

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TODAY

PART 5: SOCIALIZATION

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4b. Brandon throws the car keys at her instead, resulting in minor scratches

Yes

No

Somewhat

5a. After catching Joe in bed with David, Ted beats Joe up with his fists

Yes

No

Somewhat

5b. He only slaps him once, then leaves

Yes

No

Somewhat

6a. Rhonda threatens Jack with a knife when he once again starts questioning her whereabouts, and refuses to give her grocery money

Yes

No

Somewhat

6b. Instead, Rhonda kicks him in the shin

Yes

No

Somewhat

7a. Margaret has been harassed daily by her jealous, controlling boyfriend. One night, as they watch television, he calls her a “tramp.” When he gets up to get a sandwich, Margaret grabs a vase and cracks it over his head

Yes

No

Somewhat

7b. Margaret only pushes him

Yes

No

Somewhat

- Score 0 points for each “no,” 1 point for each “somewhat,” and 2 points for each “yes” (score sheet at end of section)

Total: _____

OUR VIOLENT SOCIETY

1. The U.S. is one of the most violent countries in the industrialized world.
The FBI Uniform Crime Reports of 1998 indicate that:
 - < Over 1.5 million violent crimes were committed
 - < Among those crimes, there were 93,100 forcible rapes
 - < The total number of murders committed was nearly 17,000
2. According to the Children's Defense Fund (1996), homicide is the second leading cause of death among 10 to 24 year olds
3. Our youth is more violent than ever, as evidenced by:
 - < Higher number of teens carrying firearms to school
 - < Proliferation of youth gangs
 - < Increase in sociopathic, mass murderers (e.g., Columbine)
 - < Increase in reported cases of infanticide
4. Ours is one of the few industrialized countries in the world that carries out the death penalty, and the only liberal democracy that allow execution of minors
5. Studies indicate a strong correlation between children's exposure to societal violence and exposure to intra-family violence (e.g., Richters & Martinez, 1993; Osofsky, et al., 1993)
6. According to 1999 Neilson statistics, children spend an average of 10-13 hours per week watching television. A flip through the channels in a typical home reveals a plethora of violent programs, from old gangster films, war, and "shoot 'em up" cowboy movies, to more contemporary action films and teen "slasher" movies

OUR VIOLENT HOMES

- * The family is the “most violent institution a citizen is likely to encounter.” This is partially explained, as we have seen, by its insular, private nature, combined with the high level of stress inherent in its function and structure. Straus (1990) adds one additional factor:

The family has different rules about violence than do other groups. In an academic department, an office, or a factory, the basic rule is that no one can hit anyone else, no matter what they do wrong. A person can be a pest, an intolerable bore, negligent, incompetent, selfish, or unwilling to listen to reason. But that still does not give anyone the right to hit such a person. In the family the situation is different. There, the basic rule is that if someone does wrong and won't listen to reason, violence is permissible and sometimes even required. This is clearly the case in respect to the rights and obligations of parents; but it also applies to spouses. As one husband said about an incident in which his wife threw a coffee pot at him: “I was running around with other women - I deserved it.” Statements like that are made by many husbands and wives. In fact, the evidence suggests the marriage license is also a hitting license...(p.184)

- * According to the NFVS, violence in partner relationships is highly correlated with violence in parent-child relationships, and vice-versa. The rate of child abuse is 150% greater for assaultive husbands than for nonviolent husbands; and the child abuse rate for assaultive wives is 120% higher than wives who are nonviolent

- * Corporal punishment of children teaches the use of violence through:

- (1) principles of modeling and observational learning
- (2) perhaps more importantly, through the unconscious association made between violence and love

- * Children learn that violence is O.K. under certain circumstances:

- (1) when they have been repeatedly warned
- (2) when they have done something really egregious.

- * Husbands and wives who verbally abuse each other are more than twice as likely to physically abuse their children (Straus & Smith, 1990)

- * In families, there are two important principles at work
 - (1) “Violence begets violence”: High rates of both partner violence and parental violence are associated with having a violent partner (Dibble & Straus, 1990)
 - (2) “The approval of violence begets violence”: Having pro-violent attitudes is also strongly correlated with the use actual use of violence, especially in lower SES groups

THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF VIOLENCE

- Interviews with battered women (e.g., Walker, 1983) reveal a strong association between partner violence by adult men and violence they experienced in their families of origin. This association exists for those who witnessed violence between their parents, as well as for those who had violence perpetrated directly upon them. Furthermore, the greater the degree of violent socialization, the more severe the assaults perpetrated against their partners (Carter, et al., 1988)
- Sommer (1994) found evidence for the effect of same-sex modeling. Witnessing dad hit mom as a child was related to violence by adult men. For adult women it was witnessing mom hitting dad, and the rates of assaults by these women was 12.5 times higher than those who did not witness any violence in their families of origin
- According to the NFVS, violent husbands are more likely than nonabusive ones to have been physically assaulted by their father, as opposed to when the mothers had hit them or the parents didn't use corporal punishment
- The NFVS indicates that assault rates by husbands are greater for men who had witnessed their parents fight, with the highest rates of all when they had seen their mother assaulting father. Violence by wives was also strongly associated with having witnessed parental violence, but the sex of the parent was not a factor
- Additionally, observing violence by the mother is associated with slightly higher rates of depression and stress in adults of both sexes, compared to having observed violence by the father. Mother's violence is also associated with a higher prevalence of drug abuse by adults, whereas father's violence is associated with greater alcohol abuse. The following table illustrates some of these correlations (Straus, 1992):

ADULT PSYCHOSOCIAL PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED
WITH HAVING WITNESSED PARENTAL VIOLENCE

| Problem | Had Witnessed Violence by | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--------|--------|------|
| | Neither | Father | Mother | Both |
| Depression index (above 80 th percentile) | 20.0 | 31.0 | 33.6 | 32.9 |
| Perceived stress index (range = 0-12) | 3.1 | 3.7 | 3.9 | 3.8 |
| Times drunk past year: men | 2.82 | 7.52 | 3.37 | 3.66 |
| Times drunk past year: women | 1.02 | 2.24 | 1.61 | 1.62 |
| Times high on drugs past year: men | 3.18 | 9.0 | 15.45 | 4.48 |
| Times high on drugs past year: women | 1.76 | 5.0 | 9.87 | 1.96 |
| Verbal aggression past yr: husband - wife | 9.6 | 13.2 | 16.3 | 15.3 |
| Verbal aggression past yr: wife - husband | 9.9 | 14.6 | 16.4 | 15.4 |
| Any violence past yr: husband to wife | 10.5 | 18.3 | 23.0 | 22.2 |
| Any violence past yr: wife to husband | 11.4 | 21.7 | 21.4 | 22.7 |
| Severe violence past yr: husband to wife | 3.1 | 4.0 | 8.4 | 7.4 |
| Severe violence past yr: wife to husband | * | * | * | * |

(Difference between having and not having witnessed parental violence were statistically significant in all instances, except for “times drunk past year: women”)

- (Data unavailable)

SOCIAL-LEARNING THEORY

- Langhinrichsen-Rholing, et al. (1995) found that children who were abused by their fathers tend to become victims of partner violence as adults, whereas children who were abused by their mothers are more likely to become perpetrators
- Pearson (1997) speculates that children learn to be submissive from watching their father's example, which leads to a form of learned helplessness as adults
- According to social-learning theory, witnessing parental violence, or experiencing physical child abuse, provides an internalized model that can later be used to cope with stress and conflict. These childhood models, together with violence in early adult relationships, teach the individual inadequate but enduring methods for resolving conflict, that are unfortunately used and re-used
- Stith and Farley (1993) theorize that witnessing parental violence lowers self-esteem, which in the adult leads to marital insecurity, as well as a greater tendency to use alcohol and harbor pro-violent beliefs. There is a strong connection between witnessing parental violence and personality traits later observed in violent adults, such as low self-esteem, emotional dependency on one's partner, and helplessness in the face of conflict
- Caesar (1988) determined that men who observed parental violence but who did not become violent themselves as adults shared some important characteristics. They had not idealized their parents, and had not chosen sides. In addition, they had better coping skills as children, better able to self-soothe, and had outlets in such activities as organized sports
- Social learning theory explains a number of the key risk factors in partner violence, including stress, violence in family of origin, personality and alcohol abuse - as well as marital conflict and negative interchanges between partners. Based on behavior principles such as modeling and reinforcement contingencies, and taking into account the mediating influence of cognition, it illuminates the mechanisms by which each factor operates, and how they relate to one another. An excellent model of partner violence, based on a social learning model, has been formulated by O'Leary (1988).

