

NOTES ON THE INTERVENTION WITH MEN WHO USE VIOLENCE AGAINST INTIMATES¹

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Abstract. This article privileges the conception of violence as a political process that organises, shapes and arranges both intimate as well as social relationships. The specific form of arrangement produced by violence resonates with a "fascist"-type of organisation. Adopting such a perspective, the perpetrator of violence is understood to participate in the circulation and invigoration of particular discursive possibilities as ways through which he comes-into-being with others. The question of responsibility therefore shifts to address his participation in such forms of social negotiation and arrangement and the specific product that such participation engenders. A process of intervention with perpetrators is discussed from this perspective.

INTRODUCTION.

Driving around Cape Town I have noticed a bumper sticker that reads "Peace is a Group Effort". I think that this succinct message draws attention to two facets of peace. However, we must bear in mind that by the same token, these two facets also refer to violence, for violence is also a group effort. To elaborate:

- (a) Peace requires a collaboration of persons towards a common goal, directly or indirectly. Persons effectively must pool their resources, find a common point of interest, and a common spirit of intent to attempt to bring forth peace in specific situations. However, there is also a second part to the notion of group effort, which is
- (b) That peace will only emerge as a social reality when persons participate in those processes that further the arrangements and organisations which are founded on notions of respect, dignity, reciprocity, mutuality and honour. This requires that for peace to be brought forth in any given situation, persons must pay attention to the micro-processes involved, such as, for example, considering whether what they think, say, and do opens space for dialogue, sharing, and respect for differences.

¹. Parts of this paper were presented to the South African Association of Marital and Family Therapy, April 07, 1998, and to the Red Cross Child and Family Unit, April 16, 1998. I also wish to thank the two unknown PINS reviewers for their cogent and constructive suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper. Last, but not least, this paper is dedicated to Sharon Ann - with love.

Violence too is a group effort, in much the same way as peace: violence however, in contrast to peace, requires that persons participate in the bringing forth of social relations that *close* space, *exclude* commonality, *marginalise* dialogic possibilities, and *disrespect* differences. We may consider peace as producing a particular quality of social arrangements, as producing a sense of community. Obviously, community does not mean the non-existence of conflicts: conflicts among persons are growing tips - they have the potential to produce novel ways of resolving problems and engaging in new possibilities for respectful relations. In families, conflicts *per se* are not problematic. What makes conflicts problematic are the ways in which these are expressed and dealt with. When conflicts are dealt with violently, we find that a sense of community is eroded, and replaced with what I will term a *fascist organisation*. We will return to examine this notion of fascist organisation in more detail shortly, for it is, I believe, a key issue in intervening in families where there is violence and abuse.

POLITICS.

The view held here is that violence is always a matter of politics. Whether this is violence within a family group, between strangers, among communities, within nations, or between nation states, violence is a pragmatic and deliberate option for the negotiation of relational politics. The moment one understands that violence only ever occurs in the context of a relationship, one must also concede that violence concerns politics. Politics, as it is used here, does not refer only to governmental policies. Politics will be taken to refer to that which *shapes a particular outcome of events in terms of who may say what, who is excluded from speaking, how the event is defined, and the opportunities and possibilities that are entered into as a consequence of the shaping of the event in given ways*. We may therefore speak meaningfully of the politics of violence in the family, because violence shapes what may be said and what may not be said in the family, who is allowed and who is not permitted to speak, and also shapes and limits the lived reality of the family and the possibilities that are available to the members of that family.

The politics of violence assume a particular shape or form, which I have elsewhere termed "fascist" (Favell, 1998). This is to say, violence produces a particular outcome which resembles the socio-political organisation of fascism. Fascism may be characterised by six dimensions which concern the arrangement of persons, access to currencies of power, and the formation of relative identities. Briefly, these six dimensions are:

- (a) *exclusionism* - whereby an in group and an out group are constructed in terms of validation and marginalisation respectively. For the perpetrator of intimate violence or of rape, it is only his will that matters, for example. The wishes of the victim do not count - that is, they are marginalised or excluded from consideration.
- (b) *totalisation* - which operates by means of totalising the excluded / marginalised other in terms of generalisations and stereotyping such that the uniqueness of the other is effectively homogenised. Again, the perpetrator of rape or of intimate violence will typically totalise the other as an object to be subjected to his commands.
- (c) *monochromaticity* - that functions by means of ordering the world into static and immutable binary polarities, such as "either-or" propositions. The perpetrator of violence will often say that "it is my way or the highway", and thereby deny the chance of compromise and negotiation, of meeting at a common ground.

(d) *verticality* - which refers to the vertical arrangement of the world in terms of hierarchies of privilege, validity, access to resources, dominance, and superiority, which assumes a pyramidal shape where few occupy the apex and the rest congregate at the bottom. This is most commonly addressed in feminist analyses of rape and violence in terms of power and control.

(e) *centralism* - this is the establishment of a core organisational complex such that all other components of the system circulate this core as if orbiting it. In the perpetration of violence, the perpetrator's organisational dictates assume central importance, with all other considerations becoming secondary. The intimate violator positions himself at the centre of the relationship and expects his partner to share in this view of his centrality. The rapist installs himself within the world of his victim that for days, even months, after the rape, she is still dominated by the rape and the rapist to the point of nightmares, not being able to concentrate, withdrawing from friends, and even, sometimes, committing suicide.

