

Intimate Partner Violence, Gender and Lethality: A Case Analysis of Two Fatalities

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Deaths caused by intimate partner violence (IPV) are an area of significant concern for advocates, practitioners, and experts. As part of collaborative community interventions to curb violence, the creation of multi-agency fatality review teams has shown effectiveness in reducing IPV and concomitant homicides. The following study is deviant case analysis of 2 female perpetrators within a multi-phasic fatality review of 22 felony cases of IPV resulting in homicide in a city in the southeastern United States. This study was designed to effectively gauge whether gender is a variable for those accused of felony murder as a result of IPV. Results indicate gender disparities for women, including inability to act as free agents within increasingly violent relationships; disparate characterization of violent women as more egregious than those of male counterparts within law enforcement and behavioral health and the pressing need for legal and therapeutic rehabilitative services provided to violent women offenders.

Deaths caused by intimate partner violence are an area of concern for advocates, practitioners, and experts. Globally, more than one third of all women are affected by physical or sexual violence (World Health Organization, 2013). Worldwide, intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most common type of violence against women, with nearly 40% of murdered women being killed by their partner (World Health Organization, 2013). In 2010, more than

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1,500 people were killed as a result of IPV in the United States (Catalano, 2013). Females made up 70% of victims killed by an intimate partner in 2007, a proportion that has changed very little since 1993 (Catalano, Smith, Snyder, & Rand, 2009). When you consider victimization by an intimate partner, 36% of women and 29% of men have been raped, stalked, or severely physically assaulted in their lifetime; nearly half of all men and women have experienced psychological abuse by an intimate partner (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). Decades of research have informed this social problem, yet in the United States more than 12 million men and women are negatively impacted by IPV each year (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011).

IPV remains a controversial topic among researchers and practitioners, as does the role of women in IPV especially as the focus shifts from women as victims toward an examination of their capacity to make independent choices in their relationships and in their use of violence against their partner. Our understanding of the etiology of IPV continues to evolve (Barner & Carney, 2011). Questions on what constitutes agency, responsibility, culpability for both victim and perpetrator, and within gender roles in IPV remain controversial. Women have played many roles in history and in the present, but exploration of women as perpetrators of IPV merits considerable further investigation (Carney & Barner, 2012). There is no possibility of a purely objective assessment of the perpetrator/victim roles in IPV. Even if it is conceded as some research suggests, that women and men engage in similar rates of IPV (Carney & Barner, 2012; Carney, Buttell, & Dutton, 2007; Dutton, 2012; Messinger, 2011), the rates of injury and severity are far greater for females (Messing et al., 2014; Sommers et al., 2012). In general, consensus suggests that male-on-female IPV is more likely to cause serious injury or result in death (Hewitt, Bhavsar, & Phelan, 2011). However a growing body of research suggests that female-on-male IPV results in male suicide (Cavanaugh, Messing, Del-Colle, O'Sullivan, & Campbell, 2011). Women often use weapons to compensate for the strong male body build, with some suggesting that women are twice as likely to use a lethal weapon in an IPV encounter (Catalano, 2013). When investigating intent to inflict harm in intimate partner relationships, the use of a weapon produces similar injury rates (Hall, Walters, & Basile, 2012; Messinger, 2011). Relying solely on the measurement of injury inflicted in IPV cases where a weapon was involved, the injury rate for men and women are similar or greater for men (Johnson, 2011). In fact, in terms of victimization, from 2002 to 2011 4% of females and 8% of males were "shot at, stabbed, or hit with a weapon" (Catalano, 2013, p. 4).

