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Domestic Violence Research:

Summaries for Justice Professionals

Barbara E. Smith, Editor

Findings and conclusions of the research reported here are those of the author(s) and do not reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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Introduction

Domestic violence is a unique crime in that it occurs between intimate partners rather than strangers and victims may not involve the justice system out of fear of more abuse. It also has a ripple effect that extends well beyond just the victim and the perpetrator. Not only does it affect families, children, and communities, but it also affects justice professionals tasked with responding to, intervening in, and making decisions about domestic violence episodes. Much can be learned from current research on how the justice system deals with domestic violence. For example:

- # The practices of court professionals can benefit from research on no-drop policies, divorce mediation procedures, factors that affect case processing and outcomes, and prosecution strategies in domestic violence cases.
- # Understanding research on the cycle of violence can help mental health professionals craft more appropriate intervention and treatment programs.

- # Policymakers can use research findings as a basis for allocating program funding and enacting new legislation.
- # Law enforcement officials can use research to examine how other police departments across the Nation respond to domestic violence calls, whether it be alone or in coordination with the community and other justice entities.
- # Through research, victim service providers can learn more about the needs and perspectives of domestic violence victims and develop means to decrease the likelihood of future abuse.

The following chapters present a broad overview of domestic violence research findings that may be of use to justice professionals as they initiate, improve, and revamp domestic violence policies and practices. The research in each chapter is organized by purpose, findings, implications, methods, and limitations.

Research on Courts

Before and After: An Evaluation of Efforts to Implement No-Drop Policies in Four Sites

Barbara E. Smith, Robert Davis, Laura B. Nickles, and Heather J. Davies
American Bar Association

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The complete study—*An Evaluation of Efforts to Implement No-Drop Policies: Two Central Values in Conflict* (NCJ 187772)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/187772.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800–851–3420.

Purpose

To determine the effects, if any, that no-drop policies had on court outcomes, victim satisfaction with the justice system, and feelings of safety in four sites: San Diego, California; Omaha, Nebraska; Everett, Washington; and Klamath Falls, Oregon. The research addressed several questions:

- # Did implementing a no-drop policy result in increased convictions and fewer dismissals?
- # Did the rate of trials increase in jurisdictions where a no-drop policy was adopted as a result of the prosecutor’s demand for a plea in cases with uncooperative or unavailable victims?
- # Did prosecutors have to downgrade sentence demands in order to win the willingness of defense attorneys to negotiate pleas in the new context of a no-drop policy?
- # What was the impact on victims? That is, did victims who initially did not want their

intimate partners prosecuted eventually come to believe prosecution was a good thing? Or did prosecution without the victims’ consent result in angry victims who were discouraged from calling the police in the future?

Findings

Findings from San Diego

San Diego’s no-drop policy dates back to the late 1980s and has been copied by other jurisdictions. Because the policy began so long ago, an archival comparison with San Diego was not possible. However, the study did examine the impact of a 1997 change in legislation regarding admissibility of evidence. The analysis revealed the following:

- # Differences in case processing were found between 1996 and 1999. On average, processing times declined from 91 days in 1996 to 32 days in 1999. The rate of adjudications of guilt remained very high during this time, as it was 96 percent in both 1996 and 1999.
- # No differences were found in the proportion of guilty defendants whose sentences included jail time, probation, or batterer treatment. There was, however, a significant difference in the proportion of offenders whose sentences included a no-contact provision. In 1999, 61 percent of offenders were ordered to stay away from victims, up from 38 percent in 1996.
- # None of the changes found between 1996 and 1999 were related, at least obviously, to the new legislation. Rather, changes that did happen seemed to be the result of changes in the implementation of a specialized domestic violence court.

- # Usually changes in legislation regarding admissible evidence affect conviction rates; however, the study found no difference in trial conviction rates between the 1996 and 1999 samples.

More specifically, the study examined the extent to which three types of prosecution evidence were or were not admitted in trials between 1996 and 1999:

- # Statements, including statements and admissions made by defendants, statements made by victims to the police, and statements made to 911 operators.
- # Evidence from witnesses, including eyewitness testimony, police witness testimony, medical testimony, and expert witness testimony.
- # Corroborating evidence, including physical evidence, photographic evidence, medical records, copies of restraining orders, and evidence of previous violence by the abuser.

Witness testimony and corroborating evidence were almost accepted universally, as approximately 90 percent of judges allowed prosecutors to introduce these forms of evidence at trial in both 1996 and 1999. Prosecutors were less successful in gaining admission of defendant or victim statements in 1996, when they were admitted in only 72 percent of cases in which prosecutors tried to introduce them. In 1999, however, these statements were admitted in 89 percent of the cases in which prosecutors tried to introduce them.

Because of the large trial sample in San Diego ($N=90$), researchers were able to examine the effects of evidence on trial outcomes in ways that they could not do in the other sites. They found that *none* of the forms of evidence significantly influenced the outcome of trials either among the entire sample or among no-drop cases.

Findings from Everett

In 1997, through a grant from the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Everett Police Department created a domestic violence unit that brought together prosecutors, police, and victim coordinators to increase collaboration. An experienced domestic violence prosecutor was hired to bring a more aggressive style of prosecution to Everett's domestic violence caseload. He was teamed with specialized domestic violence police officers who conducted followup investigations and assembled evidence. A victim coordinator worked with victims, maintaining contact with them, educating them about what prosecution can do for them, and preparing them for court testimony.

Of the four sites, Everett provided researchers with the best data on the impact of the no-drop policy on the prosecution of domestic violence cases. Data were examined from a sample of 156 cases prior to the start of the no-drop policy and 200 cases following its start. Comparisons were made among processing times, trial rates, and guilty plea rates. The pre-no-drop case files did not contain data on sentences; therefore, comparisons could not be made among rates of jail terms, no-contact orders, or conditions of probation.

In Everett, key findings were—

- # After the formation of the special domestic violence unit, processing time declined from 109 to 80 days.
- # Dismissals dramatically declined from 79 to 26 percent of dispositions. In contrast, adjudications of guilt (either by plea or trial) increased from 19 to 53 percent and diversion dispositions increased from 2 to 22 percent.
- # The implementation of the no-drop policy resulted in a large increase in trials, from 1 to 10 percent. Prosecutors won four of

every five (80 percent) trials after the shift in policy.

Findings from Klamath Falls

In 1996 and 1997, through grants from the Violence Against Women Office's proarrest program, Klamath Falls implemented a no-drop policy. In the first year, the grant supported a full-time deputy district attorney; two probation and parole officers, two victim advocates, a unit coordinator, and a clerk. In the second year, they added another full-time deputy district attorney, an attorney to supervise the unit, and an investigator. An analysis of case outcomes prior to and after the institution of the no-drop policy in 1996 revealed findings similar to those from Everett:

- # Dismissals and acquittals dropped from 47 percent prior to the policy change to slightly more than 14 percent after the change.
- # The proportion of diversion dispositions dropped from 6 percent to zero.
- # Adjudications of guilt rose from 47 to 86 percent.
- # The proportion of cases resulting in trials jumped from 1 to 13 percent. The prosecutor in Klamath Falls won the majority (63 percent) of trials after the no-drop policy went into effect.

Findings from Omaha

In Omaha, VAWA grant funds were used to establish a special domestic violence prosecution unit in the county attorney's office. Staffed by five persons, the unit adopted a no-drop policy so that cases would be pursued even when victims refused to cooperate with officials. In addition, grant funds were used to create a specialized unit within the police department to conduct followup investigations on domestic violence calls. The police department unit makes

extensive use of the department's victim advocates in domestic violence cases.

Information was not available on case dispositions before and after the implementation of the no-drop policy. This was because the shift in responsibility for prosecuting misdemeanor domestic violence cases from the city attorney to the county attorney coincided with a major improvement in recordkeeping.

Researchers learned from Omaha officials that judges differed greatly in their willingness to admit evidence in the absence of victims on date of the trial. Some judges were characterized as receptive to admitting hearsay evidence, while others were thought to be reluctant to do so. Case dispositions were analyzed in accordance with the perceived receptivity of judges to the no-drop policy in instances when victims were absent at the trial. Contrary to what researchers expected, little difference was found in dismissal rates between judges rated as sympathetic and judges rated as hostile to the no-drop policy: Approximately four of every five cases were dismissed when victims were absent at trials in which judges from both groups presided. No-drop efforts largely failed in Omaha.

Findings from the victim interviews across the four sites

- # Most victims (79 percent) wanted the defendant to be arrested.
- # Seventy percent were satisfied with the police; 4 percent reported feelings between satisfaction and dissatisfaction; and 26 percent were dissatisfied. Satisfaction with the prosecutor was slightly less but still substantial: 64 percent were satisfied; 27 percent were dissatisfied; and 9 percent were between satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Similar marks were recorded for judges: 67 percent were satisfied with the judge; 8 percent were between satisfaction and dissatisfaction; and 25 percent were dissatisfied. Satisfaction rates

for case outcomes were lower: 59 percent were satisfied, 13 percent were between satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and 29 percent were dissatisfied.

- # Most victims (83 percent) reported that they had seen or heard from the defendant since the disposition of the case. With the important exception of verbal abuse, the vast majority of victims had not been bothered by the defendant.
- # The majority of the victims interviewed had very positive things to say about the wisdom of prosecuting. In hindsight, 85 percent of the victims came to see the prosecution as helpful. Only 10 percent said prosecution was not a good thing, and 5 percent said it was both good and bad.
- # The vast majority of victims (79 percent) said they would call the police if abused again in the future. Only 11 percent said they would not call, and 10 percent said it would depend.

Implications

- # The no-drop policy is more a philosophy than a strict policy of prosecuting domestic violence cases. None of the prosecutors pursued *every* case they filed. Prosecutors were rational decisionmakers who were most likely to proceed without the victim's cooperation if they had a strong case based on other evidence. Of course, definitions of what constitutes strong evidence varied from site to site, and some prosecutors were much more likely to persist in the face of an unwilling victim than others. But none chose to proceed with every case in which the victim was unwilling to cooperate.
- # Adopting a no-drop policy can boost convictions dramatically. Extraordinarily large increases in conviction rates, declines in processing time, and large increases in the

number of cases that went to trial were found in Everett and Klamath Falls, where pre- and post-implementation data existed.

- # To implement a no-drop policy requires significant case screening. All of the sites engaged in significant screening of domestic violence cases, refusing to file as many as 30 percent of arrests. Arrests with weak evidence need to be rejected by the prosecutor so that the prosecutor can credibly claim that he or she can prosecute the remainder, regardless of what the victim wants or does.
- # A successful no-drop policy requires judges who are "on board" with the idea of admitting hearsay or excited utterances from victims, statements from defendants, or documentation of previous bad acts.
- # No-drop prosecution is expensive. Successful implementation of such a policy involves significant training of police in gathering evidence, a realization that more cases will go to resource-intensive trials, and persuasion of judges to accept forms of evidence that historically have been considered controversial. Moreover, it is not enough to encourage arresting officers to do a better job gathering evidence; it is also necessary to have specialized officers (working closely with prosecutors) to conduct followup investigations. Intensive training, special units, and thorough investigations require substantial resources.
- # Interview data suggested that victims may see prosecution as beneficial. This was evident even among those victims who initially did not want any criminal justice action beyond arrest. However, the researchers were unsuccessful in locating most of the victims they sought to interview, making it unlikely that the interview results are representative of the victim populations in the study sites. Therefore, there were no

conclusions concerning whether victims benefit when criminal justice professionals assume the exclusive right to decide when to prosecute and what outcome to seek.

Methods

The evaluation included both process and impact components. During the process component, data on no-drop program implementation were collected through a review of written materials, interviews with local officials, and onsite observations. In each of the four sites, officials from prosecution, defense, court, probation, and law enforcement agencies were interviewed about their experience with no-drop policies.

The impact evaluation assessed the overall effect of the coordinated approach to domestic violence implemented at each site. At the three sites that had recently implemented no-drop policies (Omaha, Everett, and Klamath Falls), the researchers attempted to collect samples of 200 domestic violence court cases during the year prior to implementation of the no-drop policy and 200 cases after the implementation of the no-drop policy. That was not possible in Omaha, where domestic violence cases were prosecuted by the city attorney before the no-drop policy and by the county attorney afterwards.

In San Diego, which has had a no-drop policy since the mid-1980s (and thus a pre-post sample was not feasible), the researchers examined the effects of the enactment of two State laws favorable to the prosecutors. These statutes were designed to make it easier to admit certain types of evidence and thereby increase the prosecutor's chances of succeeding in trials without victim cooperation. To assess the impact of the statutes on domestic violence cases in San Diego, samples were collected from 200 cases before and 200 cases after the new statutes took effect.

For sampled cases, the researchers collected data on charges; the defendant's criminal history; the relationship between victim and defendant; court outcome; sentence and special conditions of sentence; issuance of protection orders; prosecution of violations of protection orders; contacts with victim by phone or in person; assessments of victim willingness to prosecute; subpoenas or body attachments issued for victims; and victims' attendance in court.

For cases resolved under the no-drop policy, telephone interviews with victims were attempted to determine their views on (1) what should have been done with the case (from dropping charges to sentencing batterers to jail terms); (2) their willingness to cooperate with criminal justice officials; (3) their contact with victim advocates; (4) their belief that criminal justice officials heard and considered their views; (5) their satisfaction with officials (police, prosecutor, and judge) and with the case outcome; (6) their beliefs about whether the criminal justice outcome had increased or decreased their safety; and (7) the level of violence experienced after the case was resolved in court.

Limitations

Victim response rates were quite low. The response rate was 21 percent in Omaha; 20 percent in San Diego; 17 percent in Klamath Falls; and 14 percent in Everett. Domestic violence victim populations are notoriously hard to reach, especially using a retrospective design as was used here. The researchers tried to reach victims several months after the disposition of their cases. The study design allowed questions to be asked about satisfaction with the case and officials, and renewed problems with the abuser. But many victims had changed their phone numbers after arrests were made. It should be noted that actual refusal rates were small *if* victims could be reached by telephone.

That less than 20 percent of the sample was interviewed makes it unlikely that the results are representative of the population of victims in the four study sites. It seems quite probable that the victims who remained in one place and kept the same telephone number are different in fundamental ways from those who relocated or

changed their numbers. It also is conceivable that those who do make themselves hard to find are hiding out from the defendant or from the prosecutor. If that is the case, then these victims would likely have a different perspective than the victims that were contacted.

The Effects of Domestic Violence on Divorce Mediation Procedures

Jessica Pearson
Center for Policy Research

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The complete study—*Divorce Mediation and Domestic Violence* (NCJ 164658)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/164658.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800–851–3420.

Purpose

To determine how mediators and court staff decide if domestic violence is present in the cases they mediate and examine the common adjustments that are made to the mediation process to enhance safety in domestic abuse cases.

Findings

- # Domestic violence is a frequent problem in divorce mediation programs. Some programs estimate that it occurs in almost 80 percent of the cases and none put the incidence at less than 50 percent. There is great variation in the form, duration, and severity of abuse. Domestic violence does not automatically exclude a case from mediation. In fact, less than 5 percent of cases are excluded because of it.
- # Mediator attitudes toward domestic violence have changed, as they recognize the prevalence of domestic violence and the need to change mediation procedures as a result of it. For example, most mediation programs have changed their procedures to enhance the safety of victims during and after mediation. Ninety-six percent of mediation programs in the study reported the use of special techniques to address the prevalence of domestic violence in their cases, including onsite metal detectors;

security guards and escort services; written intake questionnaires and in-person interviews; separate mediation sessions; male-female comediation teams; separate waiting rooms and orientations for men and women; attendance by victim advocates, attorneys, and other support people; negotiations of detailed safety plans including neutral exchange sites and supervised visitation; termination of mediation by the mediator; and referrals to shelters and counseling programs.

- # Mediation programs have changed their definition of “success” because of concerns about domestic violence. In the past, the measure of success was reaching an agreement. Now, mediators prefer to terminate mediation themselves when they have safety concerns, rather than placing the burden on the client. They also may choose to alert the court if emergency evaluation is required. Also, they are more lenient on no-shows in domestic violence cases or consider the private screening alone (as opposed to the traditional joint session) as a fulfillment of the mediation obligation.
- # There is a need for multiple, individualized methods for identifying domestic violence. To screen for domestic violence, mediators prefer private, in-person sessions prior to the mediation.
- # Communication between the mediators and advocacy communities is vital to program quality and acceptance. Mediation programs generally are more accepted by victim advocates when there is open communication between the two groups.
- # Reactions of advocates for domestic violence victims were mixed. Some preferred mediation to adversarial court processing but others worried about its

coercive nature and potential risks to victims.

- # Advocates or victims and batterers expressed many concerns about mediation, particularly with laws governing custody and visitation. Frustration also was expressed about the lack of evaluation in mediation and the lack of confidentiality in the process.
- # Reactions of attorneys and judges to mediation were generally favorable. Many felt victims fared better in mediation than they did in court.
- # Domestic violence victims need a variety of dispute resolution programs. Some recommended approaches are more intensive therapeutic/legal interventions that combine mediation with counseling, evaluation, and longer term therapy; arbitration, where trained and experienced mental health professionals assess issues and make binding decisions in disputes that involve children; and hybrids of evaluation and mediation where mental health professionals conduct assessments, make recommendations, present them to parents and their attorneys, and use the feedback phase to stimulate parties to engage in decisionmaking regarding their postseparation parenting arrangements.

Implications

Mediators should take steps to accommodate the inevitable incidence of domestic violence in their divorce caseloads. Careful screening for the presence of domestic violence is the cornerstone of safe mediation. Screening should include universal review of mediation candidates prior to the start of mediation, the use of separate and private interviews, reliance on more than one method of identification, collection of eligibility information, and assessments that lead to the conduct of mediation as usual, the conduct of

mediation with special conditions, or case referral for alternative treatments.