(f) *expansionism* - this final dimension refers to the manner wherein the central organisational codes of the coloniser are effectively transplanted or "exported" into the spaces colonised, so that these latter spaces are effectively made to function congruent to these central codes as if these spaces were replicas of those codes. Examples of this are the battered wife who excuses her husband's behaviour on the basis of his stress, or because she did something wrong, effectively interiorising and then expressing, *as if her own*, his excuses for violence; the molested child who keeps her/his silence because the offender might get into trouble; the rape victim who comes to see herself as a "thing" of diminished value.

By looking at the interpersonal violences of rape, wife assault, child molestation and so forth with respect to these six dimensions of fascist organisation, we may usefully begin to consider that violence - be this interpersonal, institutional, and structural - is a political process that produces an identifiable socio-political organisation that marginalises, disempowers, and subjugates the victim while simultaneously validating, empowering, and dominantly positioning the offender.

By way of summary then, the theoretical contexts that shape my thinking and work in the area of intervention into practices of violence may be described as a mixture of semiotics (speech-act theory) and post-structuralism. One of the main implications of these philosophies as I have interpreted them is that what are read as "symptoms" are not reducible to a matrix of signification, but are rather understood as performances of negotiating a wide variety of different worlds which are each in continual flux and continually overlap and intersect, contradicting each other and creating climates of ambivalence and ambiguity (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Guattari, 1995). Each performance - by which I mean concrete action, speaking, thinking, emoting, making sense of the world, etc. - is a mixture of both necessity and chance: necessity with respect to the options available from previous performances of negotiation, and chance with respect to the indeterminacy of future possibilities (Prigogine and Stengers, 1984).

Each performance is thus an act of creation or of production. To utilise the metaphor of texts, persons' lives are texts that are in the process of being written. That is, their lives are unfinalised (Bakhtin, 1981). A person's life, as a series of productive performances, is thus a project of the ways that s/he comes-into-being in a world of others: effectively self-production. However, this is not solipsism, but rather *social* constructivism. One is, in effect, "writing" oneself into being, drawing on the "languages" and styles of "writing"

in circulation in a given sociocultural context. By drawing on such languages and styles where these inform the person's project of coming-into-being, that person is effectively lending her/his weight to those languages and styles and re-invigorating them as viable options for the project of coming-into-being. That is, s/he validates and legitimises these styles through her or his participation in them.

To posit that one "writes" oneself into being through localising indirect discourses requires that the specific localisation of one's performance of violence be situated within the contexts of these indirect discourses, and further, that the processes are examined by which such indirect discourses are localised as concrete performances. This may be rephrased provisionally as the question of how a violence (indefinite article) is expressed as *this* violence, in *this* place, at *this* time, against *this* person (definite article)? When the self is reframed not as a "unifying principle", but as a "theoretical manoeuvring" (Probyn, 1993:106), the performative self must be analysed "in relation to a given discourse" (Probyn, 1993:89). The problematic of male violence against women must hence be analysed in the double movement of the specific performances of a self-in-process as a concrete expression and imbrication of the discourses of male subjectivisation (i.e., becoming a male subjectivity). However, the social field is over-encoded in terms of rigid lines of segmentation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), one of which is the binary segmentarity that distributes identities in a mutually exclusive division of gendered, racial, socio-economic, etc., terms of reference. From this perspective, the performance of masculinity may be read as the activation of one pole of the binary segmentation which specifies not only masculine performances but also specifies what constitutes women's identities. Women's identities are, from the masculine perspective of centrality, the excluded "other", the "second sex" in de Beauvoir's (1952) phrase. Set against the backdrop of a masculine centrality and the attributed and excluded "otherness" of women, male violence against women - both in general as well as in its specifics - may be read as a performance of masculine subjectivisation which reinvigorates the relative positioning of men as central and women as marginal. Violence, when situated as a political act, maintains this relative positioning of men and women, and it does so by fixing women in place via a series of negations of women's voices and expressions such that the masculine territory is affirmed in what might best be characterised as exemplifying the Nietzschean "slave-logic". This operation of affirmation through negation resonates with Lorentzen's (1998) observation that male perpetrators of intimate violence often describe themselves as somehow non-agents in their own actions, as if their performance of violence is one wherein their own subjective agency is mysteriously absent or lacking. Violence is a performance which constitutes a space within which a man locates himself as a masculine subject, through its effects of negating the woman against whom the violence is directed. It is as if he does not pre-exist the performance but is only brought forth as a masculine subject through, or as a result of, the performance of violence. Violence pushes the woman's subjectivity back, dis-locates her performances of self, such that she is now reconfigured as a person-for-him, an "empty" space upon which he can write himself through participating in those discourses which privilege masculine centrality and female subjugation. Violence is then the process whereby he dispossess her of her spaces which she claims in the performances of herself, and colonises those now vacated territories.

