

When I think that I have been waiting for a dozen years to have you contact me and yet I sit somewhat paralyzed as to how best to respond to you. However, I also am sure that this has not been easy for you as well. Thus I will push forward and do my best to help you.

I understand you are seeking information to build upon your writing. Any author who has undertaken a similar project might ask me the same questions. For that person I would have the same questions and answers for them in response. However, you are not just another author and for me there is a more personal dimension to your reaching out.

I will try to do my best to respond to both.

I did not go into the Men's Program directly from getting a BA in Environmental Studies. Prior to engaging in the intensive Men's group training I had 18 years of experience working in mental health that involved working with teens and their families. This also involved extensive on the job training as well as workshops in milieu therapy, group facilitation, psychiatric assessment, non violent crisis intervention, psychopathology, addiction ..... as well as working side by side with psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers.

One wonders, from the tone of your questions whether you have already decided on the inadequacy of my qualifications. I will attempt to lead you through a history of men's counselling in violence against women and how all those who began this work were judged for their qualifications and efficacy.

I am including a piece I wrote when exiting the Men's Program as I knew that the history of the program would disappear as new people moved the work forward. History and context is always important and the paths that we follow to where we are today can give us great understanding of the present time.

This Brief History of the Men's Program is but an inadequate precis of the birth and development of the program and its place within the communities of Grey and Bruce. To include all the detail would take up several chapters in a book so please accept that there are many, perhaps relevant, details for your purpose left out. I sought to offer insight as to how two large and sparsely populated counties of limited resources approached this universal problem and attempted to embed the response within all the aspects of the various agencies together with messaging and educating the community at large.

The fact is that this was a process embarked upon by many individual cities and counties throughout Ontario and Canada at that time as no government ministry at any level, funding agency, community program or educational institution wanted to tackle this problem. If you want to explore this time in depth in London, I would refer you to Tim Kelly who is the director of Changing Ways, your local men's program agency. He and I met many times through the years at conferences, government think tanks and PAR program development and training sessions as well as having numerous telephone conversations. I am sure he would remember me and may be willing to comment upon our working relationship. He knows the history and development of these programs very well and can speak to how this was tackled in a somewhat different way in a major urban centre with well developed and funded resources.

You also are seeking information on how the justice system interfaced with the programs that offered counselling to abusive men. This of course involved both the criminal justice system and the family court. You have an expert on these in your midst at the university. Dr. Peter Jaffe is known internationally for his work in family violence and in particular the effects upon children. He has acted as an "expert" witness in numerous court cases and has been instrumental in creating and developing community systems and partnerships to end family violence. He and I also met many times through similar gatherings as mentioned above and he

may remember me if you ask. He could best describe how the courts work and particularly how they were approaching the problem in the early years as he has spent many years in the education of judges on these issues.

The above should give you information or lead you in the direction of getting further information for your work. I am suggesting the above, so you can understand that universally, mens violence counselling was generated from women's experiences and was developed and grew from social activists that demanded attention to the root problem to create social change.

All facets of community resources felt inadequate to take on this new and as yet poorly understood problem so in each community it fell upon the social activists to formulate how this would look in each of their regions. There was no course, there was no certificate there wasn't even an accepted understanding as to what was behind violence against women. Social work training never touched this problem, mental health workers said it was not a mental health problem and they were inadequate to provide direction, addictions counselling saw it was frequently concomitant with addictions but with no causal relationship, probation officers said that the courts alone were ineffective, and there was no psychiatric diagnosis to pin point the problem yet abused women were crying out to have someone provide help for their partners to change.

I hope you will understand that people who joined the work to create greater safety for women and children by working with men came from a multiplicity of disciplines and backgrounds. When talking about my credentials you are talking about the hundreds of other pioneers that tried to bring the problem to the fore and find counselling and community solutions.

People who began working with abusive men drew from addictions and mental health counselling techniques, adult education, narrative therapy, visualizations, role plays, active listening, paradoxical intervention, mirroring, solution based therapy, et cetera, et cetera to explore the best and safest interventions with the men. All of this being carried out along with outreach to the abused partners to offer support and resources for their safety and healing. It was from these dynamic groups that the current understandings became to be accepted and that the problem was boiled down to the idea of Power and Control which Ellen Pence and the Duluth program built upon. Since then the understanding has become more nuanced but has power and control as the principal feature.

