

# Resisting and transforming rape culture: An activist stance for therapeutic work with men who have used violence

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This writing is an attempt to bridge a stance for social justice activism that aims to resist, dismantle and transform rape culture (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 2004) that exists within a wider culture of violence (hooks, 1984, 2000), with therapeutic work with men who have used violence. This approach to resisting and transforming rape culture requires an ethical stance for justice-doing shouldered up by feminism, anti-oppression analysis and decolonizing practice (Reynolds & polanco, 2012; Reynolds & Hammoud-Beckett, 2012). As therapists and community workers, our work with men who use violence happens within the context of rape culture.

Working with individual men who perpetrate rape, sexualized violence and other forms of violence (not unlike working with individual women who have survived rape) does not necessarily take up the social project of transforming rape culture. If such work is centered in social change as opposed to only delivering necessary social service (Kivel, 2007) it does not accommodate women to rape culture, only mend individual women, or hold individual men accountable for systemic contexts of violence. Men who use violence are individually responsible for their actions, but not solely responsible for being in rape culture within a broader culture of violence.

In this article I will address the tension of holding the dignity and safety of women and children at the center when working to hold men responsible for their violence, while also maintaining the dignity and humanity of these men. Our systemic analysis embraces this accountability alongside a collective accountability to resist and transform rape culture. This work requires solid feminist-informed supervision, and accountability to the victims of men's violence. Work with men who have used violence and work with the women victimised by men's violence do not have to be in competition, as all of us can collectively resist and work to transform rape culture.

## AN ETHICAL STANCE FOR THE WORK: FEMINISM, DECOLONIZATION AND ANTI-OPPRESSION

A stance for justice-doing positions therapists to respond to our work as activists and to work for socially just structural change alongside our work responding to the suffering of individual clients. This requires critical resistance against neutrality and objectivity (Cushman, 1995) within the helping professions. As practitioners engaged in the work of creating more just societies, we are not neutral or objective about rape: we're against it. Critical resistance requires us to develop a complex analysis of power and oppression that acknowledges the social context of unjust societies as the foundation of men's violence against women. In work connected to sexualized violence this means resisting and transforming rape culture as part of our ethical stance as practitioners.

I come to this work resisting the violence of men shouldered up by feminism that attends to the intersections of power: feminist analysis that questions not only patriarchy, but the systemic and structural ways women are marginalised and victimised, addressing the domains of colonisation, racism, class, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation, ableism and the myriad ways women are oppressed.

As activists enacting decolonizing practice (Akinyela, 2002; Razack, 2002; Walia, 2012), we begin with accountability to the Indigenous people of the territories we live and work in for all of our organising. As a white settler, while I am addressing work with men who use violence, I want to respond accountably to colonisation and to the traditional people of the land.

I will use the language of men and women to talk about the impact of men's violence in order to have less complicated writing and because I do not want to obscure men's responsibility for their violence. But I acknowledge and wish the reader to keep in mind that binary understandings of gender that name only men and women erase (Namaste, 2000) the experiences and lives of people who are transgender and gender variant.

### RAPE CULTURE

Naming rape culture is not an attempt to be provocative or emotional, but an act of making power transparent and naming violence without euphemisms and minimising language. Rape culture refers to the normalisation of sexualized

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violence and systemic practices of blaming the victims, particularly women, for being raped (Prochuk, 2014).

I name rape culture because one of three women in Canada will be sexually assaulted in their lives (National Status of Women, 1993). In Canada 6 to 8 per cent of occurrences of rape are reported (Statistics Canada, 1993). Forty per cent of those reports get charge approval. Two thirds of the 40 per cent go to court, 1.8 per cent of those cases end in conviction, and 0.8 per cent of convicted perpetrators get jail time.

According to the United Nations (2010):

The percentage of women experiencing sexual violence at least once in their lifetime ranges from around 4 per cent in Azerbaijan, 5 per cent in France and 6 per cent in the Philippines, to a quarter or more women in Switzerland (25 per cent), Denmark (28 per cent), Australia (34 per cent), the Czech Republic (35 per cent), Costa Rica (41 per cent) and Mexico (44 per cent) (p. 13).

