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Beyond Carceral "Solutions": Using Transformative Human Rights Education in Domestic Violence Prevention

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Beyond Carceral "Solutions": Using Transformative Human Rights Education in Domestic Violence Prevention

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Beyond Carceral "Solutions": Using Transformative Human Rights Education in Domestic Violence Prevention

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a *choice* a person makes to gain and exert absolute power and control over another person. Unfortunately, the predominant structure for addressing domestic violence - the criminal justice system - is rife with problematic social and structural constructs, like patriarchy, white supremacy, and neoliberalism, which are themselves rooted in issues of power and control (Acheson, 2022). The influence of these factors, which are largely defined by exploitative hierarchies, helps to explain why domestic violence remains prevalent. To more effectively address and prevent domestic violence, research suggests that comprehensive policy and curricular reform are necessary on multiple levels of the socio-ecology (Lorettu et al., 2021). When the primary intervention for domestic violence reproduces oppressive conditions, alternatives are needed. Domestic violence preventionists must seek community-based measures in order to divest from the carceral system. Through an abolitionist, feminist perspective, this field project explores the preventative and, in some cases, healing possibilities offered by transformative human rights education. To aid in these efforts, this field project is a handbook that intends to provide guidance to facilitators of violence prevention in creating what I call "Community Action and Transformation (CAT) groups" that hold space for both trauma and joy and allow community members to learn about, practice, and implement freedom.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

While observing a recent court hearing, I witnessed a survivor who was seeking a restraining order against her estranged husband explain to the judge how her former partner had strangled her after what had initially seemed like a minor disagreement. Once he let her go, she recalled grabbing a knife and locking herself in a separate room in an attempt to get away and defend herself if necessary. The police, she said, arrested her - not him - once they arrived at the scene and found her with a weapon. This kind of story is all too common in my work. One of the first things I teach new advocates about domestic violence is that it is about power and control, not anger or stress, or substance abuse, which are common excuses. Domestic violence is a *choice* a person makes to gain and exert absolute power and control over another person.

Unfortunately, the predominant structure for addressing domestic violence - the criminal justice system - is rife with problematic social and structural constructs, like patriarchy, white supremacy, and neoliberalism, which are themselves rooted in issues of power and control (Acheson, 2022). The influence of these factors, which are largely defined by exploitative hierarchies, helps to explain why domestic violence remains prevalent. To more effectively address and prevent domestic violence, research suggests that comprehensive policy and curricular reform are necessary on multiple levels of the socio-ecology, which is the complex relationship between individual, relational, communal, and structural level factors (Lorettu et al., 2021). When the primary intervention for domestic violence reproduces oppressive conditions, alternatives are needed. Through an abolitionist, feminist perspective, this field project explores the preventative and, in some cases, healing possibilities offered by transformative human rights education.

Statement of the Problem

Domestic and intimate partner violence (D/IPV) has historically been considered a private family matter. Shame, myths, and stigma all shape the common understanding of the issue and contribute to underreporting and potentially unreliable statistics. Current research estimates that 10 million people per year are affected by D/IPV in the United States (Huecker et al., 2022). Although statistically, women are more likely to experience D/IPV, a U.S. Department of Justice special report noted that 24% of domestic violence survivors were men (Truman & Morgan, 2014). Transgender and nonbinary individuals have been found to experience D/IPV at least equally, if not greater than the rates cisgender people do (Forge, 2012). Financial stability, healthcare costs, and educational attainment are all impacted by abuse. One study estimates that the total lifetime economic cost of D/IPV in the United States is 3.6 trillion USD (Peterson, 2018).

While the law has criminalized D/IPV since before the founding of this country, a failure to enforce those laws led to limited means of recourse for many women (Goodmark, 2018a). Prior to the 1910s, many law enforcement departments around the United States actively discouraged the arrest of perpetrators through *arrest avoidance* policies, policies that actively discouraged arrest during domestic disputes, instead favoring responses such as anger management or alcohol and substance abuse programs (Goodmark, 2018a). Such policies reflected the sentiment that domestic violence was a private matter and should require limited interference from the state (Houston, 2014). In addition to a lack of enforcement on the ground, prosecution rates for domestic violence cases were low. Prosecutors felt that without victim-witness cooperation, they could not effectively argue the case, and survivors often declined to testify for reasons such as fear of retaliation or of subjecting their partner to criminal

liability (Goodmark, 2018a, p. 14). These failures, combined with a lack of shelter and social

service options, led many survivors to suffer alone and in silence.

Beginning in the 1970s, feminist anti-violence activists began fighting to bring domestic

violence into the public sphere to encourage a more significant response from policymakers and

criminal justice actors. Kim (2015) explains that these activists used three primary strategies:

litigation, infiltration, and coordination. In analyzing these strategies, Kim (2015) reveals that the

intentions behind these efforts, to augment the enforcement of domestic violence as a crime by

controlling the criminal system, led to a dilution of what had once been a grassroots social

movement, which had grown wary of the state due to the influence of the civil and welfare

rights, anti-war, and New Left movements (p. 7). As a result, D/IPV advocacy began to align

with the goals of the carceral state. There were some benefits of this joining, namely an increase

in funding and awareness and an overall legitimization of domestic violence as a public sphere

issue. However, this alignment of advocacy and the carceral state also contributed to the

disenfranchisement and dehumanization of already marginalized people. For example,

overcriminalization has increased state control of certain demographic groups and

disproportionately affects Black and brown communities. In this case, the alignment of D/IPV

advocacy and the criminal justice system has further harmed Black and brown women subjected

to D/IPV. Moreover, the use of the carceral state as a response to D/IVP is an ineffective

response to a problem that intersects with other large social issues such as poverty, homelessness,

and mental illness (Goodmark, 2018a).

Since the 1970s, other methods for addressing and preventing D/IPV have been taken up

by nonprofits and other social service organizations providing intervention services, most often

for survivors, such as therapy and emergency shelters, as well as preventative education

programs. However, most current prevention programs focus too narrowly on awareness-raising and individual-level factors and do not sufficiently address the related social issues nor engage the person causing the harm (Lorettu et al., 2021). Moreover, these educational efforts fail to account for the nuance of domestic violence, leaving out much of the conversation around communal and structural challenges that contribute to D/IPV. The current status quo of methods used to address domestic and intimate partner violence is in need of a refresh. Imbalanced power dynamics create a culture where survivors and communities - those on the bottom - are disempowered while funders, policy-makers, and other governmental actors - those on the top - rule. The pieces that have long bridged these two components have been a professionalized social service system and a privatized carceral system. This field project presents transformative human rights education as a potential alternative bridge to subvert these dynamics.

The time is ripe for change. The emergence of Covid-19, which caused a global pandemic resulting in the deaths of millions of people worldwide, helped make obvious the concealed imbalances of power and oppression by magnifying pre-existing issues until they could scarcely be ignored. These conditions, combined with the public outrage spurred by viral depictions of the police murders of Brianna Taylor and George Floyd, encouraged some institutions, including the anti-domestic and intimate partner violence field, to evaluate and reconcile with their own practices and histories. In one study, Kim (2021) identified that, while domestic violence service providers expressed some hesitancy around survivor safety concerning new intervention and prevention ideas involving transformative justice, they were intrigued by the approach and acknowledged it could present a valuable option for survivors who do not benefit from currently available options. This study demonstrates that the anti-violence movement is ready to explore new options.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to create a handbook for facilitators of D/IPV prevention that include examples of what Tibbitts (2017) calls *activist-transformative* human rights education curricula aimed at preventing intimate partner violence, with strategies and information for effective implementation in various communities. The handbook is intended to be a starting point for educators, preventionists, and other anti-violence actors to visualize the possibilities of transformative human rights education as a tool for domestic violence prevention. Violence prevention is a term with a wide range of meanings. As discussed in the subsequent chapter, it can include methodologies that attempt to prevent violence before it starts, as well as aiming to minimize violence that is already occurring. This handbook will offer tips for creating Community Action and Transformation (CAT) groups that include supportive, educational, and activist components for survivors and those who are considered marginalized or at-risk. Additionally, the handbook may provide a sort of roadmap for preventionists, survivors, and concerned community members to advocate and organize for real, deep-rooted change within their communities. While one of the primary intended outcomes of these groups is a personally transformative experience for each individual participant, it is also the goal of this handbook to encourage structural change by promoting the ability of the participants to work together in organizing on issues in their communities that they deem to be important.

Theoretical Framework

The two theoretical frameworks that guide this field project are abolition feminism and Transformative Human Rights Education. Abolition feminism is an expansion and convergence of both Abolition and Feminism that acknowledges and acts against the intersections of

oppression, namely the overlaps between the patriarchy, neoliberalism, and white supremacy (Davis et al., 2022). Davis et al. (2022) explain how the theory asserts that abolition is most compelling when combined with feminism, and feminism is most inclusive when combined with abolition. Using a racial and gendered lens, abolition feminists critique the proliferation of carceral feminism, an ideology that uplifts the carceral system as the primary means to address gender-based violence issues like domestic and sexual violence and ignores the root causes and impact of harm (Davis et al., 2022). Instead, abolition feminists maintain that carceral feminism and an over-reliance on the state cause greater harm among marginalized communities and perpetuate a reliance on policing systems.

In addition to calling attention to the problematic nature of such a close alignment with the carceral state, this framework encourages researchers and activists to seek solutions outside the status quo. As scholar Ray Acheson (2022) explains, "the frame of abolition speaks directly to the need not only to put an end to a particular source of harm, but to fundamentally transform the political, economic, and social relations that allowed that source of harm to grow and persist" (p. 3). Since the proliferation of the framework during the 2020 racial uprisings, the popular conceptualization of abolition has simplistically focused on the act of tearing down and dismantling. While abolition feminists agree that this *is* an important facet of abolition, equally important is the *how* - the journey of working towards liberation through by collectively struggling and creating knowledge. Moreover, abolition is primarily concerned with addressing the root causes of harm, rather than intervening after violence has already occurred. A critical aspect of abolition is the imagining of new possibilities while simultaneously working to deconstruct oppressive structures (Davis et al., 2022). Following this spirit, this field project

aims to decenter the role of the carceral state in domestic violence prevention and intervention by offering an alternative: transformative human rights education.

The most generally accepted definition of human rights education (HRE) comes from the United Nations' 2011 *Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training*, which broadly states that the practice of HRE is comprised of all activities with the intent of developing respect for human rights and "fundamental freedoms" and preventing human rights violations (United Nations [UN], 2011) According to the declaration, this is done by teaching *about*, *through,* and *for* human rights. Teaching about human rights may include incorporating content and curricula that talk about human rights laws and declarations, norms and principles, violations, or examples of people's rights being fought for and/or upheld (Tibbitts, 2017).Teaching through human rights may mean that the education is provided in a way that respects both the learner's and the educator's rights and promotes their dignity (Tibbitts, 2017). Finally, teaching for human rights means that the educator encourages participants and learners to exercise, enjoy, respect, and uphold their own rights and the rights of others (Tibbitts, 2017).

