Responding to Men's Violence against Women Partners in Post-Apartheid South Africa: On the Necessity of…

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RESPONDING TO MEN'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PARTNERS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: ON THE NECESSITY OF IDENTIFICATION ACROSS IDENTITY'S INTERSECTIONS

Floretta A. Boonzaier* and Sarah Frances Gordon

Despite a body of work on male perpetrators experiences of intervention programmes, little is known about the intersubjective aspects of the relationships between counsellors and perpetrators. This article explores the intervention context as a social encounter, in which the identities of both parties are implicated, drawing on qualitative interviews with counsellors. We show how social identifications such as age, gender, race and class intersect to produce different possibilities for counsellors and clients, but also how identification involves more than just social similarity. We suggest that a responsive response to counselling male abusers may mean the recognition of the importance of identification across and through social similarity but it may also mean working through psychic identification to overcome difference in the counselling encounter.

Keywords: perpetrator intervention, batterer intervention, intimate partner violence, counselling, abusers

Introduction

Despite nearly two decades of liberation and democracy in South Africa, it is widely recognized that, in many respects, South African women are still not liberated. High levels of gender-based violence pose a significant challenge to the aspirations of the South African constitution. Sexual and other forms of violence against women appear to be on the increase and remain a challenge to gender equity in the country. The best population-based estimates of intimate partner violence (IPV) suggest a lifetime prevalence of anywhere between 10 and 25 per cent (Jewkes *et al.* 2002; Dawes *et al.* 2006), and there is speculation that it is vastly under-reported. At the most extreme, violence at the hands of an intimate partner may result in death. In 1999, South Africa had the highest rate of intimate femicide reported anywhere in the world (8.8 per 100,000 women over the age of 14 years) (Mathews *et al.* 2008). Literature suggests that IPV in South Africa should be understood within a context of widespread poverty, gendered, racial and wealth inequalities, a history of colonialism and apartheid, high levels of alcohol consumption and endorsement of traditional masculinity and the normative use of violence as a means of conflict resolution (Jewkes *et al.* 2002; Collins 2013).

Violence against women in South Africa is a complex problem and requires equally complex responses in its aftermath. In the global context, batterer intervention programmes have become a popular way of responding to men's IPV against women. However, in South Africa, intervention practice with domestically violent men is

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relatively under-developed. Many intervention programmes that respond to men's violence against women operate from a psycho-educational perspective and are undertaken by social workers or lay counsellors in community-based organizations (CBOs) or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Although substantial international literature exists on men's experiences of intervention programmes (e.g. Buttell and Carney 2005; Gondolf 2007; Aymer 2008; Buchbinder and Eisikovits 2008), very little has been done in the South African context (van Niekerk and Boonzaier 2014) and sparse research exists on those individuals tasked with the job of counselling men toward ending their violence against women. This article was penned in relation to this gap in the literature and constructs the intervention context as a kind of social encounter in which the identities of both the 'perpetrator' and 'counsellor'[1] are implicated. We draw on qualitative interviews with men and women involved in working with domestically violent men and argue that the intersubjectivity and what it produces in the counselling relationship should be a key site of analysis in thinking about batterer intervention programmes as a response in the aftermath of men's violences against women partners.

Criminal Justice and Civil Society Responses to Domestic Violence Perpetration

This article is framed within the South African context in which state responses to IPV, albeit inadequate, are largely punitive and dealt with through the criminal justice system. Women are eligible to protection from an abusive partner by applying for a protection order through the *Domestic Violence Act 116* of 1998. If the application is successful, a copy of the protection order is served to the abusive partner—who, if he violates the terms of the order, will be arrested and expected to appear in court (South African Department of Justice 1998; Van der Hoven 2001). If found guilty perpetrators of domestic violence may be sentenced for up to five years. Depending on the severity of the offence, some however, are likely to receive a suspended sentence, which subjects to them completing an intervention programme, which may be anywhere between 12 and 30 sessions in duration (South African Department of Justice 1998; Van der Hoven 2001), depending upon the availability of such programmes. These programmes are usually run on an ad hoc basis and magistrates typically mandate perpetrators to attend programmes at two well-known civil society organizations, namely *The National Institute for Crime Prevention Re-integration of Offenders (NICRO)* and the *Families South Africa (FAMSA).* The *FAMSA* Men Stopping Violence Programme has been identified as the first batterer intervention programme run in a developing country (Rothman *et al.* 2003), while the work done by *NICRO* occurs within the broader context of their work on diversion and the reintegration of offenders. More organizations that have traditionally focused on services for victims are now beginning to include engagement with men. However, a majority of the interventions to address violence against women in South Africa still focus on victim-empowerment programmes, women's shelters, trauma clinics, support groups and counselling for survivors, with less systematic focus on batterer intervention (Van der Hoven 2001).