There is great debate over these numbers, which purposely obscures the point. The very real threat of rape and other forms of men's violence serve to control women, and that is not measured by these statistics. This is true despite the fact that women are not victimised and oppressed in the same ways, as many women, including 'minoritized', marginalised, 'racialized', disabled, transgender and poor women, are at greater risk of violence because of structural oppression. (I use terms minoritized, marginalised and racialized for the purpose of naming the power and intention required in the racist and colonial project of reconstructing the majority of the world's people as a collection of minorities). When a man puts his fist through a wall and demands obedience from his family, he does not need to hit them. That is violence, but it is not measured or responded to by the state.

American psychiatrist Judith Herman's (1992) writing presents a necessary foundation for most work with psychological trauma. Herman says that sexual assault is so prevalent it should not be considered deviant behavior, but may be more understandable as compliant behaviour. Argentinean-American strategic therapist Madanes, along with Keim and Smelser (1995), believes that the greatest social issue facing society is the violence of men, in its systemic forms, including what bell hooks (1984, 2000), a radical black educator from the United States, calls the culture of violence.

As a society, we ask women why they do not report rape, why they do not speak out, why they do not leave men who are abusive. We are asking questions of the wrong people. Many police forces have published public awareness campaigns on how the potential victims of rape need to behave, shouldering women with the responsibility to not be raped. A poster from the Sussex Police in the United Kingdom (Sussex Police, 2011) is titled Be smart, say no to any sex you do not want and make yourself clearly understood.

What has that got to do with rape? Rape and sex are entirely different domains: one is in a consensual intimate domain while one is an act of violence where one person acts violently toward another person because they have the power to do so. When women are told to "say no to any sex you don't want" by the police force in a poster against rape, it reveals that systemically the police force cannot or does not want to tell the difference between sex and rape.

Police forces and their consultants are silent on advice to men. Happily, feminists have advice for men. In a poster titled Stop rape: 10 top tips to end rape (Rape Crisis Scotland, 2011) feminists offer an activist inversion of language as resistance. "If you pull over to help a woman whose car has broken down, remember not to rape her." "Use the buddy system. If you're not able to stop yourself from sexually assaulting someone, ask a friend to stay with you when you are in public."

Offering parallel advice to men seems ludicrous and patronizing, possibly insulting, and an attack on the culture of accountable men. This fits with what Judith Butler (1997) calls "unspeakable acts". Women do not tell men how to act. But police campaigns saying exactly the same things to women somehow pass. There are no 10 tips to men because a rape culture places the responsibility entirely on woman to not get raped. Rape culture teaches "don't get raped" not "don't rape", and that feminism is the 'F' word (The "F" Word Media Collective, 2014).

According to Canadian response-based therapists Linda Coates and Allan Wade (2004, 2007), language can obscure violence, hide the victim's resistance to violence, hide the perpetrator's responsibilities, and blame victims for violence. If we consider Coates and Wade's four operations of language, we can see how the discourses of rape and sexualized violence 'invisibilise' and make disappear the resistance of the victim, as well as obscuring the existence of violence, such as naming rape as 'making love' or 'having sex'. The man is often not even in the retelling of the events, as if a woman is raped yet no man

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committed the act. Blaming women for being raped is commonplace and silences many women from naming the events or their attackers. Language is used in relation to men's violence in ways that conflate sex and rape, which is a project of feminist activism that we had hoped we had won.

Legal discourse still investigates whether or not women fight back, collapsing the absence of violent struggle with consent. This erases and makes disappear the woman's resistance to rape. Every woman, child, man, or transgender person who is raped fights back 100 per cent. Resistance is always present when there is oppression and the form a person's resistance can take is tethered to their access to power (Wade, 1997; Reynolds, 2010). When a man has a knife at your throat and says, "Don't scream" and you prudently stay silent, it is an act of resistance for your life. It is not 'not fighting back' and it is not consent.