This may be illustrated with reference to stranger rape which provides a broader context against which to situate specific instances of intimate violence. Stranger rape

exemplifies the recruitment of the male discourse of entitlement and the reciprocal positioning of women as "objects" for male pleasure and consumption. A man, in performing a rape of a woman, is effectively bringing himself into being by drawing on the sociocultural discourses that privilege, for example, notions of the sexual objectification and use-value of women, the subordination of women to men, the male-sex drive discourse (Hare-Mustin, 1994), and so on. However, by participating in such discourses that configure social and gendered relations in such ways, the rapist *reinvigorates* these discourses, effectively plugging them back into a renewed circulation as viable and legitimate ways of his coming-into-the-world. As with Lorentzen's (1998) observation of agentless action cited above, many rapists, when called upon to explain their violence, will discuss the rape as if (magically) a "response" to the women they raped. Often one will hear rapists describing their acts as a *response* to what a woman was wearing, where she was at the time, subtle nuances which are interpreted as "come-on's", and so on (Harris, Lea, & Foster, 1995). These descriptions constitute, on the one hand, a "justification" for his perpetration of rape; on the other hand however, these also reflect a more germane description of the manner in which the rapist has constructed his world: women are just there to be made use of by men, and any sense of a woman's subjectivity (constituted by, in part, a realisation that the woman concerned is working with an entirely different agenda for her life and the way that her body engages the world which does not include him) is marginalised as largely irrelevant to his organisation of her as serving the ends that he has assigned her. He comes-into-being via the concrete expression of the relative positioning of women according to male-centred definitions, according to the manner in which women are organised as "other" relative to the becoming-centrality of masculine subjectivisation. In short, for him to be subject, she must be object: the co-existence of two subjectivities in reciprocating affirmation is untenable. It is a recuperation of the binary segmentarity of the exclusive either-or. In reinvigorating these discourses of male subjectivisation however, he is simultaneously putting this into circulation as a claim to legitimacy for men's ways of being in general. He is not only positioning himself relative to an identification acquired through the violent subjugation of women; he is simultaneously offering these as potential blueprints, or "diagrams of agency", descriptive of men in general. It is not only his (individual) "right" to colonise women, but a man's (as gender) "right" to do so. To the extent that I, as a man, keep quiet about these claims to entitlement and do not challenge them, I offer not a voice of resistance, but a silence of complicity, and hence am indirectly participating in their circulation as "valid" ways of being a man. I believe that the opportunities and possibilities for masculine subjectivisation are not exhausted in male violence against women. I claim, as my responsibility as a man, alternate performances of masculine subjectivisation which confront and challenge such performances of men that subjugate and participate in the disrespect of women. Male violence against women is a *male* problem,² and *not* a woman's problem, because it is a performance option that men express irrespective of and contrary to women's own self-positioning, which not only is destructive to the personhood of women but is also an exceedingly limiting and auto-destructive performance of being male. Violence serves to maintain the rigid demarcations of the social field by which men affirm themselves through the negation of women and women's ways of being. Violence has hitherto been left in the hands of women and

² For this reason I will be directing my comments about violence in a way that will foreground men as agents of such violence, albeit in recognition that the position of women in this paper becomes the background. I offer this not as an effacement of women, but as a counter-balance to the majority of literature in this field which is written from women's perspectives.

consistently framed as a woman's problem; perhaps this is due in a large part to men's refusal to personalise the political, which would require that each individual man take such violence seriously. I submit: this must change.

INTERVENTIONS.

By politicising violence, the performance of violence is shifted from the private sphere of psychology into the explicitly public domains of constructing and organising social spaces, of arranging what currencies of subjectivity obtain legitimacy. In my work I tend not to give too much credence to psychodiagnostic categories nor to theories of causality. There are a number of reasons for this, but I will address only three:

(a) To pathologise men's violence against women is to ignore any link between individual acts of violation and the deeply entrenched socio-political contexts wherein women are routinely subjugated, marginalised, abused, disempowered, and disrespected. These contexts are so engrained in our social structures, that the link between the concrete individual performance of violence and such structural and institutional violences suggest that it is not an individual's pathology that "causes" violence, but that violence and marginalisation of women in society is an (apparently) "acceptable" political fact. To emphasise individual pathology is to remain blithely ignorant of the necessity for wide-spread socio-political changes. It is also to ignore that an individual man's violence against an individual woman is the extreme concrete expression of the taken-for-granted socio-political subtext within which women live daily (Bland, 1992).

(b) Irrespective of the diagnostic category to which a violent man is assigned, it is still my duty and responsibility to try to find ways of working with him. The actual practice is not helped any by suggestions that he is anti-social or borderline personality disordered, for when it comes to the crunch I still must face the actual reality of working with him. This resonates with the next point.

(c) It is well-documented that models of causality and diagnostic criteria are *not* facts independent of the social language communities that give rise to them and which support them (Maturana, 1988). One need only look back at the history of the APA's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual to note the extent to which certain classifications fall into and out of favour. The truth of such models and classifications is a product of social consensus, which waxes and wanes according to the *zeitgeist*. Moreover, as many readers may have experienced during their own careers - theories of causality and theories of treatment also come and go, be these psychoanalytic, cognitive-behavioural, and systemic theories.

