

DANGEROUS RELATIONSHIPS: EFFECTS OF EARLY EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE IN WOMEN'S LIVES

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ABSTRACT

Using the intergenerational transmission of violence theoretical framework, this paper examines the psychological, sociological and cultural factors that help explain the reasons why women remain in long standing relationships with abusive male sexual partners. A targeted sample of thirty-six women partners of injecting drug users in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, who were victims of conjugal abuse are used to test a number of psychological, sociological and cultural hypotheses of the existence of long term abusive relationships. All these women were involved with males who were still involved in Juarez street gangs. Qualitative data analysis revealed that all of their women's present relationships involved intimate partner violence, and that they had been subjected to some form of physical or sexual abuse while growing up. Gang violence also played and continues to have an impact in these women's lives. Most reported that their present intimate partners had been gang members in the past and that the women themselves may have participated peripherally in gang activities.

INTRODUCTION

Given the pervasive & extensive exposure to violence and related messages, children learn violence by the modeling of the violence around them (Bandura 1973; Goldstein 1980). Such learned behavior is carried into adult relationships, & the idea that violence begets violence makes intuitive sense. Children who have been victims of violence will later become abusers and violent offenders themselves with their intimate partners, their own children, and others in the community. Some authors refer to this process as the "cycle of violence" (Gelles 1976; Steinmetz 1977). Although the "cycle of violence" has gained much popular & practitioner acceptance, some violence researchers have examples of male violence being extended to young women (Gabarino, Gilliam 1980; Widow 1989b). However, contradictory to this notion is that not all abused children go on to become abusers. Many studies ignore key issues & dynamics shaping these young women's experiences with violence. Although some women are also violent & abuse their male partners (Flynn 1990; Mezey, King 1989), in the great majority of the cases, the victim has been a woman abused by a man. Many abused women do not go on to abuse their spouses or their children.

Intergenerational Transmission of Violence

The "cycle of violence" theory is based on the hypothesis that exposure to violence lays the foundations for violent behavior in later life. Researchers have examined several possible links between early exposure to violence and drug use (Rogan 1986; Worth 1991), sexual abuse (Matousek 1991) and becoming a perpetrator of violence in adult intimate relationships (Symonds 1979). Bandura's

Social Learning Theory (1986) has established that an important relationship exists between early exposure to violence and becoming a perpetrator of violent acts. He posited that by observing violent disputes between their parents, children learn and later model violent behaviors. This type of learning and modeling takes place not only in the home but also among the children in the "barrio" (neighborhood). In many low income "barrios," children see and experience interpersonal and street violence as the norm.

Concerns with one's peers, youth networks and related social worlds become a dominating force for these young women. Yet, here too, youth become concerned with intimate partner violence and street violence. In many of their barrios, youth gangs are a dominant social force—although they do not involve all youth in these barrios.

As shown in Table 1 the "cycle of violence" theory proposes that the abused child will become an abusive adult. The cycle of violence theory is based on criminal justice policies and records and primarily focuses in examining early exposure to violence of male perpetrators with little attention to violence's impact on young female's lives. Most studies do not deal directly with women and the consequences of violence in their lives. This perspective focuses little attention on the impact of either household or community violence on young and adolescent girls, or what impact this exposure may have on their future behaviors. It also suggests little in terms of early intervention, treatment, and follow-up.

We contend that most abused girls do not become abusive women, but are likely to become abused women. Widow (1989a) points out that the long-term consequences of abuse for females may be expressed in very indirect

Table 1: Comparison of Cycle of Violence & Intergenerational Transmission of Violence Theories

	Cycle of Violence Theory	Intergenerational Transmission of Violence Theory
Male	Abused Child --> Abusive Adult	Abused Child --> Abusive Adult
Female	Abused Child --> Abusive Adult	Abused Child --> Abused Adult

internalized ways. Women may suffer an increase in depressive episodes, instead of following the more male model of outward aggression. For some women, the internalized way of coping with abuse turns into situations which some have termed "learned helplessness" (Seligman 1975). The concept of "learned helplessness" was developed from observations of the behavior of laboratory animals put in painful situations without much possibility of escape. Eventually, when presented with possible escape routes, the animals would not take them. The animals' refusal to escape from the painful situations was a result of perceptual distortions brought about by the previous helpless situation (Walker 1984). Seligman (1975) suggested that the concept of learned helplessness could explain why women find it difficult to leave abusive relationships & settings.

