





# Motivating Change in Abusers:

## *Humanizing Oppression Theory*

Christopher Hall

The Retreat, Inc. and Stony Brook University: Social Welfare  
for BISCMI: Advancing the Narrative Conference  
April 16, 2015

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## Overview

- Foundations of strength-based approaches, motivational interviewing, stages of change
- Consideration of Oppression Theory, intersectionality, and personal reflection
- Humanizing oppression theory and addressing oppression on an ongoing basis in BIP/DVIP classes
- "Human Rights" activity review and discussion

## Motivational Interviewing

- Originally developed by Miller & Rollnick to address "problem drinkers"
- Values to facilitate and engage an individual's internal motivation to change
- Understands that each individual moves through a process that provides central aspects that they resolve
- Focus is on facilitating change through their selection and goals
- Not designed to be non-confrontational, non-confrontational, and non-adversarial and often involves questioning
- Encourages: FOCUSING - EXPLORING - PLANNING

## Interpretations / Cause Contrasts - cont.

Area	Traditional	Strengths-Based
View of the individual	Focus on the individual's deficits and weaknesses	Focus on the individual's strengths and abilities
Role of the individual	Individual is the primary cause of the problem	Individual is a participant in the problem, but not the sole cause
Role of the system	System is the primary cause of the problem	System is a participant in the problem, but not the sole cause
Role of the community	Community is the primary cause of the problem	Community is a participant in the problem, but not the sole cause
Role of the culture	Culture is the primary cause of the problem	Culture is a participant in the problem, but not the sole cause

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Adapted from: Anderson, R. & Gerstein, J. (2002). *Strengths-Based Approaches to Substance Abuse Treatment: A Review of the Literature*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.



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# Interpretations / Cause Contrasts

Area	Traditional	Strengths-Based
Violence against women interpreted as:	Extension of men's universal power and control	Complex phenomenon influenced by entitlement and disconnect
Causes of violence	Society that reinforces patriarchy	Avoids imposing a universal explanation
Reasons violence used by abuser	To exert power and control over a victim	Varies with individual - usually some imbalance in abuser's
View of abuser	All are similar / same	Different types of abusers
View of intervention	Educational	Therapeutic / psychoeducational
Micro focus of intervention	Individual's violence	Whole person
Macro focus of intervention	Community system	Person's interaction with environment

Adapted from: Lehmann, P., & Simmons, C. A. (2009). Strengths-based batterer intervention: a new direction with a different paradigm. In Strengths-based batterer intervention: A new paradigm in ending family violence (pp. 45-48). New York: Springer Pub.

# Interpretations / Cause Contrasts - cont.

Area	Traditional	Strengths-Based
Needs of victim/survivor	To be protected from abuser, even when he/she may not wish to be protected	To be included in process in whatever manner he/she desires
Theory of change	Educating - focusing on changing views of women	Psychodynamic, focusing on strengths / limitations / skills
Change behavior, beliefs need to be...	Challenged and confronted	A place to start and work throughout intervention
Role of BIP/DVIP facilitator	Expert and teacher	Helper and facilitator
Treatment	Same method for everyone	Different interventions for each individual based on needs
Intervention method	Always in a group	Sometimes group / sometimes individual
View of resistance / defensiveness	Problem that blocks change	Natural part of stages of change

Adapted from: Lehmann, P., & Simmons, C. A. (2009). Strengths-based batterer intervention: a new direction with a different paradigm. In Strengths-based batterer intervention: A new paradigm in ending family violence (pp. 45-48). New York: Springer Pub.



# *Motivational Interviewing*

- Originally developed by Miller & Rollnick to address "problem drinkers"
- Works to facilitate and engage an individual's intrinsic motivation to change
- Understands that each individual moves through a process that involves several steps that may fluctuate
- Focus is on influencing change toward harm reduction and health
- MI is designed to be non-judgemental, non-confrontational, and non-adversarial and often involves questioning
- ENGAGING - FOCUSING - EVOKING - PLANNING



# Stages of Change

MI Proposes that there are a series of stages that individuals go through on the path to change:

- **Pre-contemplation:** The individual does not see any need for change, is not interested in making any change, and resists information from change agents
- **Contemplation:** An initial questioning of the individual's own life and places where change may be needed, but mostly ambivalent to change
- **Preparation:** Small steps toward change - these often build the movement toward change in a testing manner
- **Action:** Expansion upon change to a more concrete shift in behavior - making these changes into routine and practice
- **Maintenance:** Ongoing changed behavior - discussion on relapse occurs in this stage of change

# *"Domestic Violence Survivor Assessment"*

## *Dienemann, Campbell, Landenburger, & Curry, 2002*

This tool represents the translation of the Stages of Change into an actionable resource of understanding where an individual client or a group might be processing several areas of change at once.

- Discusses stages focused on female victims of domestic violence, and the process of change from being actively hurt in a relationship and justifying the harms - to developing a sense of safety for self and children
- Several levels of harm-safety stages of change
- With individual victims/survivors, there may be categories where the individual is engaging in change, and other categories of avoidance and denial
- This allows for a more holistic understanding of the process of victimization and process of gaining safety for a victim/survivor

Dienemann, J., Campbell, J., Landenburger, K., & Curry, M. A. (2002, January 21). The domestic violence survivor assessment: a tool for counseling women in intimate partner violence relationships. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 46(3), 221-228. doi:10.1016/S0738-3991(01)00216-6



# ***"Domestic Violence Perpetrator Assessment"***

## ***draft by Christopher Hall***

Using a template similar to Dienemann, et al, the DVPA considers various areas of change, and the process in which such an abuser might change.

