An Attachment Perspective on Abusive Dynamics in Intimate Relationships

KIM BARTHOLOMEW and COLLEEN J. ALLISON

In this chapter we review dominant approaches to understanding relationship abuse. Feminist perspectives propose that partner abuse stems from patriarchal norms that dictate that men should dominate and control women. In contrast, various psychological perspectives consider why some individuals (and not others) act abusively in their intimate relationships as a function of such individual factors as childhood experiences, social skills, personality, and psychopathology. Attachment theory is one such psychological perspective. In particular, researchers have explored how particular forms of attachment insecurity may put individuals at risk for acting abusively toward intimate partners. Although considerable theory and research have shown the limitations of feminist models of abuse, little attention has been given to the limitations of individually focused psychological perspectives on abuse. We hope to demonstrate the inadequacy of such individual perspectives, with a particular focus on previous work guided by attachment theory.

We argue instead that partner abuse should be considered from a relational or dyadic perspective. Thus we ask why some relationships become abusive whereas others do not. Research on the interactional processes of violent couples shows the promise of such a systemic approach. We review some initial work suggesting the value of attachment theory in conceptualizing the dyadic foundations of abuse. Attachment theory may also contribute to a unifying framework for psychological and interactional approaches to partner violence. Finally, we consider the clinical implications of an attachment-informed dyadic analysis of partner violence.

A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON PARTNER ABUSE

A feminist perspective on domestic violence addresses a primary question: "Why do men beat their wives?" (Brodg, 1998, p. 13). The feminist answer to this question is that men internalize patriarchal norms that lead them to believe they have the right to dominate and control women. "Men who assault their wives are actually living up to cultural prescriptions that are enshrined in Western society—aggressiveness, male dominance and female subordination" (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, p. 24). From this perspective, violence against women is primarily a societal problem and not a problem of individual behavior or pathology. To quote Brogad (1998, p. 17), wife assault is assumed to result from "the normal psychological and behavioral patterns of most men." Psychological explanations of violent behavior are avoided because they may be used to excuse the behavior of male perpetrators.

From a strict feminist perspective, female victims play no role in the development of violent relationships. Because all men have the potential to be violent, it is not seen as useful to consider why some women become victims of male violence and others do not. In fact, psychological analyses of women victims are condemned because of the potential for such explanations to "blame the victim." However, consideration is given to the difficulties women face in leaving violent relationships, with particular focus on factors such as economic constraints and fear of further violence. Research from this perspective has also documented physical and mental health costs of women's victimization.

There are many problems with patriarchal accounts of partner violence, especially as applied to Western countries, in which the vast majority of research has been conducted. First, if violence against women is a norm, why are only a minority of men violent? Moreover, there is no evidence that men's right to dominate women is a current societal norm; rather, only a small minority of men condone violence against women (Simon et al., 2001). The assumption that male violence serves to enforce and maintain male domination of women is inconsistent with a growing body of literature that male violence toward women is associated with a lack of power in
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AN AVERSION REFLECTS

The classical conditioning of an organism can be observed in a variety of contexts, including in the laboratory and in the wild. In the laboratory, classical conditioning is often studied using aversive stimuli, such as electric shock. In the wild, classical conditioning can be observed in animals that have learned to associate certain stimuli with aversive outcomes. For example, a predator may learn to associate the sound of a nearby waterfall with the sight of a potential prey, and this association can affect the predator's behavior in the future.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

According to behavioral psychologists, classical conditioning is a fundamental process that underlies many aspects of behavior and cognition. They believe that classical conditioning is a key mechanism for the formation of associations between stimuli and responses, and that these associations can be learned through the process of conditioning. Behavioral psychologists also emphasize the importance of the environment in shaping behavior, and they believe that classical conditioning is a powerful tool for understanding how the environment influences behavior.