Globally, most batterer intervention programmes are still located in North America and Western Europe and have been developed primarily for court-mandated men, for

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[1] We use the term 'counsellor' to identify the person responsible for the delivery of the specific intervention programme. In the South African context specifically, this would include lay counsellors, social workers or lay community-based workers (with varying levels of expertise and levels of formal education).

an English-speaking population and with a particular cultural background in mind (Gondolf 1997; Boonzaier 2008). Additionally, much of the research on the effectiveness of batterer intervention programmes has been conducted in North America and is inconclusive (Gadd 2004; Eckhardt *et al.* 2013). In South Africa, there have been some evaluations of community-based prevention or intervention programmes. These interventions target all men and usually address the intersections between gender-based violence and HIV risks. While these have proved to be somewhat successful in changing attitudes that contribute to HIV risk and the perpetration of IPV, on the basis of men's reports of their own behaviour (Jewkes *et al.* 2008; Kalichman *et al.* 2009), there has been no systematic, independent review of programmes that have specifically targeted men who have encountered the criminal justice system and been identified as perpetrators of IPV.

In 2011, Padayachee documented details about the intervention programmes for perpetrators run by *FAMSA* and *NICRO*. She interviewed magistrates, prosecutors, court managers, domestic violence clerks, social workers and other social service professionals with the aim of exploring participants' views on the feasibility of court-mandated intervention programmes for perpetrators of IPV in South Africa. Padayachee (2011) documented that both programmes utilized group work as the primary treatment modality and incorporated educational and cognitive behavioural aspects in their respective interventions. She noted that central topics addressed in both intervention programmes were those of masculinity, patriarchy, gender roles, socialization, victim empathy, power and control and building life skills, such as conflict and anger management. While Padayachee did not assess the efficacy of these programmes, she pointed to the importance of improving capacity for risk-based assessments, monitoring treatment progress and independent evaluations.

In the global context, Babcock *et al.* (2004) conducted the first meta-analysis of 22 efficacy studies of a range of different treatment models. Programme success was measured by recidivism, which was seen as any act of violence reported by the partner or the police. Police data revealed that an average of 22 per cent of men reoffended (Babcock *et al.* 2004). When partner reports were taken as the measure of recidivism, this average increased to 35 per cent of men. The study revealed overall that treatment efficacy was low. Women partners saw it as only 5 per cent more likely that the abusive behaviour would stop, if the men were subjected to arrest, sanction and treatment than if they were only arrested and sanctioned, but not part of a treatment intervention (Babcock *et al.* 2004). Generally, it has also been argued that batterer intervention programmes may only be effective for ending physical, rather than other types of violence against women. Buttell and Carney (2004) argue that these programmes create 'savvy abusers' as men sometimes end their use of physical violence but learn how to conceal other forms of abuse.

An important issue emerging from the results of programme evaluations is that no particular programme has conclusively been shown to be superior to another (Gondolf 1997; Eckhardt *et al.* 2013). Factors found to be important in considerations of efficacy are substance abuse, pre-existing psychological disorders, levels of life satisfaction and impulsivity, cultural mismatch, poverty and the inclusion of generally violent men in programmes that may not be appropriate for them (Bennett *et al.* 2007; Lila *et al.* 2013). It is also conceivable that the responses men have to the interventions will be shaped by their respective social positions. In this regard, Babcock and Steiner (1999)

found that arrest had differential effects for men depending upon whether they were socially bonded or not. Men who have a greater stake in conformity are more likely to be deterred by arrest than those who are socially marginalized (e.g. unemployed and poor) (Babcock and Steiner 1999). According to Babcock and Steiner (1999), socially bonded men (described as those with higher levels of education and higher incomes and first time offenders) are not only more likely to be deterred from violence by arrest but they are also more likely to complete the programmes. Research on programme dropout bears out this argument through finding that men who drop out of programmes are more likely to be younger, less educated and unemployed, than those who complete (Edleson and Grusznski 1989, as cited in, Rosenfeld 1992).

Along similar lines to the argument above about marginalized men, Jackson-Gilfort *et al.* (2000) argued that standard programme measures, such as mandatory arrest, are likely to alienate marginalized groups who may already be distrusting of authorities and women may be less likely to report incidents of partner violence in an effort to protect partners from a system they perceive or have experienced as racist or unjust, an issue amplified recently in the global media coverage of police violence against black men in the United States. It has also been argued that involvement in batterer intervention programmes might be perceived as threatening by men who have traditionally held leadership roles within the family and that their participation in programmes may be seen as a form of public embarrassment (Lee 2004), with these specific cultural factors not being accounted for in the ways many programmes are developed or delivered. A shift in the lens from measures of programme efficacy to the complex issue of the identifications of men who are mandated to attend such programmes means that there are a range of factors to consider in terms of whether and how men might derive benefits from their participation in such programmes. One critical complicating factor to consider is the location and identifications of those who are tasked with delivering the intervention programmes.

Intersecting Identities: Transference

Much work on perpetrator interventions focuses on different types of intervention programmes, the experiences of men in these programmes and programme 'success' rates. The literature suggests that there cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' solution as an intervention programme's success is dependent on the social and political context, type of programme administered and the characteristics of the perpetrator and counsellor (Gadd 2004). However, there is a lack of literature on the role of counsellors in domestic violence programmes (Iliffe and Steed 2000) and issues of transference and countertransference in the counselling relationship, which we see as an important part of the counsellor–client context (Tyagi 2006; Aymer 2008; Blanks 2008; Mills 2009). Hollway and Jefferson (1997: 53) state that transference refers 'to the unconscious transferring of other emotionally significant relationships onto the therapist by the patient and the therapist's responses to these transferences, as well as their own reverse (counter) transferences'. This means that, beyond the 'delivery' of a specific kind of treatment modality, that there is much going on in the intervention encounter that would implicate the identities and biographies of both the male clients and those responsible for delivering the interventions.