Finally, just as there is no singular profile of a battered woman, so is there no singular profile of a battering man. To pathologise the use of violence by men in relationships is to singularise his performances as a deviation from some or other norm, when it is the norm, the context, that is *itself* structurally and tacitly supportive of such performances.

I am therefore not unduly concerned with models of diagnosis or causality. What I attend to in my work with men who use violence in intimate relations revolves around three themes, which may be summarised as follows:

- (1) *What is it that a person's violence produces as a concrete political act?*
- (2) *How does a person participate in the circulation of violence and its concrete effects - i.e. what "languages and styles" does he draw upon to justify, sustain, and perpetuate his violent style of coming-into-being with others?*
- (3) *What options for his future and the future of his relations with others are privileged and excluded through such ways of coming into being, and are these consistent with or do they contradict his preferred futures?*

These require some elaboration:

1. Political production. I draw on the concept of politics as descriptive of particular power operations prevalent in a given social context, where power is understood as the construction and arrangement of social spaces which enable and restrain the expression of semiotic flows - flows of meaning, value, reality configurations, etc. When such an understanding of politics is coupled with the notion of production, to consider violence in terms of its political production is to enquire as to what realities and forms of organisation violence puts into circulation, what it allows or affirms, and what it restrains or subjugates. In short, this line of enquiry refers to determining what the real effects of a person's use of violence are.

The notion of production refers also to what futures have been set into motion through his activities in the past, and the foregrounding of the present moment as the last chance to do something differently. By framing the present as the fulcrum upon which the future balances, he is invited to attend to his own agency in determining how events will unfold. To the extent that he considers himself to lack agency, to the extent that he continues to attribute responsibility for his use of violence to his partner and her actions, to factors such as "losing control", of being a "victim of random circumstances" and overwhelming emotions, etc., he may be invited to consider some of the concrete effects of his abdication of responsibility for his life and his behaviours. This may take the form of detailed questioning concerning the actual results of his use of violence. For example, has it resulted in the impoverishment of the quality of his relationship with his partner? Does she seem scared of him? Is she less forthcoming about herself, less willing to make love and to be intimate with him? Does she seem to be walking on egg-shells around him? How do the children appear to act around him? Do they withdraw from him, flinch at his touch, no longer confide in him? Has his violence put a dent in their social life, no longer able to go out because of the bruises she has sustained at his hands? Does he find himself having to be ever more vigilant, fearing that she might try to leave him? What about his own views of himself - does he feel proud of what he has done? How does he deal with his own feelings when looking at the bruises on her body - does he dismiss them and blame her for his actions, etc., or does he feel ashamed? Has he faced police intervention? Gone to jail, faced a magistrate, had to explain to his boss why he can't come to work because he's in court? Does he find himself having to keep the quality of his relationship a secret from his own family and friends, to pretend that everything is fine and to cover up? Is his violence bringing him and his partner closer together or driving an insurmountable wedge between them (Jenkins, 1990)? Has he lost access to the nuptial home, to his children? Has he had to move out and now has the expense of running two homes?

These questions concern the tracing of the concrete effects of his violence, and enable the development of a "cost-benefit" analysis to be undertaken with respect to the anticipated short-term gains of violence. Usually, these "gains" are directed toward his

partner in terms of attempts to change something that he sees her as doing, and hence his violence is instrumental and strategic. Common descriptions of these "anticipated gains" suggest that if his partner did not do "x", then he would not be violent, that his violence is the result of her behaviour and is intended to "shut her up", "make her back-off", "make her know her place", "make her quit flirting", "stop her from making [him] mad", etc. The metaphor which often springs to my mind when I listen to these accounts is of a puppet whose strings are pulled by others outside of himself. In Canada, for example, many men will speak of their partners knowing "all the right buttons to push to get [them] going", as if men were merely robots - exemplars of Pavlovian conditioning - and unable to do anything other than react when these "buttons" are pushed.

When considering violence with respect to its capacity for political production, its capacity to produce particular organisations and arrangements of social and relational spaces, what appears to emerge repeatedly is that violence reconfirms the relative positioning of men as capable of affirmation only through the serial negation of women as "other". The extent to which such a relative positioning of agency has coalesced can be investigated through questions which bring forth a reflexivity on his part of where he situates himself in relation to the unfolding of his life. For example, does he blame her for his violence, or alcohol, or drugs, or stress, or anger, etc., and if so, does this suggest to him that he is losing his grip on his life, that he is no longer master of himself but rather a reed in the winds of circumstances? Questions of this sort trace narratives of irresponsibility, an auto-positing of being "out of control", both in the performances of violence as well as in the more encompassing context of his intimate relational life. However, these narratives of irresponsibility may be contrasted with the development of strategies that he uses to avoid public exposure. In cases of a long history of violence and abuse I have often found that the man becomes more careful in his use of violence, that he will actively seek to control when and where he is violent. He will often take care to be violent in private, or by directing blows to his partner's body where the marks are hidden under clothing, and so on. Again, these patterns can be elicited through the use of careful questioning in terms of how he hit her, the hand he used, where on her body, which part of the house he was violent in, etc. The point of this is to highlight the contradictions between his narratives of irresponsibility, his claims of not being in control of himself on the one hand, and on the other, the measured control he actually exercises with respect to the environment, the targeting of particular areas of her body, and the degrees of force he used in the commission of violence.