- Having observed parental violence is not a sufficient condition for violence in adulthood. In Sommer's study, for instance, 80% of abusers, both male and female, reported *no* abuse in their families of origin, and these percentages are similar in other surveys as well, including the NFVS. The above figure shows how other factors must interact with those of childhood socialization for the model to have any predictive value

ATTACHMENT DISTURBANCE AND CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

- < Dutton (1998) found that abusive men with a borderline personality organization (BPO) utilize primitive types of intra-psychic defenses, such as projection, splitting, and denial. He observed that these defenses seemed to be used to ward off attacks, or perceived attacks, as though the abuser's very sense of selfhood was at stake
- < Object relations theory sheds some light on these defense mechanisms, with Klein's description of "good object" and "bad object" splitting.
- < Margaret Mahler has described how an emotionally available mother, particularly during the critical "rapprochement" subphase of individuation, is crucial in fostering a healthy, autonomous self, one that is neither too withdrawn nor too dependent
- < Bowlby observed that preschool children who were separated from their mothers responded with anger, and saw a similar reaction in older children who had been rejected or threatened with loss of love
- < In her famous "strange situation" experiments, Ainsworth identified three distinct attachment styles: "secure," "avoidant" and "ambivalent/preoccupied" (Siegel, 1999). The mothers of ambivalent children are only inconsistently responsive. Ambivalent children are thus confused and anxious. They cling to their mother upon reunification, but at the same time show anger and resist all efforts to soothe them
- < Using a protocol called the Adult Attachment Interview (Main & Goldwyn, 1998) researchers have identified a connection between childhood and adult attachment styles. In adults, the attachment styles have been categorized as: secure, dismissing, preoccupied and fearful. Adults in the "fearful" category were found to have severe intimacy issues. They were needy of others, intensely seeking closeness with others, but at the same time distrustful and expecting rejection
- < Munroe, et al. (1997) conducted two studies compared the attachment styles, as measured by the Adult Attachment Interview, in violent, maritally-distressed husbands, with those of distressed but nonviolent and happily married husbands. The violent husbands exhibited significantly more

insecure, preoccupied and disorganized attachment

- < Dutton (1998) postulates that abusive BPO men fail to reconcile the good and bad objects, as reflected in their categorization of women as either “Madonnas” or “whores.” They are unable to achieve a stable, positive, autonomous self, or to incorporate a consistent inner representation of the parental figure, so necessary for self-soothing during times of separation or conflict. They cannot be properly assertive, but instead remain passive and dependent, with occasional explosions of anger, or they attempt to dominate their partner with emotional and physical abuse. Unable to mourn the original childhood loss, and feeling an inner emptiness, these men try to mask the resulting dysphoria with alcohol or drug use, or with rage. What had been an otherwise normal, regulatory behavior in infancy is now a distorted and exaggerated response:

Filled with rage, unable to express it, possessing negative representations of himself and women but still cyclically drawn in a repetitive push-pull pattern, the avoidant-ambivalent child is a prototype for an abusive adult.

With abusive parents, the child is in a situation where he is locked into forming an attachment to his primary caregiver, who is also a source of pain and injury. The rage that is experienced with such a parent is repressed...The underlying personality will remain dormant until an intimate attachment, later in life, triggers the emotional template developed in the original attachment experience. Abusive males who experienced physical violence in their family of origin, often a dysfunctional, unstable family, were also at risk for ambivalent attachment. Although study of this “intergenerational transmission” of violence was initially focused on behavior modeling, attachment theory and research suggests that something more is going on. That something more involves the development of faulty internal schemata, particularly self-concepts and expectations of attachment to others fraught with fear and rage. The groundwork for abusiveness is set. In other words, abusive childhood experiences produce something more than just learned behavior patterns. They produce avoidant-ambivalent bonding styles that generate tendencies to be both overly demanding and angry in adult romantic attachments, a profile often reported by battered women about their husbands, and again consistent with the descriptors of borderline males’ pathology (p. 128)

- < Dutton (1998) found that abusive men with high scores on “fearful” attachment also score high on BPO, anger and jealousy. They are more likely to blame, and to characterize their partner’s behaviors as selfish and intended. Dutton also found that fearfully-attached men scored high on the Trauma Symptom Checklist (TSC), which includes anxiety, depression, dissociative states and sleep disturbances, as well as an intense dependency on primary relationships and the inability to tolerate being alone. These

men...

...seem to have been traumatized somehow, probably by extreme attachment disruptions, and react chronically with rage whenever they are in intimate relationships. They cannot self-soothe, cannot make these symptoms go away. They expect their wives to magically do so, and when the symptoms don't disappear, the woman is blamed for her "failure."...they cannot conceive and do not understand the anger in attachment terms...If they feel "dysphoric," which they frequently do, they believe it's her fault (p.138)

