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ISSUES IN THE DATING VIOLENCE RESEARCH: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT. *Since the 1980s, a growing research literature on violence in dating relationships has emerged, raising considerable concern about the extent of violence occurring in campus dating relationships across the United States. Such research has extended the knowledge base not only about the incidence and types of violence occurring but also about consequences, contributing factors, and gender differences. However, there are a number of important research issues in the literature that require clarification and/or research replication. This review identifies and addresses these issues in three sections. The first section of the review examines methodological issues, which include definition, violence rates, and sampling. The second section addresses gender and violence, in particular the relationship of gender to perpetration, victimization, and attitudes. The final section examines the issue of theory and focuses on the relative support for social learning and feminist theories, the two major theories in the dating violence literature. The review concludes with a series of recommendations for further dating violence research, based on identified gaps in the current literature.* © *1998 Elsevier Science Ltd*

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DATING IS A CENTRAL activity in the lives of many adolescents, whose very identities can be shaped and clarified by their dating experiences (Paul & White, 1990). Adolescents may enter their dating relationships with expectations of love, friendship, and happiness. For most, this will likely be their experience, but as many as 12% of high school and 36% of college students (Carlson, 1987) will encounter physical, sexual, or psychological aggression or violence in these, their early experiences of heterosexual relationships. Further, violence and aggression in dating relationships may well be, as Makepeace (1981) suggests, the mediating link between exposure to violence in the family of origin and subsequent use of violence in the family of procreation. As such, the research in this area is particularly important.

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Since the 1980s, a growing research literature on aggression and violence in dating relationships has emerged. This research rapidly established grounds for concern about the extent of violence occurring in campus dating relationships across the United States. Research has extended the knowledge base not only about the incidence and types of violence occurring but also about consequences, contributing factors, and gender differences. To a limited degree the research also extended beyond the United States, to Canada and the United Kingdom. Despite the accumulated body of literature in this area, however, only a few comprehensive reviews exist at this point of time (Carlson, 1987; Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989).

Given the body of research that now exists, it is timely to review the literature in order to identify future research directions. Accordingly, this review highlights a number of important research issues in the literature that call for clarification, and/or research replication. Methodological issues are examined first. These include problems associated with definition, violence rates, and sampling. Suggestions are made as to how the problems can be addressed in future research. The second issue discussed in the review is gender and violence, in particular, the relationship of gender to perpetration, victimization and attitudes. The review examines what support there is for equating male and female violence and suggests alternative approaches to investigate gender in relation to violence. The final issue concerns theory and focuses on the relative support for social learning and feminist theories, the two major theories in the dating violence literature,. The review concludes with a series of recommendations for further dating violence research, based on identified gaps in the current literature.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The Issue of Definition

The dating violence literature shares the definitional problems of all violence research because, as R. E. Emery (1989) points out, terms like *violence* and *abuse* are conceptually unclear. He argues that defining an act as "abusive" or "violent," is not an objective decision but a social judgement. Within the dating violence literature the terms abuse, violence and aggression tend to be used interchangeably. Although it can be argued that the difference in terms is semantic, Archer (1994) proposes a clear distinction between violence and aggression, in which aggression comprises the act but violence incorporates the consequences of the aggressive act, such as injury. Using Archer's distinction, much of the dating violence research would be described as a dating aggression literature. Notably, several studies appropriately define themselves in this way (Breslin, Riggs, O'Leary, & Arias, 1990; Burke, Stets, & Pirog-Good, 1988; Gwartney-Gibbs, Stockard, & Bohmer, 1987). Of greater concern, however, is that, with few exceptions (e.g., Bookwala, Frieze, Smith, & Ryan, 1992; Burke et al., 1988; Dekeseredy, 1988; Hausman, Spivak , Prothrow-Stith, & Roeber, 1992; Rouse, Breen, & Howell, 1988; Stets, 1991), researchers do not provide a clear definition of violence for the purpose of their research.

