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UNDERSTANDING CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR: IDENTIFYING PSYCHOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DOMESTICALLY VIOLENT OFFENDERS AND NON-OFFENDERS.

Numerous theories have been formulated in an attempt to explain the psychological differences between violent offenders and non-offenders. Constructs that have emerged as salient in such scholarship include anger expression, social problem solving, locus of control, attitudes toward women, impulsivity and temper. Although a considerable amount of sound research has been conducted into 'violent offending' per se, in general terms, research into family and domestic violence is yet to be as methodologically and theoretically rigorous. In an attempt to link these areas of work, and to identify the risk factors (or 'criminogenic needs') of specific sub-groups of male offenders, this research compared: (1) property offenders, (2) those who had been 'violent against strangers', (3) those who had been 'violent against intimates' and (4) non-offenders. In an effort to address one of the shortcomings of prior research, potentially confounding variables such as age, education level, cultural identity, and socio-economic status were controlled for in an effort to arrive at more meaningful representations of each offender group's specific psychological deficits and abundances. A number of differences were highlighted between the groups, but few of these remained after demographic covariates were controlled for. This paper details the nature of these differences, while also proposing that future studies adopt a similar methodology.

INTRODUCTION

Much of the previous research into domestic violence has been based on the assertion that violence committed against ex or current partners is 'different' from other forms of violence (Date & Ronan, 2000; Moffitt, Krueger, Caspi, & Fagan, 2000). Specifically, violence within the home is thought to have different origins and consequences to other violent crime (Coker, Smith, McKeown & King, 2000; Holtzworth-Munroe, 2000). Despite the assumption that *domestic violence* is different from *generalist violence*, very few studies have compared the characteristics of domestically violent men and other offenders e.g., those who offend against strangers. Although a significant amount of research has been conducted into violent crime, much of this research has excluded domestic violence. Consistent with this separation, domestically violent men are subject to quite distinct processing pathways in many western correctional systems (eg family violence courts, intervention program types etc) and the rationales for this separation are often less than clear (Fagan & Wexler, 1987; Holder, 2001).

In recognition of the lack of research comparing domestically violent men to other offenders, this study sought to identify the psychological differences between four particular groups of participants. The four groups explored are: (1) property offenders, (2) those who are violent against strangers (VAS), (3) those who are violent against intimates (VAI) and (4) non-offenders. The aim of creating and comparing offender 'sub-types' is to increase understanding about domestic violence and also to help identify the constructs that may be associated with that type of violent behaviour (i.e. the specific 'criminogenic needs' of each offending sub-group).

The research and theory reviewed consistently highlight a number of psychological constructs that are relevant to violent behaviour. Specifically, research findings indicate that these offenders are more likely than non-offenders to have an external locus of control, deficits in social problem-solving skills, high levels of impulsivity, and difficulty controlling the outward expression of anger. As such, these constructs will be examined in the current research. In addition, the groups examined will be matched on the demographic variables of age, education level, socio-economic status and cultural identity in order to eliminate the effect of these factors on the results obtained.

Researchers have suggested that domestically violent men are unable to successfully resolve problematic situations non-violently (Holtzworth-Munroe, 1992; Nezu, 1985). When their interactions with their female partners are examined, relative to other groups, physically abusive men become more dismissive, condescending and aloof while decreasing their problem-solving behaviour (i.e., the generation of solutions, cooperation and communication) (Margolin, John, & Glerberman, 1988). Further, research has found that domestically violent men are more limited (than non-violent men) in the range of alternatives they were able to generate or employ in order to solve interpersonal problems. In addition, domestically violent men have been shown to rely more on physical or verbal aggression than their non-violent counterparts (Hollin & Palmer, 2000). Although some significant differences in problem-solving ability have been identified between those who are violent toward strangers and those who are domestically violent, the few studies conducted in the area have demonstrated that the correlates of domestic violence are similar to those of violence against strangers.