The "intergenerational transmission of violence" (Curtis 1963) explains this event as a role modeling behavior that gets passed on from one generation to another. They recast the hypothesis stating that an individual violent response to a number of life situations tends to be passed from one generation to another by a process of behavior modeling (Gelles 1976) & unstated rules (Laing 1969). While holding that certain roles tend to become part of the individual's responses, they posit the notion that exposure to violence serves as a role model for the male perpetrator. But for female victims rather than becoming mostly abusive, they become abused females (Gelles 1976).

Staying in Abusive Relationships

Sex-role stereotyping & self-imposed difficulties seem to prevent abused women from viewing their situation clearly, or from making informed decisions about their futures (Ball, Wyman 1978). Walker (1984) suggests that abused women who remain in relationships tend to report that their childhood abuse was worse than that in their present domestic relationship. Cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1957) suggests that when a victim cannot remove herself from the situation and has to live with limited choices, she rationalizes that her present situation is no worse than her childhood & therefore acceptable. Family

system theories explain the maintenance of abusive relationships as part of the dynamics of the family system. They also draw attention to the lack of psychological, social & economic resources; the lack of responsiveness of the police, courts, & welfare system, especially the insufficiency of protective orders & other court judgments. Other research suggests that women who have been involved in helpless situations many times are more likely to perceive their present situation as hopeless. They adapt instead of leaving or exploring meaningful alternatives. Many who are developing programs & innovations to help with the problem propose solutions which are obvious. However they fail to address the perceived & real difficulties of changing the internal dynamics of the family, the variability of social support, the lack of necessary social & economic resources programs for abused women & their children, & the lack of strict enforcement of existing laws (MacDonald 1989). These difficulties are compounded when one takes into consideration the legal, political, economic & cultural norms of the Mexican culture.

Cultural and Class Impact

In Mexico, as in all Latin American countries, gender defines the limits of power in a relationship and in society. The culturally sanctioned inequality of economic & political power between men and women, coupled with the socialization of women towards passivity and dependency on their partners, increases the probability of physical and emotional violence in relationships. The implied threat or actual act of violence, which appears to be condoned by societal norms, is used by their sexual partners to maintain their dominant position. The fear of being estranged from their partners and from the family's protective milieu, together with the lack of socially acceptable alternatives, causes women to remain in long term relationships which may be dangerous to their physical and mental health. Most of them never had an opportunity to tell their story, or to discuss their violent experiences with anyone else. This lack of self-expression leaves them out of touch with their feelings. They appear not to have a sound basis by which to validate their identities or to examine alternatives. They accept the violence as normal.

Many are not openly aware of the violence that has been committed against them when they were children by parents, siblings, or others. Men turn to external justifications, especially those related to their jobs, illnesses, financial strains & the use of alcohol, to explain their violent actions, while women tend to blame themselves for the violent abusive situation in which they find themselves. This situation heightens these women's feelings of low self-esteem, dependency, and learned helplessness (Overholser, Moll 1990). This is particularly true of women who are injecting drugs users (IDUs) or who are sexual partners of IDUs.

METHODOLOGY

The Setting and Sample Selection

Interviews were conducted in Ciudad Juarez, in the US-Mexico border state of Chihuahua. Juarez is the fifth largest city in Mexico, with a population of 1.5 million inhabitants, & is the center of a burgeoning "maquila" industry (factories that use primarily US raw materials to produce finished products for export back into the US). Despite the favorable circumstances created by the "maquiladoras," the level of unemployment and consequent poverty remains high. Social and educational services are lacking because of the high rate of population growth and the low rate of infrastructure development. A targeted sample was selected among women whose socio-demographic profiles closely matched those of the women participating in the National Institute of Drug Abuse and Prevention (NIDA AIDS Targeted Outreach Model—ATOM Project) funded study (ABT 1992), but who lived in different Juarez "barrios." They were recruited by trained fieldworkers familiar with the drug users' patterns and demographics of the different neighborhoods in Ciudad Juarez. The ATOM project's inclusion criteria was used to select participants: women, older than eighteen years of age, non-users of injecting drugs for the past year, and who had been sexual partners of male active drug users within the last 6 months to the past five years. Women not meeting these criteria were excluded from the study.