A failure to define violence is accompanied by a failure to define what is meant by dating or the alternative expression of courtship. Such an omission raises the question as to whether it is only heterosexual relationships that are being examined as very few studies make this explicit. Muehlenhard and Linton (1987), in a study of sexual aggression, provide a definition of dating as "planned social activity with the opposite sex," providing examples of this. Carlson (1987), in her review of the literature, defines dating very simply as a romantic relationship between an unmarried couple. In the first definition, homosexual

dating is clearly excluded, but not in the second. In recognizing the definitional problems related to dating, Sugarman and Hotaling (1991) propose a definition that encompasses commitment, future interaction and physical intimacy. At the same time, they acknowledge that dating can involve considerable variation on these dimensions. Confusion about "dating" can easily be avoided if researchers make explicit their operational definition of dating for any given study of dating violence or aggression.

The Issue of Measurement

There are two key issues of concern related to the measurement of dating violence that are shared with the marital violence literature. The first issue is the type of violence investigated. The violence investigated in the literature is, with few exceptions, physical violence. Only a handful of studies has investigated psychological violence (Dekeseredy, 1990; Hockenberry & Billingham, 1993; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Le Jeune & Follette 1994; Molidor, 1995; Stets, 1991; Stets & Pirog-Good, 1989). A similarly small number of studies has focused on sexual violence, either on its own (Margolin, Moran, & Miller, 1989; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987) or together with other forms of dating violence or aggression (Aizenman & Kelly, 1988; Burke et al., 1988; Makepeace, 1988).

Although investigating only physical violence has the advantage of simplicity and manageability, such a process results in a myopic view of dating violence. Studies that include different forms of violence suggest that these are interrelated, such as verbal abuse predisposing physical violence (Hyden, 1995; Ryan, 1995; Stets & Henderson, 1991). If only physical violence is studied, then extending the parameters of knowledge about dating violence will be severely restricted. A small number of investigations (e.g., Burke et al., 1988; Lo & Sporakowski, 1989; Sigelman, Berry, & Wiles, 1984) examine all forms of violence together thus highlighting the factors common and different to each and their relationships to each other.

The second issue of concern pertains to the method of measuring violence. The most common practice is for researchers to use the Physical Aggression Scale of the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979). On this scale, respondents indicate from a check list of various acts of violence what responses they have used to resolve conflict situations over the last 12 months. A number of writers have criticized this scale (e.g., Bograd, 1990; Dekeseredy, 1995; Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992; M. D. Smith, 1994) on the basis of its failure to account for meaning, consequences, motivation, and intention. In a review of the measurement of violence, Lapsley (1993) makes the point that surveys, such as the CTS, are unable to access "the long term pattern of fear, threat, emotional, sexual and physical abuse that go to make up battering" (p. 23). McGregor (1990) also questions the use of the term *conflict.* She argues that *conflict* assumes both partners are equally involved in an interaction that leads to violence. In reality, male violence is often used to punish a woman for her failure to meet his expectations. Another potential problem with the CTS is that it presents conflict as a resolution tool. Hyden's (1995) recent narrative research in Sweden suggests that the use of physical violence is conflict removing rather than conflict resolving, used to obtain dominance by putting an end to verbal argument.

Definitional and Measurement Issues: Summary and Implications

The major problem with the research literature to date is the narrowness of its scope, arising from a preoccupation with physical violence, then measuring it only in terms of acts, without reference to intent or consequences. This limits our knowledge of violence per se and does not provide an integrated picture of violent dating behavior. It would be useful to know, for example, whether a relationship exists between different types of

violence regarding both perpetration and victimization. A clear direction for future research is the use of multiple measures (e.g., CTS with contextual questions added, open questions, interviews), as advocated by M. D. Smith (1994). In addition, considerably more research on psychological violence and the interrelationships between different forms of violence is needed.

Violence Rates

There are effects from the definitional and measurement issues which impact on subsequent cited violence rates. As pointed out in the preceding discussion, dating violence studies are commonly only about physical violence. The consequence of excluding types of violence other than physical is that the given rates in research to date may underestimate considerably the extent of violence, aggression, and abuse in students' dating relationships. Studies that investigate several forms of violence (e.g., Burke et al., 1988; Lo & Sporakowski, 1989) support this suggestion, as they report a higher rate of violence than studies which examine only physical aggression.

