

Interrupting the Cycle of Violence

Laura Henning & Nicole Sommer

Advised by: Susan Wolfgram, Ph.D. University of Wisconsin-Stout

Research Problem

- Research supports that 40-60% of women in violent relationships return to their abusive partners after leaving the domestic violence shelter (Herbert 1991; Lesser 1990; Strube 1988, as cited in Ben-Porat, A., & Itzhaky, H., 2008).
- Past research has found that there are many factors that affect the decisions women make in interrupting the cycle of violence; however, research does not focus specifically on what those factors are.

Research Question

What are the perspectives of domestic violence professionals on the most effective ways to interrupt the cycle of violence?

Hypothesis

We hypothesized that professionals in the field would support that women victims who encompass personal resources and organizational variables, such as participation and commitment in support programs, would have greater self-empowerment and higher life satisfaction, which in turn would help interrupt the cycle of violence.

Literature Review

Boonzaier and Harpe (2011) found that the women who reported having positive changes (from their partners having attended the intervention program) still felt that the program was not completely sufficient and did not confront the fundamental reasons for the abuse.

Nathanson, Rhatigan, & Shorey (2011) discovered that victims with a greater risk factor for both PTSD and depression, and who have increased shame and lesser alternatives, were linked with greater satisfaction in their relationship with the abuser, investments, and commitment. This increases the likelihood of the victim staying with a violent partner.

Lacey (2010) revealed that Black and Hispanic women were both negatively affected by emotional abuse and had a greater chance to leave when this mistreatment happened.

Bostock, Plumpton, & Pratt (2009) discovered that women were able to gain confidence and find safety away from domestic violence when they had support, empathy, understanding, and effective protection from family, friends, and social and health services.

Ben-Porat & Itzhaky (2008) found that when individual resources such as self-respect and empowerment were combined with involvement and dedication to the shelter, this related to higher levels of life fulfillment in women.