CONTRAFACTUAL PERSPECTIVES

In contrast, some psychologists have argued that classical conditioning is not a sufficient explanation for the complexity of human behavior. They believe that other factors, such as cognitive processes and emotions, also play a role in shaping behavior. These psychologists argue that classical conditioning is a limited account of the ways in which humans learn, and that a more comprehensive understanding of behavior requires a more complex model of the mind.
tion, separation, and abandonment. Individuals high in attachment anxiety are expected to be hypersensitive to such threats because they are more likely than those low in anxiety to perceive ambiguous partner behaviors as threatening. Anxious individuals who have failed to effectively communicate their need for reassurance to a relationship partner in more functional ways may then strike out in abusive anger or even violence to gain or regain proximity to an attachment figure. Moreover, anxious individuals who also have a strong approach orientation (or low avoidance), or those with ambivalent or preoccupied attachment orientations, may be especially likely to strike out in anger when they perceive a relationship threat. This perspective on partner violence is consistent with the finding that relationship violence typically takes place in the context of couple conflict (e.g., Cassidy & Virian, 1995), and that perpetrators of partner violence are characterized by high dependency and psychological vulnerability (e.g., Murphy et al., 1994).

Attachment avoidance has been linked with hostility, with a hostile attribution bias, and with a lack of forgiveness toward partners (e.g., Kohak & Scery, 1988; Mikulincer, 1998; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2003). Therefore, it might be expected that avoidance would also be predictive of partner abuse. However, the defining feature of attachment avoidance is a tendency to withdraw when anxious or threatened, with the goal of deactivating the attachment system and maintaining personal control (Mikulincer, Florian, Cowan, & Cowan, 2002). Correspondingly, avoidance is associated with controlling the expression of anger (Mikulincer, 1998). As a result, we would not generally expect avoidance to engender extreme and dysfunctional protest behavior. Rather, the tendency to withdraw when threatened would seem contrary to the active protest behavior shown in aggressive acts.

An attachment-based conceptualization of partner violence is not gender-specific, however, typically this framework has been applied to understanding male violence against women. Consistent with expectations, studies have demonstrated links between anxious attachment (assessed in various ways) and male-to-female partner violence (e.g., Dunn, Saunders, Starzomski, & Bartholomew, 1994; Holtzworth-Munroe, Stuart, & Hutchison, 1997). Moreover, studies that have considered other forms of partner violence have yielded similar patterns of findings. For example, attachment anxiety (and especially a preoccupied orientation) is associated with women's violence toward male partners (Henderson, Bartholomew, Trott, & Kwong, 2005) and with men's violence toward male partners (Bartholomew, Orent, & Landolt, 2000).

Although most attachment-guided work in the field of partner violence has focused on the perpetration of violence, attachment theory has also been used to guide research on victims of relationship abuse (e.g., Dutton & Painter, 1993; Henderson, Bartholomew, & Dutton. 1997). The attachment bonds that form between partners in intimate relationships make it difficult to leave such relationships, even highly dysfunctional and distressing ones. Moreover, victims of partner abuse are likely to be anxiously attached as a consequence of abuse and perhaps also as a prior risk factor for involvement in an abusive relationship. This anxiety is then expected to exacerbate the normative fear of separation and loss involved in ending a long-term attachment relationship. It has also been suggested that threatening situations might strengthen attachment bonds, even when the attachment figure is the source of threat (Bowlby, 1969; Dutton & Painter, 1993). Such traumatic bonding may, paradoxically, make leaving abusive relationships especially difficult.

Most research investigating the potential role of attachment in partner violence has focused on one gender and only one direction of violence (from male to female). For example, in our earliest work in this field, we looked at links between attachment patterns and perpetration of violence in a sample of men only (Dutton et al., 1994), and we looked at links between attachment patterns and success in separating from abusive male partners in a sample of women only (Henderson et al., 1997). However, recent work based on a more inclusive approach suggests that gender and direction of abuse may not necessarily moderate associations between attachment and violence variables. Thus, in a diverse community sample, preoccupied attachment was correlated with both the receipt and perpetration of relationship aggression, for both men and women (Henderson et al., 2001). Similarly, in a sample of male and female undergraduates, Bookwala and Zdanik (1998) found that preoccupied and fearful attachment were significantly associated with reciprocal dating violence for both men and women.

**EVALUATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES**

Psychological research on partner violence, including research guided by an attachment perspective, has contributed substantially to our understanding of why, given the same normative environment, only some individuals become violent in their intimate relationships. Also, this research has deepened our understanding of why some individuals stay in abusive relationships and what is involved in the process of leaving such relationships.

Unfortunately, most psychological approaches to understanding partner violence have not taken the relational context of partner violence into account. Thus studies of perpetrators of violence (most often male perpetrators) and recipients of violence (most often female recipients) tend to be conducted in isolation. This failure to consider both partners in violent relationships has resulted in some questionable interpretations of data. In cross-sectional studies, for example, high attachment anxiety (or a preoccupied attachment orientation) has quite consistently been found to be associated...
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with male violence and with female victimization. The typical interpretation of such findings is that anxious males are more prone to violence and that male violence tends to women. Thus only the male perpetrator is seen as having any role in the development of a violent relationship. Moreover, identical cross-sectional results for women and men are interpreted as indicating opposite causal relations: Male insecurity causes violence perpetration, and receipt of violence causes female insecurity. For a similar observation about the interpretation of findings that link "intimate-skills deficits in men and women to marital violence, see Anglin and Holowczy-Munroe (1997). Such gender-biased interpretations of data are the legacy of the patriarchal model, which defines partner violence in terms of male violence against women and explicitly rejects the possibility that a female victim of abuse has any role in the development of an abusive relationship.

DYADIC BASIS OF RELATIONSHIP FUNCTIONING AND PARTNER ABUSE

In the research literature on intimate relationships, there is considerable evidence that both partners contribute to the quality of their relationship. Evidence of assortative mating suggests that partners select one another based on preexisting qualities and traits. For example, men and women with histories of antisocial behavior tend to become partnered with one another (Krueger, Moffitt, Caspi, Bledsoe, & Silva, 1998). Moreover, individual qualities of both partners contribute to relationship dynamics and relationship outcomes. For example, both partners' negative emotionality independently predicts relationship quality (e.g., Robins, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2000). Studies also indicate that partner similarity on values and expectations predict relationship outcomes (e.g., Powers & Olson, 1984). However, the strongest predictors of marital outcomes are interactional processes, processes that arise out of the joint behavior of partners in a relationship (for reviews, see Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Similarly, there is some evidence that the attachment literature that both partners' attachment orientations contribute to relationship outcomes (for a review, see Feeney, 2003). For example, in a large sample of married couples, wives' and husbands' attachment orientations independently predicted each partner's marital satisfaction (Basse, 2004). Moreover, there was some evidence of interactive effects, such that particular combinations of secure and anxious attachment were predictive of satisfaction.

Given the general acceptance of the dyadic basis of relationship behaviors and experiences in the study of dating and marital relationships, it is striking that such relational models have not gained a higher profile in research on partner violence. However, considerable data in the violence field point to the role of both partners in the development of violent relationships. Notably, studies have documented that power imbalances in heterosexual relationships (in favor of the male or female partner) are associated with partner violence by both male and female partners (e.g., Coleman & Strauss, 1990). Other studies have indicated that characteristics of both partners are associated with marital violence, for example, problem-solving skills (Anglin & Holowczy-Munroe, 1997). With such cross-sectional data, however, it is possible that just one partner has determined the course of the violent relationship, with the other partner simply responding to the violent partner. However, studies examining partners' family backgrounds suggest that violence in the family of origin is predictive of both women's and men's violence and of victimization, as well as perpetration (e.g., Ehresmann et al., 2003; Kwong et al., 2003). Moreover, having experienced violence in a prior dating relationship appears to increase the risk of violence in a subsequent dating relationship (e.g., Gowerney-Gibbs, Stockard, & Bohm, 1987), and there is some modest continuity in the experience of abuse across relationships (Robins, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2002). Finally, negative emotionality at age 18 has been found to predict subsequent partner violence, again for both genders (Moffitt, Krueger, Caspi, & Fagan, 2000). If only men influenced the development of abusive heterosexual relationships, we would not expect background or personality characteristics of women to be associated with their likelihood of becoming involved in and staying in abusive relationships.

