

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/8010126>

Twenty Years of Progress in Addressing Domestic Violence: An Agenda for the Next 10

Article in *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* · May 2005

DOI: 10.1177/0886260504267879 · Source: PubMed

CITATIONS

23

READS

111

1 author:



[Melanie F Shepard](#)

University of Minnesota Duluth

18 PUBLICATIONS 667 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

All content following this page was uploaded by [Melanie F Shepard](#) on 04 March 2015.

The user has requested enhancement of the downloaded file. All in-text references [underlined in blue](#) are linked to publications on ResearchGate, letting you access and read them immediately.

Twenty Years of Progress in Addressing Domestic Violence

An Agenda for the Next 10

MELANIE SHEPARD

University of Minnesota, Duluth

The past 20 years have seen great strides in addressing violence against women by their male partners. Although the author cannot point to one single intervention or set of interventions as being the most effective, institutional reforms that have included coordinated community responses have had a positive impact. During the next 10 years, researchers must learn how to address the obstacles that prevent institutional responses from being more effective in addressing the needs of victims.

Keywords: *domestic violence; partner abuse; intimate partner sexual violence; coordinated community responses*

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE HAVE LEARNED ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE PAST 20 YEARS?

The past 20 years have seen great strides in addressing violence against women by their male partners. According to the National Institute of Justice (2003), the number of nonfatal violent crimes against women by their intimate partners declined from 1.1 million in 1993 to 588,490 in 2001. Furthermore, domestic homicide has steadily declined since the mid 1970s. National legislation in the form of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 has provided the sanction and resources to place domestic violence on the radar in communities across the nation. An industry of domestic violence programs has emerged in criminal justice, human service, and health care systems that did not previously exist. Still, domestic violence persists in our communities as a serious social concern.

In reflecting back 20 years, we can see that the groundwork for the next two decades of work had been laid. The Battered Women's Movement brought the issue to the forefront with its analysis that domestic violence is

JOURNAL OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE, Vol. 20 No. 4, April 2005 436-441

DOI: 10.1177/0886260504267879

© 2005 Sage Publications

rooted in patriarchal social structures. State-level policy reforms were enacted, shelters for battered women were opened, and domestic violence appeared on the research agenda (Schechter, 1988).

We have had both highs and lows in the struggle to address a complex problem where a host of social, cultural, and psychological variables interact with devastating consequences for individuals and communities. Much of our debate over the past 20 years has centered on where to place the blame and what the focus of our change efforts should be. We have been quick to grab onto promising single interventions and have been discouraged when these have had inconsistent outcomes. For example, group programs for men who batter have been found to be limited in their impact (National Institute of Justice, 2003). Mandatory arrest policies have varying outcomes that are shaped by community demographics and local institutional responses (National Research Council, 1996).

Although we cannot point to one single intervention or set of interventions as the most significant, we can see that the multiple reforms put into place over the past 2 decades have had an impact. The most important thing we have learned in the past 20 years is that comprehensive institutional reforms can be successful in reducing domestic violence. Changes in how social institutions respond to domestic violence reflect a shift in cultural sanctions for violence against women and have a ripple effect in the daily lives of women.

Coordinated community responses that include a host of agencies acting together to protect victims and hold offenders accountable can make a difference. Initial studies of interagency coordination and of uniform policies and procedures demonstrated increased rates of identification and intervention (Gamache, Edleson, & Schock, 1988; Pence, 1985). Although more studies are needed, evidence suggests that coordinated interventions do result in less violence (Gondolf, 1999; Shepard, Falk, & Elliott, 2002; Steinman, 1990; Syers & Edleson, 1992; Tolman & Weisz, 1995). The challenges of studying complex institutional responses, notwithstanding a combination of interventions that provide social consequences for violence against women, hold the most promise.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE NEED TO LEARN IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

During the next 10 years, we must learn how to address the obstacles that prevent institutional responses from being more effective in addressing the needs of victims. On one hand, there is the challenge to strengthen uniformity in how communities respond to domestic violence. Communities, even

within the same state, can have vastly different institutional responses, which are shaped by policies, procedures, personalities, and community characteristics (Worden, 2001). Much of the effort in the past 2 decades has been directed toward removing the discretion of criminal justice practitioners in how they respond to victims and offenders. However, evidence suggests that when model approaches have been adopted, they are not implemented consistently by practitioners in the field (Shepard et al., 2002).