Many activists working to dismantle rape culture believe that legal systems cannot deliver safety from rape. The present options from the legal system in responding to sexualized violence are flawed, but they are what we have to work with as we struggle for more just options. Locking individual men up does not dismantle rape culture or deliver safety to women. I do not feel safe because men who are poor, colonised and marginalised are incarcerated. What that does is violate the dignity and humanity of another man, and that can be dangerous for women, transgender people and other men who have less access to power. Many of the men I work with have been in jail for extensive lengths of time and have been subjected to institutionalisation.

We are not looking solely to legal systems that American transgender activist Dean Spade (2011) says were "formed by and exist to perpetuate capitalism, white supremacy, settler colonialism, and heteropatriarchy" (pp. 15-16) to resist and transform rape culture. We are looking to each other as women, accountable men and transgender and gender-variant people in community.

### **Feminism is for everybody**

bell hooks (2000) teaches that "feminism is for everybody": women, men, transgender and gender-variant people.

I do not see working with women who have survived men's violence and working with men who perpetrate violence against women as a conflict. Despite important differences, in some ways it is the same work. I do experience an ethical tension in terms of holding myself accountable in all of my work to the



women and children who have suffered men's violence. The collective goal in all facets of this work is to resist, dismantle and transform a rape culture – to have a society where everybody is safe and dignified.

## **WHAT MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO WORK WITH MEN WHO HAVE USED VIOLENCE?**

### **The culture of accountable men**

I believe in the "culture of accountable men" (Reynolds, 2002), meaning that I believe that men can and do choose to be accountable for their particular access to men's power and privilege. All men do not have equal access to power. Social locations that are comprised of domains of identity such as race, class, education, sexual orientation, migration status, and other sites of both advantage and oppression make up the complexity of a man's access to power (Crenshaw, 1995).

I hold the family privilege of being connected to not perfect men but good men, and men who can hold each other to account and men who have made some amends. My father, brothers and brothers-in-law are committed fathers, my nephews are decent and kind young men, and this amplifies my hope that men can be accountable. This extended family of accountable men and strong loving women is a privilege that resources me. This belief in and experience of the culture of accountable men shoulders me up in engaging ethically and effectively in work with men who use violence.

### **Lessons from Death Row**

What makes it possible for me to work with men who have been violent is the activism I engaged in against the death penalty in the United States long before I was a therapist. I became involved in work against the death penalty in the United States because when nation states kill their own citizens, they can (and do) kill the innocent, as well as criminalise and execute political opponents and activists.

What I learned about men on death row is that people are so much more than the worst thing they have ever done (Reynolds, 2010). Men on death row are not murderers. They are men who murdered someone. They are third-base players. They are someone's father. They are somebody's son. They might be

guitar players. They are guilty human beings. The United States government imprisons people from all over the United States.

One of those men had committed a crime that he was guilty of in a democracy and this is why we have murderers on death row. This proposition takes it apart or deconstructs it of violence. The monster and the

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guitar players. They are poets. Sometimes they are innocent men, sometimes they are guilty men but they are human beings and there is so much more to a human being than the one act that we use to define who they are. The United States government has executed innocent people and released many innocent people from death row before their executions, sometimes after 20 years of imprisonment (Cohen, 2012). Every man I worked for on death row in the United States was executed.

One of those men was Roger Coleman, who was executed in 1992. Coleman had committed rape as a young man and served a prison sentence. The fact that he was guilty of rape was used to construct his identity as a monster. For a democracy to kill its people you have to construct them as less than human and this is why we must resist using language that calls people pedophiles or murderers or rapists and creates an identity construction of a man as inhuman. This props up the death penalty and the use of violence by the state so we have to take it apart on every level to resist participating in state killings and the culture of violence. The fact that Coleman had been seen as a rapist, constructed as a monster and dehumanised, is what made it possible for the state to kill him.