Questions of this sort which attend to the micro-details of an assault event, begin to reveal specific choice points in an event that is usually described as one's being "out of control". It is interesting to note that a picture of deliberate and well-timed violation often emerges: for instance, many men have told me that the argument *began in public*, but the assault only happened when they were *in private* - in other words, *he controlled his violence until he could maximise the conditions within which he would not be interrupted*. Many men will exercise incredible degrees of self-restraint, ensuring that they draw the curtains first, turn up the volume on the TV or stereo, ensure that the children are in bed or at a friend's house, that the telephone is unplugged, that it takes place in the kitchen where there are weapons available, even to the point of choosing to either violate or not violate depending on the social calendar for the next few days.

His narratives of irresponsibility, of not being in control of himself and of his behaviours, may then be contrasted with this emerging picture of just how much control he *did* exercise. By developing these contradictions, a site of agency is constructed. This site of emerging agency is positioned no longer with respect to what he claims his partner did or did not do in terms of a "justification" for his violence, but instead is an agentive site which governs what it was that he did or did not do in response. The ability to respond or not, as the case may be, is the first but crucial step in the development of response-ability.

This is not to "trip" him up; rather it is to co-construct a space within which a multiplicity of possibilities accumulate in a both-and inclusivity which subverts the rigid either-or binarity. This binarity is the all-or-nothing whereby the "cause" of violence is attributed to his partner and where he was a mere puppet or robot reacting blindly to her "pushing" his "buttons". Such a binary configuration is replayed across the dimensions of his intimate relationship, the development of an affirmed identity only at the expense of an excluded or negated partner (expressed in the dictum "[his] way or the highway"), the subjective lack of personal agency which is reflected in his attributions to his partner to control his actions by her "pushing [his] buttons", etc.

The above descriptions hold violence as a strategy which produces and reproduces particular arrangements of intimate and social spaces, spaces through which certain forms of identity are brought forth. Although writing of serial killing, Seltzer's (1998:274) comment that "[t]he stakes of the murder are [...] not finally the possession of an object of love or pleasure but self-possession: the repeated, and repeatedly failed attempt, to pass through identification to identity" may also be applied to serial violence *in place*. Whereas serial killers, by definition, target different persons in series, long-standing intimate violence is the seriality of violence against the same person. Violence is utilitarian: it is first and foremost functional, functioning to construct a vehicle for self-production where the ante has been raised to the exclusive either-or of coming-into-being or passing out of being. When gender is read as performance, a doing, such that a gendered "identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1990:25), male violence may be understood as the attempted performance of a dominant discourse of masculine subjectivisation. Violence in intimate relationships appears, therefore, to operate as a *threshold performance*, a means to an end, through which a man performs a version of masculinity premised on the rigid arrangements inscribed across the social field in the binaries of gender identities, a version which is localised in *this* relationship at *this* time, a collective discourse of rigidly defined manhood funnelled into the singularity of how he negotiates the politics of inclusivity and exclusivity of a given intimate heterosexual coupling.

2. Participation. The perspective taken here is that male violence performed in the context of an intimate heterosexual relationship is the localisation of indirect discursive arrangements which specify masculine identity in terms of the exclusive binarity of male self-affirmation through the negation of women and "the feminine". This second theme of participation concerns the manner in which he participates both specifically and generally in the performance of these exclusive and rigid gender inscriptions, how he reproduces these "scripts" in the context of his heterosexual intimacies, and in so doing, how he reinvigorates them, lending them new life, new domains of application and endorsement. Effectively then, this line of enquiry concerns the ideas, beliefs, and justifications that he uses as ways of making sense of his performances of violence.

These may include his own experiences of past victimisation, directly or vicariously, and any prior engagement in the military or police forces where violence is the basic currency of such groups. It may also include ways that he came to understand what being a man is supposedly all about; subscription to particular gender and sex-role discourses; the ideas that support violence as a viable option for resolving conflicts, that support the recruitment of force to endorse one's views and opinions. It will also include paying very close attention to the images that he holds of himself and his partner and women in general; attention to the processes involved in the escalation into violence, be these somatic or cognitive; how he understands his use of violence, the conditions that he takes as providing legitimisation for violence, his own thresholds of tolerating arousal, confusion, insecurity, ambivalence and ambiguity.

Privileging a Foucauldian analysis of power as constitutive and positive, the direct and brutal expression of violence as not only a vehicle of power (force of arrangement), but also as the power to be violent (entitlement or "permission" to use violence), constitutes a world in which the protagonist is positioned in a way which endorses his ways of bringing himself forth that marginalises alternate forms and modes of self-production. That is, his ways of being are privileged to the exclusion of any other way, including alternate ways for him to perform himself, performances of women's ways of being as legitimate possibilities, performances that include uncertainty and ambivalence, etc. Hence, a man's participation in the dominant discourses of a restrictive and exclusive masculinity, expressed through the performance of violence, affords him a degree of certainty, a surplus of legitimacy and authority, which he garners to himself and reinscribes across the surface of his intimate relationship where the roles and the politics of reality are at best ambiguous.