The other challenge is to develop institutional responses that can adapt to differences in cultures, regions, and socioeconomic factors. Research findings for both batterer intervention programs and mandatory arrest policies have found that socioeconomic factors play a role in whether interventions are successful (National Institute of Justice, 2003; National Research Council, 1996). For example, batterers who owned their homes or were employed were less likely to reoffend (National Institute of Justice, 2003). This suggests the need to address economic disparities in our nation as a strategy for addressing domestic violence.

Our current institutional responses are particularly inadequate in the area of intimate partner sexual violence. It is estimated that between one third and one half of battered women have also been victims of sexual violence by their partners (Bergen, 1998). Studies have shown that some battered women experience repeated sexual assaults by their partners (Monson & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1998). However, intimate partner sexual violence is rarely charged or prosecuted in the criminal justice system (Hasday, 2000). Most domestic violence incidents are treated as misdemeanor offenses, and felonious sexual assaults are ignored.

Yllö (1999) identifies a number of reasons why coordinated community responses to address domestic violence have not been successfully applied to addressing intimate partner sexual violence. The difficulty of successfully prosecuting intimate partner sexual violence cases is a primary one, leading criminal justice professionals and advocates to focus on where they can have more immediate results. Yllö points out that many of the same arguments were made about physical violence in the past and that these barriers were overcome as innovative approaches were found to hold offenders accountable.

Although important research has been conducted on the nature and prevalence of intimate partner sexual violence, much more needs to be done to design appropriate criminal justice interventions. Intimate partner sexual violence remains a hidden form of family violence, influenced by the shame and secrecy surrounding such acts. For a variety of reasons, it is often assumed that women do not want to pursue criminal justice intervention for acts of sexual violence against them by their partners. It is also assumed that

criminal justice interventions will largely be unsuccessful. Yet these assumptions do nothing to provide safety and protection to victims of intimate partner sexual violence, and they leave dangerous offenders at large. Determining how institutions can more effectively respond to domestic violence, particularly intimate partner sexual violence, would be an important area of study during the next 10 years.

WHAT IS THE MOST PROMISING METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATION IN THE PAST 20 YEARS FOR THE STUDY OR TREATMENT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

This article has argued that institutional reforms hold the greatest promise for addressing domestic violence. One of the most promising methodological innovations in the past 20 years for addressing domestic violence has been the Duluth Model (Pence & Shepard, 1999). Emerging in the early 1980s, the Duluth Model advocates reforming the criminal justice system response by developing a coordinated community response. Components of a coordinated community response include the following: proarrest or mandatory arrest policies, follow-up support and advocacy for victims, aggressive and prompt prosecution, active monitoring of offender compliance with probation conditions, court-mandated participation in batterer intervention programs, strengthening of civil remedies, and monitoring of the system-wide response to domestic violence cases. Communities throughout the world have adopted and expanded this model to fit their unique characteristics (Pence & Shepard, 1999). Efforts are also underway to expand coordinated community responses to include agencies outside the criminal justice system.

The Duluth Model is often mistakenly identified as the educational curriculum for men who batter, a curriculum that was developed by Pence and Paymar (1983). The curriculum was designed to be part of a larger community response to domestic violence that focused on offender accountability and victim safety. The Duluth Model is essentially a macrolevel change model that focuses on changing social institutions, not a microlevel change model that focuses on the treatment of batterers. Recent efforts have focused on improving methods of risk assessment and information sharing among criminal justice practitioners and advocates, improvements that have resulted in lower rates of recidivism (Shepard et al., 2002).

Another innovation to encourage institutional reform has been the development of safety and accountability audits. Pence (1996), a leader in the development of the Duluth Model, has applied the method of institutional eth-

nography to domestic violence, criminal justice reform efforts. She has developed processes for auditing everyday institutional practices to reveal how organizational processes shape practitioners' responses. These audits hold the potential for identifying institutional reforms that can be made at the local, state, and national levels to more effectively address domestic violence.