In order to investigate this further, Date and Ronan (2000) administered a battery of psychological instruments to three sub-groups of incarcerated men: non-violent men (n= 20), those convicted of domestic violence (n= 20) and those convicted of a violent offence against a stranger (n= 19). Despite a lack of differences between the violent sub-groups, the researchers reported significant differences between each of the violent offender sub-groups and the non-offending group. That is, non-offenders were more likely than all of the offending sub-groups to employ more effective problem-solving.

In addition to social problem solving skills, researchers have also focused on the broader social skills of violent and non-violent men. The results of these studies were reviewed in a meta-analysis by Holtzworth-Munroe (1992). The review concluded that, rather than being deficient in social or problem-solving skills per se, domestically violent men were likely to find particular *types* of issues problematic (i.e., those directly relating to their partner and/or relationship) (Holtzworth-Munroe & Anglin, 1991; Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994).

Another risk factor that has been implicated in the perpetration of domestic violence is an external locus of control. It has been suggested that domestically violent men are more likely than other violent men to attribute their behaviour to external forces such as their partner. That is, domestically violent men are *less* likely than other violent men and non-violent men to have a generalised expectancy or belief that their life outcomes are under their personal control. Empirical results in this area indicate that domestic violence occurs in response to the individual's perceived lack of control over their environment and other individuals (DuCette, Wolk & Soucar, 1972; Rouse, 1984; Theodore, 1992; Umberson, Anderson, Glick & Shapiro 1998).

In a study investigating this contention, Theodore (1992) investigated the relationship between locus of control and the level of violence in marriages. The researcher admin-

istered the *Conflict Tactics Scale* (Straus, 1979) and the *Locus of Control Scale* (Rotter, 1966) to 120 participants from the general public. A comparison was made between 60 abusive couples and non-abusive couples. The researcher found that an external locus of control was directly related to hostile and physically abusive marital relationships.

Similar to the construct of locus of control, impulsivity has rarely been studied directly in investigations related to domestic violence, however the few studies conducted have arrived at some noteworthy conclusions. A comprehensive meta-analysis conducted by Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) indicated that violent offenders who victimise non-intimates are impulsive, while those who victimise intimates are not impulsive. The results of the meta-analysis led the writers to conclude that impulsive individuals are often volatile, and therefore more likely to 'act out' in public places. On the other hand, non-impulsive individuals are more controlled and often let their emotions simmer until they explode (Hershorn & Rosenbaum, 1991; Moffitt et al., 2000). Subsequent researchers have argued that domestically violent men are violent in order to avoid aversive emotions and consequences within the home, and tend to have more control over where and when they exert their force (Tweed & Dutton, 1998).

In a longitudinal study, Moffitt et al. (2000) examined how general crime and partner abuse are related to self-constraint, a concept analogous to self-control. 'The Dunedin study' consists of a starting sample of 938 participants (although this number of participants has reduced with every subsequent testing) from a birth cohort of both males and females, in the New Zealand City of Dunedin. Moffitt et al. (2000) found that criminal behaviour in the individuals they examined was predicted by lack of self-constraint, as measured by the *Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire* (MPQ; Tellegen & Waller, 2000). While self-constraint had a negative relationship with both general crime and partner abuse, lower self-constraint predicted general crime more effectively than partner abuse.

As an extension of the idea of deficits in self constraint being influential in offending behaviour, it has been suggested that offending sub-groups are likely to express their frustrations differently. There have been a number of studies investigating anger expression among domestically violent men, those who offend against strangers and non-offenders. In a comprehensive and well-designed study, Maiuro, Cahn, Vitaliano, Wagner and Zegree (1988) compared four samples of men on measures of anger expression and hostility. The four groups were: domestically violent men, general assaulters, mixed assaulters and non-violent men. The results of the study indicated that the violent sub-groups scored significantly higher than the non-violent group on anger and hostility measures. Further, the domestically violent men and generally violent men scored similarly on anger and hostility. As such, it appears from this study that anger is not of any more pertinence to domestically violent men than it is to generally violent men.