Bearing in mind that predominantly physical violence is investigated, the percentage of those who report violence varies from 10% to 50% (Archer & Ray, 1989). Carlson's (1987) review indicates a lower rate for high school (12.1%) than for college students (36%) among low to middle class students. These rates do not give a clear picture of dating violence for several reasons. First, there is the problem of conflating recent (incidence) and lifetime (prevalence) violence. Some studies use the former approach, asking respondents about what acts of aggression they used or experienced in the past 12 months (e.g., Bookwala et al., 1992; Breslin et al., 1990; Burke et al., 1988). Other studies address the prevalence of violence in dating, asking about acts that have ever occurred (e.g., Aizenman & Kelly, 1988; Bird, Stith, & Schladale, 1991; Flynn, 1990; Follingstad, Rutledge, Polek, & McNeill-Hawkins, 1988; Tontodonato & Crew, 1992). Second, most studies do not distinguish between responses drawn from multiple relationships and responses drawn from a single relationship only. Henton, Cate, Koval, Lloyd, and Christopher (1983) resolved this problem by asking respondents to specify the number of relationships in which violence had occurred. Further confusion about rates of violence arises from the mingling of perpetration and victimization data (Sugarman & Hotaling, 1991).

Another source of limitation regarding prevalence rates is the reliability of reporting. Invariably, self-report measures are subject to socially desirable responding. A very clear pattern in the dating violence literature is that women report rates of their own perpetration of violence that are higher than rates of violence reported by men. A possible explanation for this is a perceived low social acceptance by men of male to female violence. Hence, it is socially undesirable for men to report perpetration of violence. Although women appear willing to report their perpetration of violence, they seem less likely to report their own experience of being severely physically abused (Sigelman, Berry, & Wiles, 1984). Clearly, self-disclosure issues impact on the accuracy of violence rates and methodologies need to be developed to counteract effects of socially desirable responding.

Violence Rates: Summary and Implications

Rates of violence are likely to be underestimated as a consequence of focusing only on physical violence. It is imperative that the dating violence literature expands its investigation of psychological and sexual violence to provide a more complete picture of the extent of violence in dating relationships. In tandem with this expansion, however, reported rates need to separate incidence from prevalence data and victimization data from perpetration data. Methodological attention to separating out violence that has occurred in

different relationships is also required. Problems associated with self-disclosure pose difficulties for researchers. Research on responsibility for violence is one area of research that might be helpful here. The findings of Le Jeune and Follette (1994), for example, suggest women take greater responsibility for initiating violence, which offers one explanation for higher self-disclosure by women.

Samples

The last of the methodological issues raised in this review is that of sample. The vast majority of dating violence studies use a White, heterosexual, college or university population. In addition, the literature is primarily American, except for a few Canadian and British studies. Few researchers note the limitations on their studies imposed by sample selection.

College and university populations are obviously convenient and appropriate samples for studies of dating violence and aggression but there are several problems with a research literature that relies so heavily on these samples. The key problem is representativeness. The proportion of non-White participants reported in studies is very small even when oversampling procedures are used to address the problem (Carlson, 1996). This either reflects lower attendance at college by non-White adolescents or a methodology that is more appropriate to a White culture. In addition to the prevalence of White students in the populations sampled, college and university samples also tend to represent middle to upper class socioeconomic groups. Consequently, there is a significant group of students from working class backgrounds not included.

A further problem with some of the college and university samples is the bias produced by the selection of specific classes. Several studies use psychology students and often grant course credits for participation (e.g., Bookwala et al., 1992; Breslin et al., 1990; Briere, 1987; Kasian & Painter, 1992). Some researchers do not specify classes used (e.g., Bethke & De Joy, 1993; Flynn, 1990). To avoid the potential bias of class selection, a number of studies have approached students in areas such as libraries that are used by all students (e.g., Follingstad et al., 1988). Others have mailed out surveys to a random sample of the student population, with response rates ranging from 63% down to 19% (e.g., Aizenman & Kelly, 1988; Bird et al., 1991; Carlson, 1996; Gwartney-Gibbs et al., 1987). Low response rates raise concern about the representativeness of the sample.