Studies conducted on counselling in the general mental health context and batterer intervention programmes construct cultural, religious, language, age, gender and class differences between counsellors and clients as barriers to the therapeutic relationship (Maultsby 1982; Gibson *et al.* 2002; Tyagi 2006; Balmforth 2009). Tyagi (2006: 17), for instance, highlights the importance of the issue of gender in the counselling relationship when she states: 'The issue of gender in counselling male perpetrators of violence against women must be examined because the locus of the work *is* gender, gender relations, and women's subordination on the basis of gender'. Navigating the issue of gender in this context can be complex as the counsellor is expected to also demonstrate gender, cultural and racial sensitivity and find ways of challenging men about their cultural beliefs relating to women and their role in systems of patriarchy and gender inequality, without shaming them (Tyagi 2006). This is, arguably, particularly challenging task if the counsellor is herself a woman. Counsellors are expected to achieve this whilst 'using culturally appropriate mechanisms of communication that facilitate a respectful, dialogical interaction' (Tyagi 2006: 9). Päivinen and Holma (2012), further addressing the role of gender in perpetrator intervention programmes, argue that female counsellors are sometimes constructed by male perpetrators as weaker than men, potential man-haters and sexual objects. They found that erotic or sexualized positions were constructed for female counsellors and some male perpetrators even constructed them as possible dating partners. In response female counsellors repositioned themselves as professional and attempted to establish a balance between being empathetic and challenging (Päivinen and Holma 2012). These constructions affect how male perpetrators relate to women counsellors and the respect they attribute to the intervention programme.

While the issue of violence against women is explicitly gendered, making the gendered dynamics of the counselling relationship central, other identifications such as class or race also manifest in the counselling context. The socio-economic class and race of counsellors and male abusers was found to have a significant impact on the counsellor–client relationship (Tyagi 2006; Blanks 2008; Balmforth 2009; Walling *et al.* 2012). A counsellor may come from a dominant group, typically signified by their race or socio-economic class (Tyagi 2006). As a result, these men may react to the dominant social and political positioning of their counsellors by positioning themselves defensively throughout the therapeutic process. This defensive positioning could manifest as open challenges to the counsellor's authority, sexualization of the counsellor or reluctance to engage in the process of counselling at all.

Intersecting Identities: Counter-Transference

The counter-transference by counsellors has been granted limited attention in the literature. In Morran's (2008) study on male counsellors' experiences in an intervention programme, counsellors identified the difficulties they experienced around their own identities, due to the nature of their work. On the one hand, they experienced concern over whether or not they shared similarities with violent men. On the other hand, male counsellors differentiated themselves from the violent men, who they saw as frightened boys. Male counsellors also experienced concern over knowing how to model appropriate behaviour for violent men and felt that it was their duty to challenge the men on certain issues that female counsellors were unable to (Morran 2008). Finally,

they experienced more positive emotions working with violent men, in contrast to their female colleagues who also participated in the study. Bailey *et al.* (2012) conducted interviews with male social workers working with male perpetrators of domestic violence and found that similar to Morran's (2008), these social workers were concerned about the similarities they shared with the violent men. Bailey *et al.* (2012) reported that in the counselling context, these social workers felt a considerable amount of shame regarding their own identification as men because the field of IPV services is typically a female dominated environment, expressing concern that these feelings of shame may affect the counselling context.

Research shows that working with batterers may bring to light practitioners own problems with violence, power and control, as well as their own personal histories of abuse (Iliffe and Steed 2000; Tyagi 2006; Aymer 2008; Blanks 2008; Morran 2008). Female counsellors in Morran's study reported that working with abusive men meant that they were constantly encountering issues of abuse and control, which influenced how they perceived current and past relationships (Morran 2008). Female counsellors working with male perpetrators are also frequently exposed to trauma narratives, which may be upsetting and evoke feelings of anger, disgust, shock and loathing for the perpetrators (Tyagi 2006; Aymer 2008; Blanks 2008). The position of female counsellors will be further complicated if they are sexually harassed or objectified by male clients (Päivinen and Holma 2012). The above work on counter-transference, while highlighting important issues that counsellors may bring with them to the relationship, does not go far enough in considering how this shapes the counselling relationship and how it manifests and makes particular responses from the counsellor possible and others not.

In this paper, we attend to the question of identities and how they are implicated in counselling relationships with perpetrators, specifically from the vantage point of counsellors. We make the argument that a responsive response to IPV means that the intersubjective aspects of the relationships between counsellors and men in perpetrator programmes need to be attended to. In this context, intersubjectivity refers to 'the variety of people's possible relations between people's perspectives'. We assume that 'these perspectives can belong to individuals, groups, or traditions and discourses, and they can manifest as both implicit (or taken for granted) and explicit (or reflected upon)' (Gillespie and Cornish 2010: 19–20). Our notion of intersubjectivity also relies on the theorizing of identity within a broader model of subjectivity that accounts for the range of non-rational, non-unitary, emotional and unconscious dimensions of identity and its relationality (Weedon 2004) and hence the possibility of change, as described below.