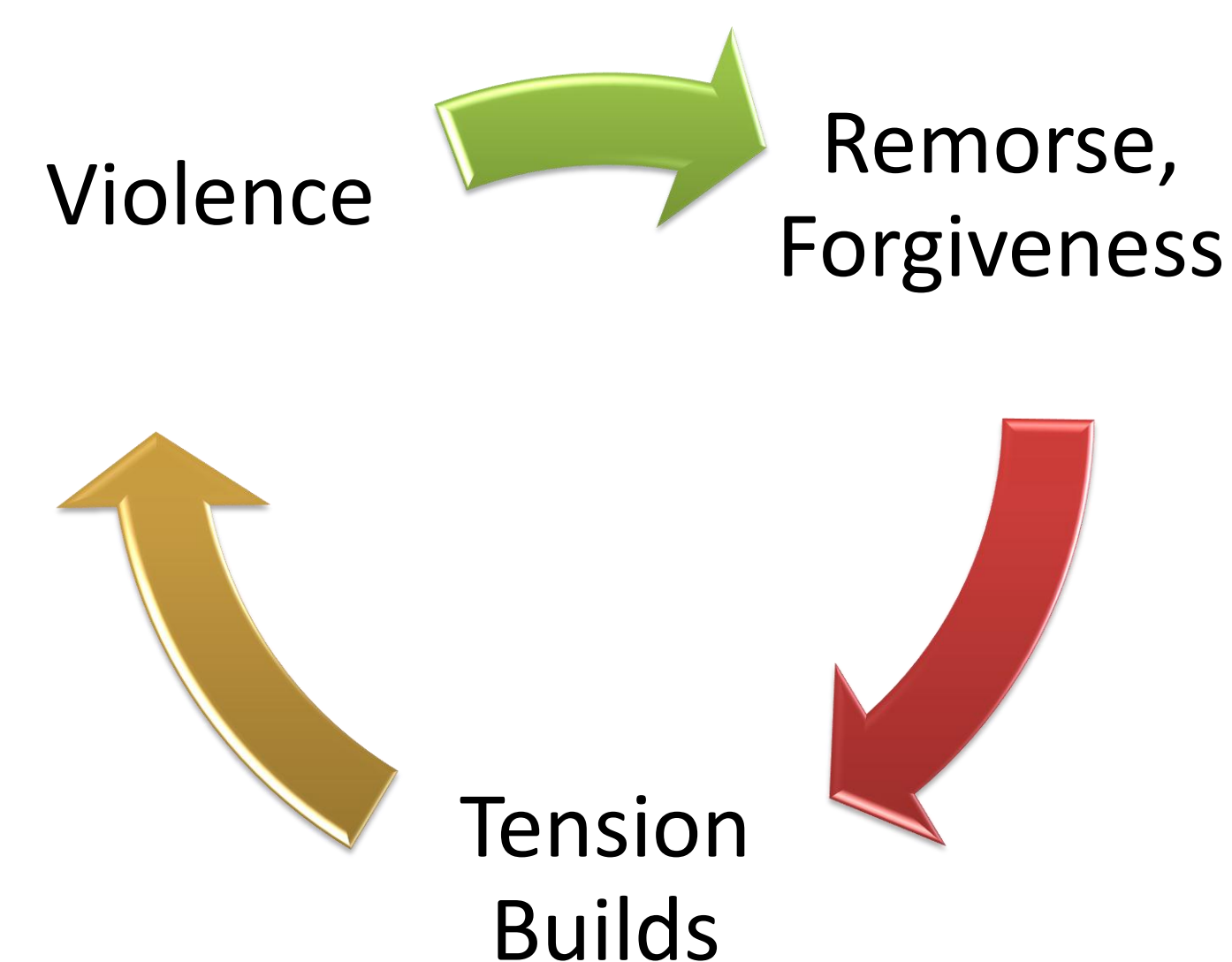
Theoretical Framework

The Family Ecology Theory (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2005) There are four levels to the environment: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. One of the assumptions of the theory is that when the environment changes, this has an effect on the family.

As applied to our study:

As applied to our study, the Family Ecology Theory would predict that there would be many factors in each of the four levels of environment that could influence the interruption of the cycle of violence. For example, the microsystem involves direct interactions between the family and people of importance, such as family members and friends, which could have a direct impact on the women's decision to interrupt the cycle of violence and perhaps leave her partner.

The Cycle of Violence



Methods

Participants: Three domestic violence professionals

Research Design: Non-random qualitative research, Cross-sectional, Purposive and Snowball sampling design

Procedure: Qualitative email interviews were sent to participants

Data Analysis Plan: Thematic analysis and member checking

Qualitative Interview Protocol

Initial Question: What are the most effective ways to interrupt the cycle of violence?

Sub-questions:

- Mental health therapies
- Participation and commitment to specific resources provided in DV shelters
- Ways to empower women
- The victim's personal resources
- Legal strategies
- Policy strategies

Findings

Most effective way to interrupt the cycle of violence:

- Early education/prevention
- Provide victim with basic necessities
- Goal = her and her children's safety
- Advocates

Mental health therapies:

- Can be important if they have access to them
- Used as a way for coping

Participation and commitment to specific resources provided in DV shelters:

- DV shelters are a great tool when leaving in a hurry
- Should not be forced

Ways to empower women:

- Encouragement from friend/survivor is best motivation
- Tell them they are not alone and have normal feelings
- Encourage them to make their own choices
- Remember only victim knows what's best for them and their family

The victim's personal resources:

- Finances is most important deciding factor for women to stay

Legal strategies:

- Victims need to be educated about the legal system
- Advocates can be there to help and support emotionally

Policy strategies:

- Victim's should be more informed on their rights

Implications

Practitioners

- Domestic violence education needs to be presented to children at a young age to help prevent these situations from occurring
- Mental health therapies need to be more financially available
- Domestic violence shelters need to have trained staff always available
- Advocates need to strive to help women accept self-empowerment
- Information and assistance on how women can keep their personal resources (valuables) needs to be readily available
- The legal system needs to be more "friendly" to women in violent relationships so they feel more confident in making their decisions
- Society needs to support women's empowerment

Future Research

- Qualitative interviews throughout the country
- Note any regional differences and cultural/ethnic differences
- Find participants with greater years of experience to receive a variety of view points
- Seek participants of different genders to eliminate odds of bias

Conclusion

Women who are in violent situations need support and assistance in order for them to interrupt their cycle of violence. If education was provided at an early age and more of their immediate resources were met, the cycle of violence may be more effectively disrupted.