One of the things I still shake about is the fact that the state and the prison industrial complex co-opted our resistance against rape to kill this man in the name of women's safety. That is not what feminism wants. That does not serve justice.

We must be careful and critical of how our well-intentioned activism may possibly be used to justify and strengthen the structures that we oppose (Smith, 2006; Spade, 2011). For example, feminist activism against a rape culture has been used in some contexts to shift more resources to law enforcement and legal apparatus such as tribunals and inquiries, nominally for women's safety, in the face of widespread cuts to feminist-based programs, such as shelters, counselling and court advocacy.

Attending to power

Addressing power is required in work with men who perpetrate violence, as in all therapeutic work, because the helping professions are immersed in relationships of power. I hold power in these relationships as a therapist and I try to make that public as opposed to mitigating power or minimizing and ignoring it. As an activism-informed therapist I aim to resist replicating oppression. Addressing power requires that we look at the intersections of

domains of power (Crenshaw, 1995; Robinson, 2005) especially in work alongside men who are poor, racialised and institutionalised.

Brazilian popular education activist Paulo Freire (1970) named dialogue the space where liberatory practice occurs, as something that can only happen in the absence of oppression. If I am abusing my power with a man, we cannot be in dialogue. I work primarily with poor men and institutionalised men who do not have shelter. If we organize our work simply around gender accountability of men to patriarchal power then that client has to be accountable to me. But we meet in the intersections of power and identity. I am housed, I am a therapist. When I am meeting a man who has used violence in therapy we are in a domain I have competence in, and he is there because, often, he cannot manage his life. That is an intersection of power I need to be accountable to.

I do not start with an understanding of power that says he is a man and has been violent or I am a woman who has been the victim of men's violence, so he needs to be accountable to me. That is not useful or helpful. A stance of therapeutic love (Tomm, 1990) and compassion for this man alongside compassion and accountability to the women he has victimised is at the heart of my work. If I do not have therapeutic love and compassion for this man and I do not believe in the culture of accountable men then I would be unable to do this work.

I believe that therapy that does harm to clients is worse than no therapy for many reasons, most especially because it steals hope that any future therapeutic work could be useful. If therapists do harm they do not suffer the consequences, but the women and children in the man's life become more vulnerable. This is especially important because the men I work with are not men who get to hide behind money and dominant culture privilege when they use violence; often they will go to jail.

Another competency that is required in working with men who have used violence is to attend to suicide, which is ever near. As practitioners we require the capacity to 'hold' men who have used violence against women and children on this planet and to create an ethical container for the work as part of an ethic of belonging (Richardson & Reynolds, 2012). I believe that hate kills (Reynolds, In press), and that suicide is a social problem, which does not occur within the landscape of a person's brain but in the social world where power is abused and people are harmed. Some men I have worked with who have raped and murdered women believe that their suicide would be justified by society and would in fact enact an unofficial death sentence against them. An ethic of justice-doing informs me to resist this man's death and hold an

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analysis of suicide as a social problem, as opposed to psychological ideas that frame suicide as an individual problem for which he is solely responsible. This man's struggle with what is called suicide is informed by hate and a culture of violence that responds to the complex issues of violence against women with state killings and moving resources that could promote women's safety into more funding for the prison industrial complex and state apparatus.

In resisting the culture of violence we need to hold an analysis of suicide that resists blaming the individual for taking their own life, especially when that life has been stolen from them. In work with women who have suffered sexualized violence, whenever a woman 'commits suicide', we understand her death as connected to the multiple experiences of violence and sexualized assault she has endured; issues of oppression such as hetero-patriarchy, white supremacy, and poverty; and resist blaming the woman for either the rape she suffered or her death.

### **Personal responsibility and collective accountability**

Our collective accountability as therapists with an ethic of justice-doing requires us to work towards changing the structures of social injustice that promote rape culture. When therapists put responsibility for the socially unjust society on the shoulders of individual young men I think that is therapeutic violence and it does not serve that young man, the women he has victimised, or the women and children he may potentially victimise (Jenkins, 1990). If we do not help this young man who is willing to talk to us, again, the consequences will not only be experienced by him but by women he may victimise in the future. All of our suffering is connected, as all our liberations are connected with each other. So while I want to hold men 100 per cent responsible for what they do, they are not responsible for the social context.