GENDER, DECISION-MAKING, AND VIOLENCE

The prevailing thinking about why women use violence against men is that they do so in self-defense. Research suggests that 90% of women who use

violence against their partners had been victimized by their partner (Swan, Gambone, Caldwell, Sullivan, & Snow, 2008). This has been played out widely in the media through movies and music. Men are considered the aggressors who use violence as a means of control, and women use violence in retaliation (Swan et al., 2008). Men are also considered to be much stronger than women, so their ability to injure women without a weapon is greater. The theme of power exerted by the perpetrator over the powerless victim is pervasive. Yet, some researchers have found that powerlessness is not a significant predictor of victimhood (Caetano, Vaeth, & Ramisetty-Mikler, 2008; Strauss, Gilles, & Suzanne, 2006). Understanding the motivations underlying the violence experienced by perpetrators and victims is difficult. Men and women's motives for violence and the context in which the violence takes place are very different (Feder & Henning, 2005; Hamberger, 2005; Swan, Gambone, Van Horn, Snow & Sullivan, 2012). The following study is an effort to provide much needed empirical evidence suggesting that the needs of women who perpetrate felony violence are different than those of their male counterparts and point to areas where service provision is in need of reform.

Broadly, researchers have classified violence motives as means of exerting power or control over their partner or more expressive motives that reflect internal cognitive or affective states such as anger, jealousy, rage, or frustration (Dutton, 2012; Spitzberg, 2013; Walker, Bowen, & Brown, 2013). A more nuanced interpretation of IPV motives suggests that there are three levels: (a) personal attributes of the perpetrator or victim such as personality or childhood experiences (distal background); (b) contextual situations such as stress, relationship satisfaction, alcohol/drug abuse (proximal/contextual); and (c) interactional situations such as relationship transgressions (proximal/interactional; Flynn & Graham, 2010). Men are thought to use violence against women as a means of coercion or control (Carney & Barner, 2012; Dutton, 2012; Johnson, 2008; Walker et al., 2013). Yet, the reasons women use violence against men other than in self-defense is less articulated. Celeste Walley-Jean and Swan (2009) studied motives among African American women's perceptions of IPV and found control to be a relatively minor motive and expression of negative emotions (jealousy, etc.), retaliation or self-protection, communication (show anger, etc.), or expression of positive emotions (to get attention, to prove love, etc.) to better represent women's motives for using violence against an intimate partner. Power and control as motivators for use of violence was only moderately correlated (Spitzberg, 2010).

Similar to the work done to type males who use violence in intimate relationships, Swan and Snow (2003) identified four relationship types that emerge among women who use violence in their relationships. This work was later revised and suggests these are relationships in which (a) women are victims where the partner commits more severe violence and coercion

again the woman than she commits against him; (b) women are aggressors (later changed to abused aggressors) defined as situations in which the woman commits more severe violence and coercion against the partner than he commits against her; (c) women are in mixed-male coercive relationships where women's partners use more coercive control relative to the women, but the women's use of severe physical violence is equivalent to or greater than that used by their partners; and (d) women are in mixed-female coercive relationship, that is, women's use of coercive control is equivalent to or greater than their partners' use of coercive control, but the partners' use of severe physical violence is equivalent to or greater than that used by the women (Swan & Snow, 2003).

Comparatively, there is an organizing framework of emotional abuse/control, sexual coercion, and stalking behavior found within Johnson's (2008) "controlling/coercive violence" schema. This framework may include a constellation of behaviors, including (a) emotional abuse/control, (b) sexual coercion, (c) stalking, (d) combined physical assaults and emotional abuse/control, sexual coercion and stalking, and (e) controlling/coercive violence or combined rates of physical and non-physical abuse (Carney & Barner, 2012). For the purposes of this study, typologies of interpersonal relationships and patterns of violent or nonviolent/coercive behavior will be used to group identified variables and themes in the results obtained from analysis of fatality review data.

ROLE OF THE FATALITY REVIEW

Fatality reviews allow law enforcement officials, community practitioners, service providers, and advocates the opportunity to identify homicides and suicides resulting from domestic violence, and closely examine the circumstances leading to the crime, details of its commission as well as identify gaps in service deliver and improve preventative interventions (Albright, Banks, Broidy, Crandall, & Campos, 2013; Bent-Goodley, 2013; Jaffe, Dawson, & Campbell, 2013; Websdale, 2012). As reported by the National Domestic Violence Fatality Review Initiative (NDVFR), fatality reviews are currently legislated in 42 of 50 U.S. states and are common practice in the throughout Europe and North America (Campbell, Glass, Sharps, Laughon, & Bloom, 2007; Jaffe & Juodis, 2006; Watt, 2008; Wilson & Websdale, 2006). Fatality reviews can reveal overarching trends within a state, municipality, or jurisdiction and may lead to changes to the existing system that could provide avenues for more effective prevention and intervention as well as provide much needed information on linkages between service need and delivery. Moreover, close scrutiny of IPV-related fatalities are instrumental in gauging the impact of broader social policies, legislation criminal justice investigative and intervention strategies, and public awareness (Websdale, 2012).

