

Violence has no gender.



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A comparative study of battered women and violence-prone women

December 2, 2014 By [Erin Pizzey](#)

In 1971, I opened the first refuge/shelter in the world. Almost as soon as I opened the door, I was aware that many of the women who were coming in were as violent as the partners they had left. Over months of talking with these women and their children, I recognised that domestic violence was a generational family issue. All the

women who came in filled in a questionnaire. I recognised that those women who were violent and violent towards their children needed long-term therapeutic intervention in a residential setting. This we were able to do, and we created community housing for women and children who needed to learn to control their violent and dysfunctional behaviours.

It wasn't until I left my refuge that I could spend the time to review the evidence from the questionnaires. I discovered that 62 of the women were violence-prone (victims of violent childhood trauma) and that 48 of the women were innocent victims of their partner's violence. Over these past 40 years, there has been no research done about the women with their children who took refuge/shelter in the houses offered by other agencies. We urgently need to think about intergenerational violence as the root cause for all family violence. Worldwide research now proves that both men and women can be violent to each other and to their children. The old, fraudulent claim that somehow the "patriarchy" can be used to blame all men has been totally contradicted internationally. It is a matter of urgency that researchers in the field of domestic violence turn their attention to intergenerational family violence. —EP

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Introduction

In 1971, I opened Chiswick Women's Aid in Chiswick, London, England. This organisation was the first refuge [known as *shelter* in North America] in the world created for the care and treatment of battered women and their children. I continued to run this program until 1982. In 1974, I wrote the first book in the world on the subject of wife-battering, *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours Will Hear*.

Not many years had passed from the time of my founding the refuge before I recognised that in Chiswick Women's Aid, and in other refuges that had grown up throughout the world, two distinct problems were being treated under the one unified heading of "refuge." One was that of what I came to call "genuine battered women." The other problem was that of what I came to call "violence-prone women." The difference between the two types of people can be stated quite simply: A battered person is the unwilling and innocent victim of his or her partner's violence; a violence-prone person is the unwilling victim of his or her own violence.

In 1981, I published a piece in the British *New Society* periodical further stating the importance of this differentiation.

“ The time has come for a clear distinction to be made between a woman who has accidentally become involved with a violent partner and who now wishes to leave and to never return again, and a woman who, for deep psychological reasons of her own, seeks out a violent relationship or a series of violent relationships, with no intention of leaving.

Any honest worker in the field of family violence will admit to at least an unconscious awareness of this distinction. Any honest worker in the field of family violence knows on some level that there are women who can be liberated from violent relationships without much difficulty. Such a woman well may require aid in finding new living accommodation, financial help, legal help, and emotional support to overcome her feelings of responsibility, compassion, and even pity for the abusive partner whom she intends to leave. This is the woman whom I call the genuinely battered woman.

Any honest worker in the field of family violence, however, must admit also to knowing women who prove very difficult to help. In the case of such a woman, new housing arrangements may be provided, legal and financial aid may be given, and all preparations may be made for the woman concerned to begin a new life independent of her abusive partner. Such a woman then returns repeatedly to her partner, or if she does leave the original partner, she finds herself in a relationship with a new and equally violent partner. This is the woman whom I call the violence-prone woman.

Since the founding of Chiswick Women's Aid, I have been invited to France, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Italy, America, Canada, Bahrain, and New Zealand to speak on the subject of domestic violence and to help found new refuges and to fund-raise for newly established refuges. In 1976 and in 1979, I was invited by the United States government and by the National Institute for Mental Health to fund-raise for newly established shelters, to help found new shelters, and to share with workers in the field of family violence various insights that I have gained through my work with violent families. From my travels throughout the world, I know the principles of family violence to be universal. Furthermore, from my seminars with social workers, doctors, and shelter-workers in America, I know that violence-prone women have been seen as a leading problem among workers in the field of family violence in the United States. All over the United States, I addressed groups of workers who suffered from what they called "staff burnout." This "burnout" occurred, the workers claimed, when they had made all provisions to establish a woman in a new and non-violent lifestyle only to find their efforts seemingly betrayed by the return to the woman in question to her violent partner. Indeed, these reports confirmed my own early experiences in dealing with violence-prone women, experiences that led me to establish a therapeutic treatment program designed specifically to face the special needs of violence-prone individuals.

