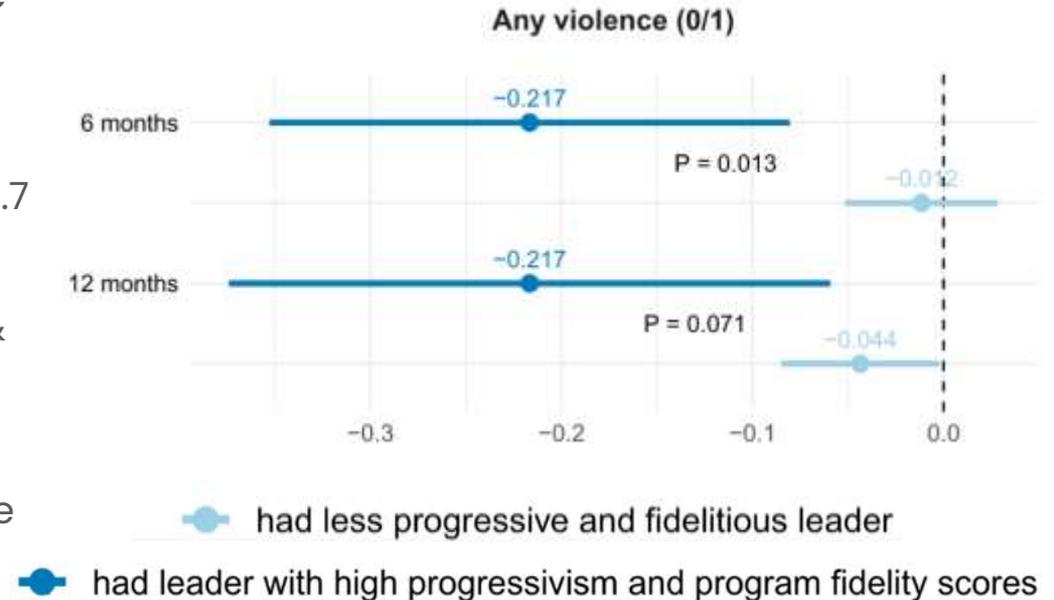
Violence reduced

- Prevalence of violence reduced by 5 percentage points (12%) at 12 mo

  - Driven by reductions in sexual violence (-4 pp), most prevalent form at baseline

- In addition, frequency, severity and breadth of acts all reduced

- Evidence for cessation of sexual violence as well as prevention of new cases of physical violence

- Spillover effects - reduced disciplinary violence against children
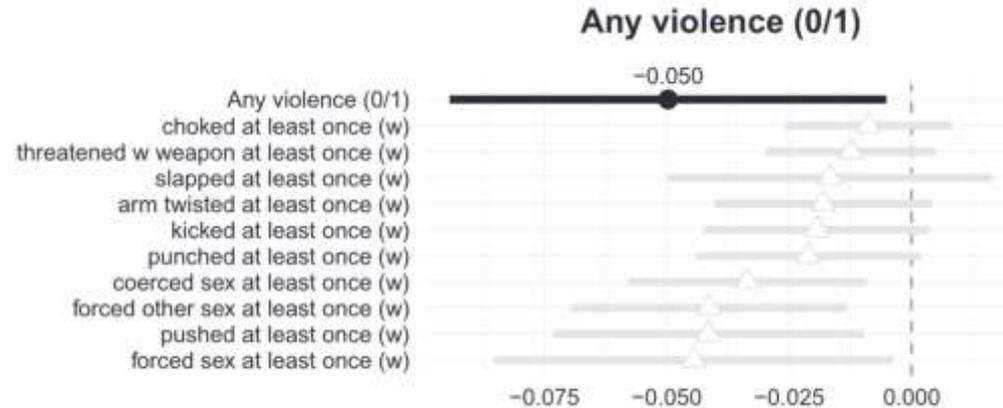
Some leaders were better than others*

Leaders who were more *progressive* at baseline and who *implemented the program the best* achieved:

- **5x** larger reductions in violence (-21.7 pp versus -4.4 pp)

- **6x** larger improvements in control & decision-making, consent, and relationship quality

- Significant shifts in behavioral game with real stakes

Any violence (0/1)

6 months −0.217 P = 0.013 −0.012

12 months −0.217 P = 0.071 −0.044

−0.3 −0.2 −0.1 0.0

had less progressive and fidelitious leader

had leader with high progressivism and program fidelity scores

* Come to our session on Wednesday to learn more!

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Measurement innovations

Social desirability bias / experimenter demand

- Placebo tests
  - Included questions to elicit whether respondents were providing answers that reflect well on program
  - Little evidence for bias; robust to correction
- Solomon design
  - Randomly assigned, with 70% probability, women to receive baseline violence questions
  - Violence reports increased by 6 percentage points among those who received questions
  - Effect was the same across treatment groups, suggesting baseline didn't sensitize participants to the "correct" responses

Implications

- A couples counseling course embedded within the church can reduce violence

- Benefits-based programming and faith leader engage men without backlash

- However, heterogeneity in impacts across faith leaders suggests identifying the right facilitators or improving training

- Similar "change from within" strategy could work in other contexts, but to work must be credible

Next Steps

- Partnering with the Church of Uganda to scale up program and integrate Becoming One into standard services

- Charging couples to attend sessions.

- Testing content that directly addresses violence through "respect sessions"

- Experimenting with Faith Leader selection criteria within the Church

Learn more

- In Press:
  - Boyer, C., Paluck, E.L., Annan, J., Nevatia, T., Cooper, J., Namubiru, J., Heise, L., & Lehrer, R. (2022). Religious leaders can motivate men to cede power and reduce intimate partner violence: Experimental evidence from Uganda. *PNAS*, *119*(31), e2200262119. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2200262119

- Website:

  - https://airbel.rescue.org/projects/becoming-one/

  - https://prevention-collaborative.org/programme-examples/becoming-one

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- International Rescue Committee: *Shirin Ahmed, Justina Li, Shanley Knox and Shirley Rodriguez*

Appendix

Primary Findings - ITT

	Any violence	Control & decision-making	Sexual consent	Communication & conflict resolution
6 month follow up				
Becoming One (B1)	-1.3 pp	**+0.19 SD****	+0.06 SD	**+0.13 SD****
p-value	0.583	< 0.001	0.055	< 0.001
12 month follow up				
Becoming One (B1)	**-5.0 pp****	**+0.13 SD***	+0.04 SD	**+0.12 SD****
p-value	0.009	0.002	0.124	< 0.001

** Significant at FWER = 0.05; pp = percentage point, SD = control standard deviation

Primary Findings - Attendees

	Any violence	Control & decision-making	Sexual consent	Communication & conflict resolution
6 month follow up				
Becoming One (B1)	-1.9 pp	**+0.29 SD****	+0.11 SD	**+0.19 SD****
p-value	0.583	< 0.001	0.055	< 0.001
12 month follow up				
Becoming One (B1)	**-7.3 pp***	**+0.18 SD***	+0.04 SD	**+0.18 SD****
p-value	0.047	0.014	0.124	0.018

** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05; pp = percentage point, SD = control standard deviation