Our young men are being raised in rape culture and then held individually responsible as if they invented misogyny. They did not invent misogyny and patriarchy; they are swimming in it. I think about this in relation to my own position around racism and colonization. I cannot say that I am a non-racist person – that would just be a truth claim I could not back up with facts. I grew up in a racist society in a racist culture. I am a white-skinned person of a settler culture in a territory that was stolen from Indigenous people, meaning First Nations people, Metis people and Inuit people, through invasion, occupation, genocide and assimilation (Hill, 2010). The territory is saturated in the blood of Indigenous people in Canada for which there has been no accountability.

How can I make a claim to be non-racist in this territory?

The most that I can claim is taking a position against racism, colonization and genocide. If I have it set as an intention, and work hard in a given moment to not be racist I may achieve it – but the moment I let down my guard or do not attend to racism I will replicate it. How can I expect a 15-year-old man to do more and to not replicate rape culture and misogynist culture that is the society he swims and breathes in? And how is it just to leave him alone and individually responsible for that?

When I work with men who have been violent and young men who have been sexually coercive, for example, I do not begin with their accountability for violence. I ask them where they learned about violence. I have never met a man who invented violence. Every man I have ever worked with was the victim of violence first, particularly the violence of men. They experienced violence on the body. That is how they were trained up in the ideas of violence. And so we have to start here.

### **Accountability to women and children who are victimised by men who use violence**

Holding work with men who have used violence accountable to women and children who men have victimised is complicated, and requires practitioners to create structures of individual and organisational accountability. In my work with men who have used violence I hold the women and children who are victimised by this man's violence close to me. I bring these women and children into the room with me metaphorically. When I have a conversation with the man, I am reflexively questioning how the woman would critique my therapeutic conversation. How am I honoring and dignifying Julie in my efforts to dignify Joe? We can hold these things in a tension: it is not either/or. Our work with men who have used violence can serve all of us if it is accountable to the larger project of resisting, dismantling and transforming rape culture.

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These questions can be useful in framing individual and organisational responses to structures of accountability in work with men who have used violence:

- How is my work with an individual man held accountable to the people he has been violent toward? How does my organisation assist in this accountability?
- How do I personally attend to this accountability?
- How is our work directed or informed by the women and children victimised by men who use violence? What structures of accountability can we create to hold this work more closely accountable to the women and children who have suffered from his violence?
- How am I personally and professionally resisting rape culture? How is my organisation, professional body, discipline, private practice, training/teaching faculty resisting rape culture? How can I impact the work in all of these domains to be more accountable?
- Who is in solidarity with me in resisting rape culture in these professional domains? Who are my allies? What access to power do we hold in these domains that we can access to promote the hard and ethical work to resist rape culture?
- Are we holding accountability to funding sources higher than accountability to the victims of men's violence? If so, how can we resist this, and what people/communities/organisations can help us get our practices in more ethical alignment with our ethics?

The following is a practice example of what it looks like to be responsive and hold our work with men accountable to women. I served as the supervisor for a center for survivors of torture. Racialised women, refugee women, migrant women and asylum-seeking women came to me and said, "You're white, you know how to talk in your language in a way that gets listened to. We need you to talk to police about the fact that they have to understand that men who are the victims of political violence and torture are not necessarily beating their wives when a neighbor phones the police".

These women told me they would never phone the police for protection. It is a sign of privilege to think that if you call the police their first interest is your safety. Many people never have that privilege, in particular poor people, racialized and minoritized people and asylum seekers. These women explained that sometimes what is happening is a flashback or a psychological experience based on the political violence and torture the man has suffered. The police see it as a domestic violence situation, which women describe as being much more complicated than that. If the man gets charged, he may lose his asylum or refugee status and the whole family suffers.