I have said already that any honest worker in the field will be familiar with violence-prone individuals even among their own clients. It has been my experience, however, that not all workers in the field of family violence can be deemed honest. Opposition against my work and against the theories growing from my work have arisen among circles of women working in the field of family violence who call themselves "feminists." (This label is not mine but their own.) It is this circle of women, clinging fast to a specific set of political and rhetorical beliefs, who have attempted to suppress my theories. Sadly, many refuges in the West have come to be operated largely by this circle of women. In October 1982, the publication of *Prone to Violence* was picketed in England by a group of British refuge-workers, also calling themselves "feminists."

I feel confident in questioning the honesty and integrity of this circle of women. In my work I have had no political position to maintain. I believe the problem of violence-prone individuals to be primarily personal, not political. The "feminists," however, have committed themselves publicly to the maintenance of a

political stance. In my work I tried neither to manipulate my findings nor to direct the natural course of the theories arising from the work toward a safe set of attitudes that would jibe with the current political and theoretical trend for the purpose of acquiring public and governmental funds. I sought only to discover the truth underlying problematical human relationships, whatever the political and other consequences of that truth might be. The “feminists,” however, are cautious not to release any information that might turn public and governmental sympathy and funds away from their “cause.”

The YWCA/Battered Women’s Services of San Diego, California, a member organisation of the National Coalition on Domestic Violence and of the Southern California Coalition on Battered Women, wrote to me asking for a copy of *Prone to Violence*. This book I sent and they read. On July 15, 1985, they wrote a letter to me. In the letter they say of the theory of violence-prone individuals:

“ This theory perpetuates the myth that battered women “like”, “deserve”, and in fact “provoke” the violence of their partners. This attitude of “blaming the victim” can result in a criticising, judgmental, and punitive approach toward the battered woman by human services professionals, a decrease in the recent, increased responsiveness of the criminal justice system (“why prosecute the victim—the man”), a decrease in the police response (“why ‘protect’ the perpetrator—the woman”), less sensitivity in the handling of domestic violence victims by medical personnel (“she must be sick to provoke and enjoy the abuse”), and decreased funding (“these women don’t need shelter”).

Prone to Violence (which can be read online at bennett.com/ptv), incidentally, states specifically:

“ It is far too easy and flippant an answer to say that women stay in battering relationships “because they like it”, or “because they want it,” or “because they deserve it”.

I have more faith in America’s human services professionals, criminal justice system, police departments, and medical personnel than do the YWCA/Battered Women’s Services of San Diego, California. (I trust I am correct in assuming that the views expressed in their letter are representative of the views held by the National Coalition on Domestic Violence and by the Southern California Coalition on Battered Women. Firstly, the San Diego organisation is a member of both of the other organisations. Secondly, the women of the San Diego organisation made sure to inform me that they have sent copies of this letter to both of their parent organisations.)

It is my belief that the truth about problematical relationships must not be suppressed; however altruistic the rationale for this suppression may appear to a particular circle of politically motivated individuals. Moreover, I believe that the human services professionals, the criminal justice system, the police departments, and the medical personnel all stand to benefit by an increased understanding of the nature of violence-prone individuals. Once the condition of being “violence-prone” has been recognised fully as a

treatable condition, then all of the workers in the field of family violence will be enabled to help instead of to punish violence-prone individuals. No increased understanding of human relationships, however, is possible in an atmosphere of suppression. Unfortunately, a large percentage of current research in the field of family violence is politically motivated. An entire body of study and research in domestic violence has grown up in recent years for the specific purpose of maintaining a political position.

The letter from the YWCA/Battered Women's Services of San Diego, California, takes issue with the fact that the ideas expressed in *Prone to Violence* do not conform with the theories currently proposed by the recent body of study. The letter states:

“ There is apparently no integration of knowledge gained through the well-researched and documented work of Gelles, Straus, Stienmetz, Finkelhorn, Stacey, or Shupe. There is also no mention of the contributions of many human behaviour experts specialising in the area of domestic violence, e.g., Walker, Martin, Roy and Davidson.

Without a political position of my own to defend, I have no vested interest in presenting any politically biased or slanted theories. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that my insights have been regarded to date as standing outside the popular sphere of research.