Mediators should receive continual training in the dynamics of domestic violence. Mediation program directors should include their local advocacy communities in such training to encourage communication between mediators and advocates and to dispel misconceptions about the mediation process. Steps should be taken to promote safety, such as separate waiting rooms, security systems, escort services, safe termination of the mediation process, and so on.

Better coordination between and among the criminal justice, court, and support agencies that assist families by providing legal and treatment services is needed. Given declining resources and the range of help needed in domestic violence cases, coordination is the key. No one agency can do it all.

Research should focus on the experiences of domestic violence victims who use mediation and other forms of dispute resolution. More research is needed on client satisfaction, compliance rates, and recurrence of abuse of domestic violence victims who go through the mediation process.

Methods

Three methods were employed. First, a mail survey of 149 administrators of public-sector divorce mediation programs in courts was completed. The survey questioned administrators about official policies and procedures for identifying and handling domestic violence cases. Second, telephone interviews were conducted with 34 administrators of court-based divorce mediation programs. The interviews probed the information gathered in the mail survey in greater detail and included more open-ended questions on the day-to-day practice of the mediators. Third, five court mediation programs were examined to determine how domestic

violence cases were screened for their suitability for mediation, how staff were allocated, and how traditional mediation sessions were altered to address the possible dangers of mediation in domestic violence cases. Programs were studied in Tucson, Arizona; Santa Ana, California; Middletown and Litchfield, Connecticut; Chicago, Illinois; and Portland, Maine.

The most controversial type of programs were selected: All of the programs mandated participation in mediation by either statute or court rule or it was “strongly recommend[ed]” by judges that disputing couples attempt to mediate. Three-day, two-person site visits were conducted at each of the five programs. While onsite, the researchers conducted direct observations, held focus groups, and interviewed mediation staff, judges, attorneys, and battered women advocates.

Limitations

This research relied on mail and telephone interviews and direct observation during the

course of a 3-day site visit. The surveys and interviews with mediation administrators were tainted by social desirability and the natural inclination to portray their programs in the best possible way. The qualitative observations in the five jurisdictions also were subjective and may have reflected mediators who were on their best behavior because they knew they were being studied.

The study did not include feedback from victims and batterers: They are the only ones who can speak to their feelings as to the fairness of the mediation session and to the impact of the mediation.

All mediation programs may not be as attentive to safety and as committed to adopting policies aimed at minimizing the dangers associated with domestic violence as the programs examined.

Factors Related to Domestic Violence Court Dispositions in a Large Urban Area

Joanne Belknap
University of Colorado

Dee L. R. Graham
University of Cincinnati

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The complete study—*Factors Related to Domestic Violence Court Dispositions in a Large Urban Area: The Role of Victim/Witness Reluctance and Other Variables* (NCJ 184232)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/184232.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

To identify factors that influence how misdemeanor intimate partner domestic violence cases are processed in an urban setting and analyze how processing affects case outcomes (i.e., dismissal, acquittal, or conviction).

Findings

Findings from pretrial, police, and prosecutor data

- # The defendants were predominantly male (86 percent), and 3 percent of the sample were same-sex couples. Most (71 percent) were black, and the remainder (28 percent) were mainly white. Victims and offenders were most often in their late 20s and early 30s. Almost two-fifths (37 percent) were common law or living together, slightly more than one-fifth (28 percent) were married, and almost one-tenth (9 percent) were boyfriend-girlfriend.
- # Victim statements made to police were available in slightly more than 50 percent of the cases. Other evidence available included photographs (19 percent), 911 tapes (2 percent), and medical records (1 percent).
- # Weapons were used in 23 percent of the cases, and injuries were sustained in 48 percent of the cases. Punching or hitting (45 percent), pushing or shoving (31 percent), and strangling (17 percent) were among the more prevalent forms of physical abuse.
- # Victims were subpoenaed in 47 percent of the cases.
- # There were no victim advocates in the prosecutor's office, and prosecutors spent very little time with the victims. In nearly 90 percent of the cases, the prosecutor never spoke with the victim on the phone; and in approximately 50 percent of the cases, the prosecutor never met with the victim in person.
- # Fifty-one percent of dispositions were dismissed. Prosecutors indicated that dismissals were largely a result of the victim not appearing. Batterer treatment and time served were the most common sentences. Forty-four percent of the dispositions resulted in a guilty or plea verdict, and defendants in 5 percent of cases were found not guilty.
- # Multivariate analysis was conducted to predict the court verdict. None of the variables that measured abuse levels were significantly related to the verdict. The only defendant characteristic that produced significant results was that defendants who were currently involved with their victims at the time of the incident were more likely to be convicted than ex-partners.
- # Two of three victim participation variables were significantly related to the court outcome. First, victims who gave statements were more likely to have their batterer convicted than those who did not. Second,

as expected, when the victim “changed stories,” the defendant was less likely to be found guilty. Regarding the system variables, the more often the prosecutor met with the victim, the greater likelihood that the defendant was found guilty. Also, domestic violence defendants were less likely to be found guilty in cases in which the prosecutors’ caseload was greater than the norm.

Multivariate analysis of three sanctions (i.e., the amount the defendant was fined, the number of days the defendant was incarcerated, and the number of days the defendant was sentenced to probation) revealed the following:

- # Male defendants were sentenced to more days in incarceration than female defendants.
- # Defendants who were accused of strangling the victim were sentenced to longer periods of probation.
- # The more serious the charge against the defendant, the more days of incarceration were imposed.
- # When the victim changed her story, the defendant was sentenced to fewer days of incarceration and fewer days of probation.
- # When photographs of injury or property damage were available, the defendant was sentenced to more days in incarceration.
- # When medical records were available, the defendant was sentenced to more days in incarceration and a longer probation period.
- # When the prosecutor’s caseload was above the mean, defendants were sentenced to fewer days in incarceration but more days on probation.
- # Defendants were sentenced to fewer days of incarceration when the prosecutors were men rather than women.
- # Defendants were sentenced to lower fines and to fewer days on probation when the prosecutors were black than when they were white.
- # Black judges tended to impose lower fines and fewer days of incarceration than did white judges.

Findings from interviews with judges, prosecutors, and public defenders

- # Prosecutors were the most likely to report that both victim and defendant attitudes influenced case outcome.
- # Public defenders and prosecutors, more so than judges, reported that victims’ wishes were likely to determine whether batterers were prosecuted and convicted.
- # All three groups of court professionals reported that the availability of batterer treatment had little influence on case outcome. Two-thirds of the public defenders reported these programs were cost prohibitive, while almost half of the judges and one-third of the prosecutors reported that they were largely ineffective.
- # Prosecutors emphasized more often than judges and public defenders that victims’ behavior affected case outcome. They also reported the highest rates of victim absence in the courtroom and victim refusal to testify. Prosecutors much more often reported that abusers often threatened victims if they testified.

Findings from an analysis of 127 court transcripts

- # The type of abuse, injury, and weapon were raised infrequently in court proceedings.

- # When a woman was charged with domestic violence, much of the trial focused on the contention that she was actually the victim.
- # The police were often unprepared for domestic violence court cases, often failing to remember any details of the incident. Further, police rarely testified in cases in which the victim was not present or did not testify.

Findings from victim surveys and interviews

Intensive surveys with 118 battered women and indepth face-to-face interviews with 100 battered women in the sampled court cases yielded the following:

- # When victims testified, they were more afraid of the courts and the law than they were of harming their relationships with the defendant or experiencing reprisal from him. Two of their greatest concerns about testifying were that the prosecutors would not prepare them adequately and the defendant might not be found guilty.
- # There was no relationship between the victim's preferred case outcome and the actual case outcome.
- # No relationship existed between the amount of violence a woman experienced in the relationship and the court outcome.
- # Victims whose cases were dismissed sought more help than those whose cases were prosecuted.

Implications

The findings strongly suggest that prosecutors are remiss in contacting victims and spending time with them to learn about the incident or preparing the victim for testimony. Prosecutors and public defenders must implement a better system of contacting victims, maintaining that contact, and listening to their accounts and

history of abuse. Threats are often made against victims that keep them from testifying; therefore, victim safety is key. Current safety programs need to be evaluated and adjusted to suit the needs of victims.

Caseloads are far too high. Relief could come in the form of additional staff, especially victim advocates.

The prosecutor's office must have specially trained, dedicated prosecutors who specialize in understanding the dynamics of domestic violence cases. Police officers also are in need of such training and should learn how to testify in domestic violence cases. In the study, police did not testify in cases in which the victim did not testify. These are exactly the cases where their testimony is needed most, as has been recognized in many jurisdictions around the country that have adopted no-drop or evidence-based prosecution approaches.

Methods

Data for the study were collected from four sources:

- # Data already collected by the criminal processing system, including information from the city's pretrial services, official police reports, and a "green form" that provided information from prosecutors on their perspectives of the victim and judge's behavior and other facets of the case.
- # Surveys from and indepth, one-on-one interviews with 14 judges, 18 prosecutors, and 31 public defenders who handled misdemeanor domestic violence cases. The interviews assessed court professionals' knowledge of and attitudes toward domestic violence.
- # A detailed analysis of court transcripts from 127 misdemeanor domestic violence cases. The analysis sought to determine who

speaks in court and what evidence is considered relevant by court professionals.

- # Face-to-face interviews with 100 battered women and self-administered written surveys from 188 battered women. These instruments measured victims' perspectives on their personal life and on their experiences with the criminal justice system.

Limitations

This research is set in a single jurisdiction. Unfortunately, the jurisdiction did not implement many of the techniques that other jurisdictions use to pursue cases with reluctant witnesses. The jurisdiction also fell short in other areas:

- # There was not a specialized domestic violence prosecution unit nor were there victim advocates.
- # Caseloads were extremely high.

- # Victims were not contacted or listened to when they did appear in court nor were they prepared for trial.
- # Referrals to services and safety planning for victims were conspicuously absent.
- # No-drop or evidence-based prosecution was not attempted, even when police were in court to testify and the victim was not. When police did testify, they were often unprepared and confused about the facts of the case.

Thus the study results come from a poorly managed jurisdiction. Findings would likely be different in jurisdictions that have expended considerable resources to prosecute domestic violence cases. Future research should study offices that give special priority to domestic violence cases. Research also is needed on how domestic violence cases are handled in suburban and rural jurisdictions.

Prosecution Strategies in Domestic Violence Felonies: Telling the Story of Domestic Violence

Carolyn Copps Hartley
University of Iowa

Roxann Ryan
State of Iowa Attorney General's Office

NIJ 95-WT-NX-0003

The complete study—*Prosecution Strategies in Domestic Violence Felonies: Anticipating and Meeting Defense Claims* (NCJ 194075)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/194075.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

The research had four objectives:

1. To identify evidentiary constraints in domestic violence cases.
2. To describe prosecution strategies and themes in domestic violence trials.
3. To identify what evidence the prosecution used to prove the elements of the case.
4. To describe the strategies and themes used by the defense to counter the prosecutor's case.

Findings

Prosecutors generally tried to “tell the story” of violence by presenting in great detail the event and prior events. Sometimes the story included a history of abuse; other times the story involved only the incident of violence that was charged. Regardless of the scope, the “story” often began with witnesses—possibly the victim, an eyewitness, an investigating officer, or an examining physician—who could give a graphic account of the events surrounding the crime.

Then, through a series of questions, prosecutors drew out the story through a step-by-step replay of events, focusing on what the witnesses saw, heard, and felt, including the witnesses' emotional reactions to the events. Prosecutors often relied on testimony from expert witnesses, perhaps to educate jurors about battered woman's syndrome. Such testimony helped explain abuse and control issues to jurors and why victims might behave in particular ways.

Prosecutors used physical evidence to illustrate the testimony. For example, when the witness described the weapon used, the prosecutor produced the weapon as an exhibit and asked the witness to describe or demonstrate how it was used. Prosecutors also brought the story to life by using photographs of the victim or the scene, diagrams of the scene, and tangible objects (e.g., bloody clothing) seized during the investigation.

The stories also discussed motives. Usually, prosecutors tried to show what motivated the defendant to act, such as jealousy, rage, or a need to exhibit control. Some prosecutors even tried to show the victim's motive in reporting the abuse. Highlighting the victim's motive usually was in response to or in anticipation of a defense strategy painting the victim as a liar or a vengeful person. Many prosecutors tried to establish that the victim had little to gain from the criminal justice system, or that the victim's primary motivation was simply to see justice served through the court system.

Three prosecution themes were identified. First, prosecutors stressed that “this was a crime.” They argued that domestic violence is a crime for which the defendant should be punished. Second, “the defendant is responsible.” Prosecutors used various strategies to prove identity: They showed that it was the defendant who committed the crime, highlighted the brutal nature of the attack and total disregard for the victim, focused on the violence that the defendant displayed to control the relationship,

and/or explained that words alone could not provoke or justify an attack by the defendant on the victim. Third, “the State’s evidence is credible.” The victim’s credibility was emphasized and/or inconsistencies in the defendant’s story were aired.

In any event, prosecutors indicated that their strategies were no different in cases that resulted in convictions than they were in cases that resulted in acquittals.

Defense attorneys generally focused on one of four themes. First, the defendant acted in self-defense and was provoked by the victim. The crime was not premeditated but happened in the heat of the moment. Second, the defense admitted the defendant attacked the victim but argued for a lesser charge (e.g., he killed her but not with intent or he assaulted her physically but not sexually). Third, the defendant had diminished responsibility. That is, he was either not responsible or less responsible for his actions because he was incapacitated by alcohol, drugs, or a psychological disorder. Fourth, the defendant “didn’t do it.”

Defense strategies often attacked the victim’s character and/or sought to manipulate common myths about domestic violence:

- # “The relationship was fine.” Friends and family members were called to the stand to testify that the relationship was normal and happy.
- # The defendant was a “good guy” who could not possibly commit such a crime.
- # The evidence was insufficient and, therefore, could not lead to a conviction. For example, there were no witnesses or physical evidence to connect the defendant to the crime, and/or the victim’s injuries were not obvious or serious enough to warrant a felony conviction.

- # The “police botched the investigation,” possibly through poor evidence collection or by presenting misleading evidence.

Implications

Understanding prosecution and defense strategies is important for both prosecutors and victim advocates. The strategies used by the prosecutors in the cases examined in the study resulted in convictions and, therefore, can be of benefit to other prosecutors as they plan their cases. Similarly, knowing typical defense strategies also can help prosecutors prepare for their cases. For example, if a prosecutor knows that the defense will attack the victim’s character, both the prosecutor and the victim can prepare for handling such instances. Likewise, victims can learn what to expect during the trial if domestic violence advocates explain common prosecution and defense strategies.

The authors concluded that victim character assassination seemed especially intense in cases in which the investigation was incomplete or there was a lack of physical evidence. They also felt that some police witnesses did not understand completely the dynamics of domestic violence abuse or had a negative attitude toward a victim or domestic violence in general. Poor police investigations and/or negative attitudes by witnesses can cripple the prosecutor’s case and lead to distrust of the police by domestic violence victims. Thus, police may need additional training on investigating domestic violence cases.

Judges also could benefit from training on the dynamics of domestic violence. The researchers stated that many of the judicial decisions in cases in which character assassination of the victim was permitted resulted from a lack of understanding by the judge about domestic violence.

Finally, that the cases in the study resulted in convictions also suggests that effectively telling the victim's story can improve the chances of a conviction.

Methods

Researchers analyzed transcripts from 40 felony cases (21 murders and 19 felony assaults) that resulted in conviction in Iowa between 1989 and 1995. Prosecution and defense themes and strategies were identified by coding the transcripts. Felony cases were selected based on the researchers' beliefs that criminal justice officials and jurors treat felony domestic violence cases more seriously than misdemeanor cases. They also reasoned that felony trial strategies are more complex and advanced than are those used in misdemeanor cases. Including only cases that resulted in convictions was largely a decision of convenience since it would be easier to identify felony cases and transcripts in these cases.

Limitations

The authors identified several limitations:

- # Only felony cases were studied, even though the majority of domestic violence cases are prosecuted as misdemeanors. Thus the findings are limited to the small proportion of domestic violence victims whose cases actually go to felony trial.
- # Only cases that resulted in convictions in which a transcript was prepared were analyzed. It is not possible to know if the

strategies in these cases were different from those in cases resulting in acquittals. Also, no empirical evidence confirms or refutes assertions from prosecutors that case outcomes do not affect strategies used.

- # The study contains no comparisons between domestic relationship cases and non-domestic-relationship felony assault and murder cases.
- # Only cases from Iowa were analyzed, limiting the applicability of the study's findings only to other jurisdictions with similar statutes and rules of evidence.
- # All cases were tried between 1989 and 1995. Attitudes may have changed since then because of campaigns around the country to raise awareness of domestic violence and more domestic violence training for police, prosecutors, and victim advocates.
- # The analysis is based on the codification of trial transcripts. Although the information is there, it is somewhat restricted because the intonation and posture of prosecutors, judges, and defense attorneys is lost. Observing live trials or conducting personal interviews may reveal more context than can be found in written records.

Responses to Domestic Violence in a Proactive Court Setting

Eve Buzawa, Gerald Hotaling, and James Byrne
University of Massachusetts, Lowell

Andrew Klein
Consultant

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The complete study—*Response to Domestic Violence in a Pro-Active Court Setting* (NCJ 181427)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/181427.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

To determine whether practices of a nationally recognized, integrated domestic violence program initiated by the district court of Quincy, Massachusetts, could be applied to other jurisdictions. The study examined program operations (i.e., police response, the decisionmaking process between the prosecutor's office and the court, the role of victim advocates, and the extent to which offenders received treatment and/or were incarcerated); characteristics of incidents, victims, and offenders; victims' perspectives of the criminal justice system; and revictimization rates.

Findings

The study observed the following case characteristics:

- # Domestic violence incidents in this study were serious criminal events: 71 percent were violent; 22 percent involved victims who felt they needed medical attention; 16 percent involved a weapon; and 10 percent involved victims who suffered serious injuries.