Transformative human rights education, more specifically, generally takes place outside of "formal" educational settings, such as schools, and instead in more "informal" educational settings, like nonprofits and other community groups (Tibbitts, 2017). This type of HRE critically examines society, power structures, and even the human rights system itself, which interlinks with one of the primary goals of abolition feminism - addressing the root causes of harm. Generally, the audiences for THRE are marginalized populations and youth. The goal of this model is to build capacity for human rights activism with the purpose of driving long-term social change. Learners in this type of HRE are encouraged to critically examine their own local

communities and lived experiences because they may have experienced or are currently enduring their own personal violations.

As a result, not only does THRE work to address larger, systemic issues, but it also aims to promote healing and personal transformation (Tibbitts, 2017). In this way, transformational human rights education helps to balance the power dynamics between the educator and learner by recognizing that each group has valuable knowledge and experience to share with one another. This leveling is critical for preventative education that may involve domestic violence survivors because one of the key aspects of domestic violence counseling is to ensure the survivor is empowered by their own autonomy.

Significance of the Project

This field project may be of interest to practitioners of gender-based violence issues, those affected by gender-based violence issues, and others interested in examples of human rights education. It may hold significance for those involved in issues of gender-based violence because it contributes to a body of research exploring additional means of addressing violence outside of normalized methods like the criminal justice system. After reading this handbook, practitioners of domestic and sexual violence prevention who wish to move away from a reliance on the carceral state may be inspired to seek solutions from affected communities. In addition, this field project may also interest those affected by gender-based violence issues. Some survivors, or loved ones of survivors, find growth and healing by supporting others in similar situations. Reading this handbook might provide them with ways to do so beyond the normative framework and in a trauma-informed way. Finally, researchers and scholars interested in human rights education may also find this work significant because it provides an example of what it can look like outside of formal education settings and illustrates how human rights education can

intersect with domestic and intimate partner violence. This project attempts to go beyond the standard definition of HRE to create transformative change by overturning traditional power structures, placing those who are most affected by violations and those who are doing the learning in charge.

Researcher Positionality

My positionality as a researcher is admittedly biased against the carceral state. I work in the domestic violence field as a Volunteer Coordinator, where I recruit and train new volunteers and staff to become domestic violence counselors. My responsibilities occasionally require client interaction and advocacy through the 24/7 crisis line, support groups, and court accompaniment. I have heard countless stories from survivors of barriers and additional trauma directly resulting from the so-called justice system. I have personally observed members of the system, including attorneys and law enforcement, perpetuate harmful myths and recreate conditions of oppression. Additionally, my work in a nonprofit setting has shown me the limitations and challenges within that industry. Professionalization and lack of resources create bitter competition among organizations that tout themselves as driven by collaboration and survivor safety, which leads to less-than-ideal conditions for survivors. At the same time, I have also witnessed the incredible empathy, creativity, and perseverance of advocates and survivors working together in a struggle for freedom. I have celebrated and cried with people through victories and disappointments alike. The work of this field project is personal and is drawn from a deep love and care for those who seek to live their lives free from violence in all its forms.

Definition of Terms

- **Abolition Feminism** - Abolition feminism is an expansion and convergence of both Abolition and Feminism that acknowledges and acts against the intersections of oppression, namely the overlaps between the patriarchy, neoliberalism, and white supremacy (Davis et al., 2022) As scholar Ray Acheson (2022) explains, "the frame of abolition speaks directly to the need not only to put an end to a particular source of harm, but to fundamentally transform the political, economic, and social relations that allowed that source of harm to grow and persist" (p. 3).

- **Anti-Violence Movement** - The anti-violence movement is made up of feminists and others fighting for an end to gender-based violence issues, particularly domestic and sexual violence, as well as human trafficking. The movement has fought for legal reforms including protecting the rights of survivors, making sexual harassment illegal, and addressing the needs of children who witness violence (Richie, 2000).

- **Activist-Transformation Model/Transformative Human Rights Education** - The activist-transformation model, also known as transformative human rights education, is a type of human rights education that primarily takes place within informal settings like civil-society organizations and takes a critical look at society, power structures, and the human rights system itself (Tibbitts, 2017). Common audiences include marginalized populations and youth, with content depending upon the audience and local context. This model is oriented towards building capacity for human rights activism with the purpose of driving long-term structural change, as well as encouraging personal healing and individual transformation (Tibbitts, 2017).

- **Arrest-Avoidance Policies** - Until the 1980s, many police departments had, in some cases written, policies that actively discouraged arrest during domestic disputes, instead favoring responses such as anger management or alcohol and substance abuse programs (Goodmark, 2018a).

- **Banking Education** - Coined by Brazilian educator Paolo Freire, a "banking" education system is one in which the relationship between the teacher and the student is one where the teacher is the "knower" and deposits that knowledge into the student, who is presumed to know nothing (Freire, 2017).

- **Carceral Feminism -** Carceral feminists generally believe that policing and prisons are solutions to gender-based violence. For example, if someone has been assaulted, carceral feminists may believe that the proper response should be to have the "perpetrator" stand trial before a judge and jury in a criminal court and that "justice" would look like having the perpetrator incarcerated as punishment for their crime (Terwiel, 2020).

- **D/IPV/Spousal abuse** - Domestic or intimate partner violence, also sometimes referred to as spousal abuse or family violence, is a pattern or range of abusive behaviors used to establish and exert power and control by one person in a relationship, whether familial or intimate, over another.

- **Mandatory Arrest** - Mandatory arrest policies require law enforcement to identify the primary aggressor and make an arrest when they have reasonable suspicion that domestic violence occurred on the scene of a domestic disturbance call. These policies proliferated across the US after a 1981 study, dubbed "the Minneapolis Experiment," by researchers Richard Sherman and Lawrence Burke, found arrest to be associated with lower rates of

recidivism in men who harmed their partners. The study was limited in scope, and later efforts to replicate the study failed to draw a consensus (Bridgett, 2020).

- **Trauma-Informed Practices** - Trauma informed practice recognizes that trauma is widespread and has significant short and long term impacts on individuals. In an educational environment, trauma-informed practice can be used to help mitigate these effects. Carello suggests seven principles of trauma-informed teaching and learning: physical, emotional, and academic safety; trustworthiness and transparency; support and connection; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice, and choice; social justice; and resilience, growth, and change (Carello (2020), as cited by Garritty, 2022, p. 1856).

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

The claim of this literature review is that a complex set of factors influence and contribute to the ways in which domestic and intimate partner violence (D/IPV) are addressed and that transfomative human rights education, rather than criminalization, may be used to address the need for D/IPV prevention. Four bodies of scholarship support this claim and include: (a) a discussion of the criminalization of D/IPV; (b) a review of D/IPV prevention program types and strategies; (c) a discussion of domestic violence as a human rights issue; (d) a review of transformative human rights education as a violence prevention model. These sets of scholarship are framed by the theories of abolition feminism, which is used to acknowledge and act against the intersecting forms of oppression experienced by survivors of D/IPV, and transformative human rights education, which aims to create both personal and collective transformation by encouraging marginalized individuals to critically examine and analyze the society they live in. This chapter begins by revisiting abolition feminism including a discussion of its history and scholarship and later revisits transformative human rights education as theoretical frameworks and its application to domestic violence prevention.

Mapping Abolition Feminism

This thesis is grounded in both abolition feminism and transformative human rights education. This section explores the history of modern abolition feminism and demonstrates how it is a useful theoretical framework with which to conceptualize this field project. The primary text referenced in this section is the recent book by Davis et al. (2022), *Abolition. Feminism. Now*. As mentioned above, abolition feminism acknowledges and acts against the intrinsic ties between different forms of oppression, including those that stem from patriarchy,

neoliberalism, and white supremacy. It asserts that abolition is most compelling when combined with feminism, and feminism is most inclusive when combined with abolition (Davis, 2022, p. 2). Abolition feminism "is political work that embraces [a] both/and perspective, moving beyond binary either/or logic and the shallowness of reforms" (Davis, 2022, p. 19). While abolition is often viewed as an impractical, unattainable dream, Davis et al. (2022) argue that abolition feminism is about the process itself- not the final product. For these reasons, abolition feminism is critical to imagining new possibilities while recognizing that resistance is already actively taking place every day (Davis et al., 2022).

The contemporary abolitionist movement is rooted in 19th-century abolitionists' work to end chattel slavery. Davis et al. (2022) make explicit connections between this goal and that of the modern-day movement, largely led by Black feminists, which seeks to reform the retributive criminal legal system. The authors assert that the modern carceral state is directly derived from the institution of slavery, making the modern abolition movement an extension of the earlier one (Davis et al., 2022). To solidify this point, the authors map out various publications and conferences that mark key moments in the movement's history. For example, in the 1970s, numerous publications, including *Struggle for Justice: A Report on Crime and Punishment in America* and the 1976 handbook *Instead of Prisons,* helped to re-ignite the abolition movement of the 19th century. In 1998, the *Critical Resistance: Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex* conference spurred deeper conversations about the relationships between abolitionist work and issues like gender discrimination and global capitalism. During this time, Black feminists expanded conversations on mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex to include the welfare and social service system, known as "family regulation" or the "family policing system" (Roberts (1997), as cited by Davis et al., 2022, p.41).

According to Davis et al. (2022), abolition has a rich history of grassroots organizing, which in many ways mirrors the work of the feminist and anti-violence movement, pre-professionalization, and prior to its corruption by the carceral state. For example, the authors describe how organizations like INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (which is later referred to as Women, Gender Non-Conforming, and Trans People of Color Against Violence) played key roles in attempting to interrupt the mainstream feminists who were turning to carceral solutions to address gender-based violence. Their conference, *The Color of Violence: Violence Against Women of Color*, brought thousands of people together and "strategically and enthusiastically advanc[ed] an antiracist, anti-capitalist analysis of gender violence and recenter[ed] social justice and freedom" (Davis et al., 2022, p. 89). According to Davis et al. (2022), abolition feminists critique the proliferation of carceral feminism, which relies on statistical data in order to understand D/IPV and ignores the impact and root causes of harm. Abolition feminism also critiques the assumption that gender oppression is a common experience, immune to the influence of other forms of oppression, and that the state should be the source of survivor safety and justice. Abolition feminism argues that carceral feminism and an over-reliance on the state cause greater harm among marginalized communities and perpetuate a reliance on policing systems.