The Study

In this paper, we draw on qualitative interviews with 12 counsellors, recruited through snowball sampling. Four men and eight women were recruited from six different organizations (NGOs and CBOs) in the greater Cape Town area. Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, were open-ended and consisted of a few questions relating to the counselling work (e.g. Tell me about your experiences of working with men) and to their identities as counsellors (e.g. How do men respond to you as a female/male counsellor?). The interview data were transcribed and subjected to a thematic analysis influenced by social constructionism and intersectionality theory. Ethical approval for the research was gained from the University of Cape Town.

Rather than seeing identities as fixed essences of individuals, we see them as being socially constructed, dialogical and made meaningful through interaction. Adopting a psychosocial approach to subjectivity, we construct the social context of the intervention as involving the discursive positioning of both the counsellor and client, their investments in particular discourses (which may be shaped by their unique biographical histories) and their defences against anxiety (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). We draw specifically on West and Zimmerman's (2009) idea of 'doing gender', considering gender (and other identifications) as performative accomplishments achieved in interaction with another or others. Intersectionality explores how multiple social identities (race, class, age, gender or sexual orientation) are constituted in the context of power relations (Brah and Phoenix 2013; Corlett and Mavin 2014). We assume that individual's experience of 'gender' is shaped by their multiple other social identities and that 'an individual's social location is reflected in intersecting identities' (Corlett and Mavin 2014: 266).

Because our specific questions about the counselling relationship have so rarely been asked, we drew from ideas in the methodological literature on researching across difference, given that Frith (1998), using a complex understanding of identity argues that gender (and other) differences and similarities between interviewers and interviewees are not simply sources of identification over which individuals can bond, but that these identities are performed and made meaningful within the interview. Presser (2005) who worked with violent men in prison makes an argument about the kinds of discursive control that researchers enact in interviews with violent men, and how men respond to this. The discursive control produced by researchers implicates existing power imbalances: the men are under state-derived control, are stigmatized and the researcher sets the agenda for the interviews. Along these lines one could argue that the discursive control exerted by counsellors will also manifest itself within the broader intervention context. In the counselling context, one could therefore ask, as Gottzén (2013), in his interview work with domestically violent men did: What kinds of selves are made possible by the client and the counsellor in the intervention and how does this itself shape the context? We also address the following questions: How are the identities of counsellors implicated in the work they do? How might we consider the counselling/ educational context as a relational encounter? The analysis of the counsellors' interview texts also explores the spoken and unspoken nature of identity and positions the counsellors and the perpetrators they speak about as psychosocial beings, who each have multiple interlocking social identities, which are constantly finding their location in each other.

Analysis

Firstly, we present an analysis of the impact of identities on the work done by counsellors and show specifically how various aspects of subjectivity are made meaningful by counsellors and clients in the intervention context. Next, we unpack the dialogical relationship between the counselling work and counsellors' subjectivities, outside of the counselling relationship. Finally, we attend to the kinds of responses made possible from counsellors, given the subjective identifications, investments in discourses of masculinity, femininity and IPV and unconscious motivations of counsellor and client.

Intersecting intersubjective locations inside the encounter

In addressing the question of what kinds of selves are made possible by the client and the counsellor in the intervention context, we provide examples below where counsellors talked about how their gendered, cultural, age and class identities were made meaningful in the work they do with violent men. In a consideration of the intervention context as a kind of social encounter, it is important to note here that it is one in which male perpetrators were positioned as just that, as *perpetrators*, a position that is stigmatized, shameful and all-defining. Counsellors on the other hand were positioned as the 'experts' or the 'facilitators of change'.

Producing gender difference
A number of participants specifically talked about how the issue of gender difference or similarity was made meaningful within the intervention context.

… When he came and he saw that you are a woman, the first thing that comes to his mind is 'you are going to be on the- woman's side'. So, (whatever) question you are asking from him, to him it's - you want to - cover the wife's side … And you have to be yourself, and you have to tell him that you are here for everybody. 'Whether you are a man or a woman, but I'm here for you. And I'm willing to listen. And I will not judge. And I will not take sides...' (Funeka, female counsellor)

Funeka constructed gender as key to how male clients responded to her as a woman counsellor. She, in response, had to position herself as a 'neutral' observer or 'listener' and asserted her professional identity as more important than the gender differences invoked by the client. It is not surprising that the issue of gendered identification is common in literature on counsellors in batterer intervention programmes because the work is explicitly gendered. While many of the participants reflected on the issue of gender identification at a manifest level relating to clients' initial responses to them, the social worker below, who had extensive therapeutic experience, reflected on the issue of gender at a deeper level.

Gender might be a superficial thing that causes a reaction in the beginning. But I think the relational thing and the approach overrides that. So if I'm a woman and I'm [laughs] acting like they think a woman should, then they will respond like to their mother or whatever or somebody whose talking about feelings, and you know. Whereas, somebody like the other facilitator is acting as an empowered woman confronting them then gender does become more, of an aggressive reaction to, to the woman gender, female gender. (Mary, female group facilitator)

Above, the counsellor, who drew on a range of discourses of masculinity and femininity, reflected recognition that clients' transferences to her or her women colleagues emerge on the basis of their embodiment and performance of either emphasized or empowered femininities (Connell 1987). Her quote also reflects a double bind for women counsellors who, if they adopt an overly gendered (feminine) position, will win trust from the client but may, at the same time, produce a relationship that involves gendered and generational transferences. If counsellors on the other hand adopt a role that challenges a traditional gendered positioning, they may have to overcome hostility and aggression as defensiveness may be evoked from men who expect a particular kind of care from women counsellors.[2]

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[2] We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for drawing out attention to this reading of the double bind of femininity for women counsellors.