Barbour, Eckhardt, Davison and Kassinove. (1998) employed the STAXI as a measure of anger expression of maritally violent, maritally discordant-nonviolent and maritally satisfied-nonviolent men. The anger-control and anger-in sub-scales were the main focus of the study. The researchers observed that maritally violent men were more likely to express their anger outwardly, and less likely to control their anger, than the other two groups. The authors suggested that social skill deficits and an inability to generate competent alternatives to violence when feeling angry, may contribute to violent behaviour, rather than anger per se. This was because, although the males in the maritally discordant-nonviolent group also experienced conflict within their relationship, they were more adept at resolving issues without the use of violence.

In addition to differences in anger expression, it has also been suggested via feminist theories that domestic violence is a unique type of violence because perpetrators of domestic violence use violence as a tool to ensure the subordination of their partner and the maintenance of control (Date & Ronan, 2000; Dutton, 1995; Ptacek, 1998; Smith, 1990; Walker, 1989). In contrast to the commonly held belief that domestically violent men have poor impulse control, feminist theories posit that domestically violent men are always in control and that the selectivity within their behaviour is highly indicative of choice and control. Along these lines, a number of investigations have been conducted into the role of attitudes toward women in the perpetration of domestic violence. Although researchers have predicted that abusive partners would have more conservative attitudes than their non-abusive peers, the results have been mixed, with some studies suggesting that domestically violent offenders have more traditional attitudes toward women than other offending sub-groups and non-offenders (see Parrott & Zeichner, 2003; Telch & Lindquist, 1984), and others finding no significant differences (see Niedig, Collins, & Friedman 1986; Rouse, 1984; Sugarman & Frankel, 1996).

The *Attitudes Toward Women Scale* (ATW; Spence & Helmreich, 1972) employed in the current research has also been used in a number of studies measuring the sex-role attitudes of domestically violent males. Haj-Yahia (2003) employed the ATW scale in a study examining the attitudes of Arab husbands in Israel. A battery of questionnaires was administered to a sample of 500 married men. The results indicated that men's patriarchal attitudes toward women were the strongest predictor of beliefs that violence towards their partner was acceptable. Men who had more traditional attitudes toward women were also more likely to justify violence toward women, blame their partner for the violence against her, and avoid taking responsibility for the violent actions.

Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981) also employed the ATW scale as a measure of sex-role attitudes in a sample of 52 abused wives and 20 abusive husbands referred to a domestic violence treatment centre. The ATW scale was administered to both the males and females in the sample and compared to data collected from 20 couples with 'non-violent' marriages and 20 couples with 'non-violent but dysfunctional' relationships. The results indicated no significant differences between the groups on attitudes toward women.

As discussed, participants from the offender sample in the current study were allocated to a group according to the specific type of violence committed. The aim of the study was to examine if offenders who perpetrate violence against those they know (i.e., intimates/domestic partners) differ from those who commit it against strangers and property offenders. The study examined how the sub-groups of violent offenders are attitudinally and psychologically different from a sample of non-offenders, after matching and/or statistically controlling for the effects of relevant demographic variables. It was hypothesised that, after matching for gender, age, occupational prestige, weekly earnings, educational level and cultural identity, offenders who are violent against intimates would differ psychologically from those who are violent toward strangers, and non-offenders, on the constructs of social problem-solving, anger in, anger out, anger control, impulsivity, temper, attitudes toward women and locus of control.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Data were collected from two broad samples for the purposes of this research. One consisted of members of the general public who reported never having been convicted of a criminal offence. The offender sample was recruited during their assessment to undertake a court-mandated 'Anger Management' Program through Corrections Victoria (the state's justice department). All participants in the violent offender sample were sentenced to one of three community-based dispositions.¹ The non-offender sample was a purposive sample, recruited for their collective similarities to the violent offender criterion group on the variables of age, education level, average weekly earnings, occupational prestige, and cultural identity.

The offender sample was divided into three separate groups. As such, the four groups examined for the purpose of the research were: (1) those who committed crimes against property (2) those who offended against strangers, the 'violent against strangers' (VAS) group (3) those who committed violent acts against their partner, the 'violent against intimates' (VAI) group and (4) the non-offender sample. The mean age for participants who had been 'property offenders' was 25 years and 4 months (SD= 8 years and 7 months; n=30), while the mean age of participants who were 'violent against strangers' and 'violent against intimates' was 26 years and 4 months (SD= 9 years and 1 month; n= 99) and 30 years and 3 months (SD= 7 years and 7 months; n= 43) respectively. The mean age of the non-offender sample was 26 years and 6 months (SD= 9 years and 1 month; n= 100).