Although the stated purpose of a fatality review is directly linked to reducing overall incidence and prevalence of domestic violence related deaths and injuries and identification and subsequent rectification of investigation, adjudication and service delivery, the information collected also provides data germane to understanding both the victimology and perpetrating behaviors within the crimes under review (Impink, 2006; Randle & Graham, 2011; Watt, 2008; Wilson & Websdale, 2006; Websdale, 2012). The purpose of this case study is to examine the role of gender in two case examples of lethal IPV and address the impact of this variable on the discrete aspects of law enforcement, adjudication, sentencing and service provision within the context of fatality review, its stated aims, and potential for service provision.

METHOD

This study is a case analysis of two female perpetrators within a multiphasic fatality review of 22 felony cases of IPV resulting in homicide or attempted murder in two counties in the southeastern United States. This study was designed to effectively gauge whether gender can be a detriment in cases involving women accused of felony murder as a result of bi-directional IPV.

Data Collection

The first phase of this study involved reviewing the data collected as part of a fatality review of a city in a southeastern United States. Summaries of cases involving homicide or suicide were collated, yielding 22 cases reviewed during a single calendar year. Additional information was obtained on the cases through law enforcement, service providers, and others participating in the fatality review team for the city, state and participating counties in which the crimes occurred.

The second phase involved review of the cases to see those in which women were the adjudicated perpetrator in the reviewed cases. The material for these ($n = 3$) cases were further reviewed and analysis conducted and a series of codes (or themes) were created for information needing further analysis and comparison in phase three of the study, as detailed below. During this phase, and before additional analyses were conducted by the authors, all documents were handled in accordance with privacy and ethical handling of data per the Institutional Review Board at the authors' home institutions and generally accepted ethical standards for data and document analysis. Full documents were only available for two of the three cases under scrutiny. To include full documentary analysis, one case was dropped from the current sample, leaving $n = 2$ cases available for full review and analysis. Although this low number of cases for review can be considered a limitation overall, in following the methodological frame of a deviant case analysis, the

two cases under scrutiny are meant to illustrate areas where the cases are different from the majority, thus illustrating areas in need of further research (Creswell, 2012).

Data Analysis

In the third phase, data were managed using NVivo 10 (QSR International, Burlington, MA, USA). Prior to use with NVivo 10, information was de-identified to replace victim and perpetrator names with pseudonyms and remove additional identifying information. Then, the software was used to perform thematic analysis of the notes, court records, existing interview transcripts with police, family members or the perpetrator, and documents obtained as part of court proceedings or the fatality review using this software. Table 1 lists prominent themes emerging from the analysis using the NVivo 10 software. For each thematic “code,” the software creates a node, showing the relationships that may or may not exist between thematic elements. For the purposes of this study, in addition to NVivo 10 software analysis, a method of “open coding” was used to review each of the transcriptions (Padgett, 2008). The notes, court records, and other documents were reread to code additional patterns and themes, including the “nodes” contained in the NVivo 10 analysis. These were discussed and iteratively reviewed by Michelle Mohr Carney. Open coding was used to isolate instances of textual support for the thematic similarities between cases as well as additional responses lending thematic support or exposition. Textual excerpts from court transcripts were included to illustrate common results representative

TABLE 1 Thematic Codes for Analysis of Fatality Review Cases ($N=2$)

Code	Unit(s) of analysis
Gender	Perpetrator/victim
History of violence	Perpetrator/victim
Evidence of coercive relationship	Perpetrator/victim
Evidence of escalation of incidents	Perpetrator/victim
# of police reports made	Victim
Any police reports	Perpetrator
# of arrests	Perpetrator
Previous arrest record	Victim
Probation/parole	Perpetrator/victim
Referral for services (prior to crime)	Perpetrator/victim
Referral for services (after crime)	Perpetrator
Type of services referred or requested (prior)	Perpetrator/victim
Type of services referred or requested (after)	Perpetrator
Charges and adjudication	Perpetrator
Length of trial deliberation	Perpetrator
Sentencing recommendations	Perpetrator
Level of community involvement (prior)	Perpetrator/victim
Level of community involvement (after)	Perpetrator/victim

of the identified similarities (i.e., elements of the crime, any history of violence including evidence of a pre-existing coercive relationship, evidence of escalation of incidents, police involvement and criminal history), service history and service delivery before and after the crime, court determinations, and the level of community involvement before and after the crime.