Data Collection

Modified ethnographic interviews were used in collecting the data. These are in-depth, semi-structured, single-encounter interviews using an open-ended interview guide containing a set of questions which are asked of all informants. This data collection technique was chosen because it takes place in a shorter time

frame than the conversational style of traditional ethnographic interviews. Prior to the interview, written informed consent was obtained from all informants. They were assured that their names would not be used in any publications or reports, nor would they in any way be identified to their partners or to any other women who were part of the study. They were also informed that their participation was strictly voluntary, & that they could leave the interview at any time or refuse to answer any questions. The respondents were paid a stipend equivalent to fifteen US dollars for the interview. Fifty modified interviews were considered enough to elicit the needed information. Interviews were conducted in Spanish by a female psychologist trained in ethnographic interviewing techniques. Beyond general socio-demographic characteristics, the interview guide included questions examining a range of experience & behaviors over the informants' lifetimes. They encompassed childhood experience; histories of physical & sexual abuse; family influences; what attracted them to their partners; the effect of drugs in their relationships; & why they stayed in abusive relationships. The respondent was at liberty to discuss any topic she deemed significant. The interviewer was instructed to elicit & probe into those areas that she believed were important to the respondent. The interview data were collected in homes & in a neighborhood center lasting approximately 2 hours. If deemed necessary, there was a subsequent interview. In most cases, & with the permission of the respondent, the interviewer used a tape recorder as a memory aid to complement the field notes. After the interviews were completed, the tapes were transcribed into text, augmented by the fieldworker's notes, & were subjected to a qualitative analysis.

FREE TEXT ANALYSIS

Only thirty-six of the fifty women who met inclusion criteria were used in the analysis. The interviews were translated from Spanish into English. They were analyzed using a text analysis software package called AFTER (Analysis of Free Text for Ethnographic Research) developed by the data management subcontractor to the larger study (NOVA 1990). The program was used to separate and categorize portions of the narratives into factors which respondents referred to as important "markers" in their lives. These markers' importance in the past were always in relation to their present circumstances. We concentrated on the chronology of violence experienced by

these women over their life courses. Four factors were mentioned frequently in relation to the violence experienced by these women: childhood abusive experience in the family, violence from the hands of strangers, attraction to "dangerous" sexual partners, and long-standing abusive relationships with these dangerous sexual partners.

RESULTS

Women's Characteristics

All thirty-six informants were born in Mexico; all but one, in Juarez. The age range was 15-45 years, with a mean of 27.9 years. This was substantially lower than the mean age of US & Puerto Rico women in the ATOM study. Only 14 respondents had an eighth-grade education or more. None had attended college. Reasons given by women for not completing their formal education were: 1) the necessity to help parents support the family, 2) having to stay home to care for siblings, and 3) the biological family's instability and violence. Their parents did not encourage schooling. One respondent said: "None of us went to school; my mother, she couldn't mind all of us because we were so many; that was her excuse." The level of instability reported by the respondents was a consequence of the violence at home, in the neighborhood, and in the school, especially where gangs were common. The home environment was so violent in some cases that for their own protection the girls were sent away by their mothers to live with a relative. Only 17 of the women were raised by both parents.

Nearly a fifth of the women were raised by their grandmothers. One woman stated that:

The only nice memories I have of being a little girl are of my grandmother. Although she was old and frail she was the only one that fought, took sides for my sister and myself.

In most instances who raised the woman was determined by a family crisis: the death of a parent, financial problems or abuse of the child by a male relative or friend of the family. For many who stayed with their parents after such a crisis, life became unbearable & many tried to move in with a friend or female relative. Many of the women stated that they had moved permanently to the house of an aunt or other relative.

Twenty one received most of their economic support from their intimate male

partners, and nineteen reported that they had to work to complement the household income and help the children and themselves. Their income was not steady, as these women's income was largely derived from the informal sector of the economy, e.g., selling and trading goods in neighborhood markets. None of the women stated that they earned enough income to be self-sufficient, or to be able to live without their intimate male partner's income.

Violence Exposed in the Paternal Family

Sixteen of the women reported violence in their biological families' households while they were growing up. This violence was directed against themselves, their mothers and siblings, and seven remembered seeing their mothers being physically abused by their fathers. Six stated that they themselves had experienced physical abuse as children at the hands of their parents. Many respondents reported having witnessed a severe beating of a sibling by the mother during their childhood or adolescence. Yet, most respondents were likely to charge their fathers with the most abuse and the most serious incidents of abuse. Nine attributed the violence in the household to the father's use of alcohol & other drugs. Only one woman attributed such alcohol & drug violence to her mother.