Goals

A major intention of this paper and of the study that this paper describes is to prove that the issue of family violence must be seen in the personal, psychological realm rather than in the political domain. I believe, and I intend to prove, that violence-prone individuals are created primarily by violent childhood upbringings. Childhood, violent families, and family dynamics consequently must be the foremost considerations and areas of focus in any further studies of violent relationships. Such terms as “the cycle of violence” virtually have become part of the layman's everyday vocabulary. To my knowledge, however, no research to date has definitively proved a causal link between a violent upbringing and subsequent violent relationships. A goal of this paper is to prove that a causal link does exist indeed.

This paper is not intended to discuss in any length the working mechanisms of this causal link between a violent childhood and subsequent violent relationships. In my work I put forward a theory that a violent childhood is likely to create an actual addiction to violence, which in turn leads to the recreation of violence in subsequent relationships. This exploration into the addictive nature of violence, however, belongs in a separate paper. The current paper is a first step in the explanation of why people from violent backgrounds tend to create subsequent violent relationships. This study seeks only to establish that a causal link exists. A discussion of the nature of that link will be left to future reports.

The goals of this study then are:

- to demonstrate that a distinction can be made between battered women and violence-prone women

- to demonstrate that the tendency to become involved in violent relationships arises from a previous childhood history of family violence
- to draw statistical comparisons between the lives of battered women and violence-prone women in order to demonstrate further the validity of the distinction between the two types of women.

Method

This study is based on a statistical survey of answers provided in questionnaires self-completed by female residents of Chiswick Women's Aid, London, during 1975.

Participants

The residents of Chiswick Women's Aid were self-referred. The concept of refuge was still relatively new in 1975. Therefore, not many other refuges existed in the United Kingdom to care for women in violent relationships. Consequently, the residents of Chiswick Women's Aid came for help from all regions of the British Isles as well as from other countries. Women arriving at Chiswick Women's Aid were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding their personal backgrounds and the backgrounds of the men with whom they had been involved. In order to randomise the subjects of this study, all existing completed questionnaires were alphabetised. Then the first 100 alphabetised questionnaires were chosen as subjects for this study.

The 100 women participants in this study were asked to give their nationality. The 100 women are a geographically mixed group, composed of individuals from England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Southern Ireland, and the West Indies. Given the diverse countries of origin of the women involved, the group of women is also racially mixed. Furthermore, the group is religiously mixed, including Protestants, Catholics, and members of other religious denominations. Since Chiswick Women's Aid was self-referring, women of all ages were welcomed to come for help. The subjects for this study, therefore, reflect a mixture of ages from the late teens onwards.

It is important to note here that the women studied come from a diverse spectrum of financial and social strata. Some of the women studied lived by means of welfare cheques. Others supported themselves through their own employment. Others came from financially stable family backgrounds. Some women were wealthy, others poor. Some women were employed, others unemployed. The women varied greatly in terms of educational backgrounds. Some women had only a few years of primary education. Some had completed secondary education. Some had university degrees after completing courses of further education.

A subsequent analysis of the data from the study produced no statistically significant differences (regarding the nature of their violent relationships) on the basis of nationality, geographical origins, ethnicity, race, religion, age, education, or economic position. For the purposes of this study, therefore, the 100 subjects are to be considered as a mixed and randomly chosen sample from a refuge where women involved in violent relationships came for help.

A word of explanation is necessary as to why all subjects for this study are women. Chiswick Women's Aid treated not only women but also entire violent families. Chiswick Women's Aid had its own school for the

children of violent families, a men's programme to treat the male partners, and an adolescent unit. Through the operation of all these programmes, I learned that violence is not limited by age or by gender. I have treated violent men, violent women, and violent children. A violent childhood tends to create violent individuals, regardless of gender.

Nevertheless, the theory that most calls out for proof is that violence is not an exclusively male problem (as current popular rhetoric would have us believe). The participants for this particular study, therefore, are all women. On the questionnaires, the women do answer questions about their abusing male partners. Statistical analysis of these answers has produced some interesting results, which will be discussed later on. These results, however, are not to be considered the primary focus of this study. The primary focus of this study is women.