Grey and Bruce counties followed its own route given its limited resources but if you look at all other men's counselling programs you will find a similar evolution. And it was an evolution that was enhanced by having people in the work from a wide variety of backgrounds, skills and experiences but with a common passion to enhance women's and children's safety. The original applicants to do this work in Grey and Bruce were vetted by the principal agencies involved and after the months of training they were left with 6 candidates. Our original 6 counsellors came from children's mental health, addictions counselling, women's sexual assault counselling, music therapy, the women's centre and child protection services, all with no official accreditation as there was none available for this work.

Many of your questions, wishing to understand the men's counselling dynamic, are aimed at personalizing it to my experience. You say I have no meaningful training or accreditation and you wonder how I felt I was equipped to do the work. I think the best way I can respond to this is that I was asked by the community organizations on our advisory group and by my peers to take the lead in the program. I believe I was placed in my position and worked in directing the Men's Program and My Dad's Group because of the trust given to me by my clients, my peers, my supervisor, my board of directors and the professionals I dealt with regularly in all the complementary services and systems in our area. I began in trust, I continued in trust and I believe I never betrayed that trust.

Further, I never volunteered for court, I was always subpoenaed. Most of these court orders came from the Crown Attorney but several also came from the defence lawyers. The vast majority of these were for Criminal Court but there was several from Family Court as well. I would attend court in my capacity as the group leader and/or director of the Men's Program. I would take the stand with the man's file so that I could accurately testify. In Criminal Court my testimony almost exclusively consisted of attendance and homework completion with requisite dates. I was testifying to inform the court of the clients fulfillment of the direct court order to "attend the Men's Program and complete all the requirements therein" or an indirect order of "to attend all counselling as directed by the Probation Officer." On occasion some foolish defence lawyer would ask my opinion and I would hesitantly answer this, after first consulting with the judge, as the answer was never beneficial to his client if it was a hearing for a breach of probation.

I would estimate that I was a witness in perhaps 20 or so Criminal Court hearings, almost all in conjunction with a breach of probation. Interestingly, all the other group leaders together perhaps only were subpoenaed about 3 times. I appeared in 2 Family Court hearings both as a witness for the CAS and as a witness for the family. As well as the above, I prepared over 50 progress or summary reports that I gave either to the Crown Attorney, the Probation Officer, Child Protection Worker or, more frequently, the client themselves to be used in court proceedings. These reports would cover both participation in the Men's Program and/or participation in My Dad's Group and would, at times, include opinion of the man's level of participation and their displayed capacity to use the information they were receiving.

My experience is little different than what happened throughout the country. This is what leads me to say that I think that there is a second dimension to your questions. And if there is, then I have as yet not satisfied this need.

I took the liberty to read what you or your publisher has written to characterize what your forthcoming book is to explore. I believe the questions you have put to me are relevant to the "autofiction novella that digs into the author's fraught relationship with his father". I understand that writing about trauma or confusing or unfinished business is a way of understanding and exorcising the associated feelings. But, here is where I am stuck.

I have been open to any questions you might have of me regarding the reasons why you have chosen to be estranged from myself and Ann and remain so. I don't believe I can properly answer these questions via e mail as it is too one dimensional a medium and misunderstandings abound. As I remain in the dark as to the triggers that began the estrangement I have no idea how to begin but I am here if you wish to try. I miss you and I think of you often.

You seem to need to explore aspects of the "fraught relationship" through discussing details of my career and challenging my qualifications. I hope that some the above will put the question of accreditation to rest.

May I dare to suggest that some insight for you is actually hiding in plain sight. I am here and I am willing to engage. I understand there is risk for both of us but few good things come without some risk.

I said in a previous e mail that I neither wanted to interfere with your work nor further widen the gulf between us. I can only hope that my answer has not done this. We have both continued our paths through the last 12 years with achievements and disappointments.

Perhaps we are both at a different place to safely look back at what has happened. If not, then we can just continue down our paths and wait for a better time.

I would love to hear further from you.

Wishing you the best

Clark