Some of the actual physical actions reported were extreme. One respondent reported being made to lie down and tied to a grate covered with broken glass as punishment for a minor transgression. Many witnessed the mothers being physically abused. When the mother was pregnant "he still hit her." Another form of paternal abuse was the open use of drugs in front of the children: "...he thought that if he and his friend went to the backyard we would not see... but they left all their drug paraphernalia laying around." Another woman reported that "Many times I saw my dad shooting drugs. My brother and I used to play at rolling joints. I was five; he was six." Besides the economic reasons mentioned above for not leaving an abusive relationship, these women also experienced the fear of their families' disapproval of the breakup. The social pressure to stay in the relationship, the fear of further social isolation, and the fear of having the full responsibility to care for themselves and their children alone was great. Many remained in the relationship to protect the family and their children's name. One respondent stated that she knew that,

he had other women [and] I know who they were [but] I was pregnant [and] I never told the kids he had another woman, so the children would not despise him.

History of Childhood Abusive

Experiences: Physical and Sexual Abuse

All informants mentioned that their mothers physically punished them for having failed to perform their household chores. Almost all reported that their fathers punished them for some violation of rules regarding haircut, makeup, or appropriate social conduct. Seven reported that in their parental homes, serious physical abuse was triggered by their transgression of some part of the parents' strict behavior code. Although the description of verbal and emotional abuse is not as clear or graphic, they do include cases of continued abuse for many years. For example, they report being told almost daily that they were crazy or that they were hated by other members of the family. The women's transgression of their father's or mother's strict code of behaviors, such as "no makeup" or "no talking with anyone outside the family circle" produced verbal references to loose morals. Many of these women remember being called whores for such minor transgressions.

Twelve women reported being sexually abused as children. One intriguing development during the interviews was that most recounted instances of sexual abuse involving penetration. Either these women did not experience non-penetrative sexual acts, or most likely they did not classify as abuse other sexual acts such as being touched, fellatio, fondling of male genitals, or lewd suggestions. With the premium placed on virginity in Mexican culture this makes penetration the only "true" sexual act (Ramos, Ferreira-Pinto 1997). All the others are seen as a preamble to penetration. As long as these women did not lose their virginity, they may not even have thought of the act as sexual abuse. In fact, most women related these acts as examples of the irrational behavior to be expected from Mexican males. This idea was tested & found to be true by Gallegos (1996) in unstructured interviews with women who had reported sexual abuse as children.

The women's responses to abusive episodes range from open confrontation to complete silence. Women who kept silent felt that other family members and friends would not be supportive of complaints about their plight. When a woman confronted her father about his sexual abuse of her, he only said: "It is that

I need it" without any guilt. Another respondent stated that after she denounced her father's sexual abuse, all her mother said was that "I was a liar." Given this non-supportive and threatening climate, the most common response to sexual abuse was silence, either to protect the mother's or the family name. One woman explained this protective attitude as a way to avoid upsetting the mother and make her mother "suffer more than she deserved." Even as children, women reported being depressed and feeling devastated by the lack of respect that the male abuser had shown herself, her mother, or her sisters as women.

Attraction to "Dangerous" Sexual Partners

Since their adolescent years, these respondents mentioned being associated with men who were full-fledged or surrogate gang members. Many of these males may be viewed by the respondents as "pelados, desobligados, vagos, callejeros, viciosos, o encarcelado" (in a nice translation: rascals or street hoodlums). Because of their involvement with "la bola" (the gang), these young women's association with these "pelados" was seen as affording them some form of protection from their families' chastisement, abuse and predation from a dangerous and violent community.

These women were attracted to and formed a bond with males whom many considered "dangerous, and would not dare to challenge." For these women, their relationship with these men provided them with an experience which they perceived as giving them a sense of freedom from fear, and a sense of respect and status among those that others viewed as dangerous and violent. One woman stated, "Nobody would dare say something to me, or insult me, because I was with [partner's name]." For both risk-taking women and women with low self-respect, the rewards brought about by bonding with these dangerous males was a powerful motivation for selecting sexual partners respected by those residing in dangerous & violent community and "barrio" settings. It is not uncommon for these women to select other males whose economic prospects are not much better than the current abusive partner, but who, because of their own dangerousness, appear to provide them a respite & asylum from their current storm of violence.