In the summer of 2020, abolition feminists constructed a letter titled *The Moment of Truth*, which acknowledged the harm caused by mainstream anti-violence advocates against Black, indigenous, and other marginalized communities as a result of the movement's repeated failures. According to Davis et al. (2022), these failures included: (a) not listening to Black feminists; (b) promoting false solutions in terms of reforming violent systems; (c) disregarding and dismissing transformative justice and other alternative solutions. The letter was signed by

47 anti-violence organizations and coalitions across the United States. It reflected a moment in which many organizations and individuals felt compelled to confront the harsh realities of white supremacy and galvanize support for racial justice. Davis et al. observe that at the same time, tensions heightened among funders, legislators, criminal justice workers, and those in the anti-violence movement. As a result, some of the relationships between these groups dissolved, and the "speed with which relationships between [these] carceral actors and anti-gender violence groups with abolitionist orientations unraveled reveals their inherent fragility" (Davis et al., 2022, p. 80). Because the work of abolition feminism exists at the center of these relationships, the current political moment holds both enormous possibilities and the potential to exacerbate divisions. In the sections that follow, this literature review aims to work within the *Moment of Truth* by exploring the criminalization of D/IPV, why current prevention strategies fail, and the possibility of employing a human rights education framework to reimagine the D/IPV movement so that it can coalesce with the larger anti-violence movement. Abolition feminism offers a frame for understanding this literature and imagining other possibilities and new ways of addressing D/IPV.

The Criminalization of Domestic Violence

Domestic and intimate partner violence is often associated with 911 calls and restraining orders, but the criminal justice system has not always played such a significant role in intervening in abusive relationships. In fact, until the mid-1980s, some police departments across the country had *arrest-avoidance* policies that favored more discrete responses, like batterer's intervention programs, or in many cases - no response at all (Goodmark, 2018a). While laws that criminalize D/IPV have existed since the 1600s, the enforcement of those laws has been inconsistent historically. In the late 1970s, feminists and anti-violence activists began taking aim

at police departments around the country for failing to protect victims and survivors of D/IPV (Goodmark, 2018a). In a study of this history, Kim (2015) examined the unfolding of events that led to the current, tightly woven interconnections between the anti-violence movement and the carceral state. From this analysis, she identified three significant strategies used by feminist activists in an attempt to control the criminal justice system: litigation, infiltration, and coordination (Kim, 2015).

Kim asserts that the anti-D/IPV activists who played key roles in pursuing legal remedies via the criminal justice system did not do so uncritically. According to Kim's (2015) research, anti-domestic violence and sexual assault organizations debated over whether to pursue strategies tied to policing. One 1977 newsletter argued that federal funds, such as those funneled through the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, could be used "to control and subvert" the movement to fulfill governmental and carceral interests (Kim, 2015, p. 8). Many of these proponents were influenced by the anti-war and civil rights era because they recognized that a push for *more* law enforcement involvement in order to enforce domestic violence laws could have disproportionately negative effects on Black men (Kim, 2015). As a result, they were wary of lessons learned by the anti-rape movement's collusion with law enforcement, which predated the efforts of what was known at the time as the battered women's movement (Kim, 2015). This scrutiny led advocates to utilize strategies they hoped would encourage an overhaul of the system itself.

Strategies to Overhaul the System

The first strategy, litigation, involved using the court systems to punish police departments and prosecutor's offices for failure to enforce laws and protect survivors. Notable cases include *Scott v. Hart* and *Bruno v. Codd*, which were both successful in forcing law

enforcement agencies to rescind arrest-avoidance policies and make serious efforts to enforce anti-domestic violence laws (Goodmark, 2018a). As a result of this success, advocates began developing statewide anti-D/IPV coalitions, which included representatives from various criminal justice sectors. These coalitions resulted in the use of specialized units that attended to domestic violence and spousal abuse cases. Although well-intentioned, these coalitions over-prioritized gender and under-prioritized race in their scrutiny; within this new framework for adjudicating D/IPV, victims and survivors of D/IPV were women, a broad generalization that silenced dialogue on the intersection of identity markers such as race and class (Kim, 2015).

The second strategy, infiltration, placed grassroots activists inside the criminal justice system through victim-witness programs. Organizers understood that many survivors were often already utilizing or otherwise involved in the system and that it would be easier and perhaps more effective for them to infiltrate that system than attempt to create a new one altogether (Kim, 2021). Moreover, survivors of D/IPV often decline to participate with prosecutors as victim-witnesses during criminal proceedings (Goodmark, 2018a). This occurs for many reasons, including fear of retaliation by the perpetrator or fear of the legal system itself. As a result, victim-witness programs were developed and aimed to support victims of D/IPV during criminal proceedings. The development of victim-witness programs also allowed anti-D/IPV activists to embed themselves within the criminal justice system. In one interview, an activist who worked in the first victim-witness program explained that it felt as though they were infiltrating the system to influence law enforcement and create "deeper work towards systems change" (Kim, 2015, p. 16). However, the resulting impact is that the ultimate function of these victim-witness advocates is more aligned with the District Attorney's office and other law enforcement agencies, creating an institution that blurs the lines "between civil society and the state" (Kim, 2015, p.17).

The final strategy, coordination, further cemented these blurred lines by instituting Community Coordinated Response plans, which laid out the relationships between advocates and law enforcement with the singular goal of maintaining safety for survivors. These plans, along with the results of a study conducted by Lawrence and Sherman in the 1980s, helped to usher in mandatory arrest policies. The study by Lawrence and Sherman indicated that the arrest of the perpetrator of violence helped to reduce future violence. However, later attempts to duplicate this research revealed that this effect was inconsistent and that the previous claim failed to account for other contextual factors. The era of mandatory arrest policies led to an increase in arrests, particularly for people of color (Goodmark, 2018a). Due to difficulty identifying the primary aggressor, those arrested under this policy often include both the true perpetrator and the survivor. This era marked the convergence of the anti-domestic violence movement and the carceral state and contributed to increased hyper-criminalization and hyper-incarceration (Kim, 2015). As the litigation, infiltration, and coordination strategies were implemented, the system began to change. These changes resulted in the increased criminalization of D/IPV and an increase in state control over individuals, reproducing on a larger scale many of the same abusive dynamics found in relationships where domestic violence is present (Goodmark, 2018a).

The Impact of the Criminalization of D/IPV

One example of the impact of criminalizing DV/IVP can be found in protective orders. A study by Durfee and Goodmark (2021) examined the effects of cross-petitioning, in which each party in a domestic violence case files for a restraining order against the other, and found that the phenomenon is gendered. While women are still more likely to file first, men are more likely to be first-filers in cross-petition cases than in single-petition cases (Durfee & Goodmark, 2019). The researchers also found fewer reports of physical abuse, intimidation, and stalking tactics and

an increase in reports of verbal abuse involved in cross-petitions. Judges were also more likely to grant the orders of those who file first. While the data was not clear on *why* men are more likely to file first in cross-petitions than they are in single-petition cases, Durfee and Goodmark used existing research to offer the possibility that some of the data could be explained by legal abuse. Male violence users may be weaponizing the legal system against survivors, leveraging the potential criminal ramifications of violating protective orders (Miller & Smolter, 2011, as cited by Durfee & Goodmark, 2019). These ramifications could include everything from ineligibility for housing, employment, or other resources, as well as arrest, imprisonment, or the loss of children, family, and friends.

Another example of the result of criminalizing DV/IVP can be found in policing itself. In a study on the structural, communal, and interpersonal influences on determinants of police reporting in D/IPV and SV, researchers interviewed 26 women (including trans women) who were predominantly Black and low-income and had experienced IPV or sexual violence (Decker et al. 2019). Structural determinants that discouraged police reporting due to race-based factors included discriminatory police misconduct, a perception of lack of care or concern from police, power disparities, fear of harm from police, and fear of partner incarceration (Decker et al. 2019). Those influenced by gender-based factors included the minimization, justification, and devaluing of violence against women (Decker et al., 2019). On the communal level, the participants described deeply rooted social norms against contacting law enforcement, resulting from both historic and ongoing police violence and discrimination, which could result in severe sanctions, ranging from being shunned by other community members to physical violence (Decker, 2019, p.779). These results verify the need to move beyond a sole focus on minimizing the severity and reducing the occurrence of IPV and SV towards a structural focus that addresses

systemic factors that contribute to the problem. The researchers conclude that transformative and restorative justice approaches represent valuable solutions to enhance informal networks and other local services and position justice and accountability for survivors outside of the carceral system.

Yet another result of the criminalizing of DV/IVP is the dehumanization of survivors. According to Salcido (2011), many survivors feel as though they are treated as numbers rather than human beings. This is because the criminal system that deals with D/IPV prioritizes efficiency and bureaucracy over trauma-informed practices. Salcido conducted a comparative analysis study with 16 Latina and non-Latina women with mixed legal statuses to gather qualitative information regarding their experiences with the criminal legal system. Many of the participants in Salcido's study described feeling intimidated and frustrated by the overwhelming and complicated to-do lists and forms that come with a D/IPV report. The feelings of frustration and intimidation were compounded when the survivors were non-English speaking, non-citizens, undocumented, or had mixed-status households. Survivors in these groups faced additional barriers to utilizing the criminal justice system for fear that their immigration status or native language could be used against them. The participants largely characterized police officers, often the first point of contact for survivors, as insensitive and domineering. In some instances, survivors chose not to continue reporting the abuse because of the way they were treated by the police officers who responded to their calls.

In summary, the literature reviewed in this section can be used to understand the complex set of factors that influence and contribute to the ways in which D/IPV are addressed. Early proponents of the anti-violence movement acted against a failure of the carceral system to enforce laws that criminalized domestic violence using litigation, infiltration, and coordination

strategies to encourage a systems change. While these efforts were successful in encouraging the enforcement of domestic violence laws, they also resulted in over-criminalization and provided new pathways for the carceral system to become legitimized and resourced. The impact of this over-criminalization has led to adverse effects for many survivors, especially for Black survivors and others from marginalized communities. The criminal justice approach has become viewed as the primary solution for a problem that is multifaceted, highly nuanced, and has no single solution. The following section will identify additional factors, including types and strategies of domestic violence prevention, that can be used to understand the complex set of factors that influence how domestic violence is addressed.

Prevention: Types and Strategies

A literature review by Schwartz and Waldo (2012) lays out the various types of D/IPV prevention programs, as well as the strategies used by these programs. According to the authors, domestic violence prevention is a relatively recent implementation that can address various stages of violence. The first type of D/IPV prevention described by Schwartz and Waldo (2012) is primary prevention, which intends to stop violence from occurring. The authors break primary prevention into two categories: (a) person-focused prevention primary prevention, which works at the individual level using strategies such as teaching conflict resolution skills and developing emotional intelligence; (b) environmentally-focused primary prevention, which targets structural factors with efforts such as attempting to shift the social culture that tolerates interpersonal and gendered violence. One example of these efforts can be found in the organization Futures Without Violence, which aims to "change attitudes about violence against women and increase social involvement in equalizing gender disparities through widespread print and media

campaigns" (Schwartz & Waldo, 2012, pp. 31). Schwartz and Waldo identify another type of D/IPV prevention, which they call secondary prevention.