However, this line of enquiry also concerns attending to his participation in ways of being that *do not include* violence, such as experiences and understandings that he may have had where he did something *differently* from being violent or aggressive, times when he may have acted respectfully and privileged his partner's dignity, where he was able to sustain uncertainty and ambiguity without foreclosure.³ Such examples may be attended to through careful questioning which posit *him as the agent* in such alternate performances: how was he able to take this step to engage in an alternate performance? How did he contain the intensities of anxiety and uncertainty? What stops him from doing that more often?⁴ Where there any noticeable differences between being respectful and being violent with regards to the consequences, to what was produced as concrete effects of these different ways of being and relating? If so, what were these differences?

I am also interested in the contradictions between, for example, his own permission to strike his partner and whether this means that such "permission" is generalisable to include the permission for another man to strike his partner, or whether he would support assaults against his mother or his sister or even his own daughter. At which point does the logic of permissible violence break down? How does he claim to himself the permission, or the right, to hurt his partner? Is this a right all men have, or only he

³. Such enquiry is drawn from the work of "exceptions" (de Shazer, 1990) and "unique outcomes" (White and Epston, 1990).

⁴. This line of enquiry relates to the narrative concept of "restraints" as "barriers" or hindrances to narratives of accountability, and are derived from Bateson's (1979) work on negative explanation. For more detail on the idea of restraints, see (Favell, in press; White & Epston, 1990).

himself? If it is a right that only he holds, what differentiates him from other men? What is usually evoked from such questions is the discourse of male property rights that extend to include women and children as the husband's "possessions", with whom he may do as he chooses. This claim to "property rights" by men of women and children may be "externalised" (White & Epston, 1990), and the relative influences of these claims on the man's life and relationship may be plotted in juxtaposition to plotting the influence of the man on the life of such claims to entitlement.

These contradictions and ambiguities are note-worthy, for it is here that there is an intermingling, or a vital and potentially rich intersection of conflicting styles (McCarthy and Byrne, 1988; Kearney, Byrne and McCarthy, 1989; Favell, 1998), a polyphony of possibilities. In effect, and to put this simplistically, these present choice-points for future action, for future performances. By highlighting the different paths and options available to him, he is effectively positioned to be responsible for which path he participates in at any future point. By selecting the path of future violence, he can no longer do so reflexively because to do so is to choose to ignore the differences that are available to him, which means that he is responsible for selecting violence (Maturana, 1988). Awareness in itself does not produce change: as the saying in alcohol recovery circles goes - insight is soluble in alcohol. However, awareness does position a person at a junction: he is then unavoidably responsible for which track he subsequently pursues, which is, in itself, news of a difference that makes a difference (Bateson, 1979).

3. Futures. The last of these three themes concerns the future as a field of unwritten potentials. Throughout these interventions the emphasis remains on what it is that he does or doesn't do in terms of the lived realities within which he is immersed. Drawing from the constructivist perspective that we are always already in the act of living and attempting to make sense of the worlds within which we move and produce ourselves, inviting a man to consider the worlds that he has hitherto produced through his use of violence, through his participation in (re)invigorating particular discourses of masculinity derived from the negation of "otherness" as a means of self-affirmation, maps out a history which he may elect to continue as a future path of development or may seek to radically and substantially alter. Each statement, each utterance, each act, is framed as a micro-step toward replaying a history of violence and destruction or creating an alternate future which no longer includes the marginalisation of his partner and the shaming of himself. Many men approach this theme with trepidation: for some it means a leap of faith from the certainties of an established, albeit shameful, identity into the unknown. One man poignantly summed up this anxiety, claiming "if I change, I will lose my identity - I won't know who I am".

In considering the futures open to him, what is highlighted are whether or not the performances of violence and abusiveness reflect the kind of man he wants to see himself as, the kind of man that he wants others to know him as - including his partner, their children, the community, his friends, his colleagues and bosses at work and so on. It is also to consider what he thinks the longer term effects of the violence are going to be in terms of whether he might end up killing his partner (i.e. femicide), whether they will stay together, whether he is likely to spend time in jail, feel satisfied with his life, and so forth. The interesting thing here is that by and large in response to these kinds of questions, most men have answered that they *will not* kill their partners. When asked how they are able to be so convinced, many answer because they won't ever get that

far, they won't let the violence get that much out of hand. This obviously opens up an entire vista that contradicts earlier ideas that the violence was a result of them "losing control", and other similar narratives of irresponsibility (Jenkins, 1990). In short, it begins to indicate the *deliberateness* and the actual degree of control that even the most violent of men actually exercises in the perpetration of violence.

By way of summary, the objective of these interventions as I understand them is to dislodge narratives and performances of irresponsibility and violence, and to find ways through which men may come to privilege narratives and performances of responsible, respectful and non-violent relations, by drawing upon alternate "languages" and styles with which he "writes" himself into being with others.

CONTEXTS.