- # The majority of domestic violence cases did *not* involve alcohol or drugs nor was substance use present among the individuals who lived together.
- # The majority of offenders had prior contacts with the criminal justice system for a wide variety of criminal behaviors. Moreover, 59 percent of the offenders had prior crimes-against-person charges on record. On average, 3.10 prior charges existed per defendant.
- # The majority of victims tried a variety of strategies to end the violence. For example, 75 percent of the victims in the study called the police on a prior occasion about the same offender.
- # The offender's restraining order history proved a good indicator of other criminal activity and future violence. Offenders who were under an active restraining order at the time of the incident were almost twice as likely to reoffend against the same victim during the subsequent year. Those who had previous restraining orders taken out against them by more than 1 woman were 13 times more likely to reoffend against a new victim.
- # The analysis of reoffenders confirmed the existence of a subset of offenders deeply committed to a criminal lifestyle.
- # Police acted in a manner consistent with the proactive goals of Quincy's program (e.g., enforcing restraining orders).

The researchers assessed victim surveys to compare several characteristics (e.g., case, victim, defendant, and the defendant's prior criminal history) among women who participated in the survey with those who did not. They found that victims who completed the survey were significantly older than nonparticipants and that women who preferred that the police not arrest the defendant were significantly more likely to

complete the survey. Researchers also hypothesized that victims not interviewed may have been involved with more dangerous men or in more serious domestic violence incidents; however, this was *not* confirmed, at least in terms of the official data. Likewise, official data found no differences in prior history or type of incident between the two groups.

Victim surveys also revealed that—

- # Eighty-two percent of victims were satisfied with police responses to their incidents.
- # Prosecutors aggressively pursued prosecution but victims perceived a gap between their interests and those of the prosecutors, as more than 50 percent of victims wanted charges dropped or lowered. Nonetheless, 65 percent of victims were satisfied with prosecutors' actions.
- # Victim advocates were used and appreciated: 81 percent of victims were "satisfied" with the services and support they received from victim advocates.
- # The Quincy court largely upheld its mission of aggressively pursuing domestic violence cases; however, high caseloads hampered rapid and aggressive targeting of high-risk offenders.
- # Victims held more mixed feelings toward the courts than they did toward police or prosecutors.
- # Victims are often capable of assessing their danger. Women's fears of offenders were accurate. Despite aggressive intervention by a full-enforcement criminal justice system, the pattern of future offenses in many cases had not been broken.
- # Many victims did not report repeat victimization to the criminal justice system.

- # The only significant predictors of reoffending were age at first offense and having a prior criminal history.
- # If reoffending did occur, it most likely happened prior to the initial disposition of the case. Offenders not prosecuted or prosecuted without subsequent court supervision were less likely to commit a new violent offense during the study period than those who were sentenced to probation.
- # Completing a batterer treatment program had no significant impact upon reoffending behavior.

Implications

The researchers drew several implications from their findings for police, prosecutors, victim advocates, and court officials. For the police, five were identified. First, because the research shows that the risk of injury to victims is high, the police should prioritize domestic violence calls to provide the most rapid response possible. Second, the standard police incident form should be enhanced for domestic violence cases: Victim preferences for arrest should be added and the report should accurately depict what happened and indicate whether children were present. Third, although the police in this jurisdiction attempted to find and arrest abusers who left the scene, such efforts should be increased. The research found that offenders who left the scene had twice the number of past criminal charges and twice the recidivism rate of offenders who were present when the police arrived. Fourth, the police should have a clear policy to target repeat offenders. Fifth, police should be specifically trained to respond to the needs of victims, especially victims who are afraid.

Several implications were also drawn for prosecutors and victim advocates. First, it is important for prosecutors to adequately explain the system to the victim. Second, a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week emergency response team would be

helpful. Prosecutors can support domestic violence victims by becoming more involved in existing community outreach programs. They also should strive to file felony charges as opposed to misdemeanor charges, especially in very serious cases with hardcore offenders.

The role of victim advocates is often difficult to define: Do they represent the system or the victim? Many existing policies have advocates discourage victims from dropping charges against their batterer. Such policies need to be reexamined so that advocates can better educate victims about their options in the justice system.

For courts, judges and prosecutors may want to consider a task force to identify and rapidly process offenses committed by repeat offenders. Findings indicate that courts should rethink the release of offenders on bail or personal recognizance, within the limitations of the State laws. Also, a more thorough understanding of prior criminal histories may help judges identify serious repeat offenders. Finally, judges should regularly attend conferences on domestic violence.

Prosecutors and courts should listen more closely to what victims want. Victims are often good predictors of how dangerous the offender is. Some victims will want charges dropped because they do not perceive future danger. However, other women want charges dropped because they fear prosecution will not deter future violence; they, too, are often correct. For high-risk offenders, even a “model” court is often unable to stop the violence and more serious sanctions should be considered. The researchers conclude, however, that for first-time offenders and less serious cases, courts should honor a victim’s wishes to have the case dropped.

Methods

Data were based on 353 domestic violence incidents in Massachusetts, between June 1995 and February 1996, in which defendants and primary victims were over the age of 17. Data were obtained from—

- # Offenders’ criminal history records 1 year prior and subsequent to the incident in question.
- # The number and type of civil restraining orders placed against offenders 1 year prior and subsequent to the incident in question.
- # A comparison of the number, severity, and type of police charges and prosecutor charges brought against defendants.
- # Defendants who were ordered to, attended, and successfully completed batterer treatment programs.
- # Police incident reports, specifically (1) officer perspectives and actions taken at the scene, (2) the level of involvement of the call for service, (3) characteristics of the incident, (4) sociodemographic characteristics of the participants, and (5) the narrative description of the incident by the responding officer(s).
- # Victim surveys that gathered information (e.g., experiences with the criminal justice system and any renewed violence by the perpetrator) 1 year after the disposition of the case.

Limitations

The Quincy, Massachusetts, district court was selected because it was recognized nationally by the Office on Violence Against Women and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court

Judges as a model for the full enforcement of domestic violence cases. The findings reported here, thus, reflect the results of a “best practices” program and should not be construed to represent what is happening in other jurisdictions around the country.

Researchers assessed victim surveys from 118 of 413 women, representing a response rate of only 35 percent, and research was limited only to male-on-female violence.

Specialized Felony Domestic Violence Courts: Lessons on Implementation From Kings County, New York

Lisa Newmark, Mike Rempel, Kelly Diffily,
and Kamala Malik Kane
The Urban Institute

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The complete study—*Specialized Felony Domestic Violence Courts: Lessons on Implementation and Impacts From the Kings County Experience* (NCJ 191861)—is available online at <http://www.njcrs.org/pdf/files1/nij/grants/191861.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

To analyze the goals and implementation strategies of a specialized court to determine how they have been addressed throughout the court's tenure (4 years) and what issues remain.

Findings

The Felony Domestic Violence Court (FDVC) of the Kings County Supreme Court has original jurisdiction over felonies in the borough of Brooklyn. FDVC, which began in June 1996, strives to create an effective, coordinated response to felony domestic violence crimes by bringing together criminal justice and social service agencies, and to serve as a model for other communities. The model operates at both a systemic level, by seeking to change how community agencies work together, and at a case level, through efforts to hold offenders more accountable and provide better protection and other services to victims.

Several key features distinguish the structure and operations of FDVC from other felony courts with more generalized dockets and more traditional operations:

- # A network of criminal justice and social service partner agencies work together.
- # The court handles *only* a specialized caseload of virtually all indicted domestic violence felonies in the jurisdiction.
- # Trained and dedicated personnel from court, prosecution, probation, offender intervention and treatment, and victim service agencies participate in court operations.
- # The court employs vertical processing and standard practices to ensure consistency in case handling.
- # Enhanced case information flow among partner agencies improves judicial decisionmaking and agency operations.
- # The court emphasizes defendant monitoring and accountability.
- # The court provides enhanced protection and services for victims.

Researchers found that the district attorney's office was more likely to indict less severe cases when it perceived that enhanced defendant monitoring and victim services were needed. Dismissal rates were very low, at 5–10 percent of indicted cases. In addition, a new State law resulted in many protection order violation cases that previously would have been misdemeanors being prosecuted as felonies. These changes in law and practice meant that cases processed by the FDVC were more heterogeneous than the precourt cases in terms of the severity of the criminal incident (even when the protection order violations were considered separately). This may in turn have influenced patterns in case processing, disposition, and sentencing, as discussed below.

Victim services were expanded under the specialized court, in that all victims were

assigned an advocate and received a protection order during case processing (and often afterwards as well).

Judicial monitoring of defendant compliance could not be documented because information differentiating status appearances from other types of court appearances was not available. Predisposition release was used somewhat more often in FDVC cases, and defendants released from FDVC were more likely to be ordered to intervention programs while on release. Many defendants returned to jail for infractions related to release conditions, no matter which court handled their cases.

On average, the specialized court spent slightly more time processing cases from felony arraignment to disposition. However, the severity of indictment charges and the release and remand of defendants for infractions were both correlated with increased processing time. It is difficult but important to strike a balance between the need to give these complex and intractable cases the time and attention they require, the need to provide speedy justice, and the various pros and cons of predisposition release.

Conviction rates did not change under the specialized court, but methods of reaching disposition did. Convictions by guilty pleas were more common and trials less common in FDVC cases. Even when accounting for other relevant factors, plea bargaining was more likely to result from use of the court model. This represents a cost savings to the court system. Conviction charges were less severe for FDVC cases than for cases that were processed by general felony courts, which may result from increased plea bargaining and/or the fact that less serious cases (based on arrest charges) were more likely to enter FDVC than they were to enter other felony courts.

On the whole, sentencing practices under the FDVC model were neither more punitive (in terms of incarceration) nor more treatment oriented (with treatment mandates as a condition of the sentence) than previous sentencing practices. It seems likely that sentencing did not become more punitive because of the broader mix of cases entering the court (based on the severity of the charge) and/or because of the greater use of plea bargaining. Orders to batterer intervention programs may not have increased in FDVC sentencing because these programs were used much more widely in the predisposition period.

Data on probation violations and arrests for additional incidents were analyzed. Study results suggested that probation violations did not change under the new court model (about one-third of all probationers). Additional arrests for those released prior to disposition were even higher (nearly 50 percent) under the new model. Rates of predisposition repeat arrests did not vary by type of court, but postdisposition arrest rates doubled in FDVC-processed cases. However, defendants in the predisposition sample were most often arrested again for nonviolent felony offenses; defendants in the FDVC sample were most often rearrested for misdemeanors; and defendants in criminal contempt (protection-order violation) cases were most often arrested again for criminal contempt.

Criminal history, especially prior convictions for criminal contempt, emerged as one of the most consistent indicators of how well defendants performed both predisposition and during the postdisposition followup period. Those with prior criminal convictions, especially for contempt, were less likely to be granted predisposition release, more likely to be returned to jail for violations when they were released, more likely to be convicted in the current case, and more likely to be arrested on new charges in the predisposition and postdisposition followup periods.

Implications

Several implications can be drawn from the findings:

- # FDVC extensively used victim services. Given the complexity of domestic violence cases, victim services must be broad and comprehensive.
- # The fact that both previous criminal history (especially prior convictions for criminal contempt) and infractions of release conditions frequently landed defendants back in jail suggests the need for closer monitoring and supervision of these offenders.
- # The finding of longer case processing time makes it clear that it is difficult *but important* to strike a balance between the need to give domestic violence cases the time and attention they require and the need to provide swift justice.

Methods

Process evaluation

The process evaluation analyzed the goals and strategies of the FDVC model and considered the following:

- # Major influences on the court's development during its first 4 years of operation.
- # Implementation issues and how they were addressed.
- # Operational issues still outstanding.

The evaluators used qualitative research methods, including interviews with key court and partner agency personnel, observations of courtroom proceedings, and attendance at coordination meetings. They also analyzed

statistical data provided by the Office of Court Administration and documents from the Center for Court Innovation, among others.

Impact evaluation

The impact evaluation compared case characteristics, processing, and outcomes for a sample of cases adjudicated in Kings County's Supreme Court before FDVC was established with a sample of cases adjudicated by FDVC during its initial operation. Statistical analyses address questions about what difference it makes to adjudicate felony domestic violence cases under a specialized court model.

The researchers analyzed quantitative data to examine how the FDVC model changed case processing, the impact the approach had on case outcomes, and FDVC's effects on recidivism. A total of 136 cases adjudicated by FDVC in the first half of 1997 (including 27 cases in which a felony protection order violation was the only felony indictment charge) was compared with a sample of 93 cases handled by general felony courtrooms in the 18 months before FDVC was established.

Limitations

- # The FDVC-processed cases were all from the early days of the specialized court and do not reflect changes in the court and partner agencies during the research period.
- # The study began several years after FDVC started. An evaluation component should be implemented when a new court is being planned, to allow evaluators to develop better research materials and practices. For example, defendant monitoring techniques could not be documented in this study because case files did not have sufficient information and available samples were cases already processed and closed. Data describing the nature or impact of advocacy services received also were not available.

Interpreting findings on probation violations and arrests is extremely equivocal because of the limited reliability of these indicators as measures of compliance and recidivism and because of the pre- and post-research design. The study only used official records of reported allegations, which may underestimate actual behaviors. Very limited data were available on the nature of the additional arrest charges, and it was not possible to distinguish domestic violence from other types of criminal incidents.

With domestic violence being such a notoriously chronic crime and victim safety

being such a critical concern, evaluators must address the question of recidivism. They must use the most reliable measures of recidivism, going beyond incidents that were reported to and acted upon by the authorities. Interviews with victims are the best way to measure repeat domestic violence (at least against that identified victim), whether or not an arrest was made or the incident was reported. Resources for this critical step were not available for this study, but should be given higher priority in future research.

Research on the Cycle of Violence

Intimate Partner Violence Against Extremely Poor Women: Causes, Courses, and Consequences

Ellen Bassuk, Amy Salomon, Angela Browne,
Shari Bassuk, Ree Dawson, and Nick
Huntington

The Better Homes Fund

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The complete study—*Secondary Data Analysis on the Etiology, Course and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence Against Extremely Poor Women* (NCJ 188507)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/grants/188507.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800–851–3420.

Purpose

To gain a better understanding of the impact of partner violence on the lives of poor women by examining—

- # Patterns of partner violence in the lives of poor, single mothers.
- # Childhood and adult risk markers for partner violence.
- # The relationship between partner violence and substance abuse among poor mothers, exploring the joint and independent contribution of childhood physical and sexual abuse, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and partners' substance use.
- # The relationship between partner violence and women's capacity to maintain work over time.

Findings

Patterns of partner violence

Findings on patterns of partner violence were examined across four time frames: age 17 until 1 year prior to a baseline interview, 1 year prior to the baseline interview, 1 year after the baseline interview, and 2 years after the baseline interview. Almost two-thirds of the women experienced intimate partner violence at some point in their adult lives but most experiences were periodic and occurred over limited timespans. The study also revealed other patterns:

- # Less than 2 percent of women reported intimate partner violence across all four time frames.
- # Among the 145 poor women whose violence had stopped prior to the last time frame, about 28 percent (40) returned to violent relationships.

Childhood and adult risk markers

- # Poor women who experienced childhood sexual abuse were significantly more likely to experience intimate partner violence as adults. Child sexual abuse remained the only significant childhood risk marker in multivariate modeling.
- # Univariate analysis revealed that several childhood factors were associated with increased risk of adult partner violence: parental fighting, having a mother who was a victim of abuse, being placed in foster care, and having a primary male caretaker with substance abuse problems or a primary female caretaker with mental health problems.

- # Women were at higher risk for partner violence when their partner had a poor work history or substance abuse problem.
- # Women with low self-esteem were more likely to be victimized.
- # Negative social support during adulthood was a significant correlate of adult partner violence. However, women with the greatest nonprofessional emotional support in their relationships were significantly less likely to be in abusive relationships.

Relationships between partner violence, substance use, physical and sexual abuse, and mental health variables

Intimate partner violence was found to be predictive of subsequent drug, but not alcohol, use in poor women. Controlling for other factors, women with a history of adult partner violence had nearly three times the odds of using illegal drugs during the subsequent study years than women who had not experienced partner violence as adults. Reverse causation (i.e., that substance use increases the likelihood that women will become involved in physically violent relationships) did not account for the strong association. In fact, the association between partner violence and subsequent drug use was much stronger among women with no history of drug use at baseline. Women whose partners abused substances were twice as likely to subsequently use illicit drugs. In multivariate modeling, partners' substance use remained independently predictive of future drug use.

The confluence of childhood sexual molestation and PTSD was associated with, but did not significantly predict, subsequent substance use. The effect of each factor depended strongly on the presence of the other. When examined alone, however, neither childhood sexual molestation or PTSD predicted subsequent drug use.

Effects of partner violence, substance use, and mental health variables on poor women's ability to maintain work

Women who had experienced recent partner violence (within the past 12 months) faced increased difficulty in maintaining work during the subsequent year when compared with women who had not experienced such violence. Experiences of partner violence prior to the baseline year did not have as great an effect. Mental health variables also were negatively associated with the capacity to maintain work. In contrast, job support (e.g., training and placement services) and previous employment experience greatly enhanced poor women's ability to maintain work over time.

Other factors did not have the effects that one might assume. Alcohol/drug problems did not independently predict limits on a woman's capacity to maintain work. Also, histories of childhood physical and sexual abuse did not differentiate women who held jobs over time from those who did not, nor did they independently predict a limited capacity to hold work.

Implications

As results from these analyses indicate, women and children who live in poverty are at extremely high risk of physical and sexual victimization by intimates. For thousands of women, the lack of economic resources can devastate their ability to alter their environment or to live in safety, particularly if they care for children. For the subset of women addressed in these reports, issues related to partner violence may make it especially difficult to escape poverty or make the transition to independent employment as mandated by welfare reform laws in place at the time of the research.