Case Illustration # 1: Smith

ELEMENTS OF THE CRIME

Sherriff's deputies responded to a neighbor's emergency call and pronounced 65-year-old Mr. Alias, dead at the scene of a single stab wound to the left femoral artery. When the 911 caller was interviewed, he stated that 37-year-old Ms. Smith knocked on the door and stated she had been in a fight. She used the phone and left a message for her mother. He told the investigator she had blood on her and she said Mr. Alias, her domestic partner, had hit her on the head; she got away and stabbed him. A witness on the scene of the arrest observed that Smith had "lacerations" on her arm and said "he beat me in the hallway—and he got what he deserved." She was taken back to the crime scene and she signed consent to authorize a search of the trailer. She made several statements prior to being booked in jail: they (she and Mr. Alias) had been fighting and she defended herself when Mr. Alias hit her several times. At one point Ms. Smith stated "if he [Mr. Alias] makes it she is going to prosecute him for beating her." Officer's records indicate she had scratches that drew blood on both forearms, an abrasion to the palm of her right hand, and blood on her face and clothing.

HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Review data indicate two previous calls for police to be dispatched for altercations between Mr. Alias and Ms. Smith. They occurred 8 and 6 months prior to the murder, respectively. The first call was for police to escort Ms. Smith away from the property due to alleged criminal trespass. The second was a call from Ms. Smith for police to break up an argument in which Ms. Smith alleged that Mr. Alias had been threatening her with a knife. Interview materials with Ms. Smith's mother indicate that mother told investigators that Smith and Alias lived as man and wife and they got along as long as they were not drinking because both of them would become violent. Smith's mother went on to state that one time (date unknown) they were fighting at her (mother's) house and she told them to go outside. Another daughter came in the house and said Alias had a knife. They went outside, stopped the fighting between Smith and Alias and made Alias give up the knife. Smith's mother also stated that Alias was "jealous and didn't want her to go anywhere".

Mr. Alias had previously been arrested one time during the course of the Alias–Smith 7–8 year relationship for brandishing a small caliber handgun at Ms. Smith. It was reported by witnesses that Mr. Alias pulled the trigger, but the gun did not fire. There is no referral history or record of service interventions.

EVIDENCE OF COERCIVE RELATIONSHIP

Additional information includes Smith stating that earlier in the night she was trying to go out and get a Christmas present for someone and Alias wouldn't let her leave. She'd open the door, he'd shut it. She stated she finally forced her way out. She also stated that if he lived she wanted to prosecute and if he died, she wasn't sorry. When she was taken to the jail/booking room she requested an attorney and said it was self-defense. The booking officer stated that Smith stated (without prompting from investigators) she and Mr. Alias had been fighting, "he was hitting me and I just hit him harder." Further notes indicate that Ms. Smith did attempt to hide the weapon used against Mr. Alias from investigators.

COURT DETERMINATIONS

The original charges against Ms. Smith were malice murder, felony murder, and aggravated assault. Ms. Smith, upon the advice of her counsel, pled guilty to a lesser charge of voluntary manslaughter and was sentenced to 20 years confinement. No additional court involvement was reported in the review documents.

SERVICE DELIVERY AFTER THE CRIME

Officers observed smoke coming from a female cell and observed a small fire in the corner of the cell. Ms. Smith was reclining on the lower bed of the bunk bed with no clothes on and with a cord around her neck. A fire extinguisher was obtained by one of the officers who put the fire out. When asked why she started the fire she said, "I just want to die." She repeated the statement several times and said she didn't care if she hurt other people at the same time. She was taken to the hospital for a mental evaluation. When the officers searched her cell for a potential source of the fire they discovered that she had also attempted to set her mattress on fire. Five hours later, the hospital informed the investigator that Ms. Smith would not be sent to a mental facility because "she stated she had no desire to hurt herself and said that ('I just want to die') because officers wouldn't let her make a phone call when she was arrested." She was placed back in jail.