These women often enter into relationships quickly with idealized images of their partners. "I met a boy and ran away with him...I had known him for a week...he was very

handsome & strong...he treated me nicely." Many women had the perception that IDUs would "...understand them better..." since many, like themselves, were the product of troubled, abusive families. One woman stated that her partner told her that "my father would hit me when he got high." Some women stated that they knew that their partners "did not drink too much...[but they] did not know he was shooting up...I never thought that he would hit me."

The rationale used by these women for choosing their sexual partners became a major source of disappointment in their lives. This is particularly true for women with low self-esteem and little social support. They did not expect the violence displayed by these men to be used against them in a conjugal relationship. The women expected that their partners, most of whom had been products of abusive or socially drained families, would be understanding, empathetic and offer positive psychological support that was not available to them in their parents' homes. After the initial "honeymoon" period, the inverse of these expectations would become evident, to her circle of friends, her family, her personal work and social friendship networks, and to her.

Women reported feeling that they were being isolated from family and friends through social pressure: "You chose him, now endure him." Sometimes these "mujeres" isolate themselves—they feel humiliated by their partners behaviors, e.g., drug use, violent outbursts, womanizing. Womanizing partners make life particularly difficult for women in their communities—they try to hide their partners' womanizing from their significant others, especially their children.

Conjugal Abuse

Almost all (28/36) respondents met their partners through a family member, "una amiga" (a friend) or in the local "barrio" hangouts (a park, movie house, shopping center). Some of these women reported that they knew their male partners were part of a gang when they first met them. Others did not know of their partner's involvement with gangs until some conflict or some inadvertent remark revealed that they were part of a local or gang network. Even when making this discovery, they report that question about terminating the conjugal relationship was not even considered. Moreover, with many of these women, their men's participating in gangs was their least worry. For some it was the beginning of more stark

and startling discoveries, e.g., that her man was involved in using, dealing, transporting drugs; or worse, a violent, convicted drug offender. More often than not, evidence of street violence manifested itself on a friend of her partner when he was brought to her home wounded and where her role was to clean and tend the wound but not to question or discuss (Moore, Mata 1981).

While all of the women reported some type of serious abuse, only half of the women stated that they had been physically abused by their sexual partners. The pattern of abuse could start early in the relationship, in some cases, it started immediately: "Right away I started to get mistreated" stated an informant. Sometimes it would not start for several years. One informant reported that:

I knew him when I was 14...[but] he left for the US...when he returned I left my house and moved in with him. He left me at his parent's and went back to the US. He never hit me when we were living with his parents...The hitting started when we moved to our own house.

The initiation of an abusive episode was generally drug and alcohol related—the partner reaching the point where he would lose control over his state of intoxication (Rosenbaum 1981). Many of these women reported that their partners appeared to derive pleasure from being violent. The violent episodes' driving motivation is "to show the woman her place" and have her "respect her man." Often the violence has the overall end of ensuring that the male's authority should never be challenged—in the bedroom, in his house, or among their family and friends.

Even in the most abusive episodes, many of these relationships persist for many years. The reasons for these "mujeres" to remain in these abusive relationships are many. For several of the respondents, economic pressure is the primary reason for staying. Twenty one report that their main source of financial support is their partner. Although nineteen of these women reported working, one should keep in mind that most of this work is part-time, unstable, and poorly paid. Formal prostitution or more "informal" exchange of sex for support, was an option that only one woman in the sample contemplated. Given their overdependence on their partners, their options for moving out to live with relatives or friends, or "permanently" leave this abusive relationship is practically nonexistent, nor do

other similarly viable options appear to them.

DISCUSSION

The cycle of violence model fails to address reasons why a large number of women who were abused in their childhood do not later become abusers, as the theory proposes. It may be useful to apply the cycle of violence notion to young gang members & young men, but our research demonstrates that it fails to attend to & address key issues in women's lives.

First, for most of these women, early exposure to violence is part of their family life and domestic routine. This abuse and violence is at the hands of their parents, siblings, relatives, and even very close friends of the family. In many of these communities, family norms beginning in their homes have many continuities and discontinuities with the larger community & to society's agents of social control. The acceptance of these norms can be seen in the day-to-day activities of local barrio gang members, the presence of strangers, & in the actions of law enforcement personnel. These women's conflicts with their intimate partners serve as a basis for family norms supporting the acceptability of abuse and violence.