One particularly under researched population in the research literature is the gay and lesbian community. Although most dating relationships are likely to be heterosexual, exclusive focus on heterosexual couples eliminates knowledge about the violence that occurs between gay and lesbian couples. Such invisibility has implications for access of these couples to services.

Issue of Sample: Summary and Implications

Restraints imposed by the use of college and university samples have not been sufficiently addressed in the dating aggression literature. Studies across other cultures, countries and groups would provide valuable information about the problem of violence in different social milieu, contributing to our knowledge of the generalizability of findings and of how cultural norms contribute to relationship violence. Clearly, the samples used limit knowledge that future research might begin to address by seeking community participants and assisting (financially and/or through training or supervision) with research conducted by those of different ethnicity and sexuality.

THE ISSUE OF GENDER

Female and Male Rates of Violence

The methodological issues discussed previously have significant impact on a central debate in the literature as to whether women and men are equally violent. At the heart of the debate are the findings from the many studies which use only the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) to measure violence. All of these studies report that women are at least as physically violent as men, sometimes more so, in dating relationships (e.g., Bookwala et al., 1992; Burke et al., 1988; Riggs, O'Leary & Breslin, 1990; White & Koss, 1991).

There are fundamental problems in asserting that men and women are equally violent, based on these findings. First, as a number of researchers have argued (e.g., Dobash et al., 1992; Schwartz & Dekeseredy, 1993), the CTS fails to address the context and consequences of the aggression which distorts the picture of violence obtained. Further distortion occurs as a result of confining investigation to physical violence, ignoring psychological and sexual violence. For example, when sexual violence is included, strong gender differences emerge, with women consistently reporting sexual victimization experiences more often than men (Aizenman & Kelly, 1988; Burke et al., 1988; Makepeace, 1986; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987; Sigelman et al., 1984). However, the argument as to who is more violent is somewhat tenuous. It is clearly more useful to examine men and womens' respective experiences of violence as perpetrators and victims to further our understanding of violence. The following sections bring together findings from the literature that highlight gender differences in victimization, perpetration, and attitudes to violence.

Gender and Victimization

Several studies suggest that women are more frequently the victims of violence than men (Aizenman & Kelly, 1988; Follingstad, Wright, Lloyd, & Sebastian, 1991; Stets & Pirog-Good, 1989; Tontodonato & Crew, 1992). Indeed, Makepeace (1986) found that women reported being victims of violence nearly twice as often as males. As well as more often being victims, the consequences of physical violence for women are more severe. Makepeace (1988), for example, found that women sustained three times as much mild injury, twice as much moderate injury and all of the severe injury. In addition, the women reported emotional trauma. Unfortunately, few studies have addressed the emotional and physical consequences of violence in any form and there is a considerable need for more research in this area. However, on the basis of physical strength alone, the consequences of physical and sexual male violence at any level are markedly different to the effects of women using similar acts. Indeed, as Larkin and Popaleni (1994) suggest, knowledge of the harm that male force can impart means that the threat of physical force, direct or veiled, is in itself effective in achieving whatever objective the male has in mind.

The greater physical harm that can be inflicted by male violence is evident in findings from the experimental dating violence literature, in which variables are manipulated across different scenarios. In Miller and Simpson's (1991) study, both women and men acknowledged the disproportionate threat of male violence compared with female violence. Female violence tended to be trivialized and dismissed by males as being unable to do much damage. Bethke and De Joy (1993), using scenarios in an experimental study, found that slapping and pushing were seen more negatively if perpetrated by a male than by a female and that male perpetrators were perceived as inflicting more physical and emotional harm.

