

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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The next portion of the presentation focuses on the results as presented in Logan, et. al's study entitled "Police Attitudes Toward Domestic Violence Offenders." Negative police attitudes may influence the outcome of the police call in women's attempts to seek help from the justice system in the future. As such, it is critical to examine the degree to which police officers view domestic violence as a criminal activity compared to other types of crimes.

The purpose of this study was to examine police attitudes toward three kinds of sanctions-- fines, hard labor, and incarceration. And to examine police attitudes toward the treatment for DV offenders compared to other types of violent and non-violent offenders. And to examine police attitudes toward sanctions and treatment for domestic violence offenders who do and do not use substances.

This study had a sample of officers from one mid-sized city police department of 315 officers. This represented 69% of all sworn officers at the time of the study. Surveys were distributed during roll call in all three shifts-- the 7:00 AM shift, the 4:00 PM shift, and the 10:00 PM night shift from June 2000 through August 2000. On average, these officers were 36 years of age, 89% were white Caucasians, and 73% of the officers were male.

The two main findings were, first, officers rated treatment rather than sanctions as more appropriate for domestic violence offenses compared with other offenses, especially other violent offenses. The second main finding was that officers rated the use of sanctions higher for domestic violence offenders who use drugs or alcohol compared to domestic violence offenders who did not use drugs or alcohol. While rating treatment options as more appropriate for domestic violence offenders who did not abuse substances compared to those who did abuse substances.

The results from this study had several policy implications. For instance, officer training needs to include more information about the fact that domestic violence perpetration is a violent crime. Also, ongoing education and training of police officers is critical in continuing to address the response to domestic violence. Finally, officer attitudes may be a salient contributor to situation interpretation, and also, the response on behalf of the officer to the situation.

The remainder of this presentation focuses on a discussion from Kernic's and Bonomi's article entitled "Female victims of domestic violence: Which victims do police refer to crisis intervention?" The purpose of this study was to describe whether selected factors differed between intimate partner violence victims for whom crisis intervention services were activated and those for whom they were not. In this study, the intervention was victim support team services, VST. The research design was a quasi-experimental design because the participants were not randomly assigned to the treatment and control groups. So this is in comparison to the randomized experiment, which was the type of research design that was implemented in the Minneapolis domestic violence experience.

Overall, the study population in this study comprised of 2,092 adult female victims of male perpetrated intimate partner violence reported to the Seattle Police Department between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2002. The sample was identified using the Seattle Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit database. The treatment group included only victims who agreed to meet with a VST, victim support team volunteer, in cases where officers determined if it was safe for a victim support team volunteer to respond to. Comparatively, the control group included otherwise eligible victims of police reported intimate partner violence, but for those whom victim support team services were not activated.

Of the 2,092 female victims of police reported intimate partner violence occurring during the victim support team hours of operation for the study period, 415 of these victims, or 19.8% were involved in incidents in which the victim support team was activated. The remaining 1,677 victims, or 80.2% were involved in incidents in which the victim support team was not activated. Preliminary analyses demonstrated there were no significant group differences in the number of police reported physical or psychological abuse in the year prior to the incident of interest.

So this begs the question, do factors differ between victims who are likely to have victim support team services activated by the law enforcement agency in their case compared to victims who are not likely to have victim support team services activated by law enforcement agencies in their case? In short, the answer to this question is yes, they do differ. Specifically, the following factors were related to victim support team activation-- being married to abusive partners, being pregnant, being of Asian or Latino race/ethnicity, incidents involving physical abuse, especially those resulting in injury, and among incidents involving physical injury, and finally, among cases when an arrest is being made. All of these characteristics are indicative of those cases that are more likely to have victim support team activation.

Finally, this part of the presentation focuses on Johnson's article in 2007, "Victims' perceptions of police response to domestic violence incidents." The purpose of this study was to identify areas of police intervention that victims find most helpful and least helpful. The study also examined the effect that a mandatory arrest policy had on a victim's decision to stay in or leave an abusive domestic relationship.

There were two stages of data collection in this study. Stage one, there was a random sample of incident reports from the domestic violence unit during the year 2000. The data that was collected included characteristics of domestic violence victims and summary info about domestic violence incidents.

Stage two involved telephone interviews with a random sample of the female domestic violence victims. Data collected at stage two included the victims' perceptions of how helpful the police were in responding to their case and how their case was handled by the criminal justice system. The results from this study showed that victims are in a complicated decision making process in determining whether to call the police in domestic violence situations. This concludes the presentation.