

Working With Men who Have Used Violence

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Thrilling Agenda

- Social responses
- Complexity: Ron and Dennis
- Violence is deliberate
- The language of effects applied to violent behaviour
- Twin stereotypes of abusive men and abused women
- Engaging men in different settings

Social Responses to Offenders

- Swift and decisive social responses (E. Gondolf)

“The effectiveness of offender treatment depends in large part on the system of which the treatment is a part.”

- Criminal Justice & Mental Health

Slow, non-enforcement

Dual charging

Mitigate offender responsibility

Men lacking skills and awareness, out of control

Specialized courts, services not available

Blame victim, stigmatize children

Section 15 reports

Ron . . .

Violence is (with rare exceptions) Deliberate

Perpetrators anticipate and suppress victim resistance.

Larger pattern of domination (e.g., isolation, money)

Control during assaults

Threats

Beginning of the relationship

In the community

Responses to “swift and certain” social responses

Violence as an “Effect”

Although violence is deliberate, it is described as an effect of other forces.

Applied to victims, the language of effects conceals responses and resistance.

Applied to offenders, the language of effects conceal responsibility.

Psychological Explanations of Men's Violence

- The coca-cola theory
 - Shake him up and he must “go off”, explode, ejaculate
 - Tensions slowly build and drive behaviour
- The fool
 - Does not understand and has no skills
- The socialized dupe
 - Has internalized patriarchal ideology/discourse
 - Mindlessly repeats patterns from family of origin
 - Is prevented from being responsible by “restraints”
- The victim
 - Abused as child, poor attachment, acts out of pain
- The monster
 - Extremely and deliberately violent, the killer

Rage and intimate abusiveness are closely tied to issues in early development, and seeing this connection can. . . . enable us to chart cyclical buildups of internal tension as a key element in intimate abusiveness. Such cyclical tension is, I believe, a personality consequence of a disrupted attachment process, a pathway linking early problems with adult pathology. From John Bowlby's descriptions of insecurely attached infants "arching away angrily while seeking proximity" to the ambivalence of the abusive adult, a lifelong thread appears in the psychological profiles of abusive men. This thread includes ambivalence toward the partner, dysphoria produced by intimacy, and a tendency to blame the partner for the dysphoria. The latter process spirals upward on self-amplifying ruminations that produce unbearable tension states that culminate in violence.

(Dutton, 1998, p.vii)

For Don, control meant turning Martha into a puppet, stifling her independence, taking away any life she may have had apart from him. He was **tortured** by the **fear** that she would abandon him, and no matter how hard he tried to squelch that fear by asserting control, the **fear** never left him. This helps explain why Don was battering Martha practically every other day rather than episodically. He felt constantly **vulnerable** to losing her, and he released the demons of his **vulnerability** through violence.

(Jacobson & Gottman, 1998, p. 75)

From “The Cycle Theory of Violence”

Generally, she realizes that his battering behaviour is out of control and that he will not respond to reason.

(Walker, 1979, p. 62)

The batterer ends up not understanding what happened. His rage is so great that it blinds his control over his behaviour. He starts out wanting to teach the woman a lesson, not intending to inflict any particular injury on her, and stops when he feels she has learned her lesson.

(Walker, 1979, p. 60)

The batterer, **spurred on by her apparent passive acceptance** of his abusive behaviour, does not try to control himself.
(Walker, 1979, p. 57)

During the first stage, minor verbal abuse, the woman tries to calm the abuser and often changes her lifestyle to avoid angering the man. This usually **sets a precedent of submissiveness by the women building the gateway to future abuse**. The second stage consists of an “uncontrollable discharge of tensions that have been built up during phase one.

(Ciraco, 2001, p. 169)

Both the batterer and the battered woman fear they cannot survive alone, and so continue to maintain a bizarre **symbiotic relationship** [and] **cannot extricate themselves**. (Walker, 1979, p. 43)

Judge's Comments: Regina v. Hunka (2003)

There is an underlying violence that is released by the cocaine . . . and that is the part that ends up tying up your partner with duct tape and you are incredibly lucky that she did not die on you. I mean, when you choke somebody until they lose consciousness, you do not know they are going to come back.

Ms. Smith, you should not contact him because you can put him in a position where he is breaching this order, and he may go back to jail, which is not helpful for anybody. You are part of the problem. You are assisting him in behaving in this way by putting yourself in a position where you could be assaulted.