Case Illustration # 2: Jones

ELEMENTS OF THE CRIME

Police charged Mrs. Mary Jones for the murder of her husband, Davy Jones, after officers responded to a 911 call reporting a stabbing and found a bloody Ms. Jones holding a blood-soaked rag to the chest of Davy. The death of Davy Jones culminated a turbulent 10-year relationship and almost 7-year marriage with Mary Jones. Mary claimed she stabbed Davy in self-defense during an argument in which he suffocated her with a pillow and threatened to kill her in their bedroom at their residence. According to the first responder on-scene, Mary's demeanor upon his arrival was "hysterical & crying while yelling, 'Is he dead?!?' over & over." When Mary was asked who cut Davy she responded, "I didn't mean to hurt him . . . I stabbed him . . . but I didn't mean to do it! Is he dead?!?"

HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Davy Jones had a long criminal history, including three separate charges of simple battery stemming from domestic incidents. In all cases, Davy received probation, up to 12 months. On at least two occasions, Davy Jones was court-ordered to attend anger management and family violence prevention classes, but interviews with family members, friends, and probation officers indicate that Jones never attended the classes and no additional punitive action was taken. At least one previous relationship partner indicates that the relationship with Davy Jones was violent and was especially exacerbated by substance use (i.e., crack cocaine). Mary Jones indicated during her police interview (and was corroborated by friends, family, and neighbors interviewed) that she had suffered a long abuse history, including sexual, physical, and emotional abuse in previous relationships, stating "[I suffered] sexual abuse and physical abuse beatings from past boyfriend and husband. [I was] sexually assaulted from gang of boys raping me and past boyfriend" Fran, Mary's best friend, told investigators:

Mary had been in abusive relationships before [and] maybe she thought that was normal. Mary felt stuck and had to deal with it: She wanted to leave, but she had the kids [three teenage sons from previous relationships, two daughters with Davy] or work qualifications [Mary had predominantly been a stay-at-home parent]. Mary had enrolled in high-school diploma classes the week of the incident so she could get a job and get away from Davy, "to hopefully get her life better."

EVIDENCE OF COERCIVE RELATIONSHIP

During an initial forensic assessment, Mary Jones indicated that Davy had "slapped, hit, restrained, forcibly dragged, punched, choked, held down,

used weapons, shoved, and pulled her hair” over the course of their relationship. Davy repeatedly made her have sex against her will; made her have sex when she was sick, injured, or pregnant; said bad things about her body; and frequently accused her of having affairs. According to Mary and corroborated by others interviewed by investigators, Davy frequently ignored Mary’s feelings or made fun of them, withheld affection, humiliated her, insulted her, constantly blamed her, tried to make her feel crazy, refused to let her use the telephone, threatened to take her children, or have them taken away, intimidated her, called her names, ridiculed or minimized her needs, threatened violence against her, censored her mail, and yelled and screamed at her. Davy was reported to be very possessive and frequently displayed jealous behavior. Mary stated that she stayed with Davy because she had no childcare, no income, and she wanted her two youngest kids to be around their father “because he was good with them.”

COURT DETERMINATIONS

In February, a grand jury charged Mary Jones with malice murder, felony murder, aggravated assault, and possession of a knife while in the commission of a felony as a result of the incident involving Davy Jones. In April a jury acquitted Mrs. Jones, returning a not-guilty verdict on each of the charges after 4 days of testimony and less than 2 hours of deliberation, finding the act of stabbing Davy Jones to death to be justified.

SERVICE DELIVERY PRIOR TO THE CRIME

In recounting her abuse history, Mary Jones indicated three separate incidents of hospitalization, for depression, anxiety, and suicidal attempt or ideation. Mrs. Jones endorsed being prescribed and taking an undermined psychiatric medication in the past, but did not continue taking the medication after the prescription had expired. No service involvement was found for Davy Jones, outside of court-mandated requirements related to previous arrests or violent incidents.