Secondary D/IPV prevention aims to reduce the occurrence of IPV by supporting certain vulnerable populations, such as youth who have experienced abuse themselves and young men involved in college sports. Like the first type, secondary prevention is divided into two categories: (a) person-focused secondary prevention, which includes violence prevention programs like the *Youth Relationships Project*, a program for adolescents with a history of abuse; (b) environmentally-focused secondary prevention, which addresses larger systemic issues such as toxic masculinity. An example of this second type of prevention is the *Mentors in Violence Prevention* program, which works with college athletes in order to redefine traditional notions of masculinity and stop violence against women. In each of the secondary types of prevention, strategies like mentoring and group programming are used.

The final category identified by the authors, tertiary prevention, is the most commonly utilized type of D/IPV prevention. Tertiary prevention focuses on minimizing violence that has already occurred by supporting survivors and treating and/or punishing perpetrators. An example of this type of prevention is the public health approach. Goodmark (2018c) examined this approach and identified four steps commonly used in tertiary prevention public health models:

1. collecting data relevant to D/IPV

2. investigating the causes of D/IPV

3. designing and evaluating evidence-based interventions for D/IPV

4. disseminating and implementing the most promising strategies for prevention, for example: (a) working with men to change attitudes and behaviors; (b) preventing Adverse

Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that increase the risk of victimization and perpetration;

(c) intervening with adolescence to shift attitudes, beliefs, and biases that perpetuate

D/IPV; (d) *edutainment,* such as TV and radio programs that reach a wide audience and

can increase community knowledge about DV and IPV (Goodmark, 2018c)

Unlike earlier forms of tertiary prevention, a public health model assumes that there is no singular cause of D/IPV; rather, it implements an ecological framework to examine factors that exist on the individual, relational, communal, and societal levels. According to Goodmark, utilizing a public health approach legitimizes the very real physical injuries and ailments that D/IPV can cause, "engages affected communities in understanding the problem and developing solutions," and encourages agents from various spheres to join in on solution-making efforts (Goodmark, 2018c, p. 54).

While the three types of prevention represent a comprehensive overall model, they are not without challenges or critique. D/IPV is a complex problem and ranges in severity, from verbal abuse to emotional and psychological manipulation to homicide, which makes targeting specific abusive tactics and behaviors difficult (Goodmark, 2018c). Primary prevention strategies often do little more than raise awareness and increase knowledge, which Goodmark (2018c) claims does not necessarily lead to long-term changes. In addition, few prevention programs operate on all three levels of prevention identified by Schwartz and Waldo (2012). According to Lorrettu et al. (DATE), there is one program, the CDC's *Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Allies Impact Program* (DELTA), that does address the different levels; however, it does not do so simultaneously. Even within this comprehensive, state-sponsored model, the researchers found insufficient engagement among the perpetrators of violence (Lorrettu et al., 2021). While more research is needed on DV/IVP prevention programs,

a shift in frameworks - from criminalization to human rights education - is also necessary (Lorrettu et al., 2021). In summary, the literature reviewed in this section can be used, along with the scholarship in the preceding section, to understand the complex set of factors that influence and contribute to the ways in which D/IPV are addressed. In the sections that follow, the role of human rights and human rights education in D/IPV prevention are discussed.

Human Rights and Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence

In the preceding sections, the complex set of factors that influence and contribute to the ways in which D/IPV is addressed was discussed. This included a review of D/IPV prevention program types and strategies, as well as a discussion of the impact of the criminalization of D/IPV. In this section, the role of human rights and transformative human rights education in D/IPV prevention is addressed. This first includes a discussion of domestic violence as a human rights issue, framed by several important human rights tools such as (a) the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR); (b) the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishmen*t; (c) the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. This section then explores the definition of transformative human rights education (THRE) and the role of THRE and violence prevention in the larger D/IPV movement. Taken together, the literature in this section helps to justify the claim for this literature review that human rights education, rather than criminalization, may be used to address the need for D/IPV prevention.

Domestic Violence as a Human Rights Issue

Domestic and intimate partner violence has only recently become acknowledged as a human rights violation. Goodmark (2018b) defines human rights as international, universal

norms and values that promote human dignity and enable people to meet their basic needs.

Several international human rights tools establish the right to be free from torture, including (a)

the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR); (b) the *Convention against Torture and*

*Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishmen*t; (c) the *International Covenant*

on Civil and Political Rights. Additionally, the right to be free from gender-based discrimination

is described in the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*

(CEDAW) and the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* (DEVAW). While

CEDAW (1988) did not initially name violence against women as discrimination, *General*

Recommendation 19 remedied this. However, the recommendation is considered *soft law,*

meaning that it is not legally binding and offers no tangible way to hold states accountable.

Similarly, DEVAW (1993), which was adopted by the UN just one year after *General*

Recommendation 19, is also not legally binding. Several regional international conventions and

protocols also specifically mention the right of women to be free from violence. These include:

(a) the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence*

Against Women (also known as the *Convention of Belem do Para*); (b) the protocol to the *African*

Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; (c) the *European*

Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Like

their international counterparts, enforcement of these regional conventions, protocols, and

recommendations remains challenging.

Preventing D/IPV requires more than simply enacting international laws or laws within

certain global regions; individual nation-states must enforce those laws as well. According to

Goodmark (2018b), nation-states are responsible for protecting their citizens from violence and

exercising due diligence to prevent or respond to violence. Due diligence refers to "the standard

by which a nation's attempts to comply with its positive obligations to address [gender-based violence] are measured under human rights law" (Goodmark, 2018b, p.109). According to Goodmark, this standard exists on the individual level, meaning that governments are responsible for addressing the violence between individuals and groups. It also exists on the structural level, which entails creating an environment that encourages prevention, protection, punishment, and reparations. In order to do this, Goodmark (2018b) suggests utilizing a human rights law framework that names the problem, articulates norms, and exerts moral pressure. However, this kind of framework has a narrow scope and can interfere with privacy and autonomy by expanding the role of the State in the lives of its public with the well-meaning intention of preventing violations. It can also expand the reach of the criminal justice system by encouraging its involvement in enforcing laws to prevent violations (Goodmark, 2018b). Rather than utilizing a predominantly law-based lens, a transformative human rights education framework may provide an alternate path to D/IPV prevention.

Transformative Human Rights Education and Violence Prevention

The most generally accepted definition of human rights education comes from the United Nations' 2011 *Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training*, which states that the practice is comprised of all activities with the intent of developing respect for human rights and "fundamental freedoms" that in turn prevent human rights violations. This, the declaration states, is done by educating *about*, *through,* and *for* human rights. Education *about* human rights may entail providing curricula about human rights laws, norms, or principles, including the "values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection" (Tibbitts, 2017, pp. 4-5). Educational and learning activities must also be delivered *through* human rights, which involves educating in a way that promotes human dignity and respects both the educator's and the

learner's rights. Education *for* human rights has the purpose of encouraging participants to exercise, enjoy, respect, and uphold their own rights and that of others. Tibbitts (2017) explains that the prevention of human rights violations is a central goal of HRE, which requires a critical examination of the effects and root causes of violations. This lens leads the action spurred by HRE to primarily target the behavior of governments, action that Tibbitts (2017) argues takes place in a wider framework of social change and heavily involves the daily life of the everyday person (p. 6). In this way, human rights education is a tool that can simultaneously address both the public and the private sphere (Tibbitts, 2017).

Tibbitts lays out three main models to help understand the primary strategies of enacting HRE. The first model, the Values and Awareness Model, often occurs in formal settings such as schools and in governmental organizations and does not actively promote the learner's ability to take action to prevent human rights violations. Rather, it provides a non-critical, general understanding of human rights by building a surface-level awareness. This model primarily relies on didactic methodologies, which focus on information delivery and promotes a *banking-style* educational approach (Freire, 2017). The second model, Accountability-Professional Development, can occur in either formal or informal settings, such as through governmental and civil society agencies. This model encourages learners to take a critical stance on their professional roles' potential to both perpetuate and prevent violations. Methodologies that may be used for this model include a participatory/interactive methodology, which encourages engagement among learners but does not necessarily foster agency, and an empowerment methodology that explicitly attempts to foster agency within learners to increase their ability to enact social change (Tibbitts, 2017). The final model, activist-transformative, goes the furthest of all the models to empower learners and promote social change.

The activist-transformation model, also called Transformative Human Rights Education, which will be used to frame the field project presented in Chapter Three, primarily takes place within informal settings like civil-society organizations and takes a critical look at society, power structures, and the human rights system itself (Tibbitts, 2017). Common audiences include marginalized populations and youth, with content depending upon the audience and local context. This model is oriented towards building capacity for human rights activism with the purpose of driving long-term social change (Tibbitts, 2017). Methodologies include the previously discussed participatory/interactive and empowerment methodologies, as well as transformational methodologies that expand on the two aforementioned types by cultivating agency to incite social-change activism and by fostering personal transformation. This last point is key: learners in the activist-transformative model are encouraged to critically examine their local contexts and lived experiences, thus incorporating "collective action and community development as well as undertaking individual actions to reduce violations in one's personal life and immediate environment" (Tibbitts, 2017, p. 18). Tibbitts (2017) explains that this approach recognizes that the learners may have experienced their own personal violations and therefore aims not only to address larger, systemic issues but also aims to promote healing and personal transformation. In this way, activist-transformation human rights education balances the power dynamics between the educator and learner by recognizing that each group has valuable knowledge and experience to impart to one another.

This type of approach not only has the potential to be more effective in efforts to prevent domestic and intimate partner violence, but it may also be one of the very tools the anti-violence movement needs at this moment in time. According to Kim (2021), there has been a recent shift in D/IPV towards community-based approaches, with three intersecting trends that include: (a)

an emphasis on community and social network engagement; (b) a turn from intervention practices to prevention practices; (c) a shift away from criminalization towards community-based and transformative justice. Kim claims that community-based violence intervention models offer an alternative for marginalized and vulnerable survivors, such as those that identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community, survivors of color, and survivors who are not citizens. While community-based and transformative justice models for DV and IPV include logistical and other roadblocks (such as concerns related to the inclusion of perpetrators and the open-ended nature of the approach), shifting attitudes in the field of D/IPV prevention demonstrates that the feminist anti-violence movement is in a state of change. This change may introduce an opportunity to employ transformative human rights education as a framework for understanding, responding to, and preventing violence.

Conclusion

The claim of this literature review is that a complex set of factors influence and contribute to the ways in which domestic and intimate partner violence (D/IPV) are addressed and that human rights education, rather than criminalization, may be used to address the need for D/IPV prevention. In the first part of this literature review, a discussion of the criminalization of D/IPV and a review of D/IPV prevention program types and strategies are used to justify this claim. In the second part of this literature review, a discussion of domestic violence as a human rights issue, including a review of human rights education as a violence prevention model, is used to justify this claim. All of this scholarship is framed by the theory of abolition feminism, which acknowledges and fights against common and intersecting forms of oppression experienced by survivors of D/IPV; and transformative human rights education, which aims to create structural change by building the capacity within individuals to engage in activism. The

findings of this literature review suggest that the criminal justice system has co-opted and corrupted the anti-violence movement, placing value on data and profits and ignoring the complex needs of survivors. Current prevention efforts outside of criminal justice solutions are too narrow in scope and place much of the burden on survivors and those who have experienced harm. While some international and regional bodies have utilized human rights to create conventions and treaties that decry violence against women, the enforcement of those sentiments pose significant challenges. This field project proposes using transformative HRE as a tool for D/IPV educators, preventionists, and other anti-violence actors engaged in the work of prevention and who advocate and organize for real, lasting change within their communities.