What Mary reveals above in her reflections on the production of gender in the thera-peutic relationship is that a kind of psychic identification with the client goes beyond social similarity or the embodiment of similarity. Read psychosocially, identification involves an ability to contain the transference from the client whether it be in relation to being positioned as 'the mother' or the 'other' (woman).

The intervention literature on group work with men presents the argument that the men's psycho-educational groups should have both male and female facilitators to ensure an equal distribution of power and provide the opportunity to model non-gender-stereotypic behaviour to perpetrators (Wallace and Nosko 2003; Boonzaier 2008), relying on the idea that social identity (involving both similarity and difference to abusive men) makes the difference. In an articulation of this issue, the scenario constructed by Dennis below specifically addresses why cross-gender co-facilitation is understood as necessary in batterer interventions.

And when it is two male (facilitators) … The session, the dynamic of the session, the feel of the ses-sion, the energy of the session is very different – because it becomes almost like a boys club. And the language in the group changes. It stops becoming their partner um – it becomes they and them. … And it becomes almost a female bashing session. (Dennis, male social worker)

Dennis here, who despite his identification as male, also positioned himself as outside of the discourse on homosocial bonding, in making his argument about why co-facili-tation by a woman is necessary. The argument about a group of men bonding around their shared identities as men (who have been violent to (absent) women) brings mas-culine identity specifically to the forefront, despite other differences that might exist between the participants in the group. This extract also highlights the problematic nature of discourses of masculinity and the social worker's possible discomfort with his own masculine identity and what that means in the context of a group of abusive men. Elsewhere in his narrative Dennis appeared keen to distinguish himself from the men he worked with in counselling by describing how different his experiences were to theirs, a way potentially of coming to terms with projections of masculinity from his clients.

I come from a home where I've never ever seen domestic violence. I only ever saw my parents argue once and it was…if every couple argued like my parents argued, we would live in a happy society. So I knew what domestic violence was, but I was never confronted with it. (Dennis, male social worker)

Similar to this study, Bailey *et al.* (2012) and Morran (2008) also found that male coun-sellors and social workers were concerned about their similarities with the abusive men they worked with. These concerns surrounding masculine identification can lead to transference and counter-transference in the intervention context. For example, in his interview, Dennis repeatedly discussed how his positioning as a 'young man' often called into question his own credibility and experience as a counsellor. He spoke about how the men he worked with often questioned whether he was sufficiently qualified because of his young age. Dennis may have been responding to his clients and trans-ferring his own insecurity regarding his age and experience onto them. As a result, he constructed his age and its associated implications as a major feature of his counselling relationships.

So I love using metaphors. I love painting pictures. And I would confront in that sense. [Mumbles]. Compared to another facilitator, who can just be blunt like or maybe even use sarcasm as a way of confronting or challenging the men. Their response is different. So, when I have challenged, it's never been an issue. It's, it's so far it's never been an issue. Um because I always do it, I always do it in a way that is me. And I always do it in a way that is reflective of my style and how I'm comfortable working. I've had to be flexible and be blunt about it when necessary. Um…so, it's never, it's never been an issue. I, I don't think- I think, it reaches a point where competence plays *more* of a role than age. And the men, in my experience, have acknowledged it 'he's a young guy'. But they don't see it anymore. They see me as a *competent* facilitator- rather than a *young* boy. (Dennis, male social worker)

Dennis linked his use of metaphors and his articulate style of counselling to his competence as a counsellor and the conscious shift he has made to develop his own style of counselling. While doing so, and in an eagerness to assert competence and challenge the assumption of inexperience that comes with youth, he constructs other ways of challenging men (namely confrontation or sarcasm) as less mature. In this example of counter-transference, the male counsellor constantly implicated his own identity in the counselling relationship and reacted to the transferences present in it.

Gender, culture, age and heteronormative obligations
The issue of gender cannot be understood outside of other intersecting axes of identification. In the example below, a female counsellor unpacked the intersections between gender and culture, which she constructed as directly impacting on her role as a counsellor.

It's challenging because men in our culture, as I said there, they were raised in a certain way. And females are, should behave (a certain way). So for me to stand in front them educating and giving all sad things, it's not okay. (Khetiwe, female counsellor)

Khetiwe above related how she saw the responses of men to her, as a woman, talking about 'all sad things', specifically referring to violence against women. She positioned herself as illegitimate in the eyes of her male clients due to their cultural expectations about what roles are possible or not, for women. These cultural expectations intersect in important ways with age and heteronormative obligations, specifically for women, as seen below.

So when I went in front to introduce the programme – at the beginning, you know, this guy asks, it's an old man, 'My girl, how old are you?' And I was laughing, he said, 'Are you married?' I said: 'No'. 'Do you have children?' I said: 'No'. 'So why are we wasting our time - What are you going to tell us?' (Busisiwe, female community worker)

Busisiwe was clearly positioned by the old man as unsuitable to be educating men about gender and violence, similar to Khetiwe in the earlier extract. His positioning of her as young ('my girl'), childless ('Do you have children?') and single ('Are you married?') works to reinforce her lack of legitimacy, particularly for the male audience who were to be recipients of the education she was meant to provide. In both examples above, gender difference in the moment of cultural similarity were made meaningful by the clients or potential clients of the intervention. The differences were constructed as impediments to successful intervention. Because of the intersectional operation of identity, in the moment that gender may become a potential source of identification, other identifications also emerge to produce a lack of identification.

