



## Men Experiencing Domestic Abuse



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## Objectives

- Understanding domestic violence/abuse and the developing area of working with men experiencing abuse
- The face of men experiencing abuse
- Learning how to support men experiencing abuse in relationships

Important to note the area of working with males as victims and females as perpetrators is in its infancy, therefore much is unknown (comparably speaking)

I'd like to share a little about what we've been learning



## Overview

- Rates & themes of D.V. against males
- Video on female use of abuse
- Complexities: issues men face
- Working with male victims: Case study
- Calgary's Male Outreach Program



## 2 Research Schools:

- “Feminist” (Pagelow, Walker, Dobash)
  
- “Family conflict” (Straus & Gelles, Hamel)

Generally speaking (others approach the issue from angles such as systemic)

DV as a product of patriarchy, viewing men as perpetrators and women as victims

Vs

DV as a more interactive, systemic, and complex issue, often involving abuse perpetrated in both directions. Sometimes going so far as describing women as violent as men



## Domestic Abuse

### Instrumental Violence

- Power
- Aimed to dominate and express authority
- Motivated by general control

Patriarchal Terror

### Expressional Violence

- To express anger/frustration or other immediate emotions
- Infrequent
- Situation specific

Common Couple Violence

Johnson ('02, '06)

“Non-overlapping populations”

Regardless of typology, each involves choice & therefore, **accountability**

Common/situational Couple violence form of violence is not generally reflective of a need to control the other partner, usually arises out of an argument, rarely escalates over time, and is more likely to be mutual.

**-Mental health, poor emo regulation (e.g., anger management), mental health, or violent family of origin can increase risk for use of abuse, and help us understand or explain abuse; however, they do not excuse responsibility for the decision to use abuse.**



## Rates: General Social Survey (GSS)

### Physical Abuse:

- 7% total – 6% in males (546,000 men), 7% in females (653,000 women)
- The majority of spousal violence is not an isolated event
  - 54% men said more than once
  - 11% men said 10x or more

Most of the rates I'll be discussing come from opposite-sex domestic relationships – targeting men in opposite-sex relationships

Rates depend on the study you look at: In U.S., crime victimization studies find low rates (1%) as they look at reported crime; family conflict studies find higher rates (16%) and more gender symmetry - "women are as physically aggressive"

Does 7vs6% mean that men are victimized as often as women? That men experience at least as much violence as women? (21% women said 10x or more = female victims may experience more repeat violence than male victims)

20% of court victims are men; Shelters report 10% of their calls come from men.

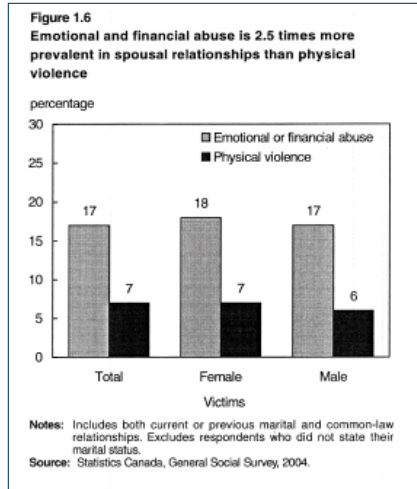
Some will argue that the frequency of violence reflects the severity of the DV more than the severity of a single episode

Also note: women are more likely to be injured

## Rates: GSS

### Emotional Abuse:

- Men and women are equally likely to experience emotional abuse such as controlling (e.g., jealousy, knowing where the other is)



Emotional Abuse: demeaning/criticizing, belittling the partner, undermining their self-worth

These equivalent rates are similar in U.S.



## Rates: Meta Analysis (Archer '00)

- Women *slightly* more likely to hit men, & to use violence more frequently
- Men *slightly* more likely to inflict injuries
- Note different types of samples: women's refuge (e.g., shelter) vs community samples

Analysis of studies over the 1980s & 1990s

"slightly" because frequency of injuries was low

All studies were self-report: studies show women are more likely than men to overestimate use of violence, men underestimate (Kimmel)



## Turning Point: Women Who Abuse

Video



## Men Who Have Been Abused



## Rates

- Men primarily experience emotional/verbal abuse
- 19% of men reported being injured, 2% sought medical attention
- Only 17% of men who have experienced abuse report to police, 20% to social services
- 10% of victims seeking shelter support are men
- Men constitute ~18% of intimate murder vics in Canada, 30% in U.S.

While men are less frequently injured, they more often experience abuse with objects (throwing, hitting with objects)

44% of women claimed they were injured, 13% sought medical attention.