SERVICE DELIVERY AFTER THE CRIME

No information related to any services for Mary Jones or her children was found in the documents under review. A single piece of correspondence was obtained from a public defender who had worked on the Jones case to a forensic psychiatrist who had interviewed Mrs. Jones in preparation for the trial. In the note, the defender stated that, many months after the conclusion of the trial “it is very difficult for her to understand or admit that her act was intentional, but justified.”

RESULTS

Results from the case analyses indicate that gender was one determinant in addressing the largest situational thematic elements contained in Table 1, such as evidence of a pre-existing coercive relationship, evidence of escalation of incidents, police involvement and criminal history. Specifically, information from the fatality review of these two cases do show a gendered determinant on police decisions, including, as Dawson and Hotton (2014) reported, higher police involvement and an increase in retaliatory escalation for intact, rather than estranged relationships, like the Smith case, and less police involvement and follow-up (with greater escalation) when arrest was initially opposed or avoided throughout a criminal history, as in the Jones case. Moreover, initial reporters and responding officers' adherence to traditional gender roles could be seen to influence their attitudes about and response to an act of IPV, in some cases masking bidirectional or coercive violence (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). These themes are consonant with community policing studies that show gender as a high-impact variable in policing decisions around arrest and determination of the act as one of IPV (Lee, Zhang, & Hoover, 2013; Stark, 2012).

Additional thematic elements focused on adjudication, including the formal charges leveled, length of trial deliberation and sentencing recommendations. Again, the gender of both victim and perpetrator did seem to factor in to these thematic elements in the context of fatality review and were impactful in the adjudicative process, specifically the record of arrest procedures for both victim and perpetrator, probationary sentencing (in the Jones case), and charges levied. Analysis of these cases did indicate that themes such as service history and service delivery before and after the crime and the level of community involvement before and after the crime were either not present in either the Smith or Jones case, despite previous reporting and, in the case of Smith, at least one incident of suicidal behavior and ideation.

Analysis of the cases further illuminated the relationship between the themes derived from fatality review and existing typologies of controlling and coercive relationship violence. In both cases, where both previous arrests, reports of violence, and service provision were evident, these themes were comparable to Swan and Snow's (2003) typologies of the Smith and Jones as "abused aggressors" and/or participants in mixed-male coercive relationships and Johnson's (2008) typology of controlling, coercive violence. For example, the Smith case is emblematic of a relationship displaying "combined physical assaults and emotional abuse/control" (Johnson, 2008, p. 87) displayed by both partners, with a clear pattern of escalation over time as documented through police records and reportage.

Despite these elements and the increase in police involvement within an interval of several months prior to the fatality, no referrals for services were indicated. In the Jones case, Johnson's (2008) fourth type of controlling,

coercive violence, displaying “combined physical assaults and emotional abuse/control, sexual coercion and stalking” was evident from the outset and, despite multiple arrests, punitive action for incidents did not extend beyond probation. Where services were court-mandated, they were unilaterally addressed toward the aggressor at the time of the previous incidents and not enforced, allowing for both escalation and a change in the direction of the relational violence from the perceived aggressor to the victim as “abused aggressor” in a retaliatory or defensive situation. Moreover, and striking in the thematic analysis of the fatality review data available in the Jones case, was the lack of appropriate mental health and social services for Mrs. Jones and the children, after the adjudication of the fatal incident, despite the court finding in favor of Mrs. Jones.

Thus, results from this study indicate several gender disparities for women, including inability to act as free agents within increasingly violent relationships and the disparate characterization of violent women as more egregious in their actions than those of male counterparts, within law enforcement and behavioral health. These analyses indicate that although gender plays a role in determination of incidents as IPV, arrest, trial, conviction, and dispensations from the court, ultimately these considerations fail to address the relational context of these incidents, the potential for ongoing bidirectional hostility and escalation of violence arising over time, and the long lasting impact of such impact on the empowerment and decision-making of women within an adjudicative context.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Community Responses to Violence

As the cases above illustrate, several of the coded themes proved relevant in identifying issues identified repeatedly in reviewed domestic violence fatality cases that involve women as either bi-directional participants in violent relationships or as reaching a point of relational decision-making where “lashing out” with violence was the only solution. It is important to note that these thematic elements are relevant not only to understanding the motivations of the crimes themselves but also to the ability of our communities to support victims of IPV as well as provide opportunities for prevention, intervention, and treatment for perpetrators, in keeping with the stated aims of fatality review.