The well-established finding that violence in intimate relationships is often bi-directional also suggests the need to consider the dyadic context of partner violence. In about half of relationships with any violence, both members of the couple report violence (e.g., Moore, 1995; Sors & Strauss, 1990a). Moreover, there are strong associations between partner reports of severity of violence. For example, in a large community sample of young adult couples, there was a correlation of .47 between male and female partners' abuse perpetration (Moffitt et al., 2001). We have found that similar levels of abuse reciprocity characterize male-sex relationships (Regan, Bartholomew, Oram, & Lundt, 2002). If both members of a couple are violent (especially if this violence is not self-defensive), then it is necessary to consider the backgrounds and dispositions of both partners and how they interact to fully understand the development of relationship violence. To focus only on one identified perpetrator (usually the male partner in heterosexual relationships) in relationships with bidirectional violence is inherently limiting. Moreover, severe violence (especially male severe violence) is considerably more likely to occur in mutually abusive relationships than in relationships with unidirectional abuse (e.g., Ehresmann, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2004). For example, in a national U.S. survey, the likelihood of severe male violence was much higher when the female partner was also severely violent than when the female partner was not violent: The relative odds were 10:1.
INTERPERSONAL APPROACHES
to Partner Violence

The epidemiology of partner violence has been thoroughly investigated in international studies. The relationship patterns in partner violence are often characterized by recurrent cycles of abuse, with periods of calm followed by outbursts of violence. These patterns are often referred to as the "cycle of violence.""}

In their classic work, Paris and Paris (1983) described the cycle as consisting of four stages: the "tension building phase," the "outburst," the "deception," and the "honeymoon" or "miracle phase." During the tension building phase, increased tensions and emotional outbursts occur, often leading to verbal abuse and control. The outburst stage is characterized by explosive behavior, physical violence, or both. The deception stage involves the perpetrator convincing the victim that the situation is under control, often through promises of change. Finally, the honeymoon phase is marked by a return to normalcy, allowing the perpetrator to repeat the cycle.

These findings have been supported by numerous studies conducted in various cultural and social contexts. For example, in a study by French et al. (2001), researchers found that the cycle of violence is recurrent and cyclical, with a tendency for the violence to increase in severity over time. Another study by Baca-Gastélum and colleagues (2005) also supported the cyclical nature of partner violence, indicating that the pattern is consistent across different populations.

The cycle of violence is not only important for understanding individual cases but also for developing effective intervention strategies. By recognizing the cyclical nature of partner violence, professionals can better prepare for and respond to the escalation of violence, providing support and intervention at the appropriate stages. This approach recognizes the need for responsive and flexible support services that can adapt to the changing needs of the victim.

In conclusion, the cycle of violence provides a useful framework for understanding partner abuse. By acknowledging the cyclical nature of abuse, professionals can develop more effective strategies to support victims and reduce the likelihood of recurrence. Further research is needed to explore the underlying mechanisms that drive the cycle of violence and to develop interventions that can effectively disrupt this cycle, leading to a sustained reduction in partner abuse.

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Consistent with the negative reciprocity findings, some studies have indicated that violent couples are distinguished from distressed but nonviolent couples by high levels of negativity and verbal aggressiveness on the part of both partners (e.g., Burman et al., 1993; Jacobson et al., 1994). Notably, even in studies of couples' choice for severe male-to-female violence, female partners also demonstrate high levels of anger and negativity in conflict interactions. For example, Jacobson et al. (1994) compared distressed-violent and distressed-nonviolent couples interacting in a laboratory setting. Based on observational measures, wives showed higher levels of provocative anger than husbands in the distressed-nonviolent couples, whereas husbands' provocative anger rose almost to the level of wives' in the violent couples. Thus violent marriages seem to be characterized by two partners who are angry, belligerent, and contemptuous of each other.