Study findings further suggest that women involved with abusive partners are at significantly increased risk of subsequent illicit drug use and limited capacity to maintain work

over time. Both these factors have profound impacts on women's ability to be financially self-sufficient, escape violence, and live in safety.

In addition to partner violence, substance use by partners independently contributes to women's drug and alcohol abuse later in life. Furthermore, women with histories of childhood sexual molestation and diagnoses of PTSD are far more likely to abuse drugs. Understanding these joint and independent contributions to women's substance abuse is an important step in structuring treatment and policies that respond meaningfully to women's real needs.

The study findings demonstrate the impact of child trauma. Children who grow up in abusive and threatening environments, especially those who experience childhood sexual molestation, are more likely to experience partner violence later in life. Early intervention may help break this cycle.

A more thorough understanding of the complex relationships among childhood sexual molestation, PTSD, and adult partner violence may lead to more appropriate treatment programs for drug-abusing women. Treatment strategies also may benefit from greater knowledge of the decisions that lead battered women to remain in abusive relationships and the impact that partner substance use has on women's subsequent substance use.

The findings also highlight the importance of nonprofessional and professional support networks. Family, friends, and neighbors often prove valuable in protecting women from and helping them cope with partner violence. Job skills and training and job placement services can help move women out of poverty and reduce the incidence of partner violence.

Responding to the complex relationships among childhood sexual molestation, partner violence, substance use, and work is especially important in the wake of welfare reforms that limit the

time individuals can remain on public assistance. This enhances the need for and cooperation of cross-system solutions that pull together health, mental health, substance abuse, and battered women's services and resources from the criminal justice and child welfare systems.

Methods

The dataset examined the Worcester Family Research Project, an in-depth longitudinal study of 220 homeless and 216 low-income housed (never homeless), single mothers living in Worcester, Massachusetts. Homeless women in the sample were recruited from an emergency/transitional shelter. All had resided at the shelter for at least 7 days and had children under the age of 17 or were pregnant. The low-income housed mothers were recruited from Worcester's Department of Public Welfare Office. To be eligible, the women had to have no history of homelessness, be pregnant or have custody of at least one dependent child under the age of 17, and currently be receiving public assistance.

The women were interviewed at three points in time, at baseline (extensive interviews lasting 10–12 hours over multiple sittings) and during two followup interviews approximately 12 and 24 months after baseline (each lasting about 2 hours). Of the 436 women in the baseline study, 356 were interviewed during the first followup, and 327 were interviewed again during the second followup. Data were studied for bivariate and multivariate relationships.

Limitations

The analysis used in this study relies on self-reported data of women living in poverty. Self-reported data has limitations: Respondents may feel as if they have to give socially acceptable answers, or their childhood recall may be askew because of current life events.

Male-Perpetrated Domestic Violence: From Origins to Actions

Lynda A. King and Daniel W. King
VA Boston Healthcare System and Boston
University School of Medicine

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The complete study—*Male-Perpetrated Domestic Violence: Testing a Series of Multifactorial Family Models* (NCJ 185696)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/185696.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

To gain a better understanding of the causes and continuation of aggressive behaviors in families by examining the connection between domestic violence and trauma-related psychological distress, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and comorbid alcohol abuse. Primarily, the study focused on risk factors associated with male-perpetrated domestic violence, partner's mental distress, and child behavior problems.

Findings

Overall, the findings indicate that psychological consequences resulting from exposure to highly stressful life events in a man's childhood or early adulthood may explain partner battering later in life accompanied by partner mental distress and child behavior problems. The perpetrator's own family background characteristics and experiences contributed to early acting-out behaviors. In turn, these were influential in his subsequent exposure to high levels of combat. The study also found a positive link between trauma exposure (combat and threat) and PTSD and alcohol abuse.

The relationships among dysfunction in the perpetrator's family of origin, childhood antisocial behavior, exposure to combat, and perceived threat suggest that early distress and

troublesome experiences in the family of origin may lead to a propensity for risky, destructive, and perhaps illegal activities. Individuals with these traits are at risk for exposure to additional serious life stressors in late adolescence and early adulthood.

The study examined the associations among early adulthood trauma (combat exposure and perceived threat), PTSD symptomatology, and partner violence. Findings include:

- # Positive relationships existed between PTSD and violence and between perceived threat and violence. That is, those with more symptoms of PTSD and more perceived fear (e.g., fear from being in a war zone) tended to be more violent toward their partners. However, those exposed to high levels of combat perpetrated less violence upon their partners.
- # The emotional numbing symptoms of PTSD were particularly associated with perpetrator's perspectives on marital and family functioning. In particular, these symptoms inhibited positive interactions, interpersonal satisfaction, and feelings of warmth and intimacy with partner and children.
- # The hyperarousal (i.e., arousal and lack of control) symptom of PTSD was associated with reports of violence in the family, especially in males who abused alcohol.
- # The partner's (i.e., the mother's) mental distress was strongly associated with behavior problems in children.
- # The perpetrator's relationship with his own mother was found to influence two important variables in his family of procreation: A relatively weak relationship was associated with episodes of partner violence and a somewhat strong positive relationship was associated with the

perpetrator's perspective on his own marital and family functioning.

Implications

It is important that the criminal justice and mental health communities understand the role trauma exposure and subsequent PTSD symptoms and alcohol abuse play in the perpetration of violence against women. The researchers recommend that batterer treatment programs work with PTSD experts, who can offer training and consultation services, to explicitly help treatment providers recognize classical signs and symptoms of PTSD in perpetrators. Appropriate intervention and treatment programs could then be fashioned to perpetrators exhibiting signs of PTSD. Also, recognizing and planning for the cooccurrence of PTSD and alcohol abuse can lead to appropriate treatment plans that help break the cycle of violence.

To help break the cycle of vulnerability, youth can be trained by law enforcement and school personnel, service providers, and parents against taking risks. Personal safety is key to such training, focusing on avoiding potentially dangerous environments, instilling compensatory behaviors to quell sensation-seeking, and finding alternatives to responding violently to threatening stimuli.

Because childhood trauma can be linked to battering later in life, both domestic violence victims and children could benefit if shelters and victim programs provided services to both groups. This may help break the cycle of intergenerational violence.

Methods

The National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS), a congressionally mandated study, served as the centerpiece of the research. The NVVRS assessed the current and long-term psychosocial status of those who served

one or more tours of duty in Vietnam between August 5, 1964, and May 7, 1975. It compared their functioning level with peers who served elsewhere in the military during that same timeframe and with a comparison group who did not serve in the military. Data were collected in the mid- to late 1980s.

The present study examined data from 376 male veteran-female partner dyads, 261 of whom had one or more children between the ages of 6 and 16 living at home. The female partner was interviewed for approximately 1 hour, answering questions about the background of both the partner and the couple, the partner's perspective on the male's mental health and functioning, the partner's own psychological and emotional well-being, interaction problems and violence in the family, and the children's behavior and adjustment problems.

The research consisted of four studies:

- # Study one analyzed variables that characterized the perpetrator's family of procreation. It sought to determine the pattern of relationships among variables representing marital and family functioning, partner violence, partner's mental distress, and child behavior problems.
- # Study two examined the perpetrator's early background and trauma history to establish the degree to which partner violence was related to characteristics and experiences (especially severe punishment and other forms of childhood trauma) of the perpetrator's family of origin, childhood antisocial behavior, and exposure to stressors in the Vietnam war zone and subsequent symptoms of PTSD.
- # Study three focused on the perpetrator's current mental distress and alcohol abuse to examine how each variable was associated with marital and family functioning, violence, and the partner's current mental distress.

Study four offered a developmental perspective by examining the potential transmission of violence across generations, commencing with the perpetrator's accounts of violence within the family of origin and terminating with reports of child behavior problems within the family of procreation.

Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the data. This modeling uses confirmatory factor analysis and defines latent variables or factors to determine their observed or manifested indicators.

Limitations

The research is based on retrospective, self-reported data about potentially stressful and traumatic life events. Collecting data as such has its limitations because participants—

May suffer from poor recall, a particular problem when respondents are recalling highly stressful or painful events.

Have a tendency to reconstruct events and assign meaning based on their current psychological state.

May seek recognition or need to present themselves in a socially desirable manner.

Furthermore, the structural equation modeling analysis cannot *confirm* a model but simply asserts that no available data can *disconfirm* the model. The researchers tested substantive issues and directions of associations based on theory; however, they did not test all of the factors that potentially could be associated with outcomes. Although appropriate for the analysis chosen, it excludes counterintuitive associations.

Research on Law Enforcement and/or Coordinated Community Responses

Beyond Arrest: The Portland, Oregon, Domestic Violence Experiment

Annette Jolin, William Feyerherm, Robert Fountain, and Sharon Friedman
Portland State University

NIJ-95-IJ-CX-0054

The complete study—*Beyond Arrest: The Portland, Oregon Domestic Violence Experiment* (NCJ 179968)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/179968.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

To determine the efficacy of the Portland (Oregon) Police Bureau's Domestic Violence Reduction Unit (DVRU), a program that seeks to decrease domestic violence by increasing the cost of violence to batterers, reducing the risk of renewed violence, and empowering victims. The study also sought to determine which provisions were more effective at reducing recurrent episodes of domestic violence: Arrest only or arrest followed by prosecution, trial, and sentencing of the offender coupled with enhanced support services for the victim.

Findings

The DVRU focuses on misdemeanor domestic violence crimes and has two goals: Increase the sanctions for batterers and empower victims. Each day the unit reviews all domestic violence misdemeanor reports throughout the bureau. Priority is given to repeat domestic violence cases, cases in which weapons were used, and cases where children were present. The DVRU

intervention includes investigation strategies that improve the collection of evidence, victim empowerment strategies that include the development of safety plans, instructions on how to access criminal justice and community victim services, and transportation provisions to facilitate victims' access to services.

Characteristics

Characteristics of victims in the treatment and control groups were similar:

- # Victims in a majority of the cases (81 percent) experienced such misdemeanor-level violence as being slapped, pushed, kicked, or hit.
- # The average age of the victims was 31.
- # Seventy-two percent of victims were white; 16 percent were black; and 6 percent were Hispanic.
- # More than half of the victims earned less than \$10,000 per year.
- # Children witnessed the violence in 61 percent of the cases.
- # The majority of victims (83 percent) had children and in 33 percent of those cases, the children were under the age of 3.
- # Forty percent of the victims witnessed domestic violence as children, and 37 percent reported being abused as children.
- # Eighteen percent acknowledged receiving drug or alcohol treatment in the past.

The batterers' average age was 33. Most (62 percent) were white; 24 percent were black; and 9 percent were Hispanic. Nearly half (49 percent) of all offenders had been arrested during the previous 5 years for battering the same victim. Three-fifths of batterers had witnessed domestic violence as children, and two-fifths had received some type of alcohol or drug treatment in the past.

Victim empowerment and help-seeking behaviors

Three-quarters of the women had been abused by the batterer during the 6 months prior to the arrest. Among those, 38 percent said they had called the police and 20 percent went to court to obtain a restraining order. The majority (71 percent) spoke to friends or family about the abuse. Almost one-third (29 percent) sought out some type of counseling. No significant differences existed between the treatment and control groups.

At the time of the initial interview, more than half of the women reported that their family lives were "mostly under control" and that they were capable of handling most of their problems. When an arrest was made, 70 percent of the women reported being in control of and able to handle their problems at the time of their followup interview. No significant differences existed between the treatment and control groups.

Police intervention

The researchers asked officers in the DVRU to list all of the interventions they could perform in handling a case. This list comprised *The Police Checklist* and was used to assess DVRU responses to cases. The study found that—

- # DVRU officers intervened in 286 of 404 randomly selected treatment group cases. In 98 percent of these cases, the officer offered the victim information on how to prosecute the batterer; and 70 percent of the

time, they gave safety plan information to the victim.

- # The majority of victims (79 percent) thought the arresting officer had listened to them, and 67 percent felt the officer was able to calm the situation.
- # About two-thirds of the victims recalled receiving the legally mandated information card, information about restraining orders, and advice about contacting the district attorney's office. Forty-two percent recalled that officers provided information about shelters, and 23 percent recalled being referred to a victim service program. Only 15 percent said the officer provided "on the spot counseling" to them.
- # The majority (87 percent) of victims indicated that they would call the police again in the future if they were abused.

Although no statistically significant differences existed between the treatment and control groups, the control group did report receiving information about victims' rights more often than the treatment group.

Batterer prosecution

Batterers in the treatment group were significantly more likely to be prosecuted than those in the control group (44 percent versus 37 percent), to be convicted (24 percent versus 17 percent), and to be sentenced (27 percent versus 18 percent).

Victim empowerment and renewed violence

- # Significantly more treatment group victims (64 percent) than control group victims (52 percent) sought assistance from the criminal justice system. Treatment group victims were more likely than control group victims (16 versus 9 percent) to request batterer release information from the jail, and they

were more likely to call the police after revictimization (19 versus 10 percent).

- # More treatment group victims (47 percent) than control group victims (40 percent) reported a sense of increased empowerment, but the differences were not statistically significant.
- # A significantly higher percentage of victims in the treatment group (24 percent) reported they had terminated contact with the batterer than those in the control group (14 percent).
- # Significantly fewer treatment group victims reported violence 6 months after the arrest than those in the control group. When renewed violence occurred, women in the treatment group were more likely to call the police.

The findings suggest that arrest plus police-initiated followup compared with just making an arrest led to increased prosecutions, convictions, and sanctions for batterers. Further, increased victim empowerment as a result of the followup led to reductions in subsequent self-reported domestic violence victimizations.

Implications

Special units such as the DVRU can make a difference. This study suggests that such units can increase victim empowerment; reduce subsequent repeat victimizations; increase prosecutions, convictions, and sanctions for batterers; and increase victims' willingness to call the police when future victimizations occur. Thus, the police serve as important gatekeepers in holding batterers accountable and providing victims with access to criminal justice and community resources that they can use in dealing with the aftermath of the assault. Law enforcement departments around the country should seriously contemplate these findings and assess the feasibility of implementing specialized

units in their jurisdictions to respond proactively to both batterers and victims.

Methods

Cases had to meet several criteria to be eligible for the study. Domestic violence incidents had to be misdemeanor-level crimes between adult, heterosexual, intimate partners where the male assailant was arrested at the scene and taken to jail by the responding officer. Victims had to reside within Oregon or southwestern Washington and be reachable by telephone. Dual arrest cases were excluded.

A double-blind randomized, computer-generated method assigned victims from eligible cases to either a DVRU treatment group or a control group that did not receive DVRU intervention. Data were extracted for sample cases from the Portland Police Data Systems computer files and from in-person and telephone interviews with victims shortly after the offender was arrested. Initial interviews were conducted with 478 of 927 eligible victims—a response rate of nearly 52 percent. Approximately 6 months later, followup interviews were conducted with 386 of the 478 victims—a response rate of almost 82 percent.

Limitations

- # Because initial interviews were conducted with only half of the eligible sample, it is unknown how the findings would have differed if a higher response rate had been achieved.
- # The data from victim interviews are self-reported and share the constraints of other studies that rely heavily on self-reported data.
- # The time between the initial and followup interviews (6 months) may have been too short to assess the impact of court-ordered sanctions.

Many of the victims (41 percent) assigned to receive intervention from the DVRU did not receive intervention because the unit was

not able to reach them. This makes it difficult to distinguish between the two study groups.

The Effects of Arrest on Intimate Partner Violence: New Evidence

Christopher D. Maxwell
Michigan State University

Joel H. Garner
Joint Center for Justice Studies

Jeffrey A. Fagan
Columbia University

CDC R49/CCR210534

Purpose

To determine whether arrest is more effective at reducing subsequent intimate partner violence than such informal, therapeutic methods as warnings to offenders, onscene counseling to victims, and temporary separation of victim and assailant.

Findings

Arresting batterers was consistently related to reduced subsequent aggression against female intimate partners, although not all comparisons met the standard level of statistical significance nor did results vary significantly across the five study sites. Regardless of statistical significance, the overall relationship between the deterrent effect of arrest and repeat offending was modest when compared to the relationship between recidivism and such measures as the batterer's age or prior criminal record.

Irrespective of the type of intervention used, most suspects had no subsequent criminal offense against their original victim during the followup period, and most interviewed victims did not report any subsequent victimizations by their batterer. Also, no association existed between arresting the offender and an increased risk of subsequent aggression against women or injury to women.

Implications

The findings provide systematic evidence that arresting male batterers may, independent of other criminal justice sanctions and individual processes, reduce subsequent intimate partner violence. Even though the size and statistical significance of the effect of arrest varied depending on whether subsequent aggression was measured by victim interviews or police records, arrest was associated with fewer incidents of subsequent intimate partner aggression using both measures. This finding was true several days after the experimental incident, regardless of length of detention, and beyond 1 year. The arrested suspects were detained an average of 9 days, but the reduction in aggression associated with arrest did not vary by length of detention. Thus, the research finds no empirical support for the argument that arrest may eventually increase the risk for violence against women.

The research also showed that a minority of suspects continued to commit intimate partner violence, regardless of the intervention they received. While arrest reduced the proportion of suspects who reoffended and the frequency with which they reoffended, arrest did not prevent all batterers from continuing their violence against their intimate partners. In fact, the study found a small number of victims who have chronically aggressive intimate partners. Future research needs to build on preliminary efforts to accurately predict high-rate repeat offenders and to find methods of helping their victims before they are victimized further. Accurately screening for high-rate repeat offenders is a critical component of an intervention program.

Since a majority of suspects discontinued their aggressive behaviors even without an arrest, policies requiring arrest for all suspects may unnecessarily take a community's resources away from identifying and responding to victims who are most at risk and to the worst offenders. This study documented the size of the specific

deterrent effects of arrest, which, although consistent across sites and time, appeared modest compared with the overall percentage of suspects who desisted from intimate partner violence. Although there may be other benefits from policies requiring arrest that this research has not measured (including general deterrence and an expression of social disapproval for intimate partner violence), there likely are costs of making arrests every time the police respond to an incident of intimate partner violence. Future research in this area needs to assess the benefits and costs of arresting all suspects before there can be a systematic conclusion as to whether or not mandatory arrest policies should be preferred.