Associated with the more extensive physical harm that may be inflicted by men's use of physical violence is the notion of fear. Jacobson (1994) argues that fear is an integral

component of *battering* and should be incorporated into its definition. In a large scale survey, Kelly and Dekeseredy (1994) found that women who had experienced a range of sexually and psychologically abusive behaviors in their dating relationships felt more fearful in their homes than women who did not share an abusive history. And in one of the few studies to investigate emotional effects, Follingstad et al. (1991) report that female victims were more likely than male victims to experience fear and anxiety. Together these studies suggest that women experience fear in response to men's physical violence both in the short term and as an ongoing effect. To date there is no research evidence available as to whether men develop fear and anxiety in response to violence perpetrated by women dating partners.

Gender and Perpetration

As noted in the introduction to the discussion of gender and violence, most dating violence studies which use the CTS report womens' perpetration of violence at the same or a higher level than for men. In addition, several investigators (Bookwala et al., 1992; Marshall & Rose, 1990; White & Koss, 1991) report a correlation between victimization and perpetration for males and females, suggesting a violence begets violence scenario. Unfortunately, there are few dating violence studies which investigate the motivations of each gender for use of violence. In the marital violence literature, Dobash et al. (1992) suggest that women use physical violence in retribution for past experience of being physically abused by men. Similarly, Bograd (1990) notes that women often use lethal violence to escape chronic physical abuse by their partners. Makepeace (1986) reports, in one of the few dating violence studies to examine reasons for violence, that 69.9% of women in his study gave self-defense as the reason for their physical aggression. Follingstad et al. (1991) found both men and women cited retaliation as a reason for using violence but significantly more women than men did so in response to emotional hurt, and less so in retaliation for "being hit first." In addition to self-defense and retaliation, studies have also found jealousy to be a significant factor in womens' use of violence (Bookwala et al., 1992; Stets & Pirog-Good, 1989). Although men's use of violence is more often attributed to domination and control by their victims (Bograd, 1990; Carlson, 1996; B. Emery, Lloyd, & Castleton, 1989; Follingstad et al., 1991), women also report using physical violence as a way to gain control (Follingstad et al., 1991). It is not clear whether this means control of the situation (e.g., to make things stop) or control of the person which are fundamentally different.

Factors Common to Both Perpetration and Victimization

Several studies have found a relationship between low self-esteem and being a victim or a perpetrator of violence. In Burke et al.'s (1988) study, self-esteem had a direct effect on sustaining sexual violence but not physical violence for females, whereas there were no direct effects for males. In Stet's (1991) study of psychological violence, low self-esteem was a significant factor for women in terms of both inflicting and sustaining aggression. When gender traits instead of biological gender have been examined, masculinity and femininity have been significantly related to perpetration and victimization (Burke et al., 1988; Thompson, 1991). Findings are very tentative, given that these two studies did not concur in their findings: the former found high masculinity related to aggression, the latter low masculinity. More extensive research is required to learn more of the relationship between violence, self-esteem, and gender traits.

A further example of differential gender effects can be found in studies that have examined the influence of observing family of origin violence. Breslin et al. (1990) found

that witnessing male to female violence specifically was significant in males' abuse of females while for females observing any interparental aggression had a significant impact on their own use of violence. Sigelman et al. (1984) reported that witnessing abuse and being abused as a child correlated with violence in a dating relationship for women but not for men. On the other hand, Stets and Pirog-Good (1989) observed no relationship between expressing or experiencing violence and witnessing violence in childhood for women. However, men's experience of violence toward them in a dating relationship was associated with being abused as a child. An effect for men but not women was also found by Burke et al. (1988) , with men's experience of dating violence (physical and sexual) being linked with both witnessing abuse and being abused in childhood.

Similarly, Gwartney-Gibbs et al. (1987) found that for males, the witnessing of parental aggressive interaction was significantly related to inflicting aggression in their dating relationships. Severity of abuse observed as a child positively correlated with the severity of abuse inflicted in the dating relationship. These findings are mixed but suggest that observing or experiencing violence in the family of origin impacts more significantly on men's use of violence in dating relationships than it does for women. There may, however, be more subtle and indirect effects on women, such as an impact on beliefs about staying in an abusive relationships. These effects have not been examined in the literature and represent an area for further research. The relationship between exposure to violence as a child and violence in a dating relationship is a critical one for violence prevention programs, as it defines a target, at-risk group that would benefit from early intervention.