CHAPTER III
THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Description of the project

Unlike traditional thinking, the goal of most modern-day Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence (D/IPV) advocates is not to convince the survivor to leave an abusive partner. Rather, advocates work with survivors to help them explore their own autonomy - however that might look for the survivor. In other words, advocates aim to help survivors (re)discover their freedom. A truly liberated community is impossible without the input and leadership of those most impacted by harm. Moreover, the liberation of the individual is intrinsically tied to that of the community. Putting these concepts together helps to solidify the importance of violence prevention that centers those most impacted by violence and considers the entire community when developing solutions. Domestic violence preventionists must seek community-based alternative measures in order to divest from the carceral system. To aid in these efforts, this field project is a handbook that intends to provide guidance to facilitators of violence prevention in creating what I call "Community Action and Transformation (CAT) groups" that hold space for both trauma and joy and allow community members to learn about, practice, and implement freedom.

This project is rooted in two theories: Transformative Human Rights Education (THRE) and Abolition Feminism. The first section provides a brief background and orientation of each theory. It concludes in a summary that ties both concepts to the focus of this work: Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence Prevention. The second section offers three case studies with anecdotal examples, tips, and reflective questions to support three crucial phases in developing a CAT group. The first case study, *Whose Security is it Anyway?* by Lara Brooks and Mariame Kaba, is

intended to support the agency, organization, or group in developing the CAT group. The second, *Engaging Communities in Primary Prevention: An Introduction to the Core Competencies* by the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, looks at the training and preparation process of the facilitators. The final case study, *Mesa Redonda*, illustrates an example of an existing group based out of Tahirih Justice Center in Houston, Texas, that exemplifies violence prevention combined with Transformative Human Rights Education. The conclusion of the handbook encourages readers to use this material to guide them in creating alternative solutions that work within the context of their own communities and reflects on the exciting possibilities that may come from giving survivors and community members space to learn together and engage in this dialogue.

Development of the project

The first step in developing this project was to research pre-existing examples of violence prevention curricula. This research was conducted via Fusion, ERIC, Education Source, APA PsychInfo, SocINDEX, Google, and through conversations with colleagues. Articles were identified as possibly useful if they met any of the following criteria:

- It contained elements of either (T)HRE, Peace Education, or Popular Education, even if the curriculum did not explicitly state that it was grounded in any of those things.
- The curriculum was grounded in Abolition, especially Abolition Feminism.
- The curriculum addressed issues of gender-based violence.

Narrowing down the list of initially selected articles occurred through a simultaneous process of elimination and organization. Many of the articles that were not selected were primarily not chosen because of their irrelevance to the particular goal of the handbook. Some articles were

selected to be included as additional resources rather than as the main focus. The three curricula that were ultimately chosen were selected because of their relevance to the goal of the handbook and also because, together, they formed a natural flow of the development of a program. The first piece was chosen because it offered support in building a solid abolitionist foundation that addressed issues of power and control that may exist within the context in which the program is taking place. The second piece helped lay out the training process of those who would be facilitating the groups. The third piece was one example of the type of group that may be created using the guidance in the handbook.

Once the curricula were chosen, the next task was to develop a format that would help collectively frame the pieces in the specific context of THRE, Abolition Feminism, and D/IPV. This was done by creating a series of questions/bullet points to address for each piece:

1. Summary/Outline of the Curriculum

2. Why it's useful

3. Spotlights

4. Reflective Questions and Additional Considerations

5. Additional Resources

The first point was to offer the reader an overview of each piece. The second explains why each piece can be useful in D/IPV prevention work and why it fits into the handbook's overall framework. The third point spotlights particularly important, useful, or interesting sections, aspects, or ideas from each piece. The fourth section intends to encourage the reader to think about how they may use the piece in their own work and areas where it might be improved upon or developed in other ways. The final section offers additional, similar resources that may also benefit readers in creating a CAT group or another alternative prevention method.

The Project

Please see Appendix A.

CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Matters of family and relationship violence have long been relegated to the private sphere, causing widespread misinformation about the issue and leading survivors and others affected to feel isolated and shamed. These sentiments have historically been reflected in the response, or lack thereof, by law enforcement and the legal system. Following decades of concentrated efforts by activists, advocates, and survivors alike, the carceral system began to recognize and treat D/IPV as a criminal issue. While some survivors have certainly benefited from this, and the anti-violence movement's efforts have indeed caused the issue to be brought further into the public sphere, it has also contributed to hyperincarceration and resulted in additional ostracization of survivors who are already marginalized.

To address this, this field project is a handbook that includes case studies and other examples of transformative human rights education aimed at D/IPV prevention. The handbook attempts to take a structural and individual level focus in the hopes of being both personally and collectively transformative. Intended to be a starting point for educators, preventionists, and other anti-violence actors to visualize the possibilities of transformative human rights education as a tool for domestic violence prevention, it offers tips for creating Community Action and Transformation (CAT) groups that include supportive, educational, and activist components for survivors and those who are considered marginalized or at-risk. Additionally, the handbook may provide a sort of roadmap for preventionists, survivors, and concerned community members to advocate and organize for real, deep-rooted change within their communities.

This project may be of interest to professional D/IPV prevention workers, survivors, and others affected by violence, and academics, educators, and students interested in HRE examples.

The two theories that this work is rooted in, transformative human rights education and abolition feminism, are both grounded in the idea that true solutions come from the most affected communities. The significance of this project is that it offers an alternative method to prevent violence beyond the normative measures of social services or the legal system and aims to place power back into the hands of the people. Moreover, the methods included in this handbook also have an opportunity to be healing for survivors, as many feel that supporting others in similar situations to their own can help ease the negative impact of trauma. Finally, this project offers an additional example of what transformative human rights education can look like when combined with abolition feminism.

This handbook accomplishes its intended goals by providing a guide for developing Community Action and Transformation (CAT) groups. These CAT groups may be facilitated by nonprofit organizations, as is the case with the final case study, Mesa Redonda, by the Tahirih Justice Center in Houston, Texas, in universities or schools, or by more grassroots community collectives. The groups are made up of facilitators who have been trained to provide THRE-style curricula and facilitate trauma-informed discussions and activities between participants, who may include a variety of participants, including survivors of D/IPV, loved ones of survivors, those who have used harm, or other concerned community members. While the specific logistics and content of each group will vary by different factors, including location, demographics, and capacity, the overall framework is the same: provide group members with the resources and tools they need to understand the dynamics of D/IPV, especially as it relates to human rights, and encourage participants to identify areas in their own communities where they can advocate for changed or improved conditions that will contribute to the prevention of future violence.

The guide offers three case studies organized into a step-by-step process in order to develop a CAT group. The first step, Building a Solid Foundation, showcases a toolkit by Lara Brooks and Mariame Kaba (2018) entitled *Whose Security is it Anyway?* This toolkit addresses institutionalized violence in nonprofit organizations by providing a case study of an organization that re-evaluated its relationship with policing and surveillance after increased violence within one of its drop-in centers. The organization then restructured itself to develop non-carceral solutions that would decrease violence. This first step is intended to support the planning phase of CAT groups by ensuring organizers consider and mitigate areas of their own environment that may align more with the carceral state, which could subvert the goals of the CAT group. This may be especially useful for CAT groups that take place within nonprofits or other organizations that tend to have more established relationships with law enforcement and other criminal justice actors. Additionally, this step encourages a closer look at the capacity of those holding the groups, which is important when developing protocols and policies to address harm that may occur within the context of the group or even in the group itself.

The second step, Training the Facilitators, is framed by a curriculum by Bernaldo and Movidas (2015) entitled *Engaging Communities in Primary Prevention: Introduction to the Core Competencies.* This curriculum is intended to be a train-the-trainer resource that prepares facilitators to hold the groups. It includes lessons around topics such as different types of prevention approaches and systemic power inequality and concludes with a hands-on activity that prepares facilitators to engage communities in prevention work. The overall framework of this curriculum is perfect for preparing CAT group facilitators; however, some of the specific content may need to be adjusted to better fit each group's individual needs and materials. The field project encourages readers to include more material around human rights and D/IPV, and

offers an additional resource, a resource guide by the organization Survived and Punished, that contains ten different examples of curriculum and activities related to criminalization and D/IPV to provide inspiration for possible revisions of the CPEDV content.

The final step, Imagining the Final Product, offers a case study of what a CAT group might look like. Mesa Redonda, or *Round Table*, is a community group put together by Alondra Andrade, the Community Engagement Coordinator for Tahirih Justice Center in Houston, Texas, which is a nonprofit legal clinic dedicated to supporting immigrant survivors of gender-based violence. Inspired by the Survivor Agenda's *Toolkit for Kitchen Table Conversations*, which is included in the field project as an additional resource, Mesa Redonda is a "group of individuals that have a connection to ending violence and work towards building a framework for collective action in Houston that seeks to advance safety, dignity, and equality" (Andrade, 2020, p.1). The first cohort, which ran from 2020-2021, was made up of nine Spanish-speaking survivors and a few employees from Tahirih Justice Center. The preliminary discussions revolved around defining themes such as safety, vulnerability, violence, and change. Later, facilitators realized they needed to include an educational component to help participants engage in deeper conversations (Andrade, 2020). They added three primary themes to focus on: (1) *Collective Action is the Solution, Isolation is not;* (2) *Privilege in Our Communities;* and (3) *The Power of Empowerment* (Andrade, 2020).

While there were a few informational presentations to help introduce terms relating to power, privilege, and oppression, the primary focus was on the participants' understanding of the issues, making the learning process participatory and grounded in lived experience. In addition to terminology, the group learned about the way their governments were structured and avenues for action and activism (Andrade, 2020). Towards the end of the year, the group members were able

to identify ways that they could take collective action, which culminated in the writing of a letter to their county asking that an "enhanced library card" or an alternative method of identification that was more accessible to immigrants and undocumented community members, be accepted across county departments and divisions, rather than just in a few departments (Andrade, 2020). At the end of the year, the facilitators held a celebration in which the participants were heavily involved in the planning process. The celebration was held in a park and included a schedule of activities like art, yoga, and lunch. In addition to closing the group, it also emphasized the idea of healing and self-care, which were integral parts of the entire group process. While the group meetings are officially over, participants have built lasting community and maintain connection through a WhatsApp chat.