MEASURES

Potential members of the non-offender sample were asked filter questions regarding previous criminal convictions, and prior participation in anger management programs, in order to ascertain their suitability for the study. If participants admitted attending these groups they were prevented from further participation. Both offenders and non-offenders were asked questions relating to their current age, highest education level completed, usual occupation, cultural identity, and suburb of residence.

OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE SCALE

Occupational Prestige, as measured by Daniel's *Prestige Scale* (1983), was used as an indicator of socioeconomic status. The scale contains 1120 occupations which have been scored (1-7) according to their prestige. High prestige occupations require educational qualifications, have a high earning capacity, and reflect power, privilege, authority, autonomy, influence, fame and/or status. A low score indicates high occupational prestige e.g., judge = 1.2, and vice versa e.g., cleaner = 6.6.

In addition to occupational prestige, participants' suburb of residence was also used as another indication of socio-economic status. The suburbs obtained for each participant were then cross-referenced with the 2001 *Australian Bureau of Statistics* Census figures in order to obtain the average weekly earnings by suburb. Each participant was assigned an average net weekly earning rate according to the suburb they resided in.

During the second part of the research, all participants were asked to complete a number of scales. These were: the *State Trait Anger Expression Inventory* (STAXI; Spielberger, 1988), the *Self-Control Scale* (SCS; Grasmick, Tittle, Bursik & Arneklev, 1993), the *Attitudes Toward Women Scale* (ATW; Spence & Helmreich, 1972), the

Locus of Control of Behaviour Scale (LCB; Craig, Franklin & Andrews, 1984), and the *Social Problem Solving Scale-Revised* (SPSI-R; D'Zurilla & Nezu, 1990).

THE STATE TRAIT ANGER EXPRESSION INVENTORY (STAXI)

The *State Trait Anger Expression Inventory* (STAXI) contains 44 questions making up 8 sub-scales. The 'anger in', 'anger out' and 'anger control' sub-scales were used in this research, and each contains 8 items. The STAXI manual contains several population norms for use in clinical work and research. The male adult norms were used for the purposes of this research. T-scores are recommended for use in research and were employed in the current study.

THE SELF-CONTROL SCALE (SCS)

The *Self-Control Scale* (SCS) measures six constructs: impulsivity, risk seeking, a preference for simple over complex tasks, a preference for physical over mental activities, self-centredness and temper. Although the entire SCS was administered to each of the participants, the four-item *impulsivity* scale was the only sub-scale utilised in this study.

ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN SCALE

The *Attitudes Toward Women* (ATW) scale is a 22-item instrument containing statements about the rights and roles of women in such areas as vocation, education, intellectual development, dating behaviour and etiquette, social behaviour and marital relationships. A high score indicates liberal attitudes toward women, while a low score indicates conservative attitudes (Scott & Tetreault, 1987).

THE LOCUS OF CONTROL OF BEHAVIOUR SCALE (LCB)

The *Locus of Control of Behaviour Scale* (LCB) contains 17-items and produces one total score. A high score indicates an external locus of control. The maximum score is 85, while the minimum is 0 (Craig et al., 1984).

THE SOCIAL PROBLEM SOLVING INVENTORY-REVISED (SPSI-R)

The *Social Problem Solving Inventory-Revised* (SPSI-R) is a 70-item scale that measures 5 constructs, however only the sub-scales of *positive* and *negative orientation* are utilised in the current research in order to assess participants' perceived ability to adjust and respond to problems that occur in life. The positive and negative problem orientation scales contain 5 and 10 items respectively.

PROCEDURE

Data for the violent offender samples were obtained via interviews conducted by six facilitators of an Anger Management Program. The researchers were among these. In order to ensure a standardised approach, all data collectors had a background in psychology and received training in the interview process. Data for the non-offenders were obtained via interviews with participants who met the specified eligibility and demographic criteria. All questionnaires were administered verbally to all the participants.