Gender and Attitudes

Although it is empirically difficult to establish a direct effect of attitudes on the experience or use of violence, research on attitudes to violence is extremely important for targeting prevention programs. In a study that examined the relationship between sex-role attitudes, acceptance of violence, and perpetration, Bookwala et al. (1992) found a correlation between sex-role attitudes and acceptance of violence. For males, adversarial sexual beliefs and less traditional sex-role attitudes (low masculinity) were predictive factors for perpetration of dating violence. Males also had more traditional attitudes toward women and greater acceptance of violence than women. Finn (1986) similarly found a strong correlation, with acceptance of force in marriage decreasing as egalitarian attitude increased. A traditional sex-role orientation was the strongest predictor of the legitimization of force. At the high school level as well, there is some evidence that boys have a greater tendency to accept violence and find excuses for it (Jaffe, Sudermann, Reitzel, & Killip, 1992; Lavoie, Vezina, Piche, & Boivin, 1995).

Muehlenhard and Linton (1987) used Burt's (1980) Rape Myths Acceptance Scale, Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale and Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale to investigate the relationship between attitudes and the perpetration of sexual violence. They found that males who were sexually abusive had more traditional beliefs, greater acceptance of violence toward women, and higher acceptance of rape myths compared with nonabusive males. Females who had experienced violence also had a greater acceptance of violence toward women and acceptance of rape myths. These findings are supported by Margolin et al. (1989) who found that acceptance of rape myths was significantly associated with the acceptance of violation of consent. Males were significantly more supportive of violation than women and more likely to blame victims while excusing offenders. There is a possibility that effects might be much more pronounced for sexual violence than other forms of violence, although Burt (1980) indicates that there is a very strong correlation between sex-role stereotyping, acceptance of interpersonal violence and adversarial sexual

beliefs. Also, Briere's (1987) investigation of the relationship between attitudes and the propensity for males to use violence against women, indicated that acceptance of interpersonal violence, attitudes to women, and attitudes to wife abuse effectively predicted the self-reported likelihood of males using physical violence.

Summary and Implications

The literature reviewed here clearly supports the view of Bograd (1990) that it is essential to describe violence as a gender issue. This requires extending the parameters of the research beyond measuring acts of violence to a more extensive investigation of consequence, context, motivation and meaning. Current methodological limitations have led to the suggestion that men and women are equally violent. Useful research in this area would address the situations in which violence was used, including the emotional context and the use of alcohol or drugs. Qualitative research methods offer an alternative methodology that has the ability to elicit rich contextual data (e.g., Diiorio, 1989; Mahlstedt & Keeny, 1993), providing understanding from the perspective of participants. For example, understanding what women mean when they say they use violence to gain control could best be explored through interviews. Qualitative studies in the dating violence literature are difficult to find, identifying another much needed area of research.

Interesting gender differences emerge in research on the influence of intrinsic (self-esteem, gender traits) and extrinsic factors (family of origin violence). The research raises questions about what factors might account for these differences, opening up a challenging area of new research. Overall, the attitudinal research establishes a link between acceptance of violence and actual or likely use of violence. This is a stronger finding for males than for females. The implications for education and prevention are clear: programs need to target males, challenge sex role stereotypes, and break down myths that underline acceptance of violence.