Materials

The questionnaire used in the study was designed in 1975 by me and Dr. John Gayford, a researcher of family violence from the Warlingham Hospital in England. The questionnaire is eight pages long and consists of 160 questions. It begins with questions regarding a brief history of the woman's current relationship: "Name," "Age," "Nationality," "Physical injuries," "Relationship with man causing injuries," "Length of relationship," etc. The questionnaire proceeds with questions regarding the woman's medical history, followed by her family history. The questionnaire then asks questions about the history of the woman's partner, about his background, and about the backgrounds of any other partners whom she has had in her life. Remaining questions on the questionnaire ask about the woman's personal history (i.e., her education, her sexual history, and her legal history (if applicable)).

All questions on the questionnaire were designed to be straightforward, plain-language, and, most importantly, non-directive. For example, in the section of the questionnaire labelled "Family history, Father," questions are asked such as "Temperament," "Have you ever seen him violent with other people? Whom?" "Was he ever violent towards you? In what way?" In the section labelled "Family history, Mother," questions are asked such as "Temperament," "Has she ever been violent towards you? State how."

All questionnaires were completed on an entirely voluntary basis. No coercion was applied to any woman in the refuge to complete a questionnaire if the woman did not wish to do so. Any woman agreeing to complete a questionnaire was under no obligation to answer all of the questionnaire's questions.

The headings for this chart are as follows:

- "Is woman violence-prone?"
- "Is man violence-prone?"
- "Is man morbidly jealous?"
- "Was there violence in the man's parenting?"
- "Was there violence in the woman's parenting?"
- "Number of years woman was with man."
- "Number of years of abuse."

- “Was there violence between man and woman before cohabitation?”
- “Woman’s age at first sexual intercourse.”
- “Was contraception used at the time?”
- “Number of the woman’s children.”
- “Number of suicide attempts, if any.”

Each heading requiring a numerical answer (e.g., “Number of the woman’s children”) was answered with a number. All other headings were answered on a YES/NO basis.

Of this second category of headings, perhaps the most crucial is the heading “Is woman violence-prone?” The setting up of a set of criteria to answer this question on a YES/NO basis required a great deal of thought. By definition, a violence-prone woman is a woman with a lifelong history of personal involvement with violence. Therefore, the criteria used to answer this question were a set of indicators that give evidence of the subject’s prolonged involvement with violence and evidence of the subject’s own violent behaviour. Such criteria are:

- Does the woman hit her children?
- Has the woman been in physical fights with other women?
- Does the woman have a criminal record with the police?
- Is the current relationship the woman’s first violent relationship, or has she been involved previously in frequent violent relationships?

These questions are asked in the questionnaire. My decision as to whether or not a participant rightfully could be called violence-prone entailed a further consideration. It must be remembered that Chiswick Women’s Aid had no restraints as to how long any woman could stay. All residents were free to leave whenever they wanted to, and also to stay for as long as they liked. Many women stayed for many months, some stayed for several years.

Consequently, after the subjects completed the questionnaires, I was able to know many of them in far greater depth, for I knew many of them for prolonged periods and was able to observe them in their interactions with the other residents of Chiswick Women’s Aid. In the case of many of the subjects whom I have labelled violence-prone, I knew the women very well. Many times in the refuge, I watched with great interest when a woman claimed that all of her problems would be gone if only she could get away from her abusive partner. In subsequent weeks and months, this woman then could be seen to be the centre of an inordinate amount of fights and commotion among the other female residents of Chiswick Women’s Aid. I am certain that such behaviour gives evidence to the notion that the violent nature of this woman’s relationship with her abusive partner cannot be attributed solely to *his* violence. Rather, the relationship could be described as the violent interaction of two violence-prone individuals.

Another criterion, then, in addition to the criteria collected from the self-reporting device of the questionnaire, was personal observation of the subjects in order to determine whether or not a subject is violence-prone. I feel I must say that, as an international authority in the field of family violence, my

personal observation stands as a valid academic measure. Furthermore, I would like it to be understood that in no way do I consider it a punishment or a condemnation to speak of a person as violence-prone. I dearly loved and continue to love even the most violence-prone women of the thousands of women whom I have treated over the years.