After collecting relevant demographic information, the researchers administered the aforementioned questionnaires. Following data collection, the offenders were categorised according to their *most recent* index offence. Allocation of participants into each of the groups according to their most recent offence was possible because the researcher was given access to a current summary of the charges resulting in their

referral to the Anger Management Program. As such, the events leading up to offending behaviour for the participants' most recent index offence were available.

When categorising offenders into sub-groups, a distinction was made between interpersonal violence and property crime. As such, participants who had committed only crimes against property were allocated into a different group. The remaining 'violent' offenders were categorised according to their relationship with the victim i.e., those who were related to or had an intimate relationship with the victim prior to the offence and those who had never met the victim previously. The definitions for these offence types were taken from the psychological literature regarding intimate and non-intimate violence, as well as the *Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987* (Vic) S 3(1).

The four categories arrived at in the study were:

- (a) ('Property offenders': participants who stole, damaged or destroyed property as the primary part of their most recent offence;
- (b) (Offenders who were 'Violent Against Strangers' (VAS): participants who offended violently against individuals they did not previously know in the context of an intimate relationship or against someone they had not previously met;
- (c) ('Violent Against Intimates' offenders (VAI): participants who offended violently against their partner, wife or ex-wife;
- (d) 'Non-offenders': no history of offending.

A standardised procedure for allocation into the three offending groups was ensured via the use of a second independent rater. She was able to categorise the offender sample into the three sub-groups with a 95.62% concordance rate.

RESULTS

Prior to statistical calculations, the data were screened in order to ensure the assumptions for the ensuing tests were met. Some of the participants from the 'property offender', 'violent against strangers' (VAS) and 'violent against intimates' (VAI) groups did not complete all five questionnaires, as the Social Problem Solving Inventory-Revised and Locus of Control of Behaviour scales were added to the battery at a later date. In order to account for the discrepancy between the sample sizes, two sets of calculations were performed, one in order to screen the variables of 'anger-control', 'anger-out', 'anger-in', temper, attitudes toward women and impulsivity, and another including the variables of negative problem orientation, positive problem orientation and locus of control (which had a smaller sample size). Multivariate outliers were deleted from the data set, leaving the sample sizes at 30 'property offenders', 98 'VAS' participants, 43 'VAI' participants and 100 non-offenders.

As discussed, efforts were made to match offenders and non-offenders on the demographic variables of age, socio-economic status, education level and cultural identity. The multivariate analyses, reported below, were conducted following an examination of the distribution of the demographic factors across all sub-groups (i.e., whether they had successfully been matched). As such, the multivariate analyses included a number of demographic variables as co-variables.

The descriptive statistics were examined for each of the dependent variables by group. These are detailed below.

Attempts to match the offending and non-offending groups are likely to have resulted in less variance between the groups on the demographic variables, however it is uncertain whether the groups had in fact been adequately matched. In order to explore

whether attempts to match were successful, a MANOVA was conducted to examine for group differences on the continuous variables of age, occupational prestige, education level and average weekly earnings. Further, a chi-square test of independence was performed in order to examine the association between the categorical variables of cultural identity and group membership. The MANOVA calculations indicated that, despite attempts to match the groups on the aforementioned demographic variables, a significant difference remained between the groups on the variables of education level and occupational prestige. The demographic variable of cultural identity is a categorical variable with eight levels. A chi-square statistic calculated in order to examine the association between group membership and cultural identity was not significant, χ^2 (18, N=271)= 17.70, $p= .476$. The non-significant chi-square result indicated no significant associations between group membership and cultural identity, therefore the offender and non-offender groups were successfully matched on the demographic variable of cultural identity. As such, despite differences between the groups on the variables of occupational prestige and education level, they were successfully matched on age, cultural identity and average weekly earnings.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables by Group.