Until recently, researchers who conduct interactional studies of partner violence have not questioned the assumption that partner violence is fundamentally a matter of men abusing women. We are not aware of any interaction studies that have looked at couples identified for same-sex violence or for female-to-male violence. Rather, the goal of this work has been to understand the relationship context, including wife behaviors, in which male battering occurs (Jacobson, 1994). However, given the high reciprocity of partner abuse, even in couples identified for high levels of male-to-female violence, many of the couples studied are also characterized by moderate to severe female violence. For example, although Jacobson et al. (1994) selected violent-distressed couples based on severe male-to-female violence, almost half of couples would have qualified for the violent couple group based on wife violence.

In summary, both prospective studies of partner violence (Ehrensaft et al., 2004) and interaction studies of violent couples (e.g., Jacobson et al., 1994) converge on the conclusion that severe violence is most likely to occur when both partners are prone to abusive behavior. More specifically, distressed couples (in some cases, with female violence) are characterized by high levels of negative expressivity on the part of women, coupled with avoidance, defensive, or withdrawing behaviors on the part of male partners. When, in contrast, both members of a couple are high on negative expressivity, reciprocity of negative affect escalates into male violence and generally more serious partner violence. This pattern is quite evident in work on the demand-withdrawal patterns of interaction: Whereas distressed but nonviolent couples are characterized by high levels of female demand and male withdrawal, domestically violent couples are characterized by high levels of both partners' withdrawal. (Babcock, Watzl, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993; see also Stanley et al., in press, for a discussion of this pattern in male same-sex relationships.) This pattern of findings has often been interpreted as indicating that male partners are the driving force behind marital violence, because only their behavior distinguishes between distressed couples who are and are not severely violent. For example, Jacobson et al. (1994) conclude that “Indeed, everything we found in our analyses of violent arguments is consistent with the notion that it is the man who are driving the system” (p. 987). Such interpretations are biased toward holding men solely responsible for the dynamics of abusive relationships, despite clear evidence to the contrary. Our interpretation of those findings is more balanced: Relationships are likely to escalate to severe violence only when both members of a couple reciprocate negativity on the part of their partners and act in an attacking and belligerent manner.

With few exceptions (e.g., Babcock, Jacobson, Gottman, & Yerinton, 2000), interactional approaches to partner violence have been aimed at exploring the interpersonal context of violence without paying attention to psychosocial variables that might affect partners’ likelihood of adopting particular interaction strategies. As would be expected from general interpersonal principles (e.g., Kiefer, 1983), it appears that negative reciprocity is generally required for couples to escalate to clinical levels of abuse. However, interaction studies do not address why only some women and men reciprocate hostility in their intimate relationships. Based on the longitudinal findings of Ehrensaft et al. (2004) and Moffitt et al. (2001), we can extrapolate that such mutually reinforcing negative dynamics are predictable from developmental and personality characteristics of both partners. Attachment theory may be helpful in creating a conceptual link between these psychological and interactional approaches to partner violence.

A DYADIC ATTACHMENT PERSPECTIVE ON PARTNER ABUSE

Although attachment theory is an intrinsically interpersonal theory, much of attachment research has focused on how individual differences in attachment affect individuals' psychological and social functioning. Considerably less attention has been paid to how both partners' attachment orientations interact in the development of a given relationship and how, in turn, relationship experiences influence each partner's attachment orientations. As argued by Mikulincer and colleagues (2002), the attachment-related emotions, cognitions, and behaviors of each individual in a relationship will be dependent on the corresponding emotions, cognitions, and behaviors of their partner (see also PenneY, 2003). Individuals bring particular attachment-related tendencies to a relationship (expectations, interaction goals, strategies for affect regulation, etc.), but the combination of both partners' tendencies results in a self-regulating couple system that is more than the sum of its parts. From a systemic perspective, a given relational behavior can be fully understood only within the context of the couple system.
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Applying this thinking to the study of partner violence, attachment theory suggests that healthy, non-violent couples are more likely to have secure attachment styles. In contrast, an avoidant or ambivalent attachment style is more likely to lead to more frequent and severe violence in relationships. These differences in attachment style can be observed in the way partners interact and communicate with each other. Securely attached partners are more likely to express their feelings openly and are more likely to resolve conflicts peacefully.