Methods

After nearly 20 years of research designed to test the effects of arrest on intimate partner violence, questions persist on whether arrest is more effective than less formal alternatives at reducing subsequent intimate partner violence. This research synthesized and reanalyzed data from five of six

field experiments carried out between 1981 and 1991 by research teams and six police departments as part of NIJ's Spouse Assault Replication Program (SARP). Also supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the project pooled incidents from the five replication experiments, computed comparable independent and outcome measures from common data intentionally embedded in each experiment, and standardized the experimental designs and statistical models. Using the increased power of the pooled data, this study aimed to provide a more consistent, more precise, and less ambiguous estimation of the impact of arrest on intimate partner violence.

Limitations

The SARP experiments only collected followup data for 6 months, with the exception of one site. Followup at 6 months may be too short to understand the longitudinal pattern of intimate partner violence.

Evaluation of Two Coordinated Community Responses to Domestic Violence in Virginia

Stan J. Orchowsky
Applied Research Associates

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The complete study—*Evaluation of a Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Violence: The Alexandria Domestic Violence Intervention Project* (NCJ 179974)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/179974.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

To evaluate the effectiveness and policies of different coordinated domestic violence intervention programs in Alexandria and Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Findings

The Domestic Violence Intervention Program (DVIP) in Alexandria, Virginia, is a coordinated community response to domestic violence that consists of several components located in various city agencies. This research focused on the police department, the Victim-Witness Assistance Program, and the Office on Women's Domestic Violence Program.

In 1988, the Alexandria Police Department implemented a mandatory arrest policy for domestic violence cases that requires officers to make warrantless arrests when they can establish probable cause that a domestic assault has taken place. The Alexandria Victim-Witness Assistance program screens all police incident reports daily for evidence of domestic involvement. The Victim Services Coordinator completes a Victim Referral Sheet on all of these cases and forwards them to the Office on Women's Domestic Violence Program, which contacts victims and offers counseling, referral,

and court advocacy services. The Office also runs the Alexandria Women's Shelter, staffs the domestic violence hotline, provides individual counseling, and runs support groups. Having a single office that provides all of these services is unique among Virginia localities.

The City of Virginia Beach served as the comparison site for the study. Unlike Alexandria, domestic violence services in Virginia Beach are provided by a number of agencies. The Virginia Beach Police Department maintains a Domestic Violence Unit that follows up on all calls received for domestic violence. A detective in the unit contacts victims of domestic violence and explains the resources available, even in cases where no arrest has been made. The department employs a proarrest policy in which officers are encouraged to make warrantless arrests in domestic violence calls where they have probable cause to believe that an offense occurred.

Interviews with victims

- # Sixty-two percent of the victims in Alexandria received some type of services aside from court accompaniment. In contrast, only 27 percent of the victims in Virginia Beach received some type of services other than a brochure from the police.
- # Victims in Alexandria rated the services they received positively: 68–73 percent indicated that the various agencies were “very helpful.” These ratings were much higher than those in Virginia Beach, where police staff were rated as “very helpful” by slightly more than 50 percent of the victims, and prosecutors and a domestic violence hotline were rated as “very helpful” by just over 33 percent of participants.
- # The only statistically significant difference between the ratings in the two samples was for the helpfulness of the prosecutors, which is probably best explained by the relatively

recent involvement of the Virginia Beach Commonwealth Attorney's Office in prosecuting domestic violence cases.

- # Of the victims in Alexandria, only 27.4 percent reported any type of abusive incident during the first three interviews, compared to 45.3 percent of victims in Virginia Beach.
- # More victims in Alexandria experienced physical violence sometime between the first and third interviews, although the difference was not statistically significant (6.3 percent in Alexandria versus 3.5 percent in Virginia Beach). In contrast, victims in Virginia Beach reported more nonphysical abuse at the second and third followup interviews than those in Alexandria (38.6 and 24.1 percent respectively).
- # Alexandria victims who received counseling services or attended support groups rated DVIP program components more positively than those who received other services or no services.
- # The study found no relationship between services received and revictimization, the likelihood of leaving the abuser, or ratings of overall life situation.

Alexandria offender recidivism analysis

The DVIP program's offender database was analyzed to examine the factors related to recidivism. More than 2,600 domestic violence incidents from January 1993 to June 1996 were analyzed, along with offenses other than domestic violence committed by 1,910 domestic violence defendants from January 1990 to June 1996.

A bivariate analysis of one-time (1,508) and repeat (402) offenders showed significant differences in six characteristics. Repeat offenders were more likely than single offenders to—

- # Be black.
- # Be unemployed.
- # Have used drugs at the time the abusive incident took place.
- # Have received a prison sentence for the domestic violence offense.
- # Have been arrested for at least one previous nondomestic violence offense, especially a violent offense.
- # Have been noncompliant with court-mandated treatment.

These factors, along with interaction effects suggested by previous studies, were examined in a series of logistic regression analyses. The final model showed four characteristics that significantly distinguished repeat offenders from one-time offenders:

- # Having a prior nondomestic violence offense.
- # Having received a prison sentence.
- # Being black.
- # The interaction between the first two factors.

The interaction suggests that domestic violence offenders who had a prior nondomestic violence arrest and who were incarcerated for a domestic violence offense were more likely to be repeat offenders.

Alexandria police officer attitude survey

To assess police officers' attitudes regarding the domestic violence mandatory arrest policy in Alexandria, a brief survey was administered to officers in the domestic violence unit during roll calls in the fall of 1996. A total of 133 officers and detectives completed the survey. However,

because not all of these individuals were directly involved in policing domestic violence, the analysis was restricted to those officers who indicated that they had made a domestic violence arrest during the previous 12 months. This reduced the total number of cases to 95. The survey revealed that—

- # Overall, officers expressed positive attitudes toward the domestic violence mandatory arrest policy.
- # Most officers understood what constituted a domestic violence incident; they received appropriate support from magistrates regarding their arrest decisions; and they favored the mandatory arrest policy.
- # Most officers agreed that the policy was an effective deterrent to domestic violence, but they thought that the decision to make an arrest should be left to the discretion of the officer. Sixty percent of the officers felt that they had “not much” or “very little” discretion in handling domestic violence calls.
- # More than 33 percent of the respondents made arrests in more than 90 percent of the domestic violence calls to which they responded, while approximately 20 percent made arrests in half or fewer of the cases. According to the officers, if they had complete discretion, many fewer arrests would have been made. Just over half of the officers would have made arrests in 50 percent or fewer of the calls to which they responded, and only about 14 percent would have made arrests in 90 percent or more of the calls to which they responded.
- # None of the attitudinal questions was significantly related to percentage of arrests made.
- # Gender was not significantly related to percentage of arrests made, although female

officers (18) reported making slightly more arrests (75.4 percent) than male officers (70.7 percent).

- # Age and length of service to the department were the only variables that were positively significantly related to percentage of arrests: Older officers and those who had been on the force longer reported a greater percentage of arrests than younger officers and those who had not been on the force as long.

Implications

Victims in Alexandria reported receiving more services than those in Virginia Beach and rated the various DVIP program components as being more helpful than Virginia Beach’s multiagency approach. Victims in Alexandria who received counseling or attended support groups rated the DVIP program more positively than those who received other types of services or no services. Thus, intervention programs should alert more domestic violence victims to available services and attempt to increase the number of women receiving counseling and support services.

The research indicates that a coordinated approach can result in domestic violence victims receiving more services that they view positively. However, programs seeking to provide coordinated responses to domestic violence in their communities need to be aggressive in reaching out to battered women and providing more one-on-one services rather than just general information and court accompaniment. This may result in even more positive feelings about the services received (and potentially the justice system as a whole) and increase the chances of victims contacting the program if subsequent battering occurs.

The Alexandria Police Department’s mandatory arrest policy received positive ratings from officers and appeared to result in more arrests stemming from domestic violence calls than

would otherwise be the case. However, most officers agreed that making arrests in domestic violence calls should be left to their discretion. The results of the police officers' self-reports showed that they made arrests in an average of 75 percent of the calls to which they responded. Officers estimated that if they had complete discretion, that figure would drop to 56 percent. More research is needed to determine whether 75 percent is an accurate estimate and an adequate response.

Previous research has shown that domestic violence victims are often reluctant to appear in court to testify against their abusers, even though victim cooperation with prosecutors may be related to less subsequent abuse. Domestic violence intervention programs, then, should take steps to reduce the number of nol-prossed and dismissed cases. Between January 1993 and June 1996, more than 33 percent of the domestic violence cases were nol-prossed, mostly because victims failed to appear in court. About 47 percent of cases were either dismissed or nol-prossed during that time period. Domestic violence programs should consider contacting victims to convince them to appear in court. This may involve enhancing efforts to contact victims after an arrest has been made and convincing them of the importance of participating in the prosecution of their abusers. It may also involve better communication between domestic violence service providers, prosecutors, and victims to ensure that victims understand their options and the potential consequences of their choices. Prosecution practices should also be closely examined, particularly those that result in a large number of dismissals. Instead, prosecutors should issue subpoenas more frequently to domestic violence victims to bring them to court.

Recidivism among domestic violence offenders appears to be related to both prior offense history and sentencing for the domestic violence offense. If this finding holds true for other programs, courts should consider imposing more

punitive measures, such as jail time, on domestic violence offenders who have a prior offense history.

Methods

To determine program effectiveness, multiple telephone interviews were conducted with female victims of domestic violence perpetrated by male intimate partners. Slightly more than 100 women in Alexandria and 60 women in Virginia Beach participated in a series of telephone interviews about the services they had received, their satisfaction with those services, and their experiences with subsequent abuse. All of the women had experienced abuse by an intimate male partner prior to their participation in the study. Four rounds of interviews were conducted in Alexandria and three in Virginia Beach. The length of time from the initial incident to each of the interview rounds in Alexandria was as follows: 2 months for round 1, 3 months for round 2, 6-1/2 months for round 3, and 15 months for round 4. For Virginia Beach, the intervals were 1 month for round 1, 2-1/2 months for round 2, and 5 months for round 3.

Additionally, 3-1/2 years of data on domestic violence offenses were analyzed to determine factors related to recidivism in Alexandria. The study also surveyed Alexandria police officers about their attitudes toward the department's mandatory arrest policy.

Limitations

Sampling bias

This study examined domestic violence in a sample of women who were abused by male intimate partners and contacted the police as a result of an abusive incident. Therefore, the findings are not generalizable to other types of victims and relationships, such as male victims, females abused by other females, or females abused by other family members. The findings also do not necessarily apply to abusive

situations that do not result in police contact and arrest.

Initial interviews were conducted with just more than 30 percent of the women sampled for the study. More than one-third of those contacted refused to participate and the remainder could not be contacted at all. Again, this may make the findings unrepresentative of all abused women.

Differential dropout also affected the representative nature of the study sample. Women who dropped out from one interview to the next were perhaps more likely to continue to be in abusive situations than those who participated in all interview rounds.

The sampling issues affect both the internal and external validity of the study. Because the women interviewed for the study may not be representative of all abused women, any conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the DVIP program must be viewed with caution. Similarly, care should be taken in generalizing these findings to other domestic violence programs.

Comparison group

The use of a comparison group that is not a control group (due to nonrandom assignment of participants) is helpful in a study such as this. However, it is difficult to find an entire city or county that is similar enough to the target locality (in this case Alexandria) to serve as a valid comparison. There were several differences between the two cities and their populations that made Virginia Beach a less than ideal comparison locality. First, the two cities are located in very different parts of the State. Alexandria is located in northern Virginia, close to Washington, D.C., while Virginia Beach is located in the southeastern part of the state in what is essentially a tourist and recreational area where many military personnel also reside.

Second, the populations of the two cities also vary in makeup. About 45 percent of the women

in the Alexandria sample for whom race/ethnic origin was available were Hispanic, and many spoke little or no English. In contrast, only one woman identified herself as Hispanic in the Virginia Beach sample. Other researchers have pointed out that the impact of police responses to domestic violence such as mandatory arrest laws may be different for women of color, immigrant women, and poor women than for white middle-class women. It is possible, then, that differences in findings between Alexandria and Virginia Beach may be a result of demographics as opposed to services provided.

Finally, although the Virginia Beach program was less coordinated than the Alexandria program, the two programs contained many similar elements, including a proarrest policy, followup with victims, and counseling services for both victims and offenders. These similarities also may come through in the interview responses.

Data collection procedures

Confidentiality requirements in Virginia Beach made it impossible to recruit study participants in the same manner in both sites. A potential bias was introduced into the study when Virginia Beach police informed victims of the study. This raised the possibility of reactive bias on the part of potential participants who might feel either obligated to participate in the study to receive better treatment from the police or less willing to participate because of police involvement.

Control variables

The study was limited by the information that could be collected from the participants. It is therefore possible that factors other than those examined played a role in the observed relationships between victims and their abusers in the two sites. The degree and nature of the victims' previous abusive incidents was not controlled: The study included all victims who met the criteria, regardless of whether this was

the first time they had called police or the fifth time.

Another factor that may have been related to study outcomes was the specific nature and extent of the interventions that victims received. Detailed information was not available on the nature of the services received, such as the type and length of counseling.

Data collection difficulties

The study was not implemented as originally planned because of difficulties with contacting victims for participation in the study. Despite considerable efforts to contact the victims, initial interviews were conducted only with about one-third of those sampled, and long-term followup interviews, which were part of the initial study design, could not be conducted.

The Link Between Substance Abuse and Calls for Service in Domestic Violence Incidents

Ira W. Hutchinson
Northern Michigan University

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The complete study—*Influence of Alcohol and Drugs on Women's Utilization of the Police for Domestic Violence* (NCJ 179277)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/179277.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

To examine factors (e.g., the role of substance use) that lead women to call for police assistance in a domestic violence incident and to learn what women expect from police who service their call.

Findings

Victim demographics

- # Forty-nine percent of women in the study were married and 41 percent were cohabiting. Smaller percentages were either divorced, separated, or ex-cohabitants.
- # Ages of women in the study ranged from 17 to 82, and their average age was 30-1/2.
- # Academic levels varied: 34 percent had not completed high school; 30 percent graduated high school; 32 percent had some college education; and 5 percent had completed college or postgraduate work.
- # Fifty-four percent of the women were employed full time, and 11 percent were employed part time. Thirty-nine percent of the families lived at the poverty level; 40 percent lived at the working-class level; and 12 percent were working part time.

Patterns of alcohol and drug consumption

- # Far higher percentages of men and women in the study's sample were either high drinkers (24 percent) or binge drinkers (13 percent) compared with their counterparts in the national sample, for which 5 percent were either high drinkers or binge drinkers.
- # Only the categories of low-moderate and high-moderate drinkers were comparable. In the battered women's sample, 53 percent of men were either high or binge drinkers, compared with 19 percent of women.
- # Nearly 80 percent of men in the high-drinking category consumed 6 or more drinks per day, and 37 percent consumed 10 or more drinks daily.
- # Drug use also was relatively common among offenders: Victims reported that 30 percent of their offenders used cocaine and nearly 40 percent used marijuana at least once per month. Drug use by women was much lower: Approximately 16 percent had used drugs during the 6-month period prior to the incident.

Calls for service

Threats and hitting were the most common forms of abuse reported by women. On average, women reported being threatened 4.4 times and hit 3.5 times in a 6-month period. Over the course of the relationship, the averages rose to 22.5 times and 10.4 times respectively. Verbal or physical aggression against other family members or toward property was much less common.

Despite the high incidence of abuse, most of the violence was never reported to the police. Women in this sample called the police only twice (1.8 times) in the preceding 6 months and only 3.3 times during the entire relationship with the offender.

Three variables were most predictive of how often women called the police for incidents of domestic violence: The frequency with which the abuser was drunk, used marijuana, and hit the victim. Other variables also predicted calls to the police but were less consistent, including the victim's race (black victims called more frequently than whites), threats by the offender (against both the victim and other family members or property), actual property damage, social class, and income.

Cause of the conflict

Drinking was the single most common cause of the conflict, as identified both by victims and in police reports. Although drinking was identified as the cause for less than one-third of the cases (based on victim reports), it is more than three times as common as the next most frequent cause (offender jealousy).

Alcohol consumption and drug use at the presenting incident

- # Sixty percent of the offenders were drinking at the presenting incident, having consumed an average of 6.7 drinks. Among those drinking, more than half (58 percent) were drunk, and nearly half (43 percent) had drunk more than usual.
- # Approximately one-fifth (22 percent) of the abusers were using drugs before or during the presenting incident. Offenders were significantly more likely than victims to be using drugs or alcohol at the presenting incident.

Calling the police

- # In approximately two-thirds (63 percent) of the cases in which calls were made, women called the police themselves. In other cases, the call was made by a neighbor or friend (14 percent), a child (9 percent), another family member (4 percent), someone else (6 percent), or someone the victim did not know (4 percent). When the victim did not

make the call, she asked another person to make the call in slightly less than half (45 percent) of the cases. Thus, 77 percent of the victims initiated the call themselves or through another person.

- # Based on both victim interview data and police reports, a greater proportion of calls to the police were made by someone else when the victim was injured, although no causality could be deduced from the research. It is important to note, however, that the sample in this study was drawn predominantly from incidents charged as misdemeanor domestic violence acts. Thus, cases involving serious injury were largely excluded.

Victim fear

Women with alcohol-using partners were much more likely to be afraid of their partner than women whose partners seldom drank. This study found that such women were 2–3 times more likely to be hit or threatened than women who said that they were never afraid when their partners were drinking.

Victims' expectations of police responses

More than two-thirds (71 percent) of the women in the sample wanted the police to physically remove the offender from the scene: 30 percent wanted the offender arrested, and 41 percent wanted the offender removed from the scene.

Implications

Findings suggest that domestic violence incidents are often precipitated by excessive alcohol consumption and/or drug use. This holds implications for police responses and training and judicial decisions.