Variable (score out of)	Property Offenders ⁺		'Violent Against Strangers' [‡]	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Anger control(/100)	33.80	10.06	38.81	11.70
Anger out (/100)	61.73	9.52	57.19	10.58
Anger in (/100)	56.67	10.36	55.79	9.21
Ppo (/20)	12.67	4.23	12.91	4.19
Npo (/20)	13.56	9.49	22.55	8.38
Loc (/85)	28.06	8.66	28.43	10.92
Impulsivity (/16)	9.80	3.22	8.53	2.87
Temper (/16)	10.57	3.91	8.81	3.50
Atw (/88)	59.70	8.84	59.67	10.35
	'Violent Against Intimate' [^]		Non-Offenders [#]	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Anger control(/100)	34.95	8.84	40.24	12.15
Anger out (/100)	37.77	9.08	55.04	11.02
Anger in (/100)	55.58	8.28	54.28	8.49
Ppo (/20)	13.05	3.98	12.16	3.44
Npo (/20)	12.65	10.29	12.40	7.32
Loc (/85)	26.80	11.20	26.62	10.10
Impulsivity (/16)	9.19	2.91	8.65	2.66
Temper (/16)	9.19	3.23	8.53	3.16
Atw (/88)	55.05	7.95	57.60	12.89

Ppo= Positive problem Orientation

Npo= Negative problem orientation

Loc= Locus of Control

Atw= Attitudes toward women

+ = n of property offenders is 30, with the exception of Loc, Npo and Ppo measures, for which n = 18

* = n of VAS offenders is 98, with the exception of Loc Npo, and Ppo measures, for which n = 59.

^ = n of VAI offenders is 43, with the exception of Loc, Npo and Ppo measures, for which n = 23.

= n of non-offender sample is 100.

N.B: Although Anger out, Anger in and Anger control sub-scales are out 32, the means recorded above are out of 100 because the scores used for calculations were t-scores for reasons outlined earlier.

Subsequent analyses were conducted taking into account the demographic variables that the groups were not matched on. Two between-subjects multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) were employed in order to account for the uneven sample sizes. The first included the variables measuring anger expression, attitudes toward women and self-control scores, while another was performed for the variables of positive problem orientation, negative problem orientation and locus of control.

After statistically controlling for occupational prestige and education level, the multivariate effect of group membership was not significant for the variables of anger control, anger out, anger in, temper, attitudes toward women and impulsivity, $F(18,786) = 1.38, p = .135, \eta^2 = .03$. Similarly, the variables of positive problem orientation, negative problem orientation and locus of control also had a non-significant multivariate effect, $F(9,570) = .660, p = .745, \eta^2 = .01$.

Although no multivariate effects were revealed, while controlling for the demographic variables of education level and occupational prestige, univariate effects were inspected. Table 2 contains the results of these analyses, including eta squared and power statistics.

Table 2. Simple Group Effects for the Dependent Variables, While Statistically Controlling for between group differences Education Level and Occupational Prestige.

Variable	F	df1	df2	p	η^2	Power
Anger control	1.39	3	265	.245	.016	.065
Anger out	0.08	3	265	.969	.001	.065
Anger in	0.82	3	265	.481	.009	.228
Impulsivity	1.19	3	265	.315	.013	.317
Temper	0.96	3	265	.414	.011	.260
Atw	3.59	3	265	.014	.039	.787
Ppo	1.26	3	190	.289	.020	.334
Npo	0.17	3	190	.916	.003	.081
Loc	0.28	3	190	.837	.004	.104

Table 2 illustrates that, after matching for age, cultural identity and average weekly earnings, and statistically controlling for education level and occupational prestige there were no significant differences between property offenders, 'Violent Against Stranger', 'Violent Against Intimates' and the non-offenders on the 'anger in', 'anger control', 'anger out' sub-scales of the STAXI, the negative and positive problem orientation sub-scales of the SPSI-R, the impulsivity and temper sub-scales of the SCS and the locus of control total score of the LCB. There was however, a significant difference between the groups on the total score on the attitudes toward women scale. Scheffe post-hoc tests revealed that those who were violent against intimates ($p = .033$) had more conservative attitudes toward women than the non-offenders.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the psychological characteristics of domestically violent men and to compare them to those who are violent against strangers, property offenders and non-violent men. The psychological constructs examined were: anger expression, temper, attitudes toward women, impulsivity, locus of control and social problem-solving abilities. In addition, in a design feature that many prior studies have not included, the demographic variables of socio-economic status, education level, cultural identity and age were controlled for in order to eliminate their contribution to the observed differences between the groups on the various dependent variables.