In summation of this critical point of decision, the subjects were labelled violence-prone or battered women on the basis of the criteria listed above (from the questionnaires) and often on the additional criterion of personal observation. The comparative statistics that follow, therefore, were not the basis of the decision, although many of the comparative statistics, no doubt, can be seen to support the previously made decision as to whether or not a subject could be called violence-prone.

The completion of the other headings in the chart required very little interpretative judgment. "Is man violence-prone?" can be answered easily. Virtually any man who severely beats a woman can be considered violence-prone (although important exceptions to this statement will be discussed later). A clarification must be made before describing the further questions. In other of my writings, particularly in *Prone to Violence*, the idea is expressed that emotional violence must be considered to be as cruel and as destructive as physical violence. This idea is an important cornerstone to further research. For the purposes of the absolute clarity of this study, however, only acts of physical violence are described as "violent." Therefore, to answer such headings as "Was there violence in the woman's parenting?" only self-reported evidence of physical violence was used to produce an answer of "YES."

The word *parenting*, incidentally, was carefully chosen in favour of the word *parents*. Many of the participants, and many of their partners, were not raised by their natural parents. *Parenting* is used to encompass all possible forms of guardianship during childhood, including grandparents, other relatives assuming the role of legal and/or emotional guardian, adoptive parents, foster parents, and children's homes. The word *parenting* is intentionally broad to support the hypothesis that it is the violent behaviour present in a child's "household" that produces the tendency to recreate violent relationships later in life.

The statistical analysis of the data from the chart entailed simple calculations. I would point out only that, as the women subjects were under no obligation to answer all of the questionnaire's questions, some questions on some of the questionnaires were not answered. An unanswered question, or a question answered with words to the effect of "I don't know," was recorded on the chart as "NOT APPLICABLE." In the following section of this study, statistical figures involving averages (i.e., arithmetic means) and percentages will first state the number of data from which the mean or the percentage was derived. The number of data was calculated by subtracting the number of "NOT APPLICABLE" answers for any particular question from the total number of subjects (100).

Results

The women: Violence or genuinely battered

The total number of female subjects of this study was 100. Using the criteria described in the previous section, I determined that 62 of the 100 women (62%) can be considered violence-prone. The remaining 38 of the 100 women (38%) were involved in violent relationships, yet did not meet the criteria that would

indicate a lifelong history of involvement with violence, nor did their questionnaires indicate evidence of their own violent behaviour. Therefore, it is appropriate to label this 38% of the women studied as battered women.

The male partners: Violence and morbid jealousy

Among the 100 questionnaires completed, the subjects answered questions about their partners' violence on all 100 questionnaires. Non-directive questions regarding their partners' morbid jealousy ("Was he suspicious or jealous of you? Give details") were answered on 93 of the 100 questionnaires. The following results were obtained from the questionnaires (see Table 1).

The working definition, for the purposes of this study, of morbid jealousy among men is: the pathological tendency to suspect a woman of sexual affairs and flirtations with other men, and to fantasise inappropriately about these supposed affairs and flirtations, when no evidence of such affairs and flirtations exists. The occurrence of morbid jealousy among violent men is horrifyingly frequent. Many of the subjects (both battered and violence-prone) described that it was their partners' jealous fantasies that were the primary precipitating factor for episodes of violence. (Note: Some of the violence-prone women describing their partners as morbidly jealous did admit to unfaithfulness by answering in the negative to the question "Were you faithful?" Such answers made a clear decision as to the man's morbid jealousy difficulty. In this situation, I labelled men morbidly jealous only when the questionnaire gave evidence that the man would have experienced jealous fantasies even if the woman had not been unfaithful.)

The decision to label a man violent was, in 98% of the cases, clear-cut. However, it is interesting and important to note that 2 of the 100 male partners involved could not be labelled as violent. The chart constructed in Step 2 of the study's procedure revealed that both of these two men were involved with violence-prone women. In the case of one of the two men, the female subject was unable to give any description of the man's family background or any evidence of a history of violence in the man's life. This man and woman, in fact, had been married for eight years. Throughout their eight-year marriage, the woman reported only one episode of violence, and the violence was not severe. It, therefore, would be unjust to label this man as suffering from a chronic problem with violence without sufficient evidence for such a labelling. The second man described as non-violent had a non-violent childhood (according to the woman's own description) and furthermore showed no signs of morbid jealousy. The man actually could be considered a "battered husband," for evidence of the woman's violence was far greater than any evidence of the man's violence.

