The Effects of Mutual Partner Violence on Women’s Mental Health

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Partner Violence Overview

• Overview of Partner Violence
• How it effects women physically & psychologically
• Social Support as a coping mechanism

• Hypotheses
• Project HOW
  • Participants: statistics and distribution
Partner Violence

• **Misconceptions about Partner Violence**
  • Studies on Partner violence Prevalence
    • Strauss and Gelles, 1986

• **Dimensions of Partner Violence**
  • Johnson Typology (1995)
  • Unidirectional/Multidirectional Violence

• **The Inequality of Partner Violence**
  • Physical
  • Psychological

Both groups have negative health consequences, but women experience significantly poorer health effects (Golding, 1999)
Partner Violence Physical Inequality
Female to male violence:
- Less severe
- Less intense
- Injury/Hospitalization rates lower
- Motives
  - Usually for self-defense
  - Preemptive strike
    - Women who act violently against their partners are usually primary victims engaging in active resistance and not perpetrators exerting fear and control
Partner Violence Mental Inequality

- Women have higher rates of mental disorders due to partner violence trauma

- PTSD: 63.8% (11 studies)
- Suicidality: 17.9% (13 studies)
- Depression: 47.6% (18 studies)

- Rates of Drug and alcohol abuse also found to be higher: 18.5% and 8.9% respectively
Partner Violence and social support

• Social Support reduces severity of partner violence.
  • Victims of PV rate Social Support as important need in coping
• Social Support reduces likelihood of future episodes of partner violence.
• Social Support is not always utilized.
  • Reasons of embarrassment
  • Reasons of Fear
  • Unaware of resources
Effect of Partner Violence on Mental Health

- Examine 5 dimensions of partner violence perpetration to see effect on women’s mental health
  - Unidirectional: Male to Female
  - Mutual: Male Dominant
  - Mutually Violent Couple
  - Mutual: Female Dominant
  - Unidirectional: Female to male
Hypotheses

• Women in (Male Dominant) relationships will experience most severe mental health effects.

• Women in (Mutually Dominant) relationships will experience the second highest rate of severe mental health effects due to escalation of violence.

• Women in (Mutually Dominant) relationships will suffer more severe mental health effects due to escalation of violence.
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Methodology

Project HOW
Health Outcomes of Women
Project HOW Overview

An original sample of 835 women meeting 4 requirements:

- African American, Euro-American, or Mexican American
- between the ages 20 and 48
- in a heterosexual relationship of at least one year
- within 200% of the poverty and/or receiving public assistance
Research was collected in 7 waves over a period of 6 years.

This study will utilize wave 1 of the data.
Project HOW Measures

Three measures in the survey will be utilized for this study:

- SCL
- SVAWS
- SVAMS
Wave 1 Distributions: Ethnicity

- African Americans: 302
- Euro-Americans: 273
- Mexican Americans: 260
Wave 1 Distributions: Poverty Status

- African American: 78%
- Euro-American: 96%
- Mexican American: 102%

Percent of Poverty

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Honors Thesis

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Wave 1 Distributions: Education

Number of Women

0 20 40 60 80 100 120

< High School diploma College

African American Euro-American Mexican American
Wave 1 Distributions: Age

Number of Women

African American
Euro-American
Mexican American
Wave 1 Distributions: Relationship Status

![Chart showing relationship status distributions]

- **Number of Women**
- **Dating**, **Cohabiting**, **Common Law**, **Married**

**Legend**:
- African American
- Euro-American
- Mexican American

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Preliminary Results

• Majority of the violent relationships (n=646, 77%) were characterized by mutual partner violence (n=445, 69%)
• Within these mutually violent relationships, a majority of the violence was perpetrated by the men (n=241, 54% of mutually violent sample)
• 126 females in unilateral male violent relationships (15%)
• 75 women in study (9%) in unilateral female violent relationships
Preliminary Implications

• Violence in mutually violent relationships most predictive of women’s mental health problems

• In mutually violent relationships, the violence is not necessarily equal; women face more severe physical and psychological outcomes

• Intimate partner violence should not be examined as simply male to female or female to male, as most violent relationships are characterized by mutual violence
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