This case study showcases an incredible illustration of what a real CAT group might look like. The emphasis on survivor participation and being trauma-informed were not merely aspects of the group but rather integral parts of the structure itself. Utilizing tips and resources from each step, readers of this handbook can create and hold spaces for community members to learn more about interpersonal violence, including contributing societal factors and dynamics, and engage in collective action to reduce and prevent violence in their communities. Additionally, these spaces have an opportunity to be personally healing and transformative by building support networks, modeling healthy behaviors such as communication, and giving participants the chance to openly discuss violence that may have occurred in their own lives in a safe and supportive environment. In these ways, CAT groups offer an alternative method of preventing D/IPV beyond carceral solutions.

Recommendations

Of course, no solution is without limitations. The planning, development, and facilitation of these groups may be time-consuming and require resources such as physical space or funding that may not be easily accessible for smaller collectives. Additionally, for groups operating within a more traditional nonprofit environment, a school, or a higher education institution, issues may arise around buy-in from higher up, decision-making stakeholders. It may also be challenging to address those who harm within these groups. There may be a lot of pushback around involving those with a history of using harm for fear of survivor safety. These limitations will be a key area to consider in the planning phase, and they may even be useful content additions to address within the CAT group itself in order to collectively discuss the possible barriers to action and transformation.

Mesa Redonda is just one example of what a CAT group can look like. The knowledge that is created and shared, as well as the actions that are taken, will depend entirely on the facilitator's and participant's needs, experiences, and resources. Beyond CAT Groups, other creative, alternative prevention solutions exist. An example of this can be found in the organization, A Call for Change, which is the nation's first prevention helpline for those who use harm to call and receive non-judgemental support in changing their behavior. Future work may wish to examine the possibilities of combining the framework of A Call for Change with restorative justice and the CAT group model to more specifically target prevention work to those who use harm.

Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence advocates often say they work in the grey area. Interpersonal violence is a complex and highly nuanced issue that overlaps with countless other social and economic issues. A single solution to reducing and preventing violence does not exist.

This project offers just one alternative, and it is my hope that this work may be built upon and reconfigured to meet the evolving and varied needs of individuals and communities. There are many avenues to be explored. When communities come together to support one another in the fight for their own freedom, possibilities for future violence prevention initiatives are endless.

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Appendix A

CATS For Freedom:
Strategies for Creating Your Own Community Action and Transformation (CAT) Group

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Introduction

Unlike traditional thinking, the goal of most modern-day Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence (D/IPV) advocates is not to convince the survivor to leave an abusive partner. Rather, advocates work with survivors to help them explore their own autonomy - however that might look for the survivor. In other words, advocates aim to help survivors (re)discover their freedom. This handbook is grounded in a deep love of humanity and a desire to see every person free to be their full selves.

The realization of this hope requires healthy communities that can both support one another and hold each other accountable when necessary. The liberation of the individual is intrinsically tied to that of the community. Putting these concepts together helps to solidify the importance of violence prevention that centers those most impacted by harm and considers the entire community when developing solutions. This handbook intends to provide guidance to facilitators of violence prevention in creating Community Action and Transformation (CAT) groups that hold space for both trauma and joy and allow community members to learn about, practice, and implement freedom.

How to use this guide:

This handbook is for domestic violence preventionists, those who are affected by violence, and anyone else in either formal or informal settings who wish to learn more about community-based approaches to violence prevention. Beyond learning, the goal of these groups is to facilitate a process of both individual and collective healing and transformation - allowing participants to become active and engaged citizens by providing them with the tools, skills, and knowledge needed to identify and address areas in their own lives and communities that may contribute to violence and oppression.

This work is rooted in two theories: Transformative Human Rights Education (THRE) and Abolition Feminism. The first section provides a brief background and orientation of each theory. It concludes in a summary that ties both concepts to the focus of this work: Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence Prevention. The second section offers three case studies in a "step by step" format with anecdotal examples, tips, and reflective questions to support three crucial phases in developing a CAT group, which are outlined below:

Step One: Building a Solid Foundation

The first case study is intended to support the agency, organization, or group in developing the CAT group.

Step Two: Preparing the Facilitators

The second looks at the training and preparation process of the facilitators.

Step Three: Imagining the Final Product

The final case study illustrates an example of an existing group based out of Tahirih Justice Center in Houston, Texas, that exemplifies violence prevention combined with Transformative Human Rights Education.

Key Terms

Banking Education - Coined by Brazilian educator Paolo Freire, a "banking" education system is one in which the relationship between the teacher and the student is one where the teacher is the "knower" and deposits that knowledge into the student, who is presumed to know nothing.

Carceral Feminism - Carceral feminists generally believe that policing and prisons are solutions to gender-based violence. For example, if someone has been assaulted, carceral feminists may believe that the proper response should be to have the "perpetrator" stand trial before a judge and jury in a criminal court and that "justice" would look like having the perpetrator incarcerated as punishment for their crime.

Community of Practice - According to the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, a Community of Practice is the "[cultivation] of collaboration, support, and accountability between group members [by] establishing common values, frameworks, and goals…[in order to] help prevention practitioners reduce isolation, access resources, navigate challenges, and participate more effectively as a part of a broader movement." (2015, p. 6)

Mandatory Arrest - Mandatory arrest policies require law enforcement to identify the primary aggressor and make an arrest when they have reasonable suspicion that domestic violence occurred on the scene of a domestic disturbance call. These policies proliferated across the US after a 1981 study, dubbed "the Minneapolis Experiment," by researchers Richard Sherman and Lawrence Burke, found arrest to be associated with lower rates of recidivism in men who harmed their partners. The study was limited in scope, and later efforts to replicate the study failed to draw a consensus.

Nonprofit Industrial Complex - The Nonprofit Industrial Complex is a term used to describe the relationships between nonprofit or social service/justice organizations, private funders or corporations, and local and federal government that, according to INCITE!, "results in the surveillance, control, derailment, and everyday management of political movements."

Popular Education - Grounded in the work of Freire, popular education is a method that aims to empower marginalized communities to help them regain control of their own learning and change the social and political conditions that lead to oppression. This

methodology overturns the "banking" education system so that learners and educators are peers that both share and co-create knowledge rather than two distinct groups.

Positionality - According to the University of Michigan's Center for Social Solutions, "positionality focuses not only on how our individual identities are constructed but on how these identities shape the way we see the world in relation to those we interact with. Originally introduced in the field of sociology, positionality can help researchers acknowledge how their own distinct identities and viewpoints inherently influence the results of their work."

Socio-Ecological Violence Prevention Model - The Center for Disease Control and Prevention uses the socio-ecological model in their violence prevention efforts. According to the CDC, the model "considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors. It allows us to understand the range of factors that put people at risk for violence or protect them from experiencing or perpetrating violence. The overlapping rings in the model illustrate how factors at one level influence factors at another level."

Theories, Foundations, and Background

Abolition Feminism

Abolition Feminism recognizes and resists intersecting forms of oppression, including patriarchy, neoliberalism, and white supremacy. It asserts that abolition is most compelling when it is combined with feminism, and feminism is most inclusive when combined with abolition (Davis et al., 2022, p. 2). The theory has roots in the fight by 19th-century abolitionists to end chattel slavery. Proponents of Abolition Feminism assert that the modern carceral state is directly derived from the institution of slavery, making the modern abolition movement an extension of the earlier one (Davis et al., 2022).

Using a racial and gendered lens, abolition feminists critique carceral feminism, an ideology that uplifts the carceral system as the primary means to address gender-based violence issues like domestic and sexual violence, ignoring the root causes and impact of harm. Instead, abolition feminists maintain that carceral feminism and an over-reliance on the state cause greater harm among marginalized communities and perpetuate a reliance on policing systems. A common misconception about abolition is that it is only about tearing down and dismantling oppressive systems. This is an important part of abolition feminism, but equally important is imagining other alternatives and the process of collectively working towards liberation.

Policies like mandatory arrest, which were initially seen as victories for activists working on gender-based violence issues, contributed to an increase in incarceration, which disproportionately impacted Black and brown communities. Where the early anti-violence movement looked towards the governmental actors for justice, abolition feminism looks to the community, specifically those most impacted by violence, to create their freedom.

For more information about abolition feminism, check out these resources:

- Davis, A.Y., Dent, G., Meiners, E.R., & Richie, B.E. (2022). *Abolition. Feminism. Now*. Haymarket Books.
- Hassan, S. (2022). *Saving Our Own Lives*. Haymarket Books.
- Acheson, R. (2022). *Abolishing State Violence*. Haymarket Books.
- Ed. by Bierria, A., Caruthers, J., & Lober, B. (2022). *Abolition Feminisms: Organizing, Survival, and Transformative Practices*. Vol. 1, Haymarket Books.
- Ed. by Bierria, A., Caruthers, J., & Lober, B. (2022). *Abolition Feminisms: Feminist Ruptures Against the Carceral State*. Vol. 2, Haymarket Books.

(Transformative) Human Rights Education

The most generally accepted definition of human rights education (HRE) comes from the United Nations' 2011 *Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training*, which broadly states that the practice of HRE is comprised of all activities with the intent of developing respect for human rights and "fundamental freedoms" and preventing human rights violations. According to the declaration, this is done by teaching *about*, *through,* and *for* human rights. Below are a few examples of what each may look like.

Teaching ABOUT human rights: incorporating content and curricula that talk about human rights laws and declarations, norms and principles, violations, or examples of people's rights being fought for and/or upheld.

E.g., teaching a group of youth that relationship violence is a human rights violation by introducing them to declarations and conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Teaching THROUGH human rights: providing education in a way that respects both the learner's and the educator's rights and promotes their dignity.

E.g., the teacher who works with the youth receives adequate compensation, time off, and support from the administration. They respect the youth's individual perspectives, are culturally relevant, and encourage them to participate by sharing their lived experiences in a way that fosters creativity and humanizes the educational content.

Teaching FOR human rights: encouraging participants and learners to exercise, enjoy, respect, and uphold their own rights and the rights of others.

E.g., the final activity of the course is to have the students create a "relationship bill of rights," which they can choose to share with their parents or guardians in order to foster discussion among the family about how to ensure their right to safe and healthy relationships are being upheld and enjoyed both in the home and in their community.

Transformative human rights education, more specifically, generally takes place outside of "formal" education settings, such as schools, and instead in more "informal" education settings, like nonprofits and other community groups. This type of HRE critically examines society, power structures, and even the human rights system itself. Generally, the audiences for THRE are marginalized populations and youth.

The goal of this model is to build capacity for human rights activism with the purpose of driving long-term social change. Learners in this type of HRE are encouraged to critically examine their own local communities and lived experiences because they may have experienced or are currently enduring their own personal violations. As a result, not only does THRE work to address larger, systemic issues, but it also aims to promote healing and personal transformation. In this way, transformational human rights education

helps to balance the power dynamics between the educator and learner by recognizing that each group has valuable knowledge and experience to share with one another.