The male partners: Violence in parenting

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study is not to focus primarily on men. Nevertheless, I believe that a look at the men's backgrounds lends strong support to the theory that a violent childhood is likely to produce a violence-prone adult.

That 76% of the battering men in this survey came from violent childhoods is a striking statistic in its own right. I believe this to be, however, a conservative figure. Information was available on only 70 of the men because 30 of the women said that they knew very little of their partner's background. Of the 70 women

who tried to provide information about their partner's background, many of the answers were too non-committal to make a definitive statement in favour of that background being violent (e.g., "He seemed to get on with his parents well enough."). Without solid evidence to declare a man's background violent, I could only, for the purposes of this study, call it non-violent.

Violence-prone and battered women: Comparative statistics

The female participants: Violence in parenting

The theory that a childhood of violence tends to create adults who re-create violent situations in their relationships is confirmed not only by the statistics from the male partners' backgrounds but also by a comparison of the statistics from the parenting of violence-prone and battered women.

As in the case of the male partners' parenting, the statistics given in Table 2 strongly support the notion of a causal link between a violent childhood and involvement in subsequent violent relationships in adult life. These figures are especially conservative for a number of reasons. First of all, among the women whom I labelled as battered women, 3 of the 38 women had questionnaires that revealed many elements of their lives that usually would indicate the making of a violence-prone individual: a violent childhood and a history of previous violent relationships in adult life. Nevertheless, these three women did not show sufficient evidence of their own violent behaviour to label them as violence-prone (i.e., did not beat their children, did not behave criminally delinquent, etc.). To me, these three women represent a very special category of individuals. They are what I call "transcenders." I define a transcender as an individual (woman or man) from a violent childhood who has overcome the violence of his or her own childhood enough not to necessarily re-create situations of violence in his or her adult relationships. In the statistical analysis, these transcenders have been counted among the battered women, and it must be appreciated that the incidence of violence in the transcenders' parenting would inflate significantly the figures for violent parenting among battered women.

I believe that the statistics indicating the occurrence of violence among the parenting of violence-prone women were deflated because of several factors. It must be remembered that these figures were compiled on the basis of a self-reporting questionnaire. This fact raises the important question of how a child from a violent background perceives his or her own background. In a number of cases among the violence-prone women, I actually met the women's parents in subsequent work at Chiswick Women's Aid. After meeting many of these parents, I had no question as to the violence of the women's upbringing. Nevertheless, even if through personal observation I knew the parenting to be otherwise, if a woman completing the questionnaire described her parents as even-tempered and non-violent, then for the chart and for the statistics of this study the parents were labelled non-violent. The particular set of statistics given in Table 3 is far too important for me to venture to alter participants' answers despite my personal knowledge to the contrary.

If a child is reared in violence and knows of no alternatives to violence, then it follows quite naturally that the child, growing to the adult, would have great difficulty in identifying aspects of his or her childhood as violent. This truth I believe to be the main contributing factor in the lowering of the figures for violent parenting among violence-prone women. It is essential to stress here that, despite all of the factors

affecting the figures shown in Table 2, violent childhoods were more prevalent among violence-prone women than among battered women by a ratio of 3.2:1.

Female subjects' history with abusing partners

No significant statistical differences are produced by a comparison of the average number of years for which a violence-prone woman and a battered woman stayed with an abusing partner. All 100 women involved in this study supplied answers as to how long they had been in a relationship with their partner. The 38 battered women stayed with their partners for an average of 8.5 years, while the 62 violence-prone women stayed with their partners for an average of 7.6 years.

The fact that the battered women stayed for a slightly longer period of time may well be explained by the fact that a slightly higher percentage of the battered women were married to (as opposed to cohabiting with) their partners. Of the 100 women answering whether or not they were married to their partners, 81.6% of the battered women were married, while 77.4% of the violence-prone women were married.

More significant and more interesting results emerge from a look at the statistical question "For what percentage of the duration of the relationship did violence occur?" This percentage can be derived from answers to two questions on the questionnaire: "Length of relationship" and "For how long has he been beating you?"

