

# The importance of offender type for interventions with domestic violent men

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## The Importance of Offender type for Intervention with Domestic Violent Men

By Kevin Browne & Louise Dixon

## The Nature of Spouse Abuse

### Definition

- ❖ Any violence between current or former partners in an intimate relationship
- ❖ The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or financial abuse

## Are Domestic Violent Offenders the Same?

- ❖ Researchers have studied male spouse abusers in comparison to non abusive males

**Table 1:** Summary of the characteristics which researchers have associated with domestic violent men in comparison to non-violent men

- ❖ Low assertiveness
- ❖ Low self-esteem
- ❖ Poor social skills
- ❖ Alcohol and drug misuse
- ❖ Poor impulse control
- ❖ Inappropriate dependencies
- ❖ Violent backgrounds
- ❖ History of violent behaviour
- ❖ Antisocial personality

## The Application of Typologies

- ❖ There is no reason to suggest that all spouse abusing men are alike
- ❖ Offenders behaviour is best described by subcategories - increase understanding
- ❖ **Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) Hypothetical Typology**  
Family Only (50%), Generally Violent/ Antisocial (25%), Dysphoric/ Borderline (25%)



*Family Only*

Absence of psychopathology.  
Low frequency of violence.  
Low severity of violence.  
Familial abuse.

*Generally Violent/ antisocial*

APD or psychopathy.  
Moderate – severe violence.  
Psychological/ sexual and non-sexual violence.  
Most extrafamilial violence.  
Most likely to have problems with substance abuse.

*Dysphoric/ borderline personality*

Psychologically distressed, evidencing borderline personality characteristics.  
Moderate – severe violence.  
Psychological/ sexual and non-sexual violence.  
Primarily familial violence.  
Some problems with substance abuse.



### Matching Treatment to Offender Type

- A one-size-fits-all intervention cannot accommodate the diverse population of domestic violent men
- 218 SA men randomly assigned to 2 treatment conditions
- **Saunders (1996)** - taken personality characteristics into account in predicting treatment efficacy

*Antisocial type* - feminist-Cognitive-Behavioural group - recidivism rate 36% (V's 53% PPT)

*Dependent* - Psychodynamic-process group treatment - recidivism rate 33% (V's 52% FEBT)



### Matching Treatment to Offender Type

- **Gondolf (1998)** - no evidence that one type did better in programme approach or another (ie, didactic vs process). Further investigation is warranted
- **Ethnic minority groups** - less participation, lower completion rates and less successful than their white counterparts
- **Treatment programmes** assume equal effectiveness across all offenders, regardless of SES, individual or ethnic background



### Review of Literature

Dixon, L. & Browne, K. (2001). *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*. (in press)

- ❖ 12 studies were reviewed, concerning typologies of domestic violent men from 1994 onwards
- ❖ Samples originated from two sources;
  - a) Court referrals,
  - b) Voluntary referrals.
- ❖ All provided some level of support for the Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) Hypothetical Typology
- ❖ Simple meta-analysis was carried out

## Results

Dixon, L & Browne, K. (2001). *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*. (in press)

	Family Only(50%)	Generally Violent(25%)	Borderline(25%)
COURT (mean %)	**37.7%	* 36.3%	23.7%
VOLUNTEER (mean %)	**59.3	*22.9%	15.5%
Total Mean %	49.7%	29.6%	20%

\* $p < 0.01$ ,  $df = 1$ , chi-square test  
 \*\* $p < 0.05$ ,  $df = 1$ , chi-square test

## Summary of Results

Dixon, L & Browne, K. (2001). *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*. (in press)

- ❖ The type of offender in the majority varied depending on the referral process by which the offenders were sampled (ie. Court or Volunteer)
- ❖ Less representation of Family Only group in court referred sample, and less representation of Generally Violent men in volunteer group

## Conclusion of Review

Dixon, L & Browne, K. (2001). *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*. (in review)

- ❖ Research into typologies of domestic violence need to sample a broad section of the population
- ❖ The research review suggests there are varying treatment needs for court and volunteer referral groups
  - a) Court referrals; more generally violent, antisocial personalities
  - b) Volunteer Referrals; family violence only, less frequent and less severe.

## Towards a Holistic Family Focused Typology

Dixon, L & Browne, K. (2001). *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*. (in review)

- Previous research has a narrow focus on the offender - does not consider factors such as context and behavioural actions/ reactions of the victim
- Aggression in the family is a product of context and the person - environment interaction
- More holistic family focused typology, based on interpersonal characteristics of the offender and victim, together with situational factors that trigger the violent act, may be a more fruitful approach to classification of treatment needs of offenders and their victims