- **Physical Harms:** from complete denial to working toward validation of harm (direct assault, restraint, sexual, indirect)
- **Emotional Harms:** outlines threats, intimidation, exposure to danger, financial control, verbal harms, sexual infidelity
- **Description of Behavior:** considers if an abuser is able to focus on individual choices, provide details, and talk about patterns
- **Social Supports / Connections:** how is an abuser working toward changing toward healthy/respectful supports in life
- **Self-Care:** understanding that hurtful relationship behavior can be connected to self-care can be important to recognize



# *Using Layers of Understanding*

For change to happen, a facilitator must understand him/herself as well as the group identified as a target of change - specific layers to address:

- **Exposure to Issue:** Where does the invisibility of the issue lie for the facilitator, the target group, and the individual group members
- **Willingness to Learn:** Once exposed to the topic, how willing are the individuals to discuss the topic or work on it themselves
- **Working Together:** How does the facilitator work with the group, and how do individuals in the group work together
- **Ongoing Work on Topic:** Is the facilitator willing to do ongoing education on the topic, will the group work on the topic outside
- **Desire for Change:** Does the group want to change the issue for themselves and/or the community
- Personal issues can get in the way of community change, and can impact the group as a whole

# Oppression Theory

Oppression is a challenging topic, mostly because it is uncomfortable to consider individual responsibility for conscious and unconscious harms caused to others. The components are straightforward, but their application is vast:

- **POWER:** The ability to influence and control others – with or without resistance. Power offers advantages and privileges to those who hold it.
- **PRIVILEGE:** The history of entitlement for a group of people. An individual's privilege may grant him or her additional benefits, immunities, powers, or entitlements.
- **PREJUDICE:** A process of building assumptions about a location, group of people, a situation, or an event. These assumptions lead to judgment toward a representative locale, person, situation, or event.



## *How do you make oppression motivational?*

- Humanizing oppression theory involves the ability to apply the concepts into your own life
- Intersectionality is the understanding of the overlaps of oppressions - that no one kind of oppression is bigger or worse than another - they all cause different harms
- BIP/DVIE concepts need to also be applied to facilitators/counselors as far as considering respect and health, disrespect and harmful behavior, and awareness of classism inherent in the group setup of facilitators and clients/participants



# Talking about Oppression in BIP/DVIP

Different components of oppression theory fit throughout discussions in BIP/DVIP - some different model-based approaches include:

- *DULUTH DAIP: "male privilege" is included on the power and control wheels, but it can be important to consider other ways abusers are oppressive beyond sexism, and to consider community coordination of discussion on oppression overall*
- *EMERGE: discussions can occur in all lesson plans, but particularly in "effects on women," and "effects on children" activities - drawing out aspects of oppression in relationship histories is important for individuals*
- *MEN STOPPING VIOLENCE: the mentor component allows for education of community in direct ways, and creates potential for healthy supports*

# *Non-Specific Discussions on Oppression*

- Oppression is about superiority and ideas of being better than others
- Broken down simply, we ALL have places we are superior to others and discussing that directly in BIP/DVIE can facilitate greater discussion of harms
- Superiority is NOT better than, but with advantages given by superiority, it can be easy to fall into the trap of feeling better than others



# *"Human Rights" Activity*

Created initially for the West Virginia Batterer Intervention Prevention Program Curriculum, this activity breaks down discussion of oppression by using principles of United States freedoms:

- Unalienable Human Rights / Four Freedoms
- Draws out discussion by allowing abusers to consider ways they have experienced harms in their lives
- Save the types of oppression you really want to discuss for last - once buy in is achieved, topics that normally have points of contention are accepted





# Summary

- Motivating change in abusers makes the work effective and productive - forcing admission and shame as a part of BIP/DVIP demotivates and leads to abusers feeding what they think facilitators want to hear
- BIP/DVIP staff need to be able to understand where they fit on the respect/health vs. disrespect/harm continuum and have the ability to talk about domestic violence in humanistic ways. Understanding the process of change and Motivational Interviewing can assist in this
- Oppression theory is not something to convince people about, it is a topic to guide reflection on personal harms experienced from others and harms chosen toward others - and that all human beings are in both oppressor and oppressed classes in different ways
- Conversations about entitlement and disconnect are conversations about oppression - BIP/DVIP classes are uniquely situated to have such discussions regardless of model practiced. How can you use those opportunities to provide increased safety and comfort for victims, survivors, and children of domestic violence offenders?



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Beliefs about change	Change is a linear process that can be achieved through direct intervention	Change is a non-linear process that can be achieved through indirect intervention
Change strategies	Focus on the individual's deficits and weaknesses	Focus on the individual's strengths and resources
Role of the therapist	Therapist as a change agent	Therapist as a facilitator
Role of the client	Client as a passive recipient	Client as an active participant

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Retrieved from: <http://www.ccr.org/2002/02/01/strength-based-approaches-to-correctional-treatment-a-review-of-the-literature/>