Responding to domestic violence incidents brought on by substance abuse is potentially dangerous for police. Current policies should be examined and updated, if necessary, to define

how to handle such incidents. Policies also can address police interaction with the victim at the scene. In addition to handing out information about shelters and domestic violence programs, the police also can distribute information about local programs and agencies (e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, and other treatment programs) that specialize in substance abuse treatment.

Closer cooperation with community substance abuse agencies would be invaluable. Ideally, police training should include substance abuse personnel who can recommend to police ways of dealing with both intoxicated abusers and victims. Training should also prepare police for responding to male abusers who blame their violence on alcohol or to victims who excuse the violence because their partner had too much to drink.

It is important that police departments document in their reports the presence of alcohol at domestic violence scenes. This may help judges inquire about chronic/long-term patterns of substance use and order substance abuse treatment for the abuser in appropriate cases.

Methods

Data were collected from comprehensive interviews of 419 women in Charlotte, North Carolina, following misdemeanor-level domestic violence incidents. The interviews were both structured and unstructured and examined 546 variables, including childhood abuse history, relationship abuse history, alcohol and drug use patterns, and measures of fear and help-seeking. Women who were interviewed were demographically similar in age, race, marital

status, and employment to those who were part of the study but not interviewed. Police reports also contributed to the study's data.

Limitations

The study had shortcomings related to the sample and data collection:

- # It was drawn only from women who had called the police (or for whom a call was made on their behalf) during a misdemeanor-level domestic assault. Felony cases, although fewer in number, typically involve the most serious violence, a greater use of weapons, and more serious injury than misdemeanor cases but were not included. Therefore, it is unknown if the findings are indicative of felony cases.
- # Most of the women were involved in an abusive relationship at the time of the study. Women who left such a relationship were underrepresented in the sample.
- # It is skewed toward a lower socioeconomic level. Therefore, the findings may not be representative of families at higher socioeconomic levels because they are less likely to call the police in response to domestic violence.
- # The research relied on the victims' reports of personal and partner drinking. Self-reports are subjective in that victims may underreport their own drinking and overreport their partner's drinking.
- # The research was conducted in one site and may not reflect practices elsewhere.

Models of Community Coordination in Partner Violence Cases: A Multisite Comparative Analysis

Alissa Pollitz Worden
University at Albany

NIJ 95-WT-NX-0006

The complete study—*Models of Community Coordination in Partner Violence Cases: A Multi-Site Comparative Analysis* (NCJ 187351)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/187351.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

To determine whether a coordinated community response is more effective at ensuring offender accountability and victim safety than traditional legal and social services responses to domestic violence. The study was designed to—

- # Map the dimensions of practices and policy and the nature of collaboration and exchange within and among criminal justice agencies.
- # Learn how collaboration is encouraged or repressed by the priorities, attitudes, and relationships of key officials and agencies.
- # Examine the relationships between a community's response to domestic violence and the strengths and comprehensiveness of its safety and accountability nets.
- # Generate hypotheses for future research.

Findings

Surveys of law enforcement agents and district attorneys

Agency-level data suggested that although elements of progressive policies were common, the sorts of comprehensive policy packages that

are often held up as models were not in place in the vast majority of communities. For example:

- # Despite much attention to arrest policies at the time, including adoption of a limited “mandatory arrest” statute by the State legislature, police departments’ arrest practices varied in terms of how “domestic” cases were defined, how officers were to respond to “offender absent” incidents, and what to do with arrested offenders prior to arraignment.
- # Departments’ policies about arrest were empirically independent of practices about case tracking, warrant-seeking, victim assistance, and report-writing.
- # Prosecutors’ reported practices varied on issues such as victims’ obligations to appear in court, evidentiary standards adopted for charging, and bail recommendations.
- # About half of the agencies in the study were affiliated with domestic violence task forces but that sort of affiliation was unrelated to the adoption of progressive practices and policies.

Community profiles

Despite increasing emphasis on standardizing practices through statutory changes, communities adopted widely varying practices for processing domestic violence cases. Often, local officials held very different ideas about what the law required or permitted them to do, and what it discouraged or barred them from doing.

Expectations for victims’ roles in the legal process strongly marked the character of criminal justice responses: Practitioners who expressed negative attitudes about victims held them to higher expectations for their contributions to prosecution. Attitudes about offender blameworthiness appeared to be associated with demands for victims’ roles;

where holding offenders accountable is a primary shared objective, there is less emphasis on holding victims accountable for the pace or success of prosecution.

Practitioners' seemingly candid beliefs about the payoffs of coordination efforts appeared to be unrelated to the success that their communities experienced. One of the least progressive sites yielded the most unanimous (and often self-congratulatory) enthusiasm about the task force. In contrast, the greatest skepticism about the effectiveness of innovations was expressed in sites with the longest and most diverse experiences with reforms.

Practitioners from all sectors who were committed to changing local responses frequently identified low-visibility, routine, interstitial decisions (such as offscene pursuit, supervisory review of incident reports, postarrest detention, conditional dismissals, and sharing of case files and records) as critical. They expressed less concern about new treatment programs or tougher sentencing. Instead, they were more concerned about changing standard practices in ways that would reliably bring more offenders and victims into contact with criminal justice and advocacy agents.

Measuring and explaining community-level accountability and safety

The strength of this community "net" of accountability was measured at several points in the criminal process: report-writing, arrest, arraignment, issuance of protection orders, disposition, and sentencing. Samples of case data coded from police and court records in each site were used to construct rates of population-adjusted system activity at each of these decision points. The following observations emerged:

- # The most actively engaged, collaborative communities exhibited higher rates of activity across most of these decision points; in other words, offenders were detected,

apprehended, and processed at higher rates, and better records were kept on these transactions.

- # Inevitably, levels of activity at the front end of the process became ceilings for levels of activity at other stages; hence police practices remained critical in establishing the upper limits of a community's accountability net.
- # In general, judges' orientations were a limiting (or perhaps liberating) factor; their effects were felt backwards throughout the system. Judges who questioned victims' legitimacy or honesty, or doubted their needs, had a chilling effect on the efforts of prosecutors and police. Interestingly, judges who held high due-process standards may have led committed law enforcement agents to document their cases more assiduously—a good outcome for all parties. However, regardless of the intensity of coordination efforts or the details of policies or practices in effect, the overwhelming majority of incidents slip out of the system before conviction or sentencing.

Implications

This study sheds some light on the roles of courts, domestic violence advocacy programs, community task forces, victims, and offenders.

The role of the courts

Much research and policy discussion has revolved around police practices; but although they are undoubtedly important in the construction of community safety nets, it appears that the behavior of the courts is very important as well.

The role of advocacy programs

Although domestic violence advocacy programs are important in any coordinated response effort, the attributes that are often noted or emphasized

(or that are likely to attract attention) do not necessarily contribute to strong community responses. Large, well-established, and well-funded programs may not be able to change the entrenched behavior of skeptical or hostile criminal justice agents, whereas smaller agencies may succeed in establishing cooperative relationships with local police and prosecutors. By virtue of their status as nonprofits, which are often staffed by volunteers, nonprofit agencies must work harder to build long-term relationships that do not rely on individuals who come and go.

The role of task forces

The findings of this study suggest that inclusive and broad-based participation in a task force dedicated to domestic violence may be a very limited indicator of the activities of that task force. The communities with the weakest nets represented the ends of this continuum: One had a task force with full participation from all sectors of the community, including all criminal justice agencies at the city and county level, and was led by a local judge; the other had a task force that was eschewed by local police and unrecognized by the local judge. The communities with the strongest nets varied as well: One had a longstanding, inclusive, and active task force; the other had a task force that seemed to include the active membership of police leaders, the deputy district attorney, and the advocacy program. The existence of a coordinating group may be a necessary condition for coordinating activities, but it is not a sufficient one.

The role of victims

At the time of data collection, victims were seen as essential to prosecution by some communities. Expectations about victim involvement are difficult to change, although one community demonstrated fairly successful efforts to adopt evidence-based prosecution. One of the frequently heard justifications for this is the fact that almost all domestic incidents

result in violation- or misdemeanor-level charges (if they result in charges at all). However, many respondents expressed attitudes toward victims that were openly skeptical, critical, or demeaning, leading to the conclusion that such attitudes affect how discretionary decisions are made. If local criminal justice officials delegitimize victims' claims, it is unlikely those officials will take steps in the direction of greater accountability and victim safety.

The role of offenders

Domestic violence offenders seemed resistant to change; many of them reoffended frequently. They were seldom subjected to significant or purposive interventions truly designed to change their behavior. Perhaps, then, the study sites paid more attention to victim behavior (such as reporting), victim safety, and victim satisfaction with responses from community agencies. However, at the local level, policymakers and researchers must remember that some criminal justice officials are attentive to the rights and claims of suspects and offenders alike; they sometimes claim that they are reluctant to take action in a case that involves a partner if they would not make the same discretionary decision in a case that involved acquaintances or strangers. While these claims may be exaggerated or unjustified in some cases, these concerns must be recognized and incorporated into coordination strategies, which typically focus on increasing the probability of an offender becoming and remaining entangled with the law. These concerns, when legitimate, are not insurmountable.

Methods

The communities selected for this intensive study were all upstate New York cities with populations ranging from 25,000 to 150,000. The study sites were given fictional names because the research was exploratory and the author did not have formal agreements with the sites to release their names. All of the sites had a task

force dedicated to domestic violence reform—a finding atypical among other small cities in New York, only 25 percent of which had task forces dedicated to domestic violence. In addition to the criterion of having a task force, communities were selected on the basis of their diversity in—

- # Police practices at the report-writing and arrest stages.
- # Allocation of criminal justice resources (i.e., across agencies) to such domestic violence matters as training, legal advocacy, and information collection.
- # The strength and stability of the local domestic violence program.
- # The degree of formalization and comprehensiveness of interagency agreements.
- # The breadth of criminal justice participation in the task force.
- # The level of community outreach generated by the task force.

Information about the diversity and dimensions of practices when the study began in 1996 was gathered through—

- # An intensive qualitative study of the communities, selected to represent variation across these dimensions.
- # An analysis of official records of criminal justice responses, to construct aggregate portraits of the character and breadth of community responses in each of the five sites.

Primarily exploratory in nature, the study illustrated the use of community-level outcome measures (as opposed to case- or individual-level). The study concluded with hypotheses about what factors contribute to and detract from establishing higher levels of offender accountability and victim safety.

Limitations

Because this project was exploratory, it had some built-in limitations. It provided only a rough cut at comparative analysis in five New York sites. It was primarily a process study rather than an impact study. To measure victim safety and offender accountability, interviews with these groups would be necessary; this was not done. Impact studies that build upon the current research and incorporate interviews with victims and offenders are needed to test and verify these process findings.

Two Approaches to Resolving Domestic Violence: A Public/ Private Partnership and Law Enforcement Training

Martha Smithey and Susanne E. Green
University of Texas at El Paso

Andrew L. Giacomazzi
Boise State University

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The complete study—*A Collaborative Effort and the Effectiveness of Law Enforcement Training Toward Resolving Domestic Violence* (NCJ 191840)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/191840.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

To evaluate the effectiveness of one city's response with two distinctive approaches to resolving domestic violence problems.

Findings

This project was conducted in an large, unnamed Southwestern city in which two-thirds of the residents are of minority descent. The project had two components: a process evaluation of an interagency collaboration and an outcome assessment of the effectiveness of a domestic abuse intervention training program for police officers.

Interagency collaboration of the commission

Funded by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, the Domestic Violence Prevention Commission is a public-private, multilevel collaborative partnership that includes members of the police department; the district attorney's office; the county attorney's office; the city attorney's office; the probation office; the parole board; the military; the school district; the Council of Judges; State, county, and

municipal legal assistance; juvenile probation; the battered women's shelter; the YMCA; the Transitional Living Center; the clergy; and other volunteer services that deal with the problems of family violence. Its goal was to reduce local family violence. To assess the Commission's level of interagency collaboration, the researchers conducted focus groups and archival research.

Despite the high activity levels of Commission members and the outward appearance of collaboration, focus group data revealed that practical and philosophical problems threatened interagency collaborative efforts during both the planning and implementation phases. Focus group findings were—

- # Agency motivations for participation in the Commission's activities were not directly goal oriented. At the very least, focus group responses raised the question of whether agencies were motivated to participate out of self-interest by either protecting one's "turf" or acquiring new information and resources.
- # Several focus group participants were concerned that the Commission was established by the police department and that the department controlled the Commission's activities. They felt that dominance of the police department was an obstacle to true collaboration. The Commission largely focused on law enforcement responses to family violence against women (i.e., law enforcement training for handling domestic violence calls for service, prosecutors' efforts to bring more cases to court, and more programs for offenders). This direction appeared to marginalize those agency representatives who were primarily concerned with preventing family violence against women proactively rather than reactively.

- # Other barriers to the realization of the Commission's goals included perceptions of waning interest in the Commission's activities, lack of organization, insufficient notification of meetings, scheduling of meetings, and unclear expectations of participants.

Effects of training on police officer attitudes

Although respondents had favorable opinions toward the training, there was little change in attitudes as a result of the intervention. Some key findings on the effectiveness of the training model were—

- # Domestic violence training did not change police officer attitudes toward traditional gender roles. There was, however, a "gender effect" among the subjects, with female police officers in less agreement with traditional gender roles than male officers.
- # The domestic violence training did not dispel beliefs in inaccurate or simplistic causes of family violence (e.g., "The primary cause of family violence is alcohol consumption" or "Family violence occurs much more in poor families than in middle-class families"). Beliefs in inaccurate or simplistic causes of family violence tended to be higher among male officers and those who agreed with traditional gender roles.
- # Officers who had simplistic or inaccurate beliefs about the causes of family violence had more difficulty identifying the perpetrator in a domestic violence incident.
- # Police officers uniformly believed that family violence was not a personal or private matter and that police should stay on the scene assisting or managing the dispute. The domestic violence training did not change the attitudes of the police officers in this regard.
- # Female officers, more so than male officers, agreed that family violence was a matter for the police.
- # The domestic violence training did not change police officer attitudes toward victim cooperation as an indication of desire to resolve his/her current situation.
- # The domestic violence training did not change police officer attitudes toward mandatory arrest. Police officers tended not to have an opinion about the effectiveness of mandatory arrest. Agreement with mandatory arrest as an effective policy was higher among police officers who served in the police department prior to the implementation of this policy.
- # Police officers tended to have "no opinion" about the likelihood of prosecution. The domestic violence training did not lead to formation of an opinion. Female officers were slightly more likely than male officers to view prosecution as probable.

Regarding the effects of training on time at the scene, acceptance of a case for prosecution, and rate of convictions, researchers found no differences between trained officers and untrained officers in the amount of time spent at the scene of a domestic violence incident. The domestic violence training also did not affect the number of cases accepted for prosecution or the number of convictions.

Implications

Process evaluation of the Commission

Evaluation of the Commission indicated that true collaboration is difficult to achieve. Formidable barriers hinder collaborative efforts and transform the process from collaboration to negotiation. Agency policies and procedures that either obstruct or facilitate collaboration should be examined, and effective team building interventions should be implemented to move

closer to collaborative problem solving, which may offer the most hope for finding meaningful, long-term solutions to social problems.

Outcome assessment of police training effectiveness

Outcome assessment of the police training showed a need for systemic efforts toward dispelling traditional patriarchal beliefs and beliefs in simplistic or inaccurate causes about family violence in order to relieve their potentially pervasive effect. Police officers in the study were found to lack understanding of the complexities of domestic violence. Because of this, they may reach quick decisions based on unfounded stereotypes.

Techniques also are needed to identify perpetrators and deal with “victims” who may be offenders. The more difficult it is to identify the perpetrator, the more dissatisfied the officer is with a mandatory arrest policy. Many law enforcement agencies resist or discourage dual arrests, so officers are compelled to identify a perpetrator.

A longitudinal study on domestic violence training received by an officer with a time series analysis is needed to detect the unique and cumulative effects of each training session. In addition, other law enforcement programs, interventions, and/or organizational changes should be documented and examined to determine what might lead to observed changes in police officers’ attitudes and/or behaviors.

Researchers should find better ways of measuring attitudinal and behavioral changes that might result from domestic violence interventions. This study on police officer attitudes suggests that there either was no training effect or that the study measures did not reveal particular attitude changes. It also found that trained officers were likely to spend more time at the scene of a domestic violence incident than untrained officers, but the research did not examine the quality of the interaction between

the police officer and victim. In light of these issues, continued research in this area is warranted.

Methods

Process evaluation of the Commission

Four focus group interview sessions were conducted at key points in the evaluation—two at the end of the Commission’s planning efforts and two approximately 1 year into the Commission’s implementation efforts. A systematic random sampling procedure was used to select focus group members. Although few in number, focus group participants represented the range of membership of the Commission. Focus group questions centered around participants’ perceptions of the Commission’s mission, the process of collaboration within the Commission, barriers to achieving the Commission’s goals, and reasons for the participating agencies’ involvement with the Commission.

In addition to focus group interviews, such archival data as meeting notes and other documentation were culled for descriptive information on the number of Commission meetings, average attendance, and agencies participating in Commission activities.

Outcome assessment of police training effectiveness

The Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project Training Model for Law Enforcement Response was provided to 135 officers. Researchers used two methods to examine these officers. First, they conducted an attitude survey. As part of the design, officers were divided into four groups, two of which received domestic violence response training (the experimental groups) and two of which did not (the control groups). The pretest/posttest measuring instrument was a questionnaire that consisted of a series of items designed to assess attitudes toward gender roles, police intervention

in domestic violence, police policy surrounding domestic violence, prosecution, the training itself, and belief in inaccurate or simplistic causes of domestic violence. In the second method, researchers gathered responses from officers in both groups on (1) the amount of time a police officer spent at the scene of a domestic violence incident, (2) acceptance of the case for prosecution, and (3) conviction rates. Answers were then compared using three experimental designs.

