

MAEVe

Melbourne Research Alliance to End
Violence against women and their children

Can he be a good dad and a violent partner?

Dr Kristin Diemer

The University of Melbourne

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Craigieburn



How do you know you are working with a violent father?



How do you know you are working with a father?

- “*Fathering Challenges*” in the context of domestic and family violence
- PACT = Domestic and family violence and parenting: impact and support needs
- PATRICIA project – Pathways and Research in interagency-collaboration
- Invisible Practices

The elephant in the room



The elephant is still present

I'm astounded by how many people are calling out a dear friend for speaking publicly about an assault she experienced. Largely because the man in question is a prominent figure. It seems for a lot of people the illusion of a unified community trumps actual solidarity. It's been pretty eye opening.

Anyone who silences women who have been abused or assaulted, who tell them to 'shut up', 'stop causing a scene', 'it doesn't look good', 'can't we all just get along', 'but he's a real good bloke' you're fracturing the community - this is NOT feminism, this is NOT solidarity, this is NOT community, this is NOT how we break the patterns and find a way forward.

Invisible Elephant



Image credit: Hartwig Hkd CC

“But he’s a good Dad – right?”



How is he as a father?

- He's fun, and active. They get out a lot. He's got a very endearing character. *They're learning from him how to lie and manipulate.* (Alice)
- He was very kind and loving and caring towards my girls and my other daughter. And he - he was just - I think - I guess the reason why I stayed with him was because he was so good to them, *but - I didn't see the bigger picture about him hurting me and the girls seeing this.* (Lara)

Violent men as fathers – coming into view

- Research shows that intimate partner violence is an issue of *direct* concern for children
 - About half of the children are likely to be subject to direct abuse
 - About 1/3 of children (mainly girls) subjected to sexual abuse

(Erickson 2002; Erikson & Hester 2001; Hester et al 2000, Jaffe et al 1990; Peled 2000)

Stop the Violence (2.3)

Digital Story

Eight digital stories were made by young people and two of them gave permission for their videos to be uploaded to the internet. For access and terms of usage of the videos please contact kdeimer@unimelb.edu.au

The two digital stories on the internet can be accessed in Vimeo through this link:

<https://violenceagainstwomenandchildren.com/youtube-vimeo-channel-podcasts-webinars/living-with-a-violent-father/>

Violent men as fathers

- Focus on
 - Their ‘rights to children’
 - Maintaining control instead of nurturing
- Far more likely to fight for custody & refuse to pay child support
- Abuse and control linked to child care activities (eg meals & putting kids to bed)

(Arendell 1992; McMahon & Pence 1995; Peled 2000; Hame 1999)

Silhouettes

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Violent men as fathers – separation & divorce

- Many men continue to be violent
 - Separated partner
 - New partner
- Relationship with the children continues
 - More access
 - Unsupervised access
- Mother may remain the key point of contact between father and child

(Hester and Radford 1996; Hester et al 2000; Lundgren 2001)

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Gender constructs

- Increasing recognition of men's violence towards intimate partners
- However – fathers are generally constructed as 'non-violent'
- Violent men are seldom in focus as 'parents' and avoid being held responsible for their children's well-being

(Erikson & Hester 2001)

Men's perceptions & insights as fathers

- There's lots of different ways of being a father, and my way wasn't necessarily the right way but I didn't even necessarily think it was the wrong way. I think it's a combination of different things and the older I get ... and same for my father (...) *my father used to drink, I don't do that, my wife doesn't drink. So there are these positives the kids get automatically.*

Men's perceptions & insights as fathers

- “The kids don't know I'm attending the program. And I'm sure my ex-wife wouldn't want them to know either. Because obviously they are still a bit young (11yo, 9yo), they're not.... yes, they're mature but they're not gonna understand you know, what a men's behaviour program is... *the whole thing with court and things like that. that might actually sort of make them a little scared... because you know...when they think of court, they think of you know umm criminals, and police, and things like that. so I guess yeah, that's definitely something we wouldn't talk to the kids about.*”

The visibility of Fathers . . .

Fathers are generally constructed as either good or absent, rarely are they portrayed as abusive.

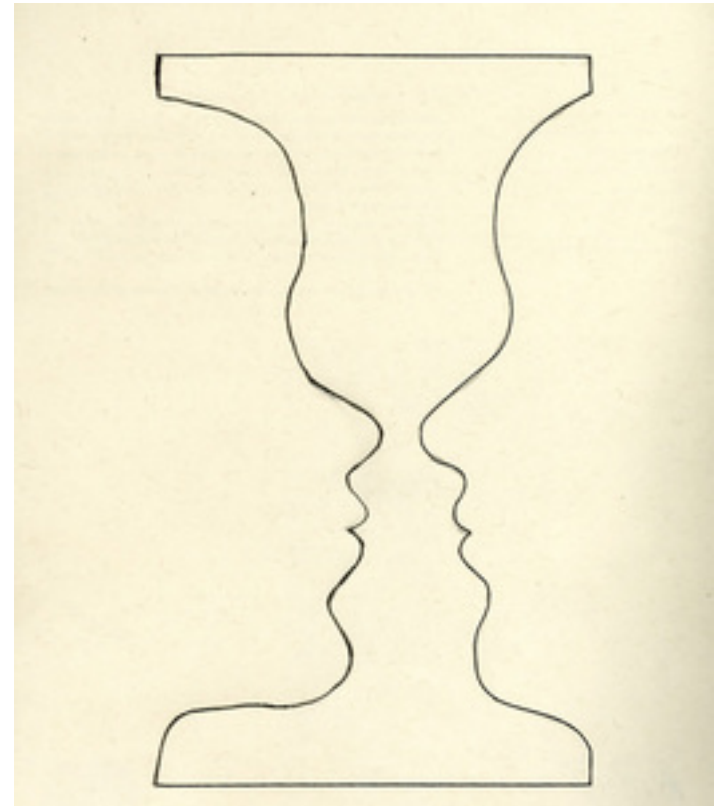
Violent men as fathers – what this means for service provision

- Separation & divorce does not mean the father has less contact with the children – it could mean he has more (unsupervised) contact
- Replicating patterns of power and control as exhibited towards intimate partners now toward or through children
- More than simply inadequate parenting
- In family law arrangements for care orders we need to re-evaluate what does ‘in the best interests of the child mean’ in the context of D/FV

Making the invisible visible

Violent men as:

- partners
- fathers
- parents



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