Even though the violence men experience may be less injurious, it is no less serious

Women are at 4to5x greater risk of spousal homicide

Kimmel: 30% male DV murder rate from FBI



## Themes of Victimization

- Physical abuse is (10x) more likely in the context of emotional abuse
- Men's Experience:
  - Slapped, threat to be hit
  - Hit with an object
  - Threat with weapon, Kicked, bit
  - When injured, likely to be severe injury
  - Most commonly emotional/verbal/psychological

Emo Abuse: controlled, partner jealousy, ridicule, isolation

Indeed, men who report violence to the police are more likely than women to have sustained injury (stats can)

[Women's Experience: Pushed, Shoved, Grabbed; Beat, Choked, threat/use knife/gun; Repeated; Injury more likely]



## Themes of Victimization

- MDAOP themes:
  - Never good enough
  - Public humiliation/ridicule
  - Neglected needs or responsibilities
  - Destroyed property
- Emotionally unsafe
- Possibility of physical harm

-not cleaning enough, helping out enough, doing it right

-In front of friends

-Not respecting need to space/time out, neglecting financial responsibilities (e.g., spending) and refusing to participate in a collaboration of this responsibility, or spending to punish financially

-Breaking tools, letting pet feces accumulate in the truck he bought



## Risk Factors

- Witnessing & experiencing abuse in childhood
- Abusive partner heavily drinks alcohol
- Between 25 and 34 years old
- Living common-law
- In the relationship for 3 years or less
- Aboriginal
- Life stress, or change in life circumstances
- NOT income or education

Heavy Drinking: > 5 drinks, significantly higher risk than moderate or never heavy drinking pop (1/4 men reported their female partner had been drinking)

Young men (25 - 34) are 4/5 x more likely to expc abuse than older (45+)

Aboriginal men are 18x more likely to experience abuse

Conflict in other areas of perpetrator's life (e.g., change in finances, moving, beginning family)

Refs: NCFV, GSS



## Effects of Abuse

### Most common experiences:

- Emotional fear
- Shame
- Silence
- Confusion
- Hurt
- Disappointment
- Low self-worth
- Low relationship S-E
- Confused responsibility
- Learned helplessness
- Family alliances
- **Emasculated**

The bulk of abuse experienced by males tends to be emotional, verbal, psychological

Interestingly, men are more reluctant to acknowledge that the abuse affects them emotionally - a greater proportion of men said it did not affect them (e.g., reported less feeling depressed, hurt/disappointed, or suffering anxiety attacks)

Can men be called “victims”, when the history of the term victim of abuse comes with the emotions of fear and terror more often experienced by female victims?

My personal experience has been that victims frequently move from experiencing abuse to lashing out aggressively (becoming the perpetrator) – furthermore, male perpetrators often present as victims. The difficulty becomes **\*HOW DO YOU HEAR/VALIDATE THE VICTIM STORY WHEN LISTENING TO AGGRESSOR STORY?**

**Men who are abused are no less deserving of compassion**

While men may not experience the terror/fear that women more frequently report, their experience still merits attention



## Stereotypes

Male Stereotypes	Female Stereotypes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-“Real” men are not victims</li> <li>-Men don’t ask for help, in control</li> <li>-Emotionally self-reliant, stoic</li> <li>-Men are abusers, women are victims</li> <li>-Bigger, more powerful than women</li> <li>-Don’t get scared/hurt</li> <li>-Men must anticipate their partner’s needs and change to meet their desires</li> <li>-Don’t let others see you sweat – you have to be tougher than the next guy</li> <li>-A man must be dominant in his relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Caring, gentle mothers</li> <li>-Must put their family first</li> <li>-Defenseless</li> <li>-Women’s violence is relatively harmless</li> <li>-Women must keep their man in line</li> <li>-Warm</li> <li>-Judgmental</li> <li>-Temperamental/emotional</li> <li>-Women will have catfights</li> </ul>

Men may deny their feelings (emotional or physical)

You never hit a woman

Literature is beginning to challenge the notion that women are characteristically non-aggressive (e.g., relational aggression)

Men’s stories are questioned more

Men’s toughness can leave them feeling isolated



## The “Flip” between perpetration and victimization



## The “Flip”: DV Complexities

- The unilateral approach insufficient
- Struggle for control
- Using violence after experiencing prolonged emo abuse
- Karpman’s Triangle (conflict roles) – Blurred responsibility

It may not even be helpful to get to the bottom of who’s the primary perpetrator/victim; maybe more important to invite the client to tell you what they think you need to know, and what they think they need to change.