The results of study two indicated that, after matching for the demographic variables of cultural identity, age and average weekly earnings, and statistically controlling for education level and occupational prestige, there were no significant differences between property offenders, VAS offenders, VIS offenders and the non-offenders on the

'anger in', 'anger control', 'anger out' sub-scales of the *State Trait Anger Expression Inventory*, the negative and positive problem orientation sub-scales of the *Social Problem Solving Inventory-Revised*, the impulsivity and temper sub-scales of the *Self-Control Scale* and the locus of control total score of the *Locus of Control of Behaviour*. There was however, a significant difference between the groups on attitudes toward women, as measured by the *Attitudes Toward Women Scale*. Specifically, the domestically violent offenders held significantly more conservative attitudes toward women than the non-offender sample.

The results of this study challenge several notions about the aetiology of domestic violence. First, the results do not support the idea that domestic violence is perpetrated in response to the individual's perceived lack of control over those around them and their environment (DuCette, et al., 1972; Umberson et al., 1998). Rather, the study indicated that domestically violent men have similar perceptions of their control over the environment as men who are violent toward strangers and those who are not violent at all. Second, these results suggest that ideas regarding the way violence against strangers was previously thought to occur i.e., impulsively and in the spur of the moment, may require revision. After considering these findings, it is suggested that men who are violent toward their partner are impulsive because they see no reason to exert control over their emotions. While those who offend outside the home against strangers may find it necessary to adhere to certain social rules or boundaries before employing violence, it is evident that these boundaries may not be in place for domestically violent men. The intimate nature of the relationship between partners and the protection afforded by the privacy of the family home may mean that the abuser perceives less of a need to employ other strategies before resorting to violence.

Third, the results of the current study challenge the long-held belief that VAS offending is likely to occur as a result of impulsive or under-controlled actions arising from frustration or perceived provocation. In contrast, the data suggest that VAS offenders are able to control their anger to a greater extent than VAI offenders. Although these results differ from the majority of the studies reviewed above (Barbour et al., 1998; Margolin et al., 1988; Parrott & Zeichner, 2003), they concur with those of Maiuro et al. (1988). Maiuro et al. (1988) found that, although violent sub-groups scored significantly higher than non-violent men on measures of anger expression, domestically violent men did not differ from generally violent men. A possible reason for the similarity of results is that the researchers also matched the groups examined on the demographic variables of age, race and socio-economic status, while the other studies reviewed did not. Further, the researchers employed similar criteria in their categorisation of offenders into maritally violent, generally violent and non-violent groups as the current study i.e., use of the index offence to categorise offenders into groups

Finally, the study did find, as suggested, that domestically violent offenders held significantly more conservative attitudes toward women than the non-offender sample. These results support the contention that domestic violence is unique because it emanates from patriarchal attitudes and cultural values. The current study found that the other interpersonally violent group, the 'violent against strangers' (VAS) offenders were in fact less conservative in their attitudes toward women than non-offenders. It may be that men's conservative attitudes toward women lead them to believe that women are weaker and less able to defend themselves if faced with intimidating or aggressive behaviour from their partner, or that conservative beliefs about relationships lead to increased frustration when women do not adhere to traditional roles.

It was evident that the interpersonal offenders (i.e., 'violent against strangers' (VAS) and 'violent against intimates' (VAI) offenders) were somewhat difficult to distinguish from each other at the coding stage. This may have simply been because both groups of

offenders employed interpersonal violence, and/or also because of the methods employed to categorise the interpersonal offenders into sub-groups. While the property offenders were easily distinguishable from interpersonal violent offenders, the limitations of the information available to the researchers (i.e., about the most recent offence) made the allocation of interpersonal violent offenders into sub-groups more difficult. The criteria employed allowed for a degree of error, and was unable to acknowledge the very real possibility that some offenders may demonstrate versatility over time.

