

Editorial

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I want to tell everybody that family violence happens to everybody. No matter how nice your house is, how intelligent you are. It happens to anyone and everyone. (Rosie Batty, February 2014).

The first issue of the *Australian Community Psychologist* for 2016 is a special issue devoted to violence and gender. Contributions by practitioners and community activists as well as academics and researchers were invited. The major focus would be on feminist and/or community psychology frameworks relating to male violence against women in intimate relationships; however it was made clear that submissions on other aspects of gender and violence would be considered.

My offer to edit a special issue dedicated to gender and violence (or should that be violence and gender? – I was never quite sure) had two key motivations. First, there had never been a gender-focussed issue of ACP or of its parent publication *Network*, which dates back to 1984. Second, in 2015 it seemed that all Australia was talking about Domestic/Family Violence, a national conversation that had been triggered in part by the heroic work of Rosie Batty since her son Luke had been killed by his father when the boy was supposed to be safe in a public place at cricket practice. Less than twelve months later, Batty was named Australian of the Year and the momentum that had been accelerated, if not created, by her response to such horror was unstoppable.

Batty's words in the immediate aftermath of Luke's murder were gender neutral, but she has never left any doubt that family violence is primarily a problem of male violence against their female partners and children. And Batty has also been very clear that her voice is being heard because she's white, middle class and educated – and still alive. While it is certainly the case that "*family violence happens to everybody*", the perpetrator and victim statistics locally and globally are so disproportionate that it must be considered a gendered crime, and one that is supported by a range of historical and

cultural facilitators that play out in different ways across the world.

So how do community psychologists approach issues of violence and gender? How do our theoretical frameworks contribute to understanding gendered patterns of violence? In what ways are these frameworks informed by (or divergent from) feminist understandings of these phenomena? There are many directions that this special issue might have taken, in terms of the definitions of both gender (binary, non-binary or fluid?) and violence (individual, relational, structural, state-sanctioned...), and in terms of the chosen lens (theoretical, cultural, empirical, practice-based, lived experience, public policy ...).

The eight papers that have been recommended by the panel of reviewers for inclusion cannot address all possible aspects of gender and violence. But taken together, they draw attention to particularly salient issues for men who use violence, children whose mothers have experienced intimate partner violence, and women recovering from such violence. They also highlight the responsibility for, collusion in, and sometimes perpetration of, gender-based violence by nation states and governments, predominantly in Australian and Aotearoa/New Zealand contexts, but also in places like Palestine and Italy.

The special issue begins with two papers that examine problematic constructions of masculinity from the perspectives of three men with histories of violent behaviour. In the first paper (Lorigan, Snell & Robertson, 2016), a photo and three autoethnographic narratives are analysed in terms of the first author's first-time experiences with violence, drugs, and sex as part of his initiation over several years into a hyper-masculine motorcycle gang culture. In the second paper (Mowat, Coombes & Busch, 2016), interviews with two men convicted of child sexual offences focus on their experiences of power and powerlessness, and the discursive resources available to them that influenced their masculine identities, practices, and subsequent offending. In interrogating masculinity as a set

of socially determined practices, both of these papers illustrate possibilities for prevention of future violence in the ways they foreground men who have previously used violence reflecting on how their community contexts confirmed and constrained their understandings of what it means to 'be a man'.

The next three papers turn attention to women's experiences of intimate partner violence, and the implications of those experiences for their children. O'Brien (2016) reports on an in-house evaluation of a community program designed to assist women in recovery from domestic violence using volunteer mentoring as a model of support. The program discussed is an innovative and direct response to largely unmet community need, and the internal evaluation goes beyond what most community programs would undertake without an external or funded evaluation.

The two papers that focus on the needs and rights of children impacted by family violence complement each other in several ways. The paper by Morgan and Coombes (2016) draws on findings from a wider research project in Aotearoa/New Zealand to highlight some of the tensions and contradictions that confront mothers navigating the legal system in their efforts to escape intimate partner violence and protect their children from its effects. Their focus is on how the women made sense of their responsibilities for protecting their children at different times during their relationship, and how the meaning of protecting their children changed as they engaged with court processes and advocacy services. Stainton (2016) observes that children have not always been seen as direct victims of violence perpetrated against their mothers, nor have they typically been treated as refuge clients in their own right. Stainton draws on this practice-based evidence to document the development of a set of Good Practice Guidelines aimed at cultural change to ensure that children's needs are met while residing in Western Australian refuges.

The last three papers in this special issue each take a particular meta perspective on gender and violence. Hayes (2016) positions state-sanctioned reproductive coercion as a gendered form of violence, and reviews the historical role of the Australian state in seeking

to limit the reproductive autonomy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disabilities, and young women in state care. She presents a powerful argument that Australia's policies of offshore detention severely constrain the reproductive 'choices' of asylum seeker women detained, and as such, now represent the next chapter in this shameful history of gender-based violence at a nation state level.

Guidi, Magnatta, Guazzini and Meringolo (2016) provide an overview of prevalence and patterns of intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) in Italy, as compared with findings from other European countries and elsewhere in the world. IPSV appears to 'fall between two stools', receiving less attention than either sexual violence perpetrated by non-partners, or intimate partner violence of other kinds, such as physical and emotional abuse – despite evidence that intimate partners are responsible for a third of sexual assaults, and that sexual assault is both physical and emotional violence. Particular cultural risk factors for IPSV in Italy appear to include enduring gender stereotypes that induce women to accept a certain degree of violence and unwanted sex as 'a wife's duty'.

Similar cultural constraints in a very different context are cited by Saredidine (2016), who draws on Foucault's theory of Panopticism as a way of conceptualising the oppression and self-surveillance of Palestinian women through the narratives and oral history that emerged in the aftermath of the 1948 Nakba as a form of resistance to the dominant narratives of the imposed state of Israel. A consequence of this idealisation of pre-Nakba Palestinian society has been the actual and metaphorical confinement of women to the traditional roles of peasant women that operated seventy years ago, and the suppression of their voices to such an extent that external surveillance and active regulation on the part of the state are not required.

Each of these last three papers bears witness in its own way to aspects of Saredidine's (2016) conclusion that:
... violence and discrimination against women are not always personal (i.e. inflicted on a single woman at a point in time), but can

be applicable to an entire class or community of women; that violence against women is not always physical or psychological, but can be subtle and inflicted as a lack of right and privilege; and that such subtle violence against women can be so ingrained in a specific culture that it is hardly recognised as such. (p. 124)

Violence against women is as public as the policing of women's swimwear on a French beach and as private as the family home. As such it is one of the most pervasive yet least acknowledged human rights abuses throughout the world. The aim of this special issue was to trouble some of the gendered operations of power that lead to such disproportionate patterns in the use and experience of violence. There could have been considerations of violence in same-sex relationships, abuses of power by women, a stronger focus on policy and prevention, or of cultural-historical alternatives to gendered practices that have become almost universally normalised and reified, as Dobash and Dobash (1979) observed:

It was impossible to find any historical period in which there were no formulae ... specifying the conditions under which a wife was deserving of a good clout. (p. 31)

But, in the words of Judy Small's poignant anthem to the victims of the 1989 Montreal massacre,

And all those other times came
flooding back to me again
A hundred news reports of men
killing family, strangers, friends
And yes I can remember one or two
where a woman's hand held the gun
But exceptions only prove the rule
and the questions still remain.

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