Limitations

Because the study was set in a single unidentified city, results cannot be generalized to the rest of the country.

The process study on collaboration was limited to focus group interviews with Commission members, which raises two concerns:

- # Commission members would likely want to put the Commission in the best light and not acknowledge all of their problems.
- # Commission members may be reluctant to criticize each other in a group setting, as opposed to individual interviews.

Individual interviews would have helped address this problem. Researchers also could have checked the perceptions of the focus group participants against knowledgeable members of the community. Despite these limitations, the researchers uncovered a number of serious problems that hindered collaboration. More extensive internal and external interviews might have revealed even more.

The researchers acknowledge that their attitude survey of officers may not have picked up subtle changes in attitudes. This is a limitation shared by other studies trying to measure attitude change.

The researchers found that the training had no effect on police practice. Information about the broader context in which the training occurred would have been helpful. For example, could changes in command staff, high-profile cases of domestic violence, changes in laws, and so forth have affected police practice in more profound ways than the training? Future research should take such factors into consideration. This also may explain why no differences existed between the control and experimental groups.

Research on Victim Services

Exploring the Experiences and Needs of Former Intimate Stalking Victims

Mary P. Brewster
West Chester University

NIJ 95-WT-NX-0002

The complete study—*Exploration of the Experiences and Needs of Former Intimate Stalking Victims* (NCJ 175475)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/175475.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

To explore the experiences of noncelebrity, former-intimate victims of stalking, particularly the nature of the stalking, the relationship between the victim and the stalker, the victim's response to the stalking, the impact of the stalking on the victims, needs of the victims, and the response of the service delivery systems and the criminal justice system.

Findings

Characteristics of stalkers

The age of victims in the sample ranged from 17 to 57. On average, stalkers were slightly younger than their victims. More than half of the stalkers were non-Hispanic whites and one-third were black; the remainder were other racial minorities. Sixty-nine percent of the stalkers were employed, mostly in blue-collar professions.

According to the victims, more than 60 percent of the stalkers had a prior criminal record, 33 percent of whom possessed a prior record for violent offenses. Victims also reported that nearly 75 percent of the stalkers abused either

drugs or alcohol. Eighty percent of the victims described being physically abused by the stalker during a prior relationship with him.

Victim-stalker relationship

The prior relationship between victim and stalker varied: More than 33 percent were married; 25 percent were living together but not married; 25 percent were dating seriously or engaged; and slightly more than 10 percent were dating casually. Approximately 75 percent of the women reported that the stalker displayed controlling behavior during their prior relationship.

Characteristics of the stalking

The most common stalking behaviors reported by the victims were harassing phone calls, watching the victim, and following the victim. When asked about events that could have led to the stalking, 33 percent of the women stated that the breakup alone was the trigger, and more than 25 percent attributed it to drug or alcohol abuse.

Attempts by the victim to discourage the stalker

Most victims tried extralegal strategies to stop the stalker. Reasoning with the stalker, ignoring the stalker, moving to a different residence, changing telephone numbers, and blocking calls from the stalker were the most common. The majority of victims said their strategies did not work. Common legal attempts to stop the stalker included calling the police, obtaining protection orders, and having him arrested. Again, most of these strategies did not work. Some victims said that legal actions made the stalker's behavior even worse.

Threats and violence

Nearly 75 percent of the victims reported that stalkers made violent threats against them, and more than 33 percent reported threats of violence made by their stalkers toward family, friends, coworkers, and others. Nearly half of the victims said that the stalking involved violent acts committed by the stalker.

Responding to victims' needs

Overall, victims gave high ratings to the police for speed of response and politeness. However, the victims generally indicated that police were not sympathetic nor did they live up to the victims' expectations.

Nearly 60 percent of the victims needed psychological/emotional support to cope with the stalking. Nearly 25 percent of the victims searched for a sense of security. Typically, victims sought assistance from their friends and family (informal support networks). Approximately 10 percent said that they wanted more support from the criminal justice system (formal support network).

Effects of stalking on victims

Stalking resulted in a variety of psychological, physical, financial, and quality-of-life hardships. Common feelings were fear, anger, insomnia, sadness, and tension. Nearly half of all victims in the study were physically harmed. The most prevalent injuries were bruises, scrapes and cuts, and black eyes. Four-fifths of the victims experienced financial loss (e.g., costs of fixing property damage or lost salary as a result of fear of leaving the house to go to work). Nearly all (99 percent) of victims indicated that the stalking incident worsened their quality of life, and 75 percent said that the stalking had a greater negative impact on them than any previous victimization.

Implications

The research findings hold several policy recommendations for law enforcement agencies, courts, legislatures, and victim service agencies:

- # Handling of stalkers (e.g., deterrence, punishment, or rehabilitation) by police, courts, and correctional agencies should reflect the seriousness of the behavior.
- # Because drug and alcohol use was prevalent among stalkers and was labeled as a possible contributing factor to the stalking, drug and alcohol abuse among former intimate stalkers needs to be addressed by treatment personnel and by judges in their decisionmaking.
- # Because victims look to the criminal justice system for support, justice personnel must be properly trained so as not to "revictimize" the victim. Training should focus on demonstrating appropriate empathy, implementing current antistalking statutes, and making referrals to other agencies better suited to assist victims.
- # Legislatures should review current antistalking legislation and make appropriate changes that would increase the effectiveness and enforceability of stalking laws.
- # The process of obtaining a restraining order needs to be improved and made easier for victims to access.
- # Stalking by a former intimate must be taken as seriously as stalking by a stranger.
- # Legislators, victim service professionals, and criminal justice practitioners need to be reminded and/or educated about the seriousness of the crime and the impact stalking has on its victims.

- # Criminal justice professionals need to be aware of their State's antistalking legislation and the Interstate Stalking Punishment and Prevention Act of 1996 (18 U.S.C. 2261). Proper training may ensure that these laws are enforced effectively and that the intended protections are afforded to stalking victims.
- # Adequate funding should be made available to develop and evaluate innovative programs that better coordinate police, court, and victim service agencies in their handling of stalking cases.
- # Victims of stalking also are in need of greater resources, particularly those that provide education, information and guidance, counseling, and access to support groups. Providing such resources, then, needs to be the concerted and coordinated effort of the entire criminal justice system.

Methods

Interviews were conducted of 187 women from 7 southeastern Pennsylvania counties who had been stalked by former intimates during the previous 5 years. The sample was recruited from input by victim service and law enforcement professionals and through advertisements placed in local newspapers and at laundromats, supermarkets, and an international women's symposium in Philadelphia.

The semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were extensive, lasting from 1 to 3 hours. The interviews, which took place from January 1996 to July 1997, were recorded on tape and

codified. They sought victim perspectives on seven topics: (1) characteristics of the stalker's behavior; (2) the victim's relationship with the stalker; (3) characteristics of the stalking; (4) attempts to discourage the stalker through legal and extralegal means; (5) assistance sought by the victim from friends, family, and service providers; (6) the impact of the stalking on the victim; and (7) prior victimization history, other than the stalking.

Limitations

The extent to which the results garnered from a sample of 187 victims in one State can be applied to an entire population may be limited, especially when considering the difference in stalking laws among other States. Details on the recruiting process are minimal. The report does not indicate—

- # How many victims came from each of the counties, were identified per recruitment method, and were self-selected or referred by victim services or law enforcement personnel.
- # How victims were selected.
- # Rates of refusal by selected respondents.

Answers to open-ended interview questions can be difficult to analyze in a consistent manner. Given how little the field knows about stalking, such exploratory research is reasonable but more empirical work is needed.

How Effective Are Domestic Violence Intervention Programs Over Time?

Cris M. Sullivan and Deborah I. Bybee
Michigan State University

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The complete study—*Using a Longitudinal Data Set to Further Our Understanding of the Trajectory of Intimate Violence Over Time* (NCJ 185728)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/185728.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800–851–3420.

Purpose

To determine positive outcomes of domestic violence intervention services at distinct points throughout a 3-year period after abused women left a domestic violence shelter. In particular, the study analyzed—

- # The mediation process through which the intervention resulted in decreased abuse.
- # Whether positive outcomes persisted across 3 years.
- # Whether some interventions were more effective than others at reducing abuse.
- # What antecedents explained differences in victimization over time.
- # What antecedents explained differences in victimization specifically by ex-partners over time.

Findings

This summary synthesizes results of two followup studies of the same research, which was conducted by the principal investigator from 1989 to 1996. Data are based on 278 women who were residents at a domestic violence shelter. The women were randomly assigned to

trained advocates who worked one on one with them to mobilize community resources to reduce their risk of repeated victimization. Types of resources included legal assistance, employment, housing, medical care, and other needed services. The first followup study extensively interviewed the women over a 2-year period (i.e., at 10 weeks, 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, and 24 months after leaving the shelter) to examine the impact of postshelter intervention services. The second followup study examined these same women at 36 months posttreatment. The 2- to 3-year posttreatment study revealed the following:

- # The frequency of threats against the survivor during the shorter time period was related to increased risk of violence by the ex-partner during the subsequent time. Given this finding, threats against the victim should be treated seriously by criminal justice personnel and service providers.
- # Whether a batterer had ever been arrested for an assault against the victim before she went to the shelter was not related to whether he assaulted her after the relationship ended. However, this finding should be treated with caution, because the researchers only had information about the partner's battering behavior toward the current victim and not a full history of the partner's behavior toward other women.
- # The number of times the police had been contacted before women went to the shelter was not related to violence by their ex-partners.
- # The risk of being abused after leaving the shelter increased by several factors present 1 year prior, including whether the victims had been abused; had problems with the State's governmental public assistance agency; and had people around that made their lives difficult. In contrast, women were at *less* risk of further abuse if they were

employed 1 year prior and had people around 1 year prior who provided practical help and/or who were available to talk about personal matters.

- # Participants' intentions to remain in the relationship and their need for housing best predicted violence against them within the first 10 weeks after exiting a domestic violence shelter.
- # The severity of assailants' prior violence predicted a reoccurrence of violence within the first 6 months after leaving the shelter. The best predictors of violence occurring after 6 months were the number of prior separations women had from their assailants and the length of their last shelter stay.
- # Alcohol and drug use by batterers were *not* related to risk of subsequent violence.
- # Leaving the relationship was no guarantee of escaping future violence. More than one-third of the women who left their abuser suffered renewed violence from him during the followup period. Predictors of reabuse by an ex-partner were length of the relationship prior to the breakup; female involvement in a new relationship; and the ex-partner's jealousy, geographical proximity, and prior threats.

Overall, the research found that short-term, strengths-based, client-driven community advocacy can have many positive affects on women with abusive partners. Women who received advocacy intervention reported—

- # A higher quality of life, as measured by their levels of self-determination, psychological well-being, life satisfaction, physical and material well-being, and personal fulfillment.
- # Over time, women who reported having more control over and satisfaction with their lives also reported a decrease in violence.

Analysis indicated that quality of life predicted risk of reabuse, as opposed to risk of reabuse predicting quality of life. Advocates helped women achieve these positive results.

- # The availability of financial resources and social support affected women's risk of intimate partner violence. Women who lacked these resources and this support were at greater risk of being abused between 2 and 3 years after they received advocacy intervention than those with more financial resources and stronger support systems. Advocates helped women improve their financial position and garner social support.
- # Women who received advocacy services and/or who intended to leave the relationship were at a decreased risk of further abuse. Those who intended to stay in the relationship and who did not work with advocates were most likely to be abused again during the followup study period. Furthermore, those who received advocacy services were less likely to be abused again than those who did not, even for women who stayed in relationships with their abusers.

Implications

Study findings strongly support the conclusion that advocates and communities can do much to help women recover from domestic abuse. It is rare in the social science field for intervention effects to persist over time, but in this study, they continued throughout the 2- to 3-year followup period. Researchers concluded that lasting changes were achieved because—

- # The intervention enhanced the participants' inherent abilities, talents, and strengths.

- # The community was mobilized to respond effectively to the battered women's needs for resources, services, and opportunities.
- # Advocates and service providers worked collaboratively and respectfully with the participants.

Service providers should note that increasing opportunities for self-determination and autonomy may decrease future partner violence. However, advocate services only reduced the risk of further violence—they did not eliminate it. Indeed, 89 percent of women who did not receive advocacy services suffered renewed violence during the study's 2- to 3-year followup period compared with 76 percent of those who received those services. These numbers are disturbingly high and lend urgency to the need to find additional ways to help women who have experienced partner violence.

Methods

Recruited from a Midwest shelter, eligible participants were women who had spent at least one night in the shelter and planned on staying in the general vicinity for the first 3 months after leaving the shelter. Participants were interviewed at six points in time across two followup studies. Fifty percent were given free advocacy services. Ninety-three percent of eligible women agreed to participate. The retention rate over the 2-year followup study period remained at or near 95 percent.

Data were derived from self reports from the six interviews about—

- # Experiences of violence (e.g., physical, sexual, and psychological abuse; harassment and stalking) over time perpetrated by the "original" partner and a partner from a new relationship.

- # Psychoemotional well-being (e.g., depression, self-esteem, quality of life, fear and anxiety, emotional attachment to assailant).
- # Amount and quality of social support.
- # Physical health concerns and symptoms.
- # Need for, access to, and satisfaction with community resources plus self-rated efficacy.
- # Need for, use of, and satisfaction with law enforcement and criminal justice resources.

Women also reported the assailant's living situation across time (e.g., still living in the area, different State, incarcerated, etc.) and whether the assailant abused alcohol and/or drugs, participated in substance abuse and/or batterer treatment programs, and economically supported the respondent.

Limitations

Because they are derived from study participants' self-reports, the data should be viewed with caution. Women who experience domestic violence may attempt to minimize the results of their victimization during interviews. That is, they may be reluctant to reveal details of their lives that they perceive may make them "look bad" to the researchers.

Since all study participants had been residents of a domestic violence shelter, they are not representative of all domestic violence victims. Not only do shelter residents tend to have fewer resources than other types of victims, but resources also vary among shelter residents. For example, female residents at domestic violence shelters tend to have fewer resources than other residents at the shelter. Most participants in this

study had low incomes and were black or non-Hispanic white. None resided in a rural community. All came from one shelter; how their experiences would compare with women from other shelters or other communities is unknown. This is especially important to

consider in this study, since the advocates' role was to connect the women with local community resources. Their ability to do so, the type and quality of services, and the viability of the job market depended on what was available in that community.

Linkage of Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse Services: What Do Program Directors Say?

James J. Collins, Donna L. Spencer, Jeanne A. Snodgrass, and Sara C. Wheelless
Research Triangle Institute

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The complete study—*Linkage of Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse Services* (NCJ 194123)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/194123.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

To determine how often and in what ways treatment programs for domestic violence and substance abuse provide complementary services.

Findings

Program characteristics

- # Ninety percent of the domestic violence programs and slightly more than 50 percent of substance abuse programs were operated by private/not-for-profit agencies. On average, each type of program had been in operation for approximately 17 years.
- # The programs were separated by marked staffing and budget differences. On average, substance abuse programs operated with twice as many full-time employees as did domestic violence programs. Annual budgets for substance abuse programs averaged more than \$1.8 million, compared with \$550,000 for the average domestic violence program.
- # Despite fewer full-time staff and smaller operating budgets, domestic violence programs had significantly more clients than did substance abuse programs.

Client characteristics

- # The majority of clients (85 percent) in domestic violence programs were female. In contrast, two-thirds of the clients in substance abuse programs were male. Directors of domestic violence programs reported that about 63 percent of their clients were non-Hispanic whites, 17 percent were non-Hispanic blacks, and 10 percent were Hispanic. Substance abuse program directors said that 57 percent of their clients were non-Hispanic whites, 26 percent were non-Hispanic blacks, and 11 percent were Hispanic. Clients in substance abuse programs tended to be older and have higher median incomes than those in domestic violence programs.
- # More than 75 percent of domestic violence offenders had been court ordered to participate in treatment programs. In contrast, substance abuse program directors reported a nearly equal split between voluntary and court-ordered clients.

Service linkage activities

- # The majority of *both* program types screened clients for the complementary problem.
- # Domestic violence program directors, on average, estimated that about 36 percent of their victim clients had substance abuse problems, and substance abuse program directors estimated that 33 percent of their clients were domestic violence victims. In contrast, directors of domestic violence programs estimated that 61 percent of domestic violence offenders also had substance abuse problems. This was significantly higher than the estimated 26 percent of clients in substance abuse programs who also were domestic violence offenders.

- # Although domestic violence programs were more likely than substance abuse programs to have a current relationship with a complementary program, they were less likely than substance abuse programs to provide complementary services to substance-abusing offenders and victims of domestic violence.

Perceptions concerning service linkage

- # The overwhelming majority of both domestic violence and substance abuse program directors were interested in continuing or beginning to work with a complementary program.
- # Although domestic violence program directors were more likely than substance abuse program directors to express an interest in complementary programs, they also were more skeptical of service linkage.

Attitudes about the relationship between substance abuse and domestic violence

- # When asked about how often they thought that cases of domestic violence were linked to alcohol and drug use/abuse, the majority of directors of both program types responded “at least some of the time.” However, substance abuse directors were more likely than domestic violence directors (87 percent versus 64 percent) to respond “a lot of the time.” Only a small percentage of directors from each program type (6 percent domestic violence and 1 percent substance abuse) answered “a little of the time” or “none of the time.”
- # Overall, the majority of substance abuse directors conveyed the belief that substance abuse and domestic violence were related. This finding was less consistent among directors of domestic violence programs.

Implications

The fact that the majority of program directors acknowledged the cooccurrence of domestic violence and substance abuse further solidifies the need to screen clients for both problems upon entering either type of treatment program. Such screening is a model practice that all programs should adopt. In addition, service linkages should be enhanced to make sure appropriate clients receive both types of services.