For more information about human rights education, check out these resources:

- Bajaj, M., & Flowers, N. (2017). *Human Rights Education : Theory, Research, Praxis*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc.
- Bajaj, M. (2011). *Human Rights Education: Ideology, Location, and Approaches*. Human Rights Quarterly, 33(2), 481–508.
- Hantzopoulos, M., & Bajaj, M. (2021). *Educating for peace and human rights: an introduction*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Melissa Canlas, Amy Argenal, & Monisha Bajaj. (2015). *Teaching Human Rights from Below: Towards Solidarity, Resistance and Social Justice*. Radical Teacher, 103(0), 38–46. https://doi.org/10.5195/rt.2015.226
- Tibbitts, F. L. (2017). *Revisiting 'Emerging Models of Human Rights Education.'* USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center.

Conclusion

In this handbook, each of these two theories work together by informing one another. Abolition feminism provides the groundwork for understanding the ways in which communities and those impacted by D/IPV are further harmed by criminalization, as well as guidance for the creative and collaborative process of developing solutions that support families and prevent future violence. Transformative human rights education offers a methodology for actualizing this process and encouraging collective knowledge-building among impacted community members. An essential aspect of both abolition feminism and transformative human rights education is the creation of collaborative and collective solutions. In this spirit, the following case studies are examples of work that is already being done by activists, advocates, academics, and others involved in D/IPV prevention and similar fields.

Case Studies

Case Study #1: *Lara Brooks & Mariame Kaba: Whose Security is it Anyway?*

        No space is immune to violence and abuse. The Nonprofit Industrial Complex, or the relationships between nonprofit organizations, private funders or corporations, and local and federal government, often means that complex power dynamics shape and limit the work that can be done in the nonprofit industry. The following case study is a great resource to help you begin preparing for your own prevention project or program, particularly in environments where hierarchical power struggles reproduce violence and oppression. This example gives insight and materials to develop plans for preventing and responding to violence that could occur within whatever environment your prevention program lives in. It also provides tools for reflecting on the power imbalances that may be at play in your space that could impact the work being done.

1. Overview/Summary
   a. This handbook, "Who's Security is it Anyway?" offers insight into ways to address and overcome institutional violence and surveillance in nonprofit organizations.
   b. The first section offers a background stating and explaining the problem of surveillance and criminalization in "youth-serving organizations, social services, and healthcare" spaces.
   c. The second section is introduced with a brief overview of community accountability, harm reduction, and transformative justice. It offers a case study of one Chicago nonprofit's efforts to minimize this by creating a structure of community accountability. When the nonprofit became a space filled with violence, surveillance and policing increased, prompting a meeting among leadership and staff to investigate solutions. It became clear that the program's capacity and sustainability would need to be thoroughly unpacked in order to structurally address the root issue. One of the primary methods used for this effort was the Community Healing, Accountability, and Transformation (CHAT) task force. The case study offers an in-depth look at CHAT's development, implementation, and evaluation, including recommendations and areas for growth.
   d. The third section provides actionable advice and strategies for implementing similar programs in other nonprofit settings. It lays out strategies for teamwork and role/structure development, ways to build the internal structure, and important considerations for healing and community care.
   e. The fourth section lists reflective questions for organizations to consider involving the reallocation of resources away from traditional security guards and policing and provides various tools and surveys to help reassess best practices that do not involve policing. The final section is a glossary that defines key terms used throughout the handbook, including

accountability, harm reduction, and organizing.

2. <mark>Why it's useful</mark>
    a. This toolkit is especially useful for those situated in a nonprofit setting, particularly for nonprofit service providers of DV. Although the focus is on getting security guards and police out of nonprofit organizations, more broadly, it can be used to address the institutionalized harm caused by the nonprofit industrial complex. Domestic violence service providers have a complicated history and, in many cases, an ongoing relationship with law enforcement and other carceral institutions. This toolkit offers guidance in re-evaluating and disassembling that relationship by developing structures to increase community accountability. This is important because those who participate in the CAT group may have difficulty building authentic trust with an organization if it has partnerships that conflict with the values being discussed in the group.
    b. Even if your organization is not situated in a nonprofit, this work may still be useful because it can help ensure that there is sufficient capacity in order to provide quality services. Additionally, it may assist in developing processes and protocols that can prevent and address any violence that may occur within or around the CAT group.

3. <mark>Spotlight</mark>
    a. Spotlight: Campaign Capacity

Taking on a new initiative, such as a community action and transformation group, can be a big deal when everyone is already overworked and potentially under-resourced. These conditions can increase the potential for violence to occur. Building a structure that accounts for this is essential. One component of this toolkit that addresses this issue is Campaign Capacity, which is a campaign taken from the case study of Broadway Youth Center's experience in reducing violence at a community youth center. (include page numbers for campaign capacity)

     i.   <mark>What is Campaign Capacity?</mark>
1. Campaign capacity was an initiative developed by the leadership of Broadway Youth Center to help develop community accountability within their organization and ultimately make spaces safer and more sustainable. To begin, they gathered information from various sources in order to take a deeper look at what capacity actually looked like in their space and to develop the next steps to help them meet their goal. The information they gathered came from youth-led community forums, one-on-one interviews

with both participants and workers, de-escalation workshop participants, and a community action and accountability task force.

Using this information, they were able to define capacity in their space as the total number of youth accessing services both on any given day and in a defined period of time, the number of youth in the space at any given moment, the number of resources available including staff and volunteers, and the physical space itself. From there, they identified the next steps and changes that needed to be made.

First, they needed to change their hours of operation to allow more time for a staff meeting. Second, they began conducting a daily "exhale," which allowed staff to debrief and share program updates. They also began limiting the total number of participants in the space, which increased productivity, quiet time, and time for rest. They then developed a Community Healing, Accountability, and Transformation task force to investigate and help implement additional new structures and processes for their team. Finally, they reallocated part of their budget to help meet critical needs.

    ii.   Why is it useful in this context?

        1. In nonprofit organizations, in particular, we tend to talk about "capacity building" and having a "lack of capacity" without really discussing what the idea of capacity actually means. This in-depth examination helps us better understand exactly what it is that's preventing us from providing quality services so that we can restructure things that are within our control in order to mitigate those barriers.

  b. Spotlight: CHAT

Violence can occur in any setting, including within the environment in which the group is being held, but also within the groups themselves. The Broadway Youth Center case study details their Community Healing, Action, and Transformation, or CHAT task force, that helped research, create, and implement a structure for preventing and addressing violence within their drop-in center.

    i.   What is CHAT, and how does it work

        1. CHAT stands for Community Healing, Action, and Transformation. CHAT was a task force from the Broadway Youth Center case study made up of 4-6 staff that met for 1.5-2 hours each week to respond to increasing violence. They were tasked with creating and submitting a proposal that was rooted in community accountability and harm reduction and included both long and short-term needs.

Their immediate action steps were to create a yearly work plan, do ongoing research on community accountability, and define the group's responsibilities and expectations. Short-term action steps included creating and implementing policies to reduce violence, completing training and skill shares about conflict resolution and de-escalation, and continuing community conversations by creating workshops and community forums. Their long-term action step was to create a youth-led community accountability model that could train and support young people around trauma, de-escalation, mediation, and violence prevention.

Evaluation of the program demonstrated a dramatic decrease in violence thanks to a variety of components discussed on pages 29 and 30 of the toolkit, including practical measures such as improving documentation and communication and consolidating important meetings on days when the center was not open for public service. The evaluation also revealed areas for improvement, including
   a. Increasing transparency and improving communication
   b. Having a clear communication process between non-CHAT staff and CHAT members if there are disagreements
   c. Prioritizing *all* forms of violence prevention, not just physical violence
   d. Improving accountability on issues of internalized oppression, including verbal violence
   e. Developing youth worker/youth partnerships
   f. Engaging with complex realities in ways that do not perpetuate pathology or institutionalized harm
   g. Solidarity between non-CHAT and CHAT staff

ii.   How can CHAT be implemented in this context
   1. The CHAT task force is a great first step to ensure that the foundations of CAT groups are built to prevent and address institutional violence. CHATS in this context may include the facilitators of the groups themselves or others involved in the process of creating the groups. The CHAT group may be tasked with ensuring the organization or collective has actionable steps to support capacity for the program, as well as to develop processes and policies around addressing and preventing violence that

may occur within the space, such as what to do if participants experience disagreements or if there is a conflict in boundaries.

4. <u>Reflective Questions and Additional Considerations</u>

Positionality and Context: Positionality is the socio-political context that creates identity. Understanding your own positionality as well as that of the group or organization in which the work takes place is critical for creating opportunities for transformation.

- Are you a worker in a nonprofit space? Consider what that space looks like. What is the experience of receiving services like? What does it look like to work there? What are the internal and external power dynamics that impact the work being done?
- Are you a student or faculty member in a high school or university? What is it like to work or study at your school, in your program? What power imbalances are at play, and how might those impact the work?
- Are you a concerned community member working with a community group to make this program? Who is involved in the group? Whose voices are not in the conversation, and who else should be involved?

Remember that where you're situated and what kinds of hierarchies exist within that place will impact your work.

Ask yourself:

- What does your community need?
- What resources are already available?
- What are the gaps, and where is there room for growth?
- What skills or tools do you have that may support the community in meeting that need?
- What can you *realistically* achieve?

5. <u>Additional Resources</u>
    a. [Community Justice Exchange: Transparency is not Enough](#)
        i. This short text offers an abolitionist framework for understanding the limitations of focusing solely on transparency in efforts to reform the criminal justice system. Although this particular resource is focused on the court system, the way that it lays out the difference between a reformist strategy and an abolitionist strategy offers thought-provoking questions that could help spark a broader critical discussion of the dynamics in the space in which your CAT group is operating.

STEP TWO: Preparing the facilitators

Case Study #2: *CPEDV: Engaging Communities in Primary Prevention: Introduction to the Core Competencies.*

Once you've built a structure for your CAT group, the next step will be to prepare the individuals who will be facilitating the group. Among other things, these facilitators will be responsible for giving presentations to participants on key topics such as domestic violence dynamics, human rights related to domestic violence, and social justice concepts to help them build foundations for activism. In addition to the content, the facilitators will also need to be able to hold space for difficult conversations and healing, as well as prepare and support the participants as they create and implement organizing and activism strategies. These are big responsibilities that require thoughtful and detailed training. The following curriculum is a great example of what this training may look like.