There are a number of other possible reasons for the differences between the findings of previous research and the current study. First, the current study examined a number of psychological constructs pertaining to participants' general life. That is, the participants surveyed were not identified as domestically violent prior to data collection. Therefore, they were not questioned about their beliefs, attitudes and abilities in the specific context of their intimate relationship. It may be that, while domestically violent men may not differ to non-violent men with regard to their *general* beliefs, similarities may diminish if examined specifically relating to their intimate relationship. For example, although all participants may express their anger with similar frequency and intensity, domestically violent offenders may be more likely to feel frustrated and angry in certain contexts e.g., the family home. As Barbour et al. (1998) suggested, domestically violent offenders may be more likely to feel hurt, jealousy, and fear in relation to their family or partner, and therefore feel unable to control their emotions. Further, they may be unable to generate adequate alternatives to violence when angry or express their anger in a socially desirable manner.

Second, it may be that, although 'violent against intimates' (VAI) offenders did not score differently to 'violent against strangers' (VAS) and non-offenders on the constructs as measured by the psychological tests, this may not correspond to their behaviour in real life situations. That is, although they may know what is desired theoretically, they may find it more difficult to implement these behaviours in real-life situations. Although offenders' orientation toward problem-solving may not be as dysfunctional as previously believed, they may experience difficulty taking the proactive steps necessary to solve their problems successfully.

TREATMENT AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Despite slight variations between the 'violent against intimates' (VAI) and 'violent against intimates' (VAS) offender groups, the results indicate that the 'interpersonal offender' groups were indistinct. This may be because all forms of interpersonal violence share the same risk factors or correlates (Farrington, 1994). That is, offenders who are violent toward stranger or intimates may have similar psychological deficits and/or abundances, which impact on the likelihood of them perpetrating violence against other people. It may be, as suggested by Shields, McCall and Henneke (1998), that domestically violent men are not a specialised group of offenders. Rather, the previously existing schism between the 'domestic violence' and 'general crime' literatures meant that adequate comparisons between groups were not made. The results of the current study suggest that, if sub-groups of offenders are examined in the same study, while controlling for demographic variables, there are no significant group differences. It is suggested that the failure of many previous studies to control for demographic differences between offending and non-offending groups is likely to have contributed to some of the between group differences found by other researchers. The measures taken to control for these variables in the current study mean that the results may be more readily attributed to offending status, rather than demographic differ-

ences. Last, it is possible that the variables that distinguish between these offending sub-groups were not captured by this study.

It is suggested that this research has some implications for offender rehabilitation and future research endeavours. Specifically, the current research is able to play some part in bridging the gap between the domestic violence and general crime literatures by examining both types of violence in one study. Future research could further clarify the results of the current study by either providing support or challenging the findings.

Further, it is suggested that the rehabilitation and treatment of domestically violent offenders take a number of issues into consideration. First, rehabilitation of domestically violent offenders could focus on addressing their conservative attitudes toward women. It is suggested here that the beliefs and perceptions of domestically violent offenders and how they impact on their intimate relationships is also likely to influence the offenders' use of domestic violence. Second, treatment of domestically violent men could examine skills deficits in the specific context of their intimate relationship. For example, while domestically violent men may not have social problem solving or social skill deficits in general scenarios, they may find it more difficult to approach issues pertaining specifically to their intimate relationships. As already discussed, deficits specific to their relationships may be ascertained if assessment procedures elicit information about individuals' relationships, rather than general information about ability.

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ENDNOTE

- 1 Members of the violent offender sample had been sentenced to complete a Community Based Order (CBO), Intensive Corrections Order (ICO) or Combined Custody and Treatment Order. Community-based dispositions are non-custodial sanctions, which include multiple elements that can be tailored to the needs of the offender e.g., supervision, community service and program conditions. The orders are often imposed by judges and magistrates rather than imprisonment and are aimed at providing the offender with the opportunity to obtain treatment or rehabilitation for their behaviour. A treatment option in that case includes participation in Anger Management Programs.

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