## ACCOUNTABLE FEMINIST-INFORMED SUPERVISION

Men who use violence must be accountable to the women and children who are victimised by men's violence. Therapists and organisations working with men who have used violence need to create structures of accountability to these women and children in their work. Feminist-informed supervision from women who have the moral courage to challenge even the best of intentions of accountable men therapists is also necessary. What is required is an honest reckoning with male privilege, which we can predict will be discomforting, and possibly require discomfort (Kumashiro, 2004). Canadian critical social worker Barbara Heron (2005) describes "double comfort" as the comfort that follows when we name our access to privilege, such as holding men's privilege, and then do nothing to mitigate it. Critical supervision will need to disrupt this double comfort with invitations to take actions that require more than naming privilege, and show direct links between therapeutic work and resisting and dismantling rape culture.

These questions are useful in feminist-informed supervision in work with men who have used violence:

- How am I holding the safety of the women and children this man has been violent towards at the center of this work?
- How am I addressing rape culture in my work with this man who has used violence? How am I informed by complex understandings of power and a feminist-informed analysis for this work?
- How am I addressing my own access to men's power and privilege in this work? Who is shouldering me up to do this difficult work?

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- How do I keep myself open to critique and the possibility that my practice may reveal something other than accountability to the women victimised by this man's use of violence?
- What can I pay attention to that might let me know I am working in ways that are not in line with my commitments to do feminist-informed accountable work?
- What am I doing to resist, transform and end rape culture? In my work, in my communities, in other aspects of my life?

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## Gender of the therapist

Johnella Bird (2000), a feminist, narrative-informed therapist in New Zealand, teaches that when she asks men what they want, they tell her they want fair and equal relationships and then she holds them to it.

I want to honour them and do dignity to them. And because I am a woman I think I am well-resourced (Bird, 2006) to do that. Useful questions I am able to ask men are:

- What is it like for you to be able to sit in this difficult conversation with me as a woman and admit that you have done violence against women?
- What does it say about you as a man that you're going to have this conversation with me, a woman? How might our different genders influence what you can say or not say in our work together?
- Am I safe enough with you in this conversation? What do you know about yourself that has you trusting that you can be a safe-enough man in a difficult conversation with a woman?
- Do you think it is possible that you and I could create a respectful relationship between us for all of our work together? What will it take from you as a man to stay respectful with a woman therapist as we talk about your violent actions against other women and children?

- If you and I could have a respectful relationship what might that say about who you are or can be as a man in relationships with women?

When I began as a therapist working with young men who had used violence against their mothers, there were questions about whether or not women therapists could effectively and ethically do this work. I do not think it is our gender that qualifies us for the work; rather it is our ethical positioning and feminist-informed political analysis.

I believe it is possible for men therapists to be ethical and useful therapists to women who have experienced men's violence. I have supervised some accountable male drug and alcohol counsellors and some of their clients were women who had been victimised by men's violence throughout their life. These men had that cold fear in the belly that as therapists they were going to transgress against these women who had been the victimised by men. I believe that cold fear in the belly, that terror you have that you may harm a woman, is a resource to men therapists, and is actually necessary to work accountably in this situation (Reynolds, 2014). These men responded to this by seeking out feminist-informed therapeutic supervision.

### Living supervision

Our most trustworthy and useful 'supervision' comes from our clients. Despite our best intentions and committed training, I believe that we learn our work on the backs of clients. I use a process I call Living Supervision (Reynolds, 2014) to center the client as the expert on the therapeutic relationship, and to provide one structure of accountability for men therapists working with women clients who have experienced men's violence.

In Living Supervision I have a conversation with the man therapist, and the client, the woman who has suffered men's violence. The man therapist is in a listening position and as the supervisor I interview the woman client. We are inquiring about the therapeutic relationship, and I ask how the therapeutic relationship has been useful, the ways it has not been useful, and what qualities the therapist brings to the work that the woman says is useful to her.