< Insecure attachment to mother does not fully explain the behavior of BPO male batterers. Using the CTS, as well as a self-report test from Sweden called the Eгна Minnen Beträffande Uppfostran (EMBU), Dutton investigated the relationship between early parent-child relationships and adult abusiveness in a population of male batterers. Contributors to adult abuse were found to be as follows, in descending order of significance, along with their correlations:

| | |
|--|------------|
| Paternal rejection | .89 |
| Physical abuse by father to child | .64 |
| Lack of paternal warmth | .63 |
| Verbal abuse by father to child | .41 |
| Maternal rejection | .39 |
| Lack of maternal warmth | .39 |
| Verbal abuse by mother to father | .38 |
| Verbal abuse by father to mother | .36 |
| Physical abuse by mother to child | .34 |
| Verbal abuse by mother to child | .34 |
| Physical abuse by mother to father | .27 |
| Physical abuse by father to mother | .24 |

< Three important conclusions can be derived from this study:

- 1) Male BPO batterers are adversely affected far more by their relationship with the father than with the mother
- 2) Rejection and lack of love from father had a greater, or equal, impact compared to verbal or physical abuse
- 3) Problems in both parent-child relationships were more important than the child witnessing abuse by the parents on one another

< The most critical elements of the EMBU were experiences that led a child to feel unloved, guilt-induced and shamed. Shaming was particularly aversive: global verbal attacks, public punishment or humiliation, and being punished at random - the sort of experiences that lead a child to regard his or her entire self as flawed or “bad.” Dutton found that shame and parental physical abuse in combination had the highest predictive value. Men who had experienced shame without physical abuse were less likely to become physically abusive as adults, but were emotionally abusive instead. A study with 140 male batterers yielded the following correlations between the three EMBU subscales and associated features of adult abusiveness:

| | Shame | | Guilt | | Unloved | |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|--------|
| | mother | father | mother | father | mother | father |
| BPO | .37 | .55 | .31 | .38 | .27 | .23 |
| Anger | .43 | .43 | .28 | .30 | .28 | .23 |
| TSC (trauma symptoms) | .27 | .38 | .26 | .37 | .25 | .19 |
| PMWI 1* | .39 | .35 | .33 | .31 | .29 | .27 |
| PMWI 2 | .34 | .33 | .32 | .30 | .10 | .08 |
| CTS (man’s self-report) | .38 | .31 | .12 | .09 | .41 | .35 |
| CTS (wife’s self-report) | .24 | .26 | .18 | .17 | .55 | .50 |

* Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (Tolman, 1989). PMWI 1 is the dominance/isolation subscale; PMWI 2 is the emotional abuse subscale

< Being a victim of child abuse, along with witnessing parents assault each other, does not fully explain the pathology and violence of severely assaultive male batterers. The table below, from Dutton (1998), illustrates

the differential effects of various childhood socialization experiences on abusive men:

| Socialization Experience | Psychological Consequences | Behavioral Consequences |
|---|--|--|
| I - Rejection, shaming | anger, inflated self-esteem problems with affect regulation anger and rage tendency to blame | frequent rage outbursts emotional abuse |
| II - Insecure attachment | jealousy and attachment anger | dominance/isolation behavior intimate focus to rage |
| III - Physical abuse victim Witnessed physical abuse | decreased empathy for victim unconscious images of violence, and lack of healthy conflict-resolution strategies | physical abuse |
| I + II - Rejection, shaming, insecure attachment | anger focused on intimate partner relationship | intimate rage |
| I + II + III - Rejection and shaming; insecure attach- ment; victim of, and witness to, physical abuse | ego integrity dependent on relationship | physical and emotional abuse, dominance/ isolation behavior and stalking |

CONCLUSION

- Social learning theory appears to be an insufficient model for explaining the behavior of severely assaultive men with borderline personality disorder
- Although Dutton did not focus on sociopathic batterers, it may be that a combination of early attachment disturbance and shaming experiences, in combination with having experienced and witnessed physical abuse, account for their behavior as well
- Further research needs to be done, following Dutton's lead, on the childhood antecedents to severely abusive females, especially those with BPO. We need to know more about the combination of childhood experiences that lead to adult female battering. Will rejection, shaming and abusive behavior by the father be as significant to this population as Dutton's male offenders, or will we find more victimization at the hands of the mother?
- Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart found that only 25% of male *batterers* fit the BPO profile. We know that most adults who have used violence in high-conflict intimate relationships cannot be characterized as batterers at all. Dutton's excellent work may not, therefore, generalize beyond the specific population he studied
- Nonetheless, general dysfunction in one's family of origin is clearly implicated in adult partner violence, on some level, and it would seem wise to pay closer attention to issues beyond physical assaults, or "counting CTS acts" as Dutton put it

SCORING FOR "IS VIOLENCE JUSTIFIED" QUESTIONNAIRE

O = PASS

1 - 28 = FAIL

UNLESS A PERSON IS ACTING STRICTLY IN SELF-DEFENSE,
REMEMBER WHAT THE BUMPER STICKERS SAY:

THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE !

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