Ms. Smith, if you want him to get better, you have got to give him a chance to heal himself, and he cannot heal himself around you.

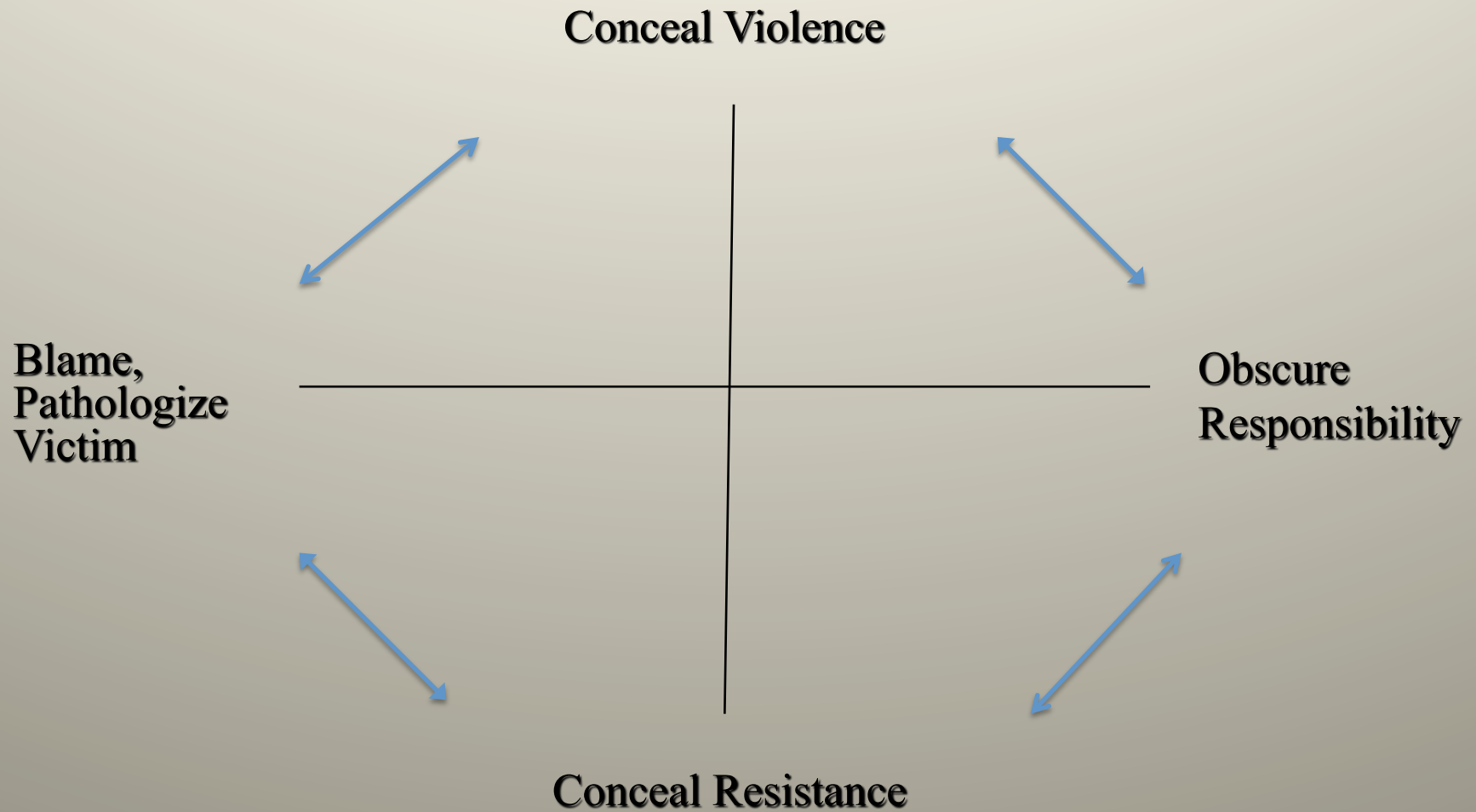
Man Arrested in Frying Pan Dispute

Gotenburg

Things got too hot in the kitchen for Alex and Margareta Edler yesterday, when a disagreement over dinner turned violent. Margareta was hit on the head with a frying pan and went to hospital with minor injuries, after police and paramedics attended the scene. She exclaimed, “Being hit on the head with a frying pan is not what I call cooking!”