Firstly, I'm not married okay? So, if I'm not married, the other man is married, I cannot say anything to the married guy. I cannot tell the married guy not to beat the wife. I don't do that. Because I, I can be in trouble, because the Xhosa men can say to me, 'Let's come and sit now. Let's look at the workshop. Let's talk on a personal level. You cannot tell me, I cannot beat my wife. I've paid *lobola* (brideprice). I've done a,b,c,d,e for my wife. If she doesn't want to do it, I need to discipline her by beating her.' I cannot say anything to that. But the only thing I do is to give information on what does abuse do-to the family. (Cebo, male community worker)

When asked about his identity and his work, Cebo constructed his single status as key to how his clients may or may not have responded to him. Despite his maleness, his single status rendered him illegitimate and sanctioned what he could or could not say. The very nature of his work (education about domestic violence) was rendered illegitimate due to heteronormative cultural obligations that he not talk about marriage because he himself was not married. The job of education on non-violence now being rendered illegitimate due to the single status of the community worker was thus renegotiated to involve the dissemination of information on the consequences of abuse.

When one dimension of counsellors' identities is considered, outside of its intersectional operation and considered to be a property of an individual, it ignores the fact that gender similarities are not simply sources of 'bonding'. Male counsellors are not always and automatically legitimized by male clients by virtue of their 'maleness'. The context in which the intervention occurs produce intersecting axes of identification such as age which may link into cultural expectations about intimate relationships.

When you work with older men, especially in (missing text) in the individual counselling there's that look at my finger, look at my age. And are you qualified? Have you got a degree? You get all those questions. (Dennis, male social worker)

In the extract above, Dennis constructed the counselling relationship as impeded in some ways by age differentials and its intersections with heteronormative expectations about marriage. His young age (in relation to potential clients) and single status made it possible for questions to be asked about his qualifications to undertake the job he was employed to do. On the one hand, the above may be interpreted as a power imbalance caused by age differences for, as Tyagi (2006) has argued, that older clients may use their age and experience to gain power over a younger counsellor. On the other hand, the question more relevant for thinking about counselling practice is: What happens in the counselling relationship when the counsellor is placed in a defensive position or when clients delegitimize their work or their roles as counsellors? The clients' challenges to the legitimacy of the counsellor, whether on the basis of gender, age, marital status or number of dependents, are produced in a context in which the counsellor already holds discursive control (Presser 2005), i.e., where male clients are not necessarily voluntary clients but where their 'client status' has been legally (or otherwise) prescribed. Even when participants have entered the programmes on a voluntary basis, it is still likely they have done so because the abused partner has threatened them with some kind of sanction such as leaving.

Producing class and race identifications
Beyond gender, culture and age, other aspects of identification are also made meaningful in the intervention encounter, by both counsellors and clients. In the extract below,

a community worker invoked a sense of shared identity in talking about class location, specifically sharing a working class background with his clients.

It is because I can identify with most of the things they are speaking about, for example, as I said in the beginning I also grew up without a father. I also stayed in gang-infested areas. I also grew up with only with a mother, you know. Also grew up with brothers that were very rebellious and also gangsters you know and always around me and I think that is and sometimes I see myself in them and I think that is what makes me identify with them and also click with them and they can sense that. (Enver, male community worker)

Drawing on the idea that social similarities were important, Enver spoke about his own childhood and emphasized features such as his working class background, absent father, single mother and stories of his brother's criminal activity, as a way to construct a bond with his clients and minimize their differences, illustrating clearly how he could see himself in his clients. In his talk about the shared experiences he had with clients (and his potential counter-transference), Enver was potentially also illustrating his ability to contain the transferences from his clients, work with his counter-transference, and thus positioned himself as a successful counsellor. In the example below, the client foregrounded the issue of race in the way that he explained his violence to a white woman counsellor.

This one guy, couple of weeks ago, started talking about and justifying his behaviour because he'd been oppressed, okay? And I looked at him, and now my immediate reaction was now 'be careful, don't get judgmental about this', you know. Whereas, the others who've also been oppressed, the facilitators, and the others in the group, came down on him like a ton of bricks. So, perhaps in a ...perhaps there is a certain inhibition in me and fear of actually being politically incorrect or un-unfeeling or un or un- or incom- so I don't, I've got to be careful about, I don't just go with my gut feeling. I think 'now hang on'. (Mary, female group facilitator)

The facilitator above constructed her response to the client as carefully thought through—given her position as a white woman counselling a black man. Although Mary's 'gut feeling' was that the client was attempting to justify his unacceptable behaviour she was unable to voice this, as a white woman, without appearing incompassionate or 'politically incorrect'. She therefore relied on the rest of the group and other facilitators who legitimized her initial impression. Incidentally, the other counsellors, who were constructed as racially similar to the client, were thus reinforcing the idea that there may be something else beyond social similarity that makes for a successful counselling encounter.