The challenge ahead is to examine how coordinated community responses and collaborative community initiatives can be more effective in the area of primary prevention. Increasingly, policy makers, researchers, and practitioners have recognized that the various forms of family violence cannot be effectively addressed in separate institutional structures and processes and that an integrated agenda is necessary for developing effective prevention strategies (Daro, Edleson, & Pinderhughes, 2004). Although we should celebrate the progress that has been made, we must continue our macrolevel efforts to promote more effective institutional practices.

REFERENCES

- Bergen, R. K. (1998). The reality of wife rape: Women's experiences of sexual violence in marriage. In R. K. Bergen (Ed.), *Issues in intimate violence* (pp. 237-254). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Daro, D., Edleson, J. L., & Pinderhughes, H. (2004). Finding common ground in the study of child maltreatment, youth violence, and adult domestic violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 19*(3), 282-298.
- Gamache, D. J., Edleson, J. L., & Schock, M. (1988). Coordinated police, judicial and social service response to woman battering: A multi-baseline evaluation across three communities. In G. T. Hotaling, D. Finkelhor, J. T. Kirkpatrick, & M. Straus (Eds.), *Coping with family violence: Research and policy perspectives* (pp. 193-209). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Gondolf, E. W. (1999). A comparison of four batterer intervention systems. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 14*(1), 41-61.
- Hasday, J. E. (2000). Contest and consent: A legal history of marital rape. *California Law Review, 88*(5), 1373-1498.
- Monson, C. M., & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, J. (1998). Legal considerations, epidemiology and an integrated typology of perpetrators. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 3*(4), 369-389.
- National Institute of Justice. (2003). *Do batterer intervention programs work? Two studies*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Research Council. (1996). *Understanding violence against women*. Washington, DC: National Academy.
- Pence, E. (1985). *Criminal justice response to domestic assault cases: A guide for policy development*. Duluth, MN: Domestic Abuse Intervention Project.
- Pence, E. (1996). *Safety of battered women in a textually mediated legal system*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, Canada.
- Pence, E., & Paymar, M. (1983). *Education groups for men who batter: The Duluth Model*. New York: Springer.

- Pence, E., & Shepard, M. (1999). Developing a coordinated community response: An introduction. In M. Shepard & E. Pence (Eds.), *Coordinating community responses to domestic violence: Lessons from the Duluth Model* (pp. 3-23). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schechter, S. (1988). Building bridges between activists, professionals, and researchers. In K. Yllo & M. Bograde (Eds.), *Feminist perspectives on wife abuse* (pp. 299-312). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Shepard, M., Falk, D., & Elliott, B. (2002). Enhancing coordinated community responses to reduce recidivism in cases of domestic violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 17(5), 551-569.
- Steinman, M. (1990). Lowering recidivism among men who batter women. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 7(2), 124-132.
- Syers, M., & Edleson, J. L. (1992). The combined effects of coordinated criminal justice intervention in woman abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 7, 490-502.
- Tolman, R. M., & Weisz, A. (1995). Coordinated community intervention for domestic violence: The effects of arrest and prosecution on recidivism of woman abuse perpetrators. *Crime and Delinquency*, 41(4), 481-495.
- Worden, A. P. (2001). *Models of community coordination in partner violence cases: A multi-site comparative analysis* (Final report to the National Institute of Justice. NIJ 95-WT-NX-0006). Washington, DC: National Criminal Justice Reference Service.
- Yllö, K. (1999). The silence surrounding sexual violence: The issues of marital rape and the challenges it poses for the Duluth Model. In M. Shepard & E. Pence (Eds.), *Coordinating community responses to domestic violence: Lessons from the Duluth Model* (pp. 223-238). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Melanie Shepard, Ph.D., is a professor of social work at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. For the past 20 years, she has been conducting research and has been publishing in the area of domestic violence. She coedited (with Ellen Pence) the book Coordinating Community Responses to Domestic Violence: Lessons from the Duluth Model (1999).