Alex was arrested and released. He stated, “I feel very bad about what has happened. Cooking has always been a strain on our relationship. We come home tired and hungry and just can’t communicate.” Bill was apparently triggered by Sue’s basil cream sauce. “That’s no excuse”, said Bill, “I can’t allow Sue’s cooking to affect me this way. I need to deal with my basil cream sauce issues”. The couple will attend a new evidence-based, trauma-informed program offered by Gotenburg Family Services, headed by Ann Hanbert, for couples caught in the cycle of culinary conflict.

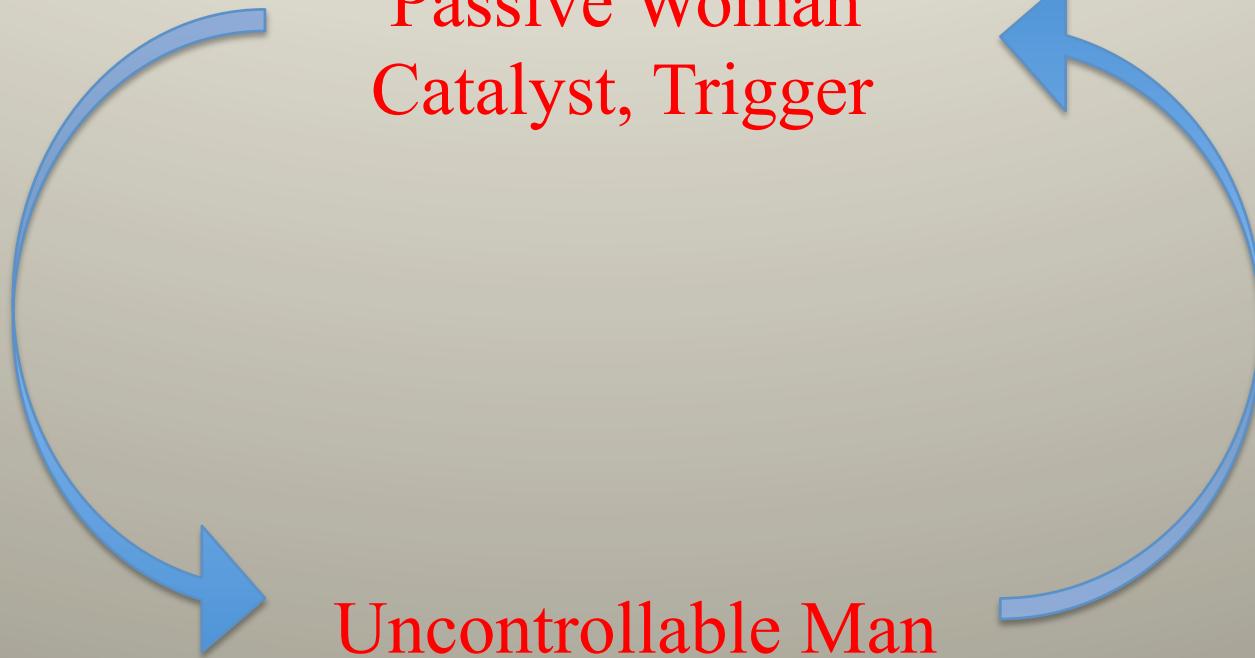
Four Operations of Language



Twin Stereotypes of “Symbiotic Relationship”

Passive Woman
Catalyst, Trigger

Uncontrollable Man
“Triggered”, “Angry”



In short . . . men are compelled to be violent and controlling by forces they do not understand and cannot control:

childhood abuse anger alcohol stress
unemployment tension stupidity lack of
skill
restraints patriarchy masculinity attachment issues
depression adhd etcetera . . .

What does this mean for how to work with men who have used violence?

Psycho-education: Teach, prescribe, instruct, evaluate

Responsibilization: Break down denial, pressure

These measures too easily maximize correction by experts.
Perpetuate standard stereotypes.

These twin stereotypes underpin negative and ineffective social responses, which too easily further disempower victims and embolden offenders.