The inability or unwillingness of others to intercede in these less than tranquil, stable, and nurturing relationships for some of these women and their children goes on to serve and to buttress local and family norms about the acceptability of interpersonal violence. For many of these women and children, the modeling of violence begins early. Some come to accept violence as a key technique for conflict resolution. Therefore, they seek and attach to other strong and dangerous men who have earned or can gain the necessary amount of respect to make them feel protected.

When studying the intergenerational transmission of violence, one should be cautious not to concentrate solely on internal factors. By not examining the external structural, situational, and culturally grounded perspectives, one can end up blaming the victim, that is, putting all the responsibility for this violence and efforts to ameliorate this violence on the woman herself. It is obvious that external environment, common poverty, and sexism in these women's lives should be focused upon and subjected to appropriate social policy and intervention. While there may be little in the short term that can be done about poverty, social and economic factors, there is much that can be done to increase support for these women to abandon violent relationships, and

to manage their lives.

The dynamic of the conjugal relationships reported by these women hinges on gender-related power structure. Many of these men try to control their female partners' physical movements, their interactions, their emotions, and even their sense of mental health and well-being by fits of rage, jealousy, and possessiveness. These struggles are focused on control issues. This scenario is played out constantly, and the behavior patterns experienced as children are reinforced through their adolescence, as these women come of age, and when they set up their own households.

The continuing acceptance of the situation will prove immobilizing, if not fatal. Without real change, these dynamics only serve to perpetuate the intergenerational transmission of violence. It must be important to understand that for most women, the selection of intimate partners has little to do with the factoring-in their partners' "dangerousness" to her, his friends, or family. His ability to command respect and fear so that she can be free from violence common in her home life, teen years, and her own outings in the "barrio" seem to loom over other considerations. If we are to provide these women meaningful information and alter norms and actions that narrow the acceptability of violence in the "barrios," the appreciation and grounding of their decisions in these local cultural contexts is essential. It is also important to teach them how to identify and avoid partners who have the potential to become seriously abusive and to avoid otherwise violent domestic relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the economic & social conditions surrounding these women, the most effective way for change to occur is not through programs that unknowingly set up a violent confrontation with their partners. In many of the "barrios," confrontations without adequate support has undesirable consequences. Learning new ways of dealing with their own internalized anger and frustration is crucial. They must also learn how to repair a damaged self-image. Social interventions must attend to the need for programs that promote a woman's attending to her own needs, particularly her need for safety and freedom from abuse.

Efforts to reduce the risk of serious violence in the short run must not lose sight of the need for transformative & long-term change. The public policy responses to violence against women should first take into account societal

issues of economic development. Nonetheless, programming efforts must address individual issues of education, health, and job skills needed for self-support. Many of these women are accustomed to self-sacrifice for the family. For these women to take advantage of programs, support for the children and their livelihood during this transition must be a primary consideration. Implementing effective service and support systems for women and their children, such as shelters & enforceable laws during crisis, is essential. But for the change to take hold, the possibility of meaningful training & jobs would serve to encourage these women to explore alternatives to the fear and threat of violence (Davis 1988).

Finally, in Mexico and the United States, policy makers and practitioners have been unwilling to address the power imbalance between intimate sexual partners, the class differences, the marginalization of large segments of society and how these factors intersect with episodes of interpersonal violence (Candib 1989). In Mexico, the therapeutic approach to crisis management of interpersonal violence must be implemented.

This does not mean that uncritical adoption of traditional family values is the answer. Promoting family values among the more marginalized in these communities without analyzing oppressive culturally prescribed gender roles can lead to development of interventions that promote, or perpetuate, women's subordinate role. Social intervention must have a sense of how to address family values & practices that do not serve to continue to promote family, conjugal, & societal abuse of these women. Further research on the topic should focus on children who have been exposed to violence during their formative years & attempt to predict who may be more likely to exhibit violent behaviors at a later date or will have the tendency to become victims of violence. These data should allow us to design better targeted interventions to teach men to better channel their aggressive tendencies; to change the women's self-images; to promote less revictimizing of abused women; & to expand the economic & social resources available for these women to be self-confident & independent.

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