THE ISSUE OF THEORY

Given the empirical evidence that violence is a gender issue it could reasonably be expected that theories with the potential to explain gender-violence relationships would underline the research being done. This does not seem to be the case. Although a number of the studies relate their research to theory a disappointing number do not. Although a few have developed models and tested them (e.g., Dekeseredy, 1990; Hockenberry & Billingham, 1993) this type of research is sparse. Although Riggs and O'Leary (1989) have proposed a comprehensive theoretical model to explain causes of dating violence, little direct testing of the model exists. In the small number of studies that do examine theory, the most frequently tested are social learning and feminist perspectives. An overview of the empirical support for each of these theories follows.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory suggests that behaviors are learned through observation and imitation of others and maintained through differential reinforcement (Bandura, 1973). A child's early parental models are a powerful source of learning about gender roles. Social learning theory therefore has a potentially significant contribution to make toward an explanation and understanding of violence as a gender issue. Overall, findings in the literature support the predictions of social learning theory. Several researchers have found that observing parental aggression increases the chances of experiencing or perpetrating

violence in a dating relationship (Breslin et al., 1990; Gwartney-Gibbs et al., 1987; J. Smith & Williams, 1992). Further, the early work of Bernard and Bernard (1983) indicated a direct mirroring, in that the exact types of aggression observed or experienced in the family were perpetrated in dating relationships.

The gender of the parent observed perpetrating violence is an important consideration in social learning theory, which would predict that a more powerful modeling effect occurs for a parent of the a same sex. Contrary to what might be expected, Breslin et al. (1990) found that men's use of aggression was significantly related to maternal aggression, not paternal aggression. Women's use of aggression in a dating relationship did not relate to a specific parent but did relate to interparental aggression. Murphy (1988) found a greater effect if the mother had perpetrated the abuse for both males and females, whereas Follette and Alexander (1992) and Reuterman and Burcky (1989) found use of violence among females related to a history of physical abuse by the father. Unfortunately, some studies have not differentiated gender of parent in their analyses (Gwartney-Gibbs et al., 1987; J. Smith & Williams, 1992; Tontodonato & Crew, 1992).

Parents provide one social learning context, peers provide another. Several researchers have examined the role of peer learning environments and it would seem that male dating aggression, in particular, is influenced by this social context (Boeringer, Shehan & Akers, 1991; Dekeseredy, 1990). In a direct test of social learning theory, Boeringer et al. (1991) found that fraternities provided an influential social learning ground which fostered the use of non physical sexually coercive behavior. Similarly, Dekeseredy and Kelly, (1995) identified male peer support as a significant predictor of abusive behavior. The salience of peer support for adolescent dating violence is clearly evident in the results of a study undertaken by Lavoie, Herbert, and Dufort (1995). They showed that peer pressure influenced experience of violence significantly more than a background of family violence. In particular, the condoning of violence by male or female friends was a key factor for female victims of violence.

Feminist Theory

A feminist analysis of violence suggests that all forms of abuse are about power and control, embedded in a patriarchal value system (e.g., Dobash et al., 1992; Larkin & Popaleni, 1994; Lloyd, 1991). Lloyd's (1991) construction of the problem of courtship violence views the combination of patriarchal values (men in control, women dependent) and romanticism as key factors in the perpetration and maintenance of intimate violence. Consistent with this analysis, Carlson's (1987) review of the dating violence literature identifies power and dependency as contributing factors to the use of violence in intimate relationships.

The use of violence as a means of asserting power in a relationship was directly investigated by Mason and Blankenship (1987) using the Thematic Apperception Test (Aitkinson, 1958). Findings suggested that men with a high power need were significantly more physically abusive in relationships. In a behaviorally operationalized analysis of the influence of power on sexual aggression, Muehlenhard and Linton (1987) defined power in terms of who initiated the date, who paid for it, who provided the transport, and age differences. There was a direct relationship between the first three of these factors and the occurrence of male sexual aggression in a dating relationship. Rouse (1990) constructed the Dominance-Possessiveness index, developed within the context of control issues underlying the use of violence in intimate relationships. In testing the index, Rouse (1990) found that all but two items had a significant correlation with the use of physical force, indicating power as a key factor in the use of physical violence. Stickel and Ellis's (1993)

use of Rouse's index in their research showed men to be higher on dominance-possessiveness than women.