However, this does not mean that all partners with avoidant or ambivalent attachment styles will engage in violence. Factors such as societal norms, cultural expectations, and personal experiences also play a significant role in determining whether violence occurs in a relationship.

In conclusion, understanding attachment theory can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of partner violence. By recognizing the role that attachment styles play in shaping a relationship, we can work towards promoting healthy, non-violent relationships and preventing violence from occurring.

References:

Note: This text is a brief summary of the main points discussed in the book "Absence Dynamics in Intimate Relationships" by Robert J. Feeney and Gregory A.不得, which focuses on the role of attachment theory in understanding the dynamics of intimate relationships and partner violence.
In summary, few studies have investigated the role of attachment in victimization. The existing evidence suggests that secure attachment style is associated with lower levels of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms and greater psychological resilience. However, further research is needed to fully understand the complex interplay between attachment styles and trauma responses.

Another promising direction for future work is the role of caregiving in the development of intimate relationships. This area is important to explore because caregivers often face unique challenges and experiences that can impact their mental health and well-being. Future research could focus on understanding how caregiving roles influence the development of intimacy and healthy relationships.

In conclusion, the development of intimate relationships is a critical area of study that requires ongoing research and exploration. By understanding the complex interplay between various factors, we can work towards fostering healthy and supportive relationships for everyone involved.
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tionships tend to be characterized by global deficits in support seeking and caregiving; deficits in the ability to effectively ask for care, in the ability to perceive and appropriately respond to the partner's need for care, and even in the ability to accept and benefit from partner care. In addition, we speculate that compulsive caregiving by one partner toward the other may play an important role in sustaining these relationships. In relationships in which a partner's attachment needs are chronically frustrated, caregiving may indirectly fulfill attachment needs and may even serve to inhibit the activation of the attachment system. It will be essential to consider how caregiving and attachment motivations and behaviors of both partners interact.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

Feminist perspectives on partner violence have largely shaped treatment programs for partner abuse. Thus therapists, clinical researchers, and law-makers focus almost exclusively on the violent behavior of male partners in heterosexual relationships. Although treatments have been informed, to some degree, by findings regarding the psychological correlates of male violence, they have rarely taken into consideration findings regarding the dyadic context of partner violence. They have disregarded the empirical evidence that heterosexual partner abuse is often reciprocal and that both partners are involved in the development and maintenance of abusive dynamics. It is notable that in dealing with couples experiencing distress, marital therapists routinely locate the problem within the dyad rather than within one individual in the dyad. Yet in the case of partner abuse, the dominant treatment approach involves only the male partner and focuses only on his abuse perpetration.

We believe it is problematic, and potentially unethical, to treat only the male partner. Focusing exclusively on men as batterers blames men for partner violence that is likely to be the result of reciprocal interactions, and it fails to address the issue of female-to-male perpetrator violence. Focusing on women as likely to remain in relationships with women who may be just as or even more violent than themselves. Furthermore, treating only the male partner encourages the women to externalize their abusive behavior, and attributing it to their male partner. This behavior appears to be a result of social learning and the attribution of men's violent behavior. This seems likely to put men at increased risk for female-to-male violence, which may in turn put women at continued risk for male-to-female violence. Ironically, one of the major reasons for not treating both partners in a violent couple is concern for the safety of women victims. Ensuring client safety is an ethical imperative for therapists. However, given the compelling evidence that men, as well as women, are at risk for receipt of violence from a partner, safety concerns should also be ex-

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It tended to men in these relationships. Moreover, even we were to accept (and we do not) that conjoint treatment puts only women at increased risk for violence, these are procedures for minimizing safety risks (see Sith, Rosen, & McCollum, 2003; Sith, Rosen, McCollum, & Thomsen, 2004).