The examples provided above draw on the idea that therapeutic relationships are established when identities between counsellors and clients are shared, and that differences may sometimes have a negative impact on the work. On the one hand, the ways in which the counsellors construct their work and in relation to their various identifications bears out the findings in the literature on counselling in the general mental health context and in batterer intervention programmes, arguing that cultural, religious, language, age and class differences between counsellors and clients may present barriers to the therapeutic relationship (Maultsby 1982; Gibson *et al.* 2002; Tyagi 2006; Balmforth 2009). On the other hand, we interpret the counselling or intervention context as one that produces and actively constructs these different identifications, either as sites of connection or of disconnection. We also see an emergence of the idea that

identification with the client may go beyond social similarity and may involve a recognition that transcends social identities.

Intersecting inter/subjective locations outside of the encounter

While there is a fair amount of literature providing an analysis of the impact of counsellor and client identities on the counselling work, not much work has attended to the reverse relationship, how who they are not only shapes the work they do, but how they themselves are shaped by the work. In the extract below, a participant reflected on the connections between her work and her subjectivity outside of the counselling context.

I will always say, 'If maybe I didn't do this kind of work - if I was not involved in this kind of work - maybe I would just love blindly'. You know? (Busisiwe, female community worker)

Although Busisiwe did not spell out the complications in her life, one may assume that her work with men and violence made it difficult for her to establish relationships with men. Elsewhere in her interview, she stated that she was unable to ignore anything and constantly challenged and analysed 'things that happen' in her life. She thus positioned herself as sceptical and questioning. She emphasized this again, later in her interview.

And sometimes I, I curse my work, you know? Why am I ...Because really really –I don't let anything pass me, you know? If everything happens- I will follow it, I will analyse it, I will...And it makes my life really complicated, you know? (Busisiwe, female community worker)

Other participants spoke about the emotional impact of hearing stories of abuse, specifically in relation to their identities as women.

… and maybe I saw this woman because this guy beat this woman. And now the woman was having a blue eye, and sometimes you get angry. Because this is a woman - and you are also a woman. (Funeka, female counsellor)

Above, Funeka recounted her anger at being confronted with men's physical violence against women. As mentioned earlier, some of the organizations have begun to shift focus from working exclusively with victims of violence, to include work with men as perpetrators. In this context, counsellors, many of whom may have had a long history in working with victims, have been expected to begin to work with perpetrators. Although receiving training and supervision for this work, the difficulties women counsellors experience may be amplified—at one organization, they are expected to work individually with men and women and in couple counselling, when the victims request it.

I didn't see myself doing it (work with men) because I had this, um, anger towards men. And everybody was the same to me. There is no man that can change the attitude I had. (Nancy, woman counsellor)

Although Nancy spoke about her 'anger' towards the idea of working with abusive men, a number of women constructed anger as a response to their work and the stories of trauma they encountered. As Khetiwe articulated it: '… sometimes you feel tired. Exhausted, because the client is here and he's crying. You have to comfort, you have to counsel, you have to think for him'. She also described feeling angry and then told a story about a woman who was part of a couple she counselled who was killed by her

partner. This and other counsellors' narratives of 'bearing witness' to serious forms of violence and abuse speaks to the difficult nature of the work being undertaken and to the transferences in the relationship that the counsellors may have difficulty containing.

The extracts above show that the participants acknowledged that they were in some way transformed or affected by their work on men and violence. They constructed the work as impacting on their identities and on their lives outside of the counselling relationships. They also constructed certain emotions, such as anger, grief and sadness as 'unacceptable' emotions in the counselling relationship, speaking to their difficulties in being able to contain the transferences in the relationship.

Repertoires of responding

Having attended to the kinds of identities invoked in the counselling context, a context shaped by the discursive control of the counsellor and includes the subjective identifications, investments in discourses of masculinity, femininity and IPV and unconscious motivations of both counsellor and client, we turn our attention to the range of counselling responses it makes available. Two primary positions are constructed for counsellors within this framework, firstly as 'expert educator' and secondly as 'empathetic, non-judgemental listener'.

The 'expert educator' role positions the counsellor as the person responsible for educating men about violent and non-violent behaviour. This position is made possible through range of challenges to counsellors' legitimacy to speak on IPV (as illustrated earlier). Once a counsellor's authority has been delegitimized, the role of counselling becomes an educational one, one that teaches about violence and the consequences thereof, as below.

… my job is to come and assess and train. And do whatever I have to do to make sure people understand: What is abuse. Um what are the consequences of abuse? What are the effects of abuse? What strategies are in place to you know...all those other things … (Cebo, male community worker)

Relying on stereotypic and negative discourses of masculinity also provided the impetus for some women counsellors to position the counsellor's role as a professional expert.

Because ja it also comes back to the relationship between you and the client, and what you allow. Because males have this way of running away with your mind. Uhm, they have this thing of she's so kind, and they want to take advantage of it at the end of the day. So that is all your boundaries that you have to put. Saying that this is my number you can call me anytime that you need me, but for certain things. (Nancy, female counsellor)

The participant above constructed abusive men as manipulative, ensuring therefore that she instituted clear boundaries within the counselling relationship—which she was also compelled to construct as a professional one. Other counsellors, women in particular, spoke similarly about the need for clear boundary-setting in their work with men. Speaking from the position of 'expert', other counsellors spoke about the importance of the knowledge they were expected to disseminate, relying on constructions of their audiences (men and particular communities) as lacking in knowledge.