Several studies have found control to be a factor in the use of violence, either for females only or for both males and females. Follingstad et al. (1991) found that female victims attributed power and control motives to their male aggressors, whereas males to a large extent did not acknowledge such reasons. In the same study, women also attributed their own perpetration of violence to an effort to obtain control. Laner (1989) suggests from her findings that women's use of violence is significantly related to their partner's perceived effort to control them or the relationship. Stets and Pirog-Good (1989) reported that interpersonal control was a significant factor in the use of violence for both males and females. Stets (1991) argues that interpersonal control not structural control (embedded in the social structure as in patriarchy theory) underlines intimate violence, as indicated by the salience of control in women's as well as men's use of psychological violence.

Summary and Implications

The literature shows support for the application of social learning theory to dating violence, particularly for males. Some findings related to parental modeling of perpetration, however, contradict expectations in that mothers seem to have more influence on the use of male aggression than do fathers. Further, social learning theory does not provide a complete explanation, given that not all children who observe aggression become perpetrators in dating relationships. Similarly, some children who do not observe violence in their families nevertheless perpetrate violence in dating relationships. Other than the family, the literature identifies the peer group as another source of influence on the use of violence, particularly for males.

The outcomes of this research raise some key questions to be addressed in future work. What are the factors that stop a person raised in a violent environment from being a victim or a perpetrator? What leads someone raised in a nonviolent home to become violent? Why do females seem to be more resilient to early experiences of violence? Why is a mother's aggression more significant than a father's in influencing subsequent use of violence or aggression?

Feminist theory similarly receives support in the dating aggression literature. Consistent with the theory, power and domination appear to underline violence perpetrated by males, but not by females. The issue of control as a reason for violence is less clear and further research is needed to clarify the meaning of control. Cross cultural studies of dating aggression, which incorporate the way in which women are regarded and treated within the culture, is an area of research that could more directly address the relationship between patriarchy and violence.

CONCLUSION

The dating violence literature provides considerable knowledge about perpetration of and victimization by dating violence among college and university students. However, this review has identified a number of methodological issues and gaps in the dating violence literature. To conclude, this review presents recommendations for future research, which address shortfalls in the literature and provide a framework for extending dating violence research.

First, it is recommended that future studies include multiple methodologies. Alongside measures of acts of aggression such as the CTS, the use of open questions is required to

address more fully the consequences and meaning of violence. Survey approaches can be complemented by individual interviews undertaken by suitably trained personnel. Consideration should be given to constructing survey questions from preliminary focus groups in order to ground research in the language and perceptions of participants. The mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods will not only provide greater depth in knowledge about dating violence but will also provide better means for understanding the relationships between gender and violence.

The second recommendation relates to types of violence investigated. Much more research is required on other than physical forms of violence in addition to an examination of the interrelationship between various types of violence. It would be very useful to extend the work of Ryan (1995) and Stets and Henderson (1991), by examining issues such as whether verbal aggression escalates to physical aggression and whether all forms of aggression tend to co-exist.

A third recommendation is that research be undertaken with other than college and university students so that other racial and socioeconomic groups do not remain invisible in the dating violence literature. Further, culturally appropriate methodologies should be developed for non-White groups and the research preferably undertaken by those of the same culture as participants. Dating violence among gay and lesbian couples also needs to be researched.

Fourth, the issue of gender and violence is one that needs much more careful analysis. It is recommended that there be a specific research focus on the relationship between gender and violence with particular emphasis on how women's use of violence is different to men's in terms of purpose, nature, context and effect. The use of multiple methodologies, as discussed earlier, will considerably enhance the research data on gender and violence.

Finally, it is recommended that there be more theory testing in the dating violence literature. Social learning theory offers some explanation of the origins of dating violence but leaves many questions unanswered. Similarly the power framework provided by feminist theory has empirical support, but linking this to patriarchy needs more investigation and the way in which power is operationalized needs greater attention.

The extent of dating violence is unquestionably wide. The figures paint a depressing picture that can create a sense of hopelessness in dealing with the problem. Underlining all of the recommendations for future dating violence research is the need for a change of emphasis from enumerating the problem to providing data that can usefully be employed for intervention and prevention. Without this change of focus dating violence research will fail to meet its social responsibility.

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