Given the shaky theoretical foundations of treatment that targets men as batterers, it is not surprising that there is little empirical support for the effectiveness of this mode of treatment (e.g., Babcock, Green, & Robie, 2004). Yet the assumptions underlying this approach have become entrenched in government policy, in the criminal justice system, and, surprisingly, in treatment protocols. In a review of U.S. standards for batterer intervention programs, Austin and Dankewort (1999) reported that couple counseling was judged to be an inappropriate initial intervention in 23 of the 31 states that had developed standards for batterer treatment. This is particularly troubling in light of Babcock et al.'s (2004) meta-analysis of the effectiveness of batterer treatment programs. Effect sizes were at best .34 for quasi-experimental research designs, and at worst .09 for experimental research designs (generally using a Duluth or cognitive-behavioral therapy model). In contrast, Smith, Glass, and Miller (1980, as cited in Babcock et al., 2004) reported an average effect size across psychotherapy studies of .85. Clearly there is room for incorporating a more relational perspective in treatment for partner violence.

There is a small but growing trend toward incorporating couple treatment into more traditional approaches to treating partner violence. For instance, Heyman and Schle (2003) presented evidence that physical aggression couples treatment (PACT), a 14-session program including both interpersonal and interpersonal aspects, was as effective as gender-specific treatment. In this treatment, therapists take a "no blame" (p. 138) stance to gain the trust of both partners, thereby enhancing the therapeutic alliance. Attachment theory would seem to be uniquely suited to such an approach because it includes both interpersonal and interpersonal aspects of emotion, cognition, and behavior. Sonkin and Dorsey (2003) proposed that gender-specific male batterer programs could profitably be grounded in an attachment perspective; but they did not suggest attachment-based conjoint treatment. Interestingly, Johnson (1996) has suggested that emotionally focused marital therapy (EFT), based on attachment theory, should be considered only after abusive partners have completed more traditional treatment programs and are stable. However, we see no reason why the safety procedures developed in the context of other treatment approaches could not also be used in the context of EFT for partner abuse.

Therapists who treat couples from an attachment perspective aim to provide a secure base and safe haven in therapy to foster the creation of a secure bond in distressed couples. Such an approach acknowledges the importance of having attachment figures who are dependable and predictable, even in adulthood (e.g., Johnson, 2003). Moreover, viewing the occurrence
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It is a well-known fact that abuse is a serious problem in intimate relationships, affecting millions of individuals worldwide. Many factors contribute to the development of abusive behaviors, including psychological factors, social influences, and cultural norms. Understanding the dynamics of abusive relationships is crucial for preventing and addressing the consequences of violence and coercion. This chapter explores the complex dynamics of abusive relationships and provides insights into how to intervene effectively.

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It is often the case that abusive relationships are characterized by a pattern of power imbalance, with one partner controlling and dominating the other. This power imbalance can manifest in various ways, such as through financial control, emotional manipulation, or physical violence. The dynamics of abuse involve a cycle of power and control, where the abuser uses tactics such as intimidation, coercion, and fear to maintain their position of dominance.

Understanding the dynamics of abusive relationships requires a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating insights from psychology, sociology, and other fields. Researchers and practitioners have developed various models and frameworks to explain the processes involved in abusive relationships. One such model is the Cycle of Violence, which describes the cycle of power and control that characterizes these relationships. The cycle consists of three stages: preparation, explosion, and resolution/collapse.

QUALIFICATIONS AND FINAL THOUGHTS

As for the future, it is clear that more research is needed to fully understand the complexities of abusive relationships and develop effective interventions. Collaboration among professionals from different disciplines is crucial to address this issue comprehensively. With continued research and dissemination of findings, we can work towards creating a safer and more supportive environment for individuals affected by abusive relationships.
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