1. Overview/Summary
    a. The aim of CPEDV'straining curriculum is to support prevention practitioners in collaborating with communities to develop local social-change initiatives using Primary Prevention Core Competencies. The curriculum is divided into three parts: foundations, organizing communities for social justice, and moving to action, for a total of 27 hours of training. The modules are meant to be cumulative and are intended to build off of one another.
    b. Foundations: Part one comprises nine modules that help orient the group to the rest of the curriculum. Participants are invited to share personal narratives through a Passion Story Activity to explain why they care about creating an equitable world. This activity is humanizing and helps to build community. They then learn about the Primary Prevention Core Competencies framework by reviewing topics such as Levels of Prevention and the Socio-Ecological model before discussing different approaches to prevention, including Criminal Justice, Human Rights, Public Health, and Social Justice, with an emphasis on the last two.
    c. Organizing Communities through Social Justice: Part two has six modules that focus on the Social Justice Approach and provide an overview of "systemic power inequalities that underlie violence in relationships and society." The participants learn how to develop coalitions and alliances between intersecting movements and how to create community-driven initiatives.
    d. Moving into Action: Part three also contains six modules that offer concrete tools and case studies of initiatives that apply the previously discussed approaches and frameworks. Participants will learn about the Collaborative Change Approach to help them engage communities and how to bring stakeholders to the table. They are then guided through an experiential consensus-building process and then encouraged to develop action plans that they can use to apply what they have learned.

2. <u>Why it's useful</u>
   a. This curriculum is a great resource to support the training of those who will be facilitating the groups. The curriculum includes sections to help the facilitators learn about important foundational subjects such as intersecting oppression and the ways that structural violence connects with interpersonal violence, which will, in turn, help them share this knowledge with group participants. The second and third parts of this curriculum will support facilitators in organizing with participants and provide guidance for future strategizing and action planning.

3. <u>Spotlights</u>
   a. Spotlight: Good foundations
      i. The values and methods that underlie this curriculum fit well within a THRE framework. This training uses a popular education approach, as developed by Brazilian educator Paolo Freire and includes aspects of mutual mentorship, which is a method of learning that assumes that both the learner and the educator have important knowledge to share with one another and resists the normative "banking" approach to education. It also incorporates a trauma-informed approach and passion story shares, which are great ways to humanize education and attempt to be personally transformative.
      ii. The focus on a "community of practice" is reminiscent of the previous case study's emphasis on community accountability. Finally, it includes an action component in Part 3, Module 5, which is key to the *transformative* aspect of transformative human rights education. All of these foundations help provide a great example of what a human rights education-like group is like as a participant. This is beneficial to help the facilitators gain experience that can help them better fulfill their role in the group.

4. <u>Reflective Questions and Additional Considerations</u>
   a. Content about human rights and DV and the criminal justice approach
      i. Depending on your capacity, this may be a revision or addition. Both the human rights and criminal justice approaches are two important factors that are just briefly mentioned in Part 1, Module 7 of this curriculum. In order to prepare the facilitators to introduce and teach these topics in the CAT group, they first need to learn about the material themselves, so you may wish to revise the lessons in this curriculum to better align with your plan for the CAT group. See the additional resources below for possible examples of this content.
   b. Consider who the facilitators are. Are they staff, volunteers, or both? What is their motivation for becoming facilitators of this sort of group? What kind of personal experience do they bring, and how might that shape their role as a facilitator?

    c.   Asking your facilitators what support they need is a key part of the process. These needs may evolve over time.

5. Additional Resources

    a.   Survived and Punished Resource Guide

        i.   This resource is a compilation of 10 different curricula and activities that can be used to understand "about the intersections between racialized gender violence and criminalization, carceral feminism, domestic violence, crimmigration and more." These activities may be beneficial inclusions into facilitator training to help them understand these concepts, but you may also find some of this material useful to include in the CAT groups themselves.

STEP THREE: Imagining the final product
Case Study #2: *Tahirih Justice Center: Mesa Redonda*

1. Overview/Summary

    a. Inspired by the Survivor's Agenda Toolkit for Kitchen Table Conversations, Mesa Redonda is a Houston, Texas-based group of immigrant survivors of gender-based violence facilitated by staff from Tahirih Justice Center, a nonprofit that offers legal and social services to immigrant survivors. The information about Mesa Redonda has been obtained from an unpublished manuscript. The group has met monthly for just over a year. Group members are invited to join a Whatsapp chat to continue the conversation beyond the monthly call. At the end of the year, they met in person for a healing retreat. The first cohort was an all-Spanish-speaking group that shared similar cultures and values, which helped to build authentic connections between group members and staff. The second cohort, which started around a year after the first finished, is an Arabic-speaking group. Each meeting followed a similar pattern:

        i. Introductions and check-ins
        ii. Discussion/learning
        iii. Thanks for joining/resource shares

    b. The first meeting, attended by nine survivors, began by establishing community rules to protect everyone's safety and confidentiality and continued with introductions and an icebreaker question: "where is the place that brings you the most peace?" The conversation, which ran between 30-45 minutes, was framed around the following questions:

        i. Where do you feel the safest, and what about that place makes you feel safe?
        ii. Where do you feel the most vulnerable?
        iii. If you have sought help to address sexual violence or harassment, what was most helpful to you? What resources and information have you had success accessing? Where and how did you find out about them?
        iv. What systems need to change to end sexual violence or sexual harassment or to change the way we address it?
        v. What resources do communities need to create justice and healing?
        vi. What is the most important thing that needs to change to help survivors of sexual violence and sexual harassment? How can elected officials and others help make that vision a reality?
        vii. Who should be held accountable for making change happen?
        viii. What are the barriers to this vision?
        ix. What role can you play in helping make change happen?

1. In a memo that summarized the conversation, group members said that safety felt like familiarity. They also said that when seeking services to address violence, they looked to familiar things, such as family, friends, and faith. On the other hand, a sense of vulnerability came from unknown things. Places or situations that were unfamiliar or uncontrollable contributed to feelings of anxiety and vulnerability. Members who were undocumented also brought up that these feelings increased when in government offices or around government officials.

c. The second meeting also had 9 participants. The group discussed a series of questions that asked how change could occur to support survivors, and the discussion specifically focused on the workplace and educational settings. Many of the participants expressed that they had experienced violence in the workplace, mainly from male employees who did not seem to respect them. They then discussed the idea of respect and what it feels like to be respected and respect others. On the topic of school, many of the participants, who were parents, said that a lot of responsibility lay with the parents to have conversations with their children.

    i. After the second meeting, facilitators realized that they needed to add an educational component to the groups to help future discussions on subjects such as systemic oppression and social change work, including elements of "learning and unlearning."

d. Following the realization after the second meeting, subsequent groups were focused on themes such as

    i. *Collective Action is the Solution; Isolation is not*

    ii. *Privilege in our Communities*

    iii. *The Power of Empowerment*

e. After 8 group meetings, a solid community had been established, and the clients who participated were fully immersed in the work. The next phase, the "reimagining" phase, was primarily guided by the participants. Each group seemed to be an opportunity to learn more about what was going on in their community, how it worked and affected their own lives, and how they could get involved to change things that were important to them. Participants learned more about how local governments work and what they could do to make their voices heard, including writing letters, making phone calls, and participating in community hearings. They brought in issues that mattered to them, and the facilitators used that to guide their conversations and helped them learn how to enact change in various ways.

    i. One example of the type of collective action this group took was writing a letter to their local county commissioners asking that county departments and services recognize an "enhanced library card" as an

      acceptable form of identification since many county residents had difficulties accessing other types of identification, making many aspects of their lives that much more difficult.

    f.   Around the year mark, the group's facilitators held a "healing circle retreat" for the participants to get together in person. The retreat was held at a park and included various self-care activities, including yoga, nature painting, journaling, gardening, music and dancing, and food. One of the group members had a knack for self-care and led many of the activities. The food and other resources were also collective actions and were the result of the participant's social networks, including one participant who had a friend with a passion for cooking and catering and served their lunch.

    g.   The final activity was an art activity where participants poured different paints into a cup that each represented different parts of themselves or different experiences they've had throughout their lives. They then dumped the cup on a canvas and moved it around, creating a cascade of different colors. The point was to show that each of those experiences and parts of themselves, for better or worse, created a beautiful painting, which symbolized their whole selves.

    h.   The healing retreat marked the "end" of the first cohort, but the group's WhatsApp continues to have active members. Although the cohort no longer meets regularly, the community that was built through the duration of the Mesa Redonda extends beyond monthly meetings. Facilitators have been considering ways to continue the successes of the group, and one idea was to hold a conference with different cohorts. The possibilities are endless!

2. Why it's useful

    a.   This is a stunning example of the type of collective action and transformation that can be done when those who are most impacted by violence are given the space and resources to come together. This group was able to build a strong community and learn, heal, and change together to stop violence in their communities without the intervention of any carceral system.

3. Spotlights

    a.   All of it! Everything was so thoughtfully planned and executed, from the foundations that promoted the well-being of both the individual participants and the collective group to the flexibility of the facilitators and their ability to recognize when they needed to pivot and allow more space for learning/unlearning.

4. Reflective Questions and Additional Considerations

    a.   What are the resources that exist in your community or organization that may make something like this possible? Is there something similar that already exists where you might be able to incorporate some elements of this CAT group?

    b.   Adding a component of education about DV/IPV and how it relates to human rights may increase the healing potential for survivors to understand what happened to them and how dynamics of power and control extend to the larger

community. Additionally, using the language of human rights may be beneficial in collective action work as it can help to legitimize the cause in the eyes of funders, politicians, etc.

5. Additional Resources
    a. Survivor's Agenda: A Toolkit for Kitchen Table Conversations
        i. This toolkit offers easy-to-understand guidance for the development of "Kitchen Table Conversations," which is the model that the Mesa Redonda groups were based on. These kitchen table conversations, when combined with the tips in this handbook, can be amazing examples of Transformative Human Rights Education.
    b. A Call for Change Helpline
        i. A Call for Change Helpline is the first-of-its-kind violence prevention helpline in the US, created to support those who harm in changing their behavior. This resource is an example of a different kind of creative prevention approach - just one of the many possibilities that exist when empathetic people put their minds and hands together to think and work outside the box.

Conclusions and Future Recommendations

The intention of this handbook is to encourage those involved in D/IPV prevention in reimagining what that prevention work can look like in ways that move towards community-based solutions and away from carceral "solutions." Community Action and Transformation groups like Mesa Redonda are just one example of what this might look like. Another example, included in step three under "Additional Resources," is an abuse prevention helpline, "A Call for Change," that offers space for those who harm to talk about why it is they make those choices in order to help them change their mindset and behavior in a nonjudgemental way. This type of radical creativity is crucial in preventing interpersonal violence in communities.

Most importantly, this handbook seeks to provide sources of hope. This work is not easy. Every day, we hear stories of violence that can often make us question whether we really have what it takes to transform the world into a better place. Burnout and vicarious trauma lead many to turn away from the problem for the sake of their own well-being. The examples included in this handbook prove that there are people who aren't just thinking about how to liberate communities but are actively testing things out and putting things into practice. Sometimes we try things that don't work: that's part of the process. It's a learning opportunity. We do not do this work alone. Bringing our communities into the conversation is an effort that is not only worthwhile but necessary. By adding these seats to the table, we breathe new life into the movement and, subsequently, ourselves.