The above has been a summary of three themes which, although have been addressed as if separate and almost sequential stages, in practice operate as "nuclei" around which the conversations orbit. These themes tend to flow into each other, are given a different emphasis depending on the context of the conversations. I admit that I tend not to enter a meeting with a pre-set game plan, because I never know where the conversation is going to lead, what dialogical openings are going to appear, what cracks might open that warrant more detailed attention (Favell, in press). In practice then, these lines of enquiry intermingle, cross over each other, and shape the development and the timing and emphasis of the others.

There remain a couple of contextual points to be made, which I will do so only briefly. These conversations occur in the context of both individual as well as in group settings. Elsewhere, I have described the outline of an intervention programme in terms of its structures and some of the tasks (Favell, 1995) and will not repeat those descriptions here. It is important to note however, that although these conversational themes may begin in individual settings, the majority and value of these conversations is really only apparent in the group settings where they continue. I attribute this to the development of a multi-vocality in the group setting, wherein a group of ten men are engaged in conversations of this sort, in the sharing of loss of identity and relationships, in the exploration and experimentation of turning to other men for support rather than relying on women to work out their emotional lives for them, of taking risks and being vulnerable in the context of other men, all of which may be examined in terms of whether these support or contradict the rigid definitions of manhood most of the men have subscribed to since childhood. When the group participants are invited to attend to making meaning of these novel ways of being and relating with other men, most will report that this is a significantly different experience for them, that - while inevitably anxiety provoking - it provides an opportunity for them to realise that it is okay not to feel that they must have all the answers, that it is okay for them to feel uncertain and indecisive, to not know in advance what one is supposed to be doing. In the face of such uncertainty, many men find an opening, a gap in the rigid demarcation and expectation of masculine performance, which did not previously exist for most. This space or gap is, as I understand it, a dialogical space that has opened, a space within which previously marginalised possibilities for self-invention may be drawn into the textual frame and which acts to undermine the dominant readings of being a man in relation to not only other men, but also the possibilities that these readings present in terms of relating differently, inclusively, with women.

The stage for these developments is set in the first individual meetings that are held. I regard the object of these individual meetings to be two-fold. First, I am wanting to reach a point with him where he is beginning to develop a safety plan for his partner. Such a safety plan concerns *concrete* steps he is going to take to minimise the risk for further violence, be this through his moving out and staying at friends for a while, not addressing anything contentious, giving her space to have her own opinions even if they are at variance with his, not arguing in private but finding ways of having people around them, such as going to a coffee shop to discuss something controversial. I don't expect that this plan is going to emerge in a sophisticated and fully-fledged manner at this stage, but as long as he has reached the point where he is beginning to consider how he can concretely and actively resist using violence, then even a rudimentary plan can be built upon over time, the caveats examined and plugged and so on. The second thing I should note is that I am quite clear in my first meeting that I will support him in his efforts to become non-violent, but I will *not collude* with him in the continuance of his violence. The implications of non-collusion are that I privilege the safety of his partner *over and above* issues of therapeutic confidentiality, and will hence take it upon myself to notify both his partner and the police if I believe that his partner is in danger, that I will keep his partner informed as to his attendance in the process, that I will recommend that his partner attend the relevant resources for her own needs and safety, and that I do not support the saving of the relationship unless it is in the partner's best interests to do so and congruent with *her* intentions and wishes. In short, I attempt to clarify that, although I will be working with him, the primary concern is with the well-being and safety of his partner.

MEN WORKING WITH MEN.

I wish to offer some brief thoughts on the issue of this work from my perspective as a man working with other men. The nature of this work hinges on notions of accountability, not only the client's accountability for his masculine performances, but also an accountability in terms of how I engage in my own processes of becoming-male. I contend that as workers in this field one must be wary that one's therapeutic interventions into abusive situations does not itself become an abusive therapy. Given the socially sanctioned position of relative power afforded therapists who work with perpetrators of violence, I submit that it is imperative that one must have their own house in order. While this is always a work in progress rather than a finished product, I believe that it is my responsibility to monitor the manner with which I conduct my own professional and private life in terms of my uses and abuses of power, in terms of acknowledging the extent to which I as a white male have benefited from the male privileges afforded us in a phallogocentric social organisation, that I do not collude in men's ways of being that subjugate and marginalise women. Some of the questions that I attempt to keep alive is whether or not I still feel outrage and disgust at reports of violence from the men that I work with as well as in the media and from other sources. I decided some years ago that if I should no longer feel this, then it is time for me to quit this line of work for then I too am disengaging from the human connection of empathy and compassion, and am vulnerable to objectifying those victimised by such violence.

Working with men who violate women (and other men) brings up a multitude of issues for me as a man. Sometimes this is experienced as a sense of shame at being a man, at being a gendered "relative" of those who perpetrate such atrocities, of being aware how a woman may be perceiving me as a potential rapist due simply to my being a man and the necessity for her protective vigilance that the culture of male violence against

women has produced. This work also evokes a surge of joy and hope in me to see men engage in ways of living and relating that are premised on an inclusivity and mutuality of respect, where men experiment falteringly with different possibilities of being men through a mutual affirmation of themselves with others, and these are the times which equip me with the faith that the future of men's violence is not a *fait accompli*, that men can and do change, and inspires me to continue with this work.