I then interview the man therapist about the relationship, asking what the woman has brought to make it useful, acknowledging that our clients make us better therapists if we are open to listening to their responses in conversation.

I ask the man about what he has witnessed that the woman's conversation with the therapist to account by the client.

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vision (Reynolds, 2014)  
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talking with women clients

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The man therapist is in  
w the woman client. We  
I ask how the therapeutic  
useful, and what qualities  
is useful to her.

ionship, asking what the  
g that our clients make us  
esponses in conversation.

I ask the man about his hopes for the woman, and for any lived experience he has witnessed that shoulders up these hopes. I ask about his responses to the woman's conversation and what meaning it holds for him, allowing space for the therapist to acknowledge the 'supervision', expertise and critique offered by the client.

In one situation the Living Supervision conversation revealed that this was the first relationship the woman client could remember with a man where she has been respected and the man has not acted inappropriately or transgressed against her in some way. He had been very careful in fact to open the door for her but always go first so that she did not have to worry that he was checking out her body. This is the first man she remembers who held her dignity and the care for her at the center of the relationship. She had not been in a relationship like this. This is not to claim that she is safe in the world, or a reason to applaud or be grateful to the male therapist for what is decent and respectful behaviour, but it shows that there is a culture of accountable men. All men are not going to hurt you. The world is not a totally terrifying place that you do not belong in.

Women can work with men who have used violence, and men can work with women who have experienced men's violence within structures of feminist-informed supervision and accountability practices. It is not our gender that qualifies us for our work but nor should it disqualify us. Gender-variant and transgender workers can also work effectively across genders because they are well positioned to transgress and disrupt gender normative roles that uphold patriarchy and rape culture.

As social justice-oriented practitioners we need to take oppression on in all of its domains. Patriarchy is supported by fixed gender binaries, 'man' and 'woman', that 'invisiblise' transgender and gender-variant people, and police the gender performance of what is allowed behaviour, laying the foundation for both the culture of violence and rape culture. Queer and sexually variant people experience homophobia that works alongside patriarchy to police heteronormativity and punish people who transgress. Trans and queer resistance creates more room for gender and sexually variant people located at the margins of power, shakes the foundations of patriarchy in complex ways, and makes more room for all of us (Spade, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

Work with men who have used violence requires feminist-informed supervision, accountability to power, and an ability to have compassion and hold the dignity of the man you are working with alongside a compassion and accountability to the women and children he has used violence against.

I do not see my activist and professional work against rape and supporting women who have suffered men's violence, and my work with men who have used violence, as competing projects, though there is a tension in holding both spaces. There are complexities involved in practising resistance politics in "an age of co-option and incorporation" (Spade, 2011, p. 34), and we can get caught up in the competition over scarce resources that pit services to men and to women against each other. This situation sets us up like dogs under the table fighting over the bones.

Our analysis and activism have to embrace ways to address all facets of men's violence without replicating competition between men and women. As an activist I continue to work to try to change the oppressive structures that promote rape culture. It is complicated, difficult and at times painful to hold these things in a tension – a compassionate care for men who have been violent alongside a compassionate and dignified accountability to the women who have been victimised by men's violence. But as activists say, we can walk and chew gum. Our collective project as women, men and gender-variant practitioners is to envision other possible worlds, and to hold all of the facets of our work accountable to resisting, dismantling and transforming rape culture.

## DEDICATION

*Respect, honor and love to the women of my extended family and family of choice who have shouldered me up in my life and work: for my sisters Susie and Nancy; and especially our mother, Joan Manuel Reynolds, who is our rock and teacher of a kind of feminism based on strength, intelligence and moral courage.*

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## ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> More articles by Viki Reynolds on the website vikkireynolds.com

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## ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> More articles by Vikki, and several of her references below, can be found at her website [vikkiireynolds.ca](http://vikkiireynolds.ca)

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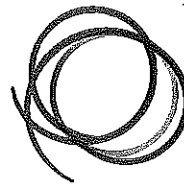
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