(Hamel: vic/perp distinctions are overstated in mutual abuse; even when phys abuse is unilateral, overall abuse is often bilateral; women and men engage in comparable levels of controlling & abusive behaviors)

Often, the victim in one relationship will go on to perpetrate abuse in another relationship (e.g., the parents bringing in violent son may have used abusive behaviors against him in past)

Steve: wife attempting to control, isolate, impose her feelings of insecurity in the relationship, following him around the house until Steve called her names back and physically grabbed her

Jeff: GF attempting to control, frame, financially threaten

Ron: Son attempting to manipulate, threaten, intimidate, until Ron reached end of patience and acted violently

True victims as blaming themselves out of fear of the abuser, dependency needs, denial of the abuse, or **guilt for the abuser**

Violence is not caused by relationships problems, nor can stress excuse the use of violence. However, violence can be used in response to relationship



## Supporting Men Experiencing Domestic Abuse



## Supporting Men

### What to look for:

- Anxiety & Depression most commonly reported effects
- Concern for children
- Confusion, blurred sense of responsibility



## Supporting Men

### ■ GOALS:

- Expose violence
- Clarify responsibility
- Elucidate and honor resistance
- Contest blaming (pathologizing...) victims

Expose violence to client, define violence & help them identify it; advocating for victims in community by building awareness

part of silence may come from the dearth of services

Responsibility for abuse, vs responsibility for emotions, responsibility for safety (problem of taking partner's stuff on) – assign resp., don't blame

WADE: resistance & responses to abuse

- Assumes the client knows, inherently, that the abuse is not right/OK; and that they must have done something congruent
- How did you respond? What did you do?
- Example (read Wade excerpt)



# Case Example



## Supporting Men: Safety

### Safety Planning:

- When lethality or danger is high
- To increase the victim's ability to protect him/herself and children
- Specific, Detailed, Practical



## Supporting Men: Safety

### Safety planning may look different for men:

- Concerned more for emotional safety than physical safety – time outs
- Her use of objects may make the house unsafe
- Monitoring personal messages
- Risk of police disbelief, seen/charged as primary perpetrator
- Are kids safe with mother?
- Taking kids perceived/reported as kidnap

Stay away from where knives/sharp objects are stored (e.g., the kitchen)

Women need to worry less about being charged – the system automatically perceives the male as the primary aggressor

We know that men who act abusively towards their female partners more likely put kids at greater risk, but literature has not described the opposite effect = need to ask him (though it's important to note that most violence against kids occurs at the hands of a male –stats can)

Discussion point: What else might a man need to be concerned about, that a woman might not necessarily?



## Supporting Men: Safety

### Therapeutic Process:

- Holding on to client resistance of abuse, refusing client helplessness
- Honoring client decisions (stay, change, leave, implement consequences)



## Assessment: the Flip

- Who's afraid of whom? Patterns?
- Minimizing use of emotional aggression, amplifying experience of physical aggression
- Distinguish abusive from assertive behavior
- Sensitivity to control & feeling out of control
- Skepticism should "slow down" the description

Has your partner ever felt intimidated/fearful of things you've done? Have you ever inflicted injury (emo/phys) on your partner; what was the effect? Injuries?

Ultimately, asking about how they have responded to their partner's use of abusive behaviors, assuming they knew it was wrong and listening for use of abuse in return.

Is this the first time? Has this happened before?

Slowing down the description: ask them to slow down, and start with exactly what has happened up to the event - even an hour ahead; what were they doing, feeling, thinking, who said what; asking for lots of detail.



## Working in Domestic Abuse

### CCC:

- Turn For The Better (TFTB; men)
- Responsible Choices for Women (RCW)

### CCC/CCS:

- Male Domestic Abuse Outreach Program (MDAOP)

Alan Jenkins' model – Invitations to responsibility, barriers to acknowledging responsibility

Allan Wade's model – response-based approach to working with victims



## MDAOP

- Partnership program (CCC – CCS)
- Enhancing access to resources for men and their families, affected by domestic abuse
  - Men experiencing any abuse, seeking support and change for themselves/kids/family
- Counselling, Advocacy, Outreach
- Easy referral
- Low/no cost



## How YOU can help

- Monitor personal biases
- Asking the question
  - Note the importance neutrality
- Listen and validate

The question may be posed with a subtle underlying message that he's likely using, and she's likely experiencing abuse.

Listening may be all the patient needs from you; communicating you care can go just as far regardless of whether or not you consider yourself to know a lot about domestic abuse



## How YOU can help

- Know some resources
  - Calgary Counselling 265-4980
  - Wheatland Shelter (CCS) 934-6634
  - MDAOP 691-5954
  - Men's Crisis Line 266-4357
  - CCASA 237-5888
  - Kirby Rotary House Shelter 705-3250



## Questions/Discussion

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- \*What might other safety precautions be for men planning for safety?
- \*How might DV affect the family when the victim is male?
- \*Why do men stay?

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