CONCLUSIONS.

So what then are the advantages - if any - of understanding violence as a political process that produces fascist social organisations? I believe that there are several advantages, although I will limit my discussion to three:

(1). When we consider violence as a political process we are reminded that, irrespective of notions of psychopathology and so on, we are still confronted with the reality that what is involved are issues of power and the negotiation of relationships. In keeping with the widely circulated school of thought that we are shaped as persons and as identities by the relationships of which we are a part,⁵ then the implications of this become more obvious with respect to violence. Basically, violent relationships inform and influence the development of personhood and of identity. A person who is violated is therefore influenced in her identity and her sense of herself as an object, a piece of property, someone with limited options, and so forth. From the perspective outlined here, we may reframe the struggles for dignity and legitimacy on the part of those victimised as an immediately *political struggle*, such that the work with women and victims now becomes a collaborative event, which addresses the processes whereby notions of personal failure, attributions of oneself as "damaged goods", and so on, have been internalised. In fact, these issues can now be "externalised" as *components of the process of subjugation itself*, such that the woman's work now takes the form of a protest against these processes rather than a self-directed attempt at "correction" (White & Epston, 1990).

(2). By considering what it is that violence produces in terms of fascist arrangements of persons and relationships, violence against women in relationships can be seen to be a point on a continuum of violence that includes criminal violence in the community, national violence in the form of warfare, and even stranger violences in the form of serial rape and murder. That is, we can begin to examine violence as the *same violent process given different forms of expression in different contexts* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). No longer compartmentalised as different types of violence, working with violence in the family necessitates that we pay attention to the other forms of violence given expression in our society, and that, to the extent that these other expressions of violence are either accepted or considered criminal acts, so to that extent must we acknowledge that acts of violence against women in relationships are part of the same currency and subject to either the same sanctions and acceptance or condemnation and prosecution. In short, *violence in the family does not take place in isolation but is an aspect of a macro-social arrangement that permits violence to circulate as a valid political currency*. This means that when working with perpetrators of intimate violence, we are working with a person who participates in - rather than originates - the continued circulation of violence. In Seltzer's (1998) useful phrase, the intervention is

⁵. Such a body of thought is literally impossible to summarise here. Gergen (1991) does an admirable job of summarising the post-modernist influence on social psychology and family therapy.

with the "mass in person", the localisation of indirect discourses of masculine subjectivisation within which the specific man locates his performance of self with others. The work therefore attends to the manner and the ways in which he lends his thoughts and his capacities for action to the circulation of such violence, and how he draws upon these discourses as "maps" to navigate and "justify" his performances of himself through violence and the subjugation of his (female) partner as a consequence. In my work with perpetrators, I therefore attend to what micro-processes he engages in *prior* to the offence of violence, *during* the perpetration of violence, and *post*-offence. In other words, his use of violence (sexual, physical or otherwise) may be regarded as the way in which he brings himself forth through a concrete expression that organises his intimate relationships in the binary terms of exclusion and marginalisation of his partner, and the reciprocal positioning of himself at the centre.

He is held as being responsible for his participation in and the subsequent continuance of the processes of violence rather than the more isolating idea that he originates violence as if out of the blue. His violence is hence regarded as a choice of engagement that he elected to express under given conditions within the context of the heterosexual politics of gender.

(3). This requires that, as workers, our work now focuses on what active steps he took to participate in the marginalisation of his partner and the relationship. We can also establish whether these steps and the results thereof are compatible or incompatible with the quality of relationship that he wants, with the kind of man he wants to be known as by his partner and community, the ideas of being a man that he wants to convey to his children (especially to his son), and so on. If these steps and results are at variance with his preferred ways of being and of relating (Jenkins, 1990), then the work concerns the examination of how he participated in their production. Once these processes of participation are identified as such, every subsequent act and attitude can now be mapped according to whether that act is more on the side of his preferred ways of being or more on the side of his non-preferred ways of being and relating (Jenkins, 1990; White & Epston, 1990). In this way, he begins to assume responsibility for living up to his preferred ways of being and relating, thereby redirecting the typically blaming focus on the alleged wrongs of his partner onto a critical assessment of what *he* himself does or does not do to further his own preferred self-presentation. In the process, he finds that he is arguing for the safety of his partner, because it is in his own self-interest to do so given his preferred self-presentation.

By examining the notions of both peace and violence as group efforts requiring the active participation of groups and individuals for their realisation, we are assisted in our work with perpetrators of intimate violences. However, we should also be aware of a final consideration, and with this I will conclude this discussion: because the focus of this work is on the notions of participation in the specific forms of social organisation that are realised in given situations, there is an issue of accountability that must be addressed by those of us who work with perpetrators. This is especially relevant for men who work with male perpetrators. Accountability does not begin and end in the therapy room: it necessitates that we ourselves critically examine our own participation in the productions of peace and of violence. Accountability is thus not something that we invite our clients to attend to without ourselves continually engaging in our own processes of becoming accountable. In short, as workers, we too must consider what it

is that we actively as well as inadvertently participate in the production of. Indeed, peace - like violence - is a group effect.

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