The Importance of Offender Type for Intervention with Domestic Violent Men

By Kevin Browne & Louise Dixon

The Nature of Spouse Abuse

Definition

- Any violence between current or former partners in an intimate relationship
- The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or financial abuse

Are Domestic Violent Offenders the Same?

- Researchers have studied male spouse abusers in comparison to non-abusive males

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Summary of the characteristics which researchers have associated with domestic violent men in comparison to non-violent men</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low assertiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem</td>
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<td>Poor social skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol and drug misuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor impulse control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inappropriate dependencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Violent backgrounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>History of violent behaviour</td>
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<td>Antisocial personality</td>
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The Application of Typologies

- There is no reason to suggest that all spouse abusing men are alike
- Offenders behaviour is best described by subcategories - increase understanding
- Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) Hypothetical Typology
  - Family Only (50%), Generally Violent/ Antisocial (25%), Dysphoric/ Borderline (25%)
Family Only
Absence of psychopathology.
Low frequency of violence.
Low severity of violence.
Familial abuse.

Generally Violent/ antisocial
APD or psychopathy.
Moderate – severe violence.
Psychological sexual and non-sexual violence.
Most likely to have problems with substance abuse.

Dysphoric/ borderline personality
Psychologically distressed, evidencing borderline personality characteristics.
Moderate – severe violence.
Psychological sexual and non-sexual violence.
Primarily familial violence.
Some problems with substance abuse.

Matching Treatment to Offender Type
- A one-size-fits-all intervention cannot accommodate the diverse population of domestic violent men.
- 218 SA men randomly assigned to 2 treatment conditions.
- Saunders (1996) - taken personality characteristics into account in predicting treatment efficacy.
  - Antisocial type - feminist-Cognitive-Behavioural group - recidivism rate 36% (V's 53% PPT).
  - Dependent - Psychodynamic-process group treatment - recidivism rate 33% (V's 52% FBT).

Gondolf (1998) - no evidence that one type did better in programme approach or another (ie, didactic vs process). Further investigation is warranted.

Ethnic minority groups - less participation, lower completion rates and less successful than their white counterparts.

Treatment programmes assume equal effectiveness across all offenders, regardless of SES, individual or ethnic background.

Review of Literature
- 12 studies were reviewed, concerning typologies of domestic violent men from 1994 onwards.
- Samples originated from two sources; a) Court referrals, b) Voluntary referrals.
- All provided some level of support for the Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) Hypothetical Typology.
- Simple meta-analysis was carried out.
Results

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Family Only(50%)</th>
<th>Generally Violent(25%)</th>
<th>Borderline(25%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COURT</td>
<td><strong>37.7%</strong></td>
<td><strong>36.3%</strong></td>
<td><strong>23.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOLUNTEER</td>
<td><strong>59.3%</strong></td>
<td><strong>22.9%</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.5%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Mean %</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
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*p<0.05, df=1, chi-square test
**p<0.01, df=1, chi-square test

Summary of Results

- The type of offender in the majority varied depending on the referral process by which the offenders were sampled (ie. Court or Volunteer)
- Less representation of Family Only group in court referred sample, and less representation of Generally Violent men in volunteer group

Conclusion of Review

- Research into typologies of domestic violence need to sample a broad section of the population
- The research review suggests there are varying treatment needs for court and volunteer referral groups
  a) Court referrals; more generally violent, antisocial personalities
  b) Volunteer Referrals; family violence only, less frequent and less severe.

Towards a Holistic Family Focused Typology

- Previous research has a narrow focus on the offender - does not consider factors such as context and behavioural actions/reactions of the victim
- Aggression in the family is a product of context and the person - environment interaction
- More holistic family focused typology, based on interpersonal characteristics of the offender and victim, together with situational factors that trigger the violent act, may be a more fruitful approach to classification of treatment needs of offenders and their victims
Postulated Abuse Patterns within Domestic Violent Families


Reciprocal Family Violence

Hierarchical Family Violence

Paternal Family Violence