Implications/Observations

- Men already know how to be respectful, non-violent
- O'Connor: Men are more involved in reflecting on their actions and responsibility than is usually presumed
- Todd: Men speak two languages, the language of effects and the language of responses

“Self-correction is better than correction by others”.

Nick Todd (2000)

Finding Control, Deliberation: Example 1

A man gave a long and agitated description of how his wife “pushed his buttons” and how he “lost it”. In the middle of the description, he said that he broke through her patio door with a hammer and “headed for her bedroom . . . just seeing red”.

T: “So, just a second, can I just ask you . . . after **you broke** the window, what did **you do** with the hammer?”

C: “Oh, I put it down. You don’t think I’m going into her bedroom with a hammer in my hand. I’m not frikkin’ stupid”.

T: “Okay . . . well . . . that was very **deliberate of you** . . . to **put down** the hammer. How did **you manage** that?”

Reflexive Frame Breaks: Problematizing Responsibility

C: She accepted this guy's phone number and I got really pissed off. Like, that's wrong, it's just really wrong. And she never told me about kissing this guy until we moved out here. And it was like, you know, I have a very hard time trusting women. I have yet to have a woman that's . . . and . . . **it's my own fault, maybe its because of me** But, you know, I've yet to have a woman remain loyal.

T: What's got **you thinking**, maybe **I had a hand** in this, maybe **it's my own fault?**

C: Because . . . **I feel I push them away. I force them away.**

Problematizing Responsibility cont'd

T: **How?**

C: By **being angry, being jealous. I'm a very jealous person.**

T: So **you've been thinking** over this problem, where the trust doesn't seem to be there, like, "**I'm wondering** if my anger"

C: Yeah, I think it's got a lot to do with it. **I push them away. I pushed Sue away** because I can't just let them just go and do what they want. I have a hard time. I want . . . you know, I don't want to be a push-over . . . but **I don't want to be . . . as aggressive as I have been.**

Alternative to Responsibilization: Example 1

A 22 year old man in prison for violent assaults is nearing the end of his sentence. He describes feeling “edgy” and “pissed off” because he is “short” and that he is hoping someone will “look at me the wrong way” so he can “explode” and “let it all out”. He’s worried about getting out and wants to “get it (anxiety) out of my system” so he can leave feeling “relaxed” and “happy”.

Responsibilizing:

“Is there a better way to handle how you’re feeling?”

Alternative:

“Why is leaving prison in a good frame of mind important to you?”

Alternative to Responsibilization: Example 2

A 45 year old verbally abusive man presents a long account of the many negative things his wife has done during the marriage and separation. He summarizes, “I’ve realized I’ll never figure her out.”

Responsibilizing:

“I think our job here is to focus on your behaviour, not hers. How do you think you might have contributed to the problems in the marriage?”

Alternative:

“So you’re thinking that spending more time trying to figure out what she’s doing is probably pretty pointless. What tells you that and what do you think is a better thing to focus on?”

Alternatives to Responsibilization: Example 1

A 15 year old boy in a residential program for “acting-out youth” “trashes the room”, throwing furniture. A chair breaks a window. Later, the boy is willing to take responsibility for breaking furniture and for dealing with his anger inappropriately but insists that breaking the window was “an accident”.

Responsibilizing:

“Don’t you think that since you threw the chair you should take responsibility for the window breaking?”

Alternative:

“So if you had broken the window on purpose that would not be good. Why do you think that breaking things on purpose is not good?”

The Dreaded Small Group Activity

In groups of 4, spend a few minutes on both sets of questions.

Set 1:

Why are men violent, abusive?

What causes men to be violent, abusive?

Set 2:

In what circumstances are men most likely to choose violence?

What social conditions and responses enable men to use violence against women?

Working in Child Protection with Men Who Have Used Violence

Engage with men immediately, with safety

- their “concerns”
- “accountability planning”
- their view of social responses
- their responses to social responses
- reflect openly on language/framing

Do not, with rare exceptions, tell the woman to separate

- this sets up a cat and mouse game
- gives the offender power
- leads to pathologizing, blaming the woman

A Response-Based Approach to Working with Men in Groups

Structure around the group

Working with social workers, team leaders

Referral, intake

Men, partners

Partner contact

Group process

Dennis . . .

“Whose tear drop is this?”

Way Tack!!

Thank you very much everyone.

Especially Ann, Viveka, Lena, and Anita.