Testing predictions from the male control theory of men’s partner violence

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Overview

• To give a brief overview of the background literature

• To present the results of a study that was part of my PhD with a large student sample ($N = 1104$)

• To discuss the implications and future directions
Intimate Partner Violence Research

• IPV Stereotypical view – dominant male perpetrator
• Typologies – to influence treatment
• Male Victims – Steinmetz “Battered Husband Syndrome”
Fiancée stubbed cigs out on me, poured boiling water in my lap and held a steam iron on my arm.. I never hit back

By STAFF REPORTERS
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BATTERED Ian McNicholl revealed today how he lied for his twisted fiancée - who subjected him...
Sex Differences in Aggression

• Differing pattern of sex differences (e.g. Archer, 2000; Archer, 2004)
• Feminists (e.g. Dobash & Dobash, 1979) believe these two types of aggression are etiologically different – a “gender perspective”
• Others (e.g. Felson, 2002, 2006) take the “violence perspective”
• Dual Belief Theory
Feminist Perspective

• IPV is perpetrated by men driven by patriarchal values and control
• Patriarchal society tolerates this
• Women’s aggression is expressive and motivated mainly by self-defence.
• IPV male perpetrators are different from other offenders
• Similar to evolutionary theories in predictions, different reasons
Felson (e.g. 2002) and Chivalry

• IPV not “special”, like other types of aggression rather than having different motives
• Society doesn’t tolerate it, quite the opposite
• Originating at early age where boys don’t hit girls
• Suggests norms of chivalry cause men to inhibit their aggression towards women
• Women have no such inhibitions as there are few social sanctions to their aggression
• Studies (e.g. Harris & Cook, 1994) suggest men’s violence is condemned much more
Johnson’s Theory of IPV

• Johnson (1995) tried to bridge feminist and family violence research.

• “Patriarchal terrorism” vs. “common couple violence”

• Later added “violent resistance” and “mutual violent control”

• Evidence for the typology:

• Graham-Kevan and Archer (2003)
Same-Sex Aggression

• Sex difference usually in favour of men
• Archer (2004) Sex differences in real world settings confirmed this
• Supported by crime statistics – 19% of 16-25 commit violent crimes compared to 10% women.
• Felson (2002) men are most at risk for being victims of violence
• Why? Women and fear?
Do women increase, or men decrease, their violence from same-sex to partner?

- Tee & Campbell (2009) had participants rate the likelihood of using physical & verbal aggression to a same-sex and opposite sex target
- Found women were more likely to be aggressive to partner and men more likely to be aggressive to same-sex.
- Men’s decrease was greater than women's increase
- Richardson & Green (2006)
Aim of Study

• To test the male control theory (feminist perspective) of IPV
  – Men would show more controlling behavior to partner
  – Controlling behavior to a partner would be linked to IPV for men but not for women;
  – Men’s controlling behavior to a partner would be unrelated to their physical aggression to same-sex non-intimates

• Additionally test assumptions from Johnson’s Typology:
  – Similar proportions of men and women are to be found among perpetrators of low-level non-controlling physical aggression (“situational couple violence”),
  – Men are to be found disproportionately among the perpetrators of high-level controlling physical aggression (“intimate terrorists”).
Method

• 1104 participants were recruited with 706 women and 398 men. There was an average age of 23.55
• Some online and some paper version
• The following measures were used:
  – Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979) – Perpetration and Victimisation for IPV, Perpetration for aggression to same-sex non-intimates
  – Controlling Behaviour Scale (CBS-R: Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2005) – Perpetration and Victimisation
Results

- Women perpetrated significantly more physically and verbally aggression
- Women reported more verbal aggression from partner but no difference for physical
Results

• Men used significantly more verbal and physical aggression to same-sex non intimates.
Results

• Within-subjects analyses of $d$ values were performed to ascertain the extent to which men and women were raising or lowering their aggression from same-sex non-intimates to their partners.

• The within-subjects effect size for physical aggression was $d = -0.22$ ($t = -4.21$, $p < .001$) for men, and $d = 0.20$ ($t = 5.21$; $p < .001$) for women.

• This indicates that men lower their aggression from same-sex non-intimates to their partners whereas women raise their aggression from same-sex non-intimates to partner to a similar extent.
Results

• Women perpetrated significantly more controlling behaviour but similar victimisation scores.
Johnson’s Typology

Men

- Intimate Terrorism
- Mutual Violent Control
- Situation Couple Violence
- Violent Resistance

Women

- Intimate Terrorism
- Mutual Violent Control
- Situation Couple Violence
- Violent Resistance
IPV and Aggression to Same-Sex Others

- IPV, aggression to same-sex others and control were all strongly associated
- These were strongly associated for both men and women
- Men and women had similar predictors
- In correlation and regression analysis
- Similar magnitude
- Contradicts several aspects of the theory
Hypotheses

– Men would show more controlling behavior to partner
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– Similar proportions of men and women are to be found among perpetrators of low-level non-controlling physical aggression (“situational couple violence”),
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Summary of Findings

- Sex differences in both types of aggression
- Partial support for Johnson’s typology
- Very little support for male control theory
- Similar findings for men and women
- Association of control and same-sex aggression
- Men inhibited their aggression towards their partners
Implications for Research

• Supports studying IPV within context of other types of aggression – focus on perpetrator characteristics not societal values

• Control and same-sex aggression - controlling IPV perpetrators have a coercive interpersonal style rather than being patriarchal

• Support for chivalry theory and normative protection of women
Implications for Policy and Practice

• Current IPV interventions in UK, US and Canada, roots in feminist research and theory
• The Duluth Model (Pence & Paymar, 1993) designed to protect women from controlling and abusive men – curriculum based on power and control, perceived to be male problem
• Other models (e.g. Finkel, 2009) argue self regulatory training would be more useful, framework for both IPV and other aggression
• Affects resources – 4000 refuges for women, 78 for men (some actually available for both)
Thank you for listening!

• Any questions?


• Copies available on request, please take a card with my email address on.