Methods

Two questionnaires (the Domestic Violence Program Directors Questionnaire and the Substance Abuse Program Directors Questionnaire) were administered via telephone to a nationally representative sample of domestic violence and substance abuse program directors. The questionnaires collected information about the program (e.g., staffing and budget) and its directors (e.g., age and education); types of services provided, including the provision of complementary substance abuse or domestic violence services; barriers to providing complementary services; and program directors’ attitudes about providing complementary services and beliefs about the domestic violence-substance abuse relationship. Overall, directors from 606 of 800 domestic violence programs and 691 of 1,100 substance abuse programs fully or partially completed the questionnaires.

Limitations

Sampling frames

Although the lists used in sampling domestic violence and substance abuse programs were recent in publication and national in scope, it is likely that these lists may not be representative of all domestic violence and substance abuse treatment programs in the United States.

Programs that were not affiliated with any State or national coalition or that do not receive State or Federal funding may have been excluded from these lists. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to all domestic violence and substance abuse treatment programs in the country. The researchers rightfully stressed that their research is preliminary and suggest that a national demonstration study would help assess more accurately the linkages between substance abuse and domestic violence programs.

Clientele size as a criterion for study eligibility

In screening sampled programs for study eligibility, clientele size restrictions were imposed

to prevent interviewing programs that served few clients. Thus, small programs were omitted disproportionately from the sample.

Questionnaire design

Many of the questionnaire items were closed-ended. Written responses to such questions are often limited in depth and detail. Closed-ended questioning may be more appropriate for telephone surveys.

Victim Advocacy Services and Gaps in Service: Domestic Violence Perspectives From Staff and Victims

Carol Bohmer, Denise E. Bronson, Helen Hartnett, and Jennifer Brandt
Ohio State University

Kristen S. Kania
Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services

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The complete study—*Victim Advocacy Services in Urban Programs: A Description by Staff and Clients of Service Provision and Gaps* (NCJ 182368)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/182368.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

To evaluate direct service programs, particularly victim advocacy services, funded in Ohio through the STOP Formula Grants under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994. The evaluation compared existing advocacy services and victim advocacy types and identified key variables in the delivery of services to assess the effectiveness of those services.

Findings

The following are results of surveys returned from 11 of 13 agencies that provided services to domestic violence victims in the State:

- # *Agency characteristics.* The number of clients served by the programs ranged from 120 to 15,000 per year with annual budgets ranging from \$75,000 to more than \$4 million.
- # *Client demographics.* People living in an urban setting dominated the client base (91 percent). Only a small portion (5 percent) lived in rural communities, and even fewer (4 percent) were from suburban areas. Fifty-seven percent of clients were black, and 38 percent were coded as being in an “other” category. Hispanics and Asian-Americans/Native Americans accounted for 4 percent and 1 percent of the client base, respectively. Most clients (74 percent) were between the ages of 18 and 45; 14 percent were under the age of 18; and 12 percent were over the age of 45.
- # *Types of services provided.* Direct legal services (e.g., court escort and assistance with prosecution) were offered more often than direct nonlegal services (e.g., shelter or assistance with educational needs). The three most prevalent direct services were assistance with law enforcement, assistance with prosecution, and crisis intervention.
- # *Community collaboration.* All of the programs surveyed indicated that they collaborated with law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and other victim service organizations. Nine of the eleven noted that they worked with court, probation, and social service personnel. Seven reported that they collaborated with trauma centers and/or children’s services. Six of eleven indicated that they collaborated with public officials and/or health agencies. Less than half collaborated with parole and adult protective services.

Client and staff focus groups held during the first phase of the study revealed the following:

- # *Referral sources.* Many of the clients were self-referred and were aware that shelter services existed. They sought shelter for several reasons: A last option in dealing with a crisis, a lack of financial resources to pay for housing and counseling services, and a means of protecting themselves and their children. Clients also learned of victim services through law enforcement and court

- referrals or through direct outreach by victim advocates.
- # *Material services provided.* Clients specifically identified transportation, being given a cellular phone, and assistance with finding childcare as being most helpful.
 - # *Nonmaterial services.* Clients noted that nonmaterial support (e.g., self-esteem groups, counseling, compassion, empathy, reassurance, and around-the-clock availability of service providers) resulted in some of the most encompassing and significant services offered by the programs.
 - # *Case management services.* Such case management services as providing information or referrals, goal setting, and case planning were mentioned by clients as important services.
 - # *Education services.* Clients and staff talked about the importance of education services. These services were defined broadly and included safety training, activities to help victims understand the cycle of violence, and letting victims know how to access services.
 - # *Legal services.* Staff often stressed the importance of legal advocacy and “victimless prosecution”—a commitment to prosecuting domestic violence offenders without relying on testimony from the victim. Clients, on the other hand, were much more likely to talk only about the importance of advocacy services.
 - # *Visitation services.* One site provided visitation services to its clients that allowed children to spend time with their fathers even when the mother had a protection order against the father or lived in a shelter. To the clients’ satisfaction, the service provided a safe place for the exchange of and visitation with the children.
- # *Children’s services.* Staff indicated the importance of safety, security, and stability in the lives of children. Thus, such services as support groups, counseling, activity programs, school connections, and summer school programs were designed to address these needs.
 - # *Gaps in service.* Clients noted several gaps in service. Most common were safety issues. Clients often felt that protection orders were not enough to protect them or their children. They also had problems with the “system,” including claims of insufficient investigation into their case, negative attitudes by law enforcement towards domestic violence victims, lengthy court processes and treatment by the court, a lack of sanctions against the abuser, and problems in getting a divorce and custody of their children. At times, clients also faulted the shelter system in that it lacked transportation and sufficient child care.
- Staff, too, identified gaps in service, especially financial resources to secure shelter, housing, and other nonmaterial services and a lack of public understanding about domestic violence.
- Another phase of the study focused on the impact of training on law enforcement officers. Because of problems obtaining data, only information obtained from questionnaires from the prosecutor’s office is detailed. Only 1 of the 25 items examined in the questionnaire revealed a significant difference between officers in jurisdictions that received training versus those in districts that did not: Officers who did *not* receive training reported more often that their supervisors supported their efforts to investigate domestic violence cases.

Implications

The study identified types of and gaps in services provided to domestic violence victims.

Many gaps were mentioned by clients and program staff (such as the lack of financial resources for housing, transportation, job training, and so on) that inhibit victims from emerging as self-sustaining, viable members of society. Ways to meet these gaps need to be constantly explored to help victims recover from domestic violence.

VAWA STOP grants were intended to create a seamless response by the criminal justice system for adult women victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Yet a seamless system does not exist among law enforcement, the courts, mental health systems, and health care systems. Better coordination among systems could help provide more comprehensive and coordinated services that better meet both the many needs of these women and the needs dictated by society.

Methods

The study was completed in two phases. Data in the first phase was obtained through surveys and focus groups. The survey was mailed to 13 victim service agencies in Ohio. It collected detailed information from each of the agencies, including organizational information, types and number of clients served, agency history, and types of services provided. Focus groups consisting of 2 to 16 participants and lasting 1 to 1-1/2 hours were held with clients and staff to learn about their definitions of advocacy, the types of services needed by and provided to victims, and the relative importance of these services. Their responses were then compared.

In the second phase, researchers evaluated service outcomes in two agencies: a domestic violence shelter and a prosecution-based victim service program. At the shelter, interactions between children and parents in a parenting program were observed to evaluate the program's impact. Furthermore, a questionnaire was used to assess client attitudes during their stay and over the course of individual

counseling. The questionnaire was administered within 3 days of entering the program and repeated monthly thereafter.

To evaluate the impact of the prosecution-based program, police in one district participated in domestic violence training and worked directly with a prosecutor on domestic violence cases. Researchers focused on the effectiveness of the police officer training and officers' increased access to information as a result of working with the prosecutor. A questionnaire obtained information about officers' attitudes toward domestic violence cases and their reactions to procedural changes in how the department and prosecutor's office communicated with each other. The results were compared with a control group (i.e., officers in another district who did not receive domestic violence training or use revised procedures).

Limitations

This is an exploratory study restricted to survey and focus-group results in the State of Ohio and, as such, has its limitations. Only 13 victim service programs were selected for the mail survey, and even fewer (11) complied. This is a very small number of programs for Ohio; therefore, the results are not likely to reflect those of the entire State. No rationale is provided for how the 13 programs were selected: Urban areas were oversampled, and rural areas were largely excluded. In addition, there is no explanation of how clients and staff were selected for the focus groups, how many focus groups were held, how many programs were represented, and how many of those selected for the focus group actually attended. Without this information, it is impossible to know how representative these groups were of victims and staff within the selected programs.

The evaluation of the impact of training provided to officers was limited to an attitude survey. The survey design did not measure attitudes before and after training; therefore, the results do not

indicate whether the training changed behaviors and/or practices. The evaluation of the impact of the training, then, is extremely limited.

Violence Against Women in San Diego

Susan Pennell, Cynthia Burke, and
Darlanne Hoctor Mulmat
San Diego Association of Governments

NIJ 97-IJ-CX-0007

The complete study—*Violence Against Women in San Diego* (NCJ 191838)—is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/191838.pdf> or by contacting NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

Purpose

To understand the nature and scope of violence against women in San Diego County and use the findings to enhance services delivered to female victims of domestic violence.

Findings

One phase of the study interviewed 599 women in shelters in San Diego County to obtain characteristics of victims, batterers, domestic violence incidents, substance use, and mental health status.

Client profile

Of the 599 clients, about 25 percent were Hispanic, 33 percent were white, 19 percent were black, and the remainder were of other ethnicities. The average age of clients was 31-1/2 years old. About 33 percent had less than a high school education, and just over 40 percent had some college or vocational training. Primary sources of income for clients were the partner (38 percent) and welfare (35 percent). More than 50 percent of the clients reported an annual household income of less than \$11,000. Clients generally were married to the batterer (48 percent) or simply living with him (43 percent).

- # Nearly 30 percent of clients reported that their primary language was Spanish.
- # More than one-half of the clients had come to the shelter from some place other than their own residence, and nearly one-quarter had been to a shelter prior to the most recent incident.

Children

Nearly three-quarters of the clients came to the shelter with their children, who totaled 936 or 2.1 children per client. The average age of children was 5.9 years old.

Substance use

Seven percent of clients reported being under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the most recent incident.

Type of abuse

When asked about the type of abuse they had ever experienced, 97 percent of women in the study reported being verbally abused; 95 percent reported being physically abused; 93 percent reported being mentally or emotionally abused; and 50 percent reported being sexually abused. Most clients seeking shelter reported being victims of multiple types of abuse during the most recent incident.

Timing of abuse

For 23 percent of the clients, the most recent incident took place within 3 days of the interview. Another 35 percent said the incident occurred within 4 to 7 days of the interview.

Weapon use

Seventy-nine percent of the clients reported that some type of weapon, body part, or object was used against them in the most recent incident.

Injury

Sixty-six percent of the clients reported that they sustained some type of injury in the most recent

incident. The most frequent injuries included bruises, aches and pains, sprains or swelling, and scratches. Approximately 16 percent reported having received medical treatment for the most recent incident.

Cycle of violence

About 50 percent of the clients had witnessed abuse in their childhood and 82 percent noted that their partners had also witnessed abuse while growing up. More than 33 percent of the clients stated that they had been in an abusive relationship prior to their current relationship.

Involvement with legal system

- # Seventy-three percent reported calling the police as a result of domestic violence. Nearly 50 percent had placed one to three calls in the past, and more than 25 percent stated that police had come to their residence more than four times. When asked if anyone had been arrested as a result of a police response, 57 percent said that an arrest had been made at least once.
- # Five percent of the women admitted having *themselves* been charged with domestic violence offenses in the past, and 33 percent of those charged had been convicted. Fifty-five percent of women reported that their batterers had been charged, 68 percent of whom had been convicted.

Restraining orders

Forty percent of the clients reported having obtained restraining orders against their current partner, either ever or at the time of the interview.

Prior services

Thirty-nine percent of the clients had previously received such services related to domestic abuse as counseling and shelter protection.

Safety plans

Clients were asked about their plans to keep themselves and their children safe after leaving the shelter. They responded, in descending order: (1) stay away from the batterer, (2) relocate, (3) find a new residence, (4) become financially independent, and (5) get a restraining order.

Services needed

Many clients and counselors reported the need for counseling, permanent or transitional housing, employment, safety plans, and financial assistance.

Another phase of the study examined reports of calls for service to law enforcement personnel for potential domestic violence incidents. Law enforcement responses were tracked from initial call through final disposition. The law enforcement sample of 3,996 cases revealed that 69 percent (2,756 incidents) were actual crimes; the remainder were calls for service in which no crime had occurred. Highlights from the reports follow:

- # Victims and suspects were similar in age, averaging about 32 years of age.
- # Victims were female in 82 percent of the cases.
- # Fifty percent or more of both victims and suspects were white, followed by Hispanic. Fifteen percent or less were black.
- # Victims mentioned that the most frequently used weapon was the suspect's hands (88 percent). Knives and firearms were noted in less than 3 percent of the incidents.
- # Fifty percent of the victims and 10 percent of the suspects were injured. Injury was more likely when a history of abuse existed.

- # Less than half of the reports contained information about alcohol and drug use. For those cases, alcohol use was recorded for 41 percent of the suspects and 21 percent of the victims. Illegal drug use was noted for 3 percent of suspects and 1 percent of victims.
- # Seven percent of the cases involved dual arrests.
- # Just over one-half of the cases had information regarding the presence of children at the time of the incident. Of these, 58 percent of the cases reported that children witnessed the abuse.
- # The majority of cases (85 percent) involved participants who were married or in relationships with significant others. Twenty-three of the cases involved partners in same-gender relationships.
- # Nearly 45 percent of the cases did not mention a restraining order. About 25 percent noted that the victim did not have one, and in 17 percent of the cases, victims were advised to get one.
- # Prior history of abuse was documented in 80 percent of the cases.
- # Approximately 25 percent of suspects had an arrest record, with an average of 3.2 arrests per suspect. Sixteen percent of the arrests involved domestic violence.
- # Thirty-one percent of the suspects were arrested at the scene and an additional 24 individuals were arrested within 24 hours of the reported incident.
- # Just over three-quarters of the arrests were for felony charges, with the most common being spousal assault.
- # Crime report narratives revealed three primary reasons that an arrest did not take place: The suspect was not present, the victim did not want the abuser to be arrested, and no visible injury was evident.
- # Evidence was collected in 44 percent of the cases. Evidence collection was a strong predictor of whether or not an arrest took place. Photographs were the most common type of evidence.
- # More than 33 percent of the cases were referred to the prosecutor; of those, 52 percent were filed and 36 percent were rejected. An additional 12 percent were not filed. The majority of cases filed resulted in a guilty plea or conviction, with 55 percent resulting in felony charges. The most common sentence imposed was probation with some amount of jail time. Four percent of the 476 convictions resulted in State prison sentences.

Perhaps the most remarkable finding of the law enforcement tracking study was that substantial information was missing from crime reports. Specifically, more than 40 percent of the reports did not include information about victim pregnancy, substance abuse by either party, or the presence of children. One-third or more of the reports did not document whether or not there was a history of violence, the length of the relationship, or the existence of children within the relationship. These indicators could have implications for future prosecution or reoffending.

Implications

- # Shelters are a critical lifeline for women and children caught in life-threatening circumstances, and shelter providers must have the capacity to serve a diverse population beyond immediate protection and with transitional and long-term housing. Policies for maintaining and building shelter

capacity should include provisions to address staff turnover and burnout.

- # Shelter clients have a host of needs beyond the provision of a bed; shelters need to be able to address these needs or provide referrals to agencies that can. The prevalence of clients with multiple needs suggests a need for further research to document the transitional services and options available to clients once they leave the shelter (e.g., transitional housing, linkage to community family resource centers, and employment development).
- # Significant numbers of women in the study experienced injury that required medical treatment. This suggests that there is a window of opportunity to train medical professionals to improve detection of abuse and increase subsequent referrals to appropriate agencies.
- # Results indicated that police frequently arrived at residences because of an abusive incident. Law enforcement, therefore, has a role to play in reducing or preventing repeat occurrences of abuse.
- # Many of the clients in the study relied on welfare, and more than half of them had annual incomes of less than \$11,000. This is a population that requires substantial public services.
- # The study found an association between being a victim of abuse in childhood and becoming a perpetrator of abuse later in life. This suggests a need for early prevention and intervention efforts aimed at preventing child abuse. The significant number of children residing in shelters warrants further research on the impact and possible implications of child abuse associated with living in a violent home.

Methods

With the assistance of staff in emergency shelters, researchers reviewed the intake instruments already in use at each of the shelters and developed a CORE (Core of Research and Evaluation) intake interview to be used by all six emergency shelters serving battered women in San Diego County. These shelters are located throughout the 4,000-plus square miles of San Diego County and included a total of 246 beds in 1998.

Researchers administered the CORE intake interview to 599 clients from March 1997 to December 1998. Data were collected on the characteristics of victims, batterers, and incidents, as well as clients' substance use and mental health status. Interviews also were conducted with 12 staff members at the shelters, including administrators and program managers.

A second phase of this study tracked domestic violence reports to law enforcement from initial call through final disposition. The intent of this phase of the study was *not* to compare this dataset with the shelter dataset, but to provide another dimension of the nature and scope of domestic violence in San Diego County. This study initially selected a random sample of more than 26,000 reports of domestic violence in San Diego County in 1996. This sample size was then refined to 3,996 reports, purposefully large so that the proportion of those involving arrests could be followed through the justice system.

Limitations

No onsite quality assurance of the CORE intake interview process was conducted by researchers, although training was offered several times during the course of the study. Interviews were conducted at different times, depending on the operation of the shelters. Clients may have been interviewed soon after admission or several hours later. The procedure asked only that women be interviewed within 72

hours of admission. All of the victims were female. Any general statements about clients who seek shelter apply only to clients in San Diego County. Finally, findings about batterers

are based on secondhand accounts by the clients. No interviews were conducted with batterers.