Within the 'empathetic, non-judgemental listener' role, counsellors draw on a discourse of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995) in which men are positioned as unable or unwilling to express their emotions.

… it's not easy to work with men. You know, they are so difficult. And for them it's not easy to, say how they feel. It's not easy to talk about their feelings. (Khetiwe, female counsellor)

So at first it's very difficult when we start the process because they not used to, you know, speaking and, and opening up and revealing. (Enver, male community worker)

Being unable or unwilling to express their emotions means that presenting for counselling is not an activity that men would voluntarily engage in. In this regard, many counsellors described the men they saw in counselling as being there because they had no other alternative, as their last resort. Khetiwe stated that most men came for counselling when their female partners decided to leave. Another woman counsellor described the men as 'desperate' and many spoke about the unexpected display of emotions of men when they had been forced to seek help.

The 'empathetic, non-judgemental listener' role is also especially constructed for women counsellors who, by virtue of their sex, are already expected to be biased against abusive men as illustrated earlier. The broader intervention context too, in which some have argued that abusive men are 'vilified' (Corvo and Johnson 2003), provides a frame in which the 'empathetic, non-judgemental listener' role of women counsellors should be understood, as illustrated in the extracts below.

Because some of them even when they come to the offices and see a woman that puts them off. Because 'Oh, this is a woman. What does she knows?' Others, when I interact with them, they say, 'I've never seen a woman like, appreciating me. Because wherever I go I've been labelled as a perpetrator. No one listen to me. No one's hearing my side of the story, but I've been labelled as a perpetrator. But it's the first time that I've seen someone that can listen to me, that can understand'. You know? (Busisiwe, female counsellor)

And I think our mindset of working for a women's organization for all the years, yes the abuser, the abuser. But when you um have the training and when you listen to this man's story, then you can see where this man is actually coming from. And what he wants is for somebody to listen and not to judge him. (Linda, female counsellor)

Although social similarities and differences are constructed as important by the counsellors in the work they do with abusive men, the above extracts from women counsellors speaks to the emergent idea that identification with the client may occur even when social identifications are not shared. The 'empathetic, non-judgmental listener role' may allow counsellors to transcend the notion of similarity to psychically identify with the client in ways that may be productive for the relationship and may involve a greater ability to contain and work with the transferences present therein.

Conclusion

Despite much global literature, we still appear to have insufficient information about what works or does not work in batterer intervention programmes (Gadd 2004). In the South African context, we have the opportunity to consider the issue from a new perspective—given the lack of coordinated programmatic work with perpetrators of IPV. In this paper, we argue that we should go beyond looking at the activities or elements of the programme to an analysis of the intervention as a kind of social encounter, one in which the identities and identifications of both the client and counsellor are heavily implicated. This paper positions the counsellors and the men they work with as

psychosocial beings, with multiple interlocking identities, which are being constructed and co-constructed by their intersubjective experience of the counselling relationship.

The study revealed that social identifications such as age, race, gender, social class and cultural backgrounds intersected in the counselling relationship to produce different possibilities for both counsellors and clients. We showed how the intervention context, one in which the counsellor holds discursive control (Presser 2005) and in which the 'client' may be shamed, is one in which a range of identifications are made meaningful in different moments. These identifications, including what is taken outside and brought back into the counselling context, produce a repertoire of possibilities from which counsellors are able to speak with authority on the matter of IPV.

At a manifest level, the intersectional social identities of counsellors and clients may be important for how the relationship is constructed by either party. However, this is not all. Firstly, the fluidities of identities means that at the moment in which one kind of identification on the basis of social similarity is made meaningful, may also be the moment in which another kind of social difference is produced. Secondly and importantly, this kind of consideration of the intersectionality of social identities (as either producing identification or not) opens itself up to a reading that does not account for the unconscious dynamics involved in identification processes. An important contribution of this work, therefore, is that it illustrates how identification/dis-identification involves more than just social similarity or difference and how this produces a potentially more responsive response from counsellors.

The analysis of counsellors' narratives illustrates the multifarious ways in which identification may occur within the counselling relationship. These involve transferences of gender and generation with counsellors sometimes being positioned as parental figures with the ability to see vulnerability in their younger clients. Some counsellors also highlighted their own counter-transference as important for the relationship, involving an ability to see themselves in their clients, and thus acknowledge their vulnerabilities. Importantly, the limits of social similarity are illustrated when women counsellors (many who have expressed difficulties in working with men) looked beyond social difference and began to acknowledge and recognize what men may need from the counselling relationship.

What this work implies is that there is no quick-fix solution thinking about what works or does not in batterer interventions. Foregrounding a more complex model of identity and identification into this work means that ideas about different types of interventions (e.g. cognitive-behavioural therapy or feminist) and the successes thereof cannot be thought of outside of what happens in the social encounter that is the intervention, its unconscious dynamics and how the broader social context as well as the subjectivities of both counsellors and clients are implicated in the work. On the one hand, a responsive response involves identification between counsellor and client across the intersections of identity. This may mean that the subjectivities of client and counsellor need to be written into the work with men and violence against women. This may also mean that we need to think about ways of overcoming social difference in the encounter. On the other hand, we are also calling for a more complex reading of identification as more than just social similarity, which may mean that a responsive response involves working through psychic identification to overcome difference in the counselling encounter.

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