Both illustrative cases signal a need for action before escalation and speak to a need for referrals to take place earlier. Law enforcement should seek to engage with community resources, including existing domestic violence programs and community informants, such as friends and family of domestic violence victims, to learn how to increase the visibility and availability of services. Careful review of incidents should be bolstered by

community-led efforts from within the service communities. Law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, and probation officers should routinely examine histories and patterns of behavior in domestic violence cases as reported and direct community partners to needed client populations, thus addressing the possible intervening variables of gender, economic inequality, and mental health status as necessary components of coordinated community response to IPV.

Results from this study of fatality review data has shown differences in motivations for participatory relationship violence directly related to themes such as retaliatory hostility (Dutton, 2012; Feder & Henning, 2005; Hamberger, 2005; Spitzberg, 2013; Swan, et al., 2012; Walker, Bowen, & Brown, 2013). Elements of the cases analyzed showed elements related to the personal attributes of the women in the distal background, proximal/contextual situations within the relationship and the interactional situations which resulted in the fatality (Flynn & Graham, 2010). The Jones case in particular showed a gendered prominence in retaliation and self-protection (Celeste Walley-Jean and Swan, 2009) from a violent partner that proved decisive in the adjudication of the case.

Moreover, data from the fatality reviews seemed consonant with typologies of IPV, with the cases demonstrating an evolving pattern of behavior and decision-making that escalated in incidence of violence toward a perceived aggressive partner (Swan & Snow, 2003) as well as an overarching pattern of controlling, coercive behavior that was either overt and bi-directional in nature (Carney & Barner, 2012; Swan, et al., 2008) in the Smith case, or indicative of a gradual pattern of limited means of response and sudden increased lethality (Catalano, 2013; Johnson, 2008) in the Jones case. In both cases, analysis of fatality review data indicated that determination of the incident by law enforcement, arrest, and adjudication were influenced by gender (Lee et al., 2013; Stark, 2012) but that gender-specific prevention and intervention efforts were not addressed.

Implications for such studies show that relational violence is a phenomena that needs to be holistically treated in order for victims—female and male—to survive and regain their empowerment and sense of self. Efforts to increase women's rights—as perpetrator or victim—must occur in conjunction with community-based prevention efforts, interventions, and treatments that are grounded in the understanding of gender equality, and the pressing need for study of the legal, penological, and psychotherapeutic rehabilitative services provided to violent women offenders, and the role these play in the adjudication of these women.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy

Social workers practicing in the area of IPV prevention and intervention in the United States are often faced with the gender based disproportionality between perpetration of violence and victimization. However, it is precisely

this disproportionality that creates a gap in the availability of service to the minority of women offenders who do participate in bidirectional IPV, controlling coercive violence, and fatal or potentially fatal violent attacks. As the analysis of the case illustrations above have shown, much more attention is needed to study the legal, penological, and psychotherapeutic rehabilitative services provided to violent women offenders, and the role these play in the adjudication of these women.

Using the fatality review process has proven effective in this study as an effort to provide much needed empirical evidence for research (Albright et al., 2013; Bent-Goodley, 2013; Jaffe et al., 2013; Websdale, 2012). Use of this process as a means of collecting data has been instrumental in suggesting that the needs of women who perpetrate felony violence are different than those of their male counterparts and point to areas where service provision is in need of reform. The case illustrations themselves provide practitioners, researchers, and policy analysts needed data to make therapeutic and legal recommendations for prevention and intervention services that could curb escalation of IPV and prevent the fatal trend concomitant with such escalation. Further studies of this kind are needed, as well as collaborative efforts between law enforcement and social workers, to ensure a sound policy of prevention, intervention, and adjudication for those impacted by relational violence.

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