Statistics from Table 3 demonstrate that, on average, violence occurred over a larger portion of relationships with abusing partners among violence-prone women than among battered women. Far more telling results, however, are obtained by a different question on the questionnaire: "Did he beat you before you lived together?" Of the 37 battered women who answered this question, only 2.7% of them reported violence occurring before co-habitation. Of the 60 violence-prone women who answered the question, however, 33.3% experienced violence before co-habitation. Violence before cohabitation occurred more frequently among the violence-prone women than among the battered women by a ratio of 12.3:1.

These statistics provide a strong demonstration of the distinction between battered women and violence-prone women. Battered women can rightfully be described as women who enter into a relationship with a man without prior knowledge of his violence. One-third of the violence-prone women, however, had been beaten by their partners before making the decision to cohabit. This fact supports the necessity for a distinction between the two kinds of individuals (man or woman) who find themselves involved in a violent relationship.

Other comparative statistics

Statistical comparisons of data collected from several other questions revealed no conclusive evidence differentiating violence-prone from battered women. Nevertheless, some of the questions produced statistics that give interesting information if the subjects are seen in the light of being simply a group of women.

For example, the average age at which battered women first had sexual intercourse with a man was 18.35

years old. The average age at which violence-prone women first had sexual intercourse with a man was 17.54 years old. Of these women, 75.7% of battered women did not use contraception the first time they had sexual intercourse with their batterer, and 86.4% of violence-prone women did not.

The percentage of women, violence-prone and battered, who did not use contraception at the time of their first sexual intercourse is staggering. All other factors aside, I believe that these statistics prove the necessity of further research and further efforts towards the education of young women having sexual experiences in their late teens.

There were also incredibly large rates of attempted suicide of the participants of this survey. Of the 100 subjects of this survey, 33 had attempted suicide at least once: 23.7% of the battered women and 38.7% of the violence-prone women. (The arithmetic averages for number of suicide attempts among those women attempting suicide are 1.1 attempts per battered women attempting suicide, and 1.56 attempts per violence-prone woman attempting suicide.) I believe these figures to demonstrate the degree of suffering experienced by any individual involved in a violent relationship. Even if a woman (or a man) is violence-prone, she or he is not happy in living a violent lifestyle. To me these sad statistics stress the urgency of further research to enlighten the treatment of everyone involved in violent relationships—women, men, and children.

Of those who were mothers, the violence-prone and battered women studied have approximately the same average number of children, 2.45 children per woman. What is of great concern is that among the 100 participants, 251 children were involved in this study. More importantly, these 251 children had experienced violence in their childhoods, whether their mothers could be labelled violence-prone or not. All of these children have either witnessed violence between their parents and/or have been beaten themselves by one or both of their parents.

Concluding Discussion

This study has shown evidence of a causal link between violence in childhood and the recreation of violent relationships in adult life and suggests that the young boys among these children will grow up to be batterers themselves. This study also demonstrates the likelihood that the young girls among these children will grow up to be violence-prone women, women who, having experienced violence in their childhoods, grow to re-create violent relationships. The children of this next generation of violent relationships, then, are likely to grow to create new violent relationships and subsequently to produce the next generation of violent children.

Violence thus appears to be intergenerational. A link has been shown to exist between one generation of violence and the next. I believe the nature of this link to be one of addiction. Violence is addictive. If a child, through a violent childhood, becomes addicted to violence, then, like any addict, the child, growing to the adult, will be driven to pursue the object of the addiction: violence. To me, the addiction to violence is the true meaning of the term *violence-prone*. The book *Prone to Violence* includes a detailed description of what I believe to be the working mechanism of this literal (not merely metaphorical) addiction to violence. This book has been hotly opposed by some circles. Nevertheless, it is my convicted belief that addiction is the

perpetuating factor in the causal link of intergenerational violence. This study provides further support for the existence of such a causal link. Further research into the nature of addiction is an undeniable necessity. The implications of the causal link of violence between one generation and the next are far-reaching. It is essential that there be research into the factors that enable some children of violence to become what I called transcendents. In the meantime, workers in the field of family violence should be aware that findings such as those put forward in this study should change the way in which the members of violent families are dealt with.

For 12 years I ran a programme in London that treated entire violent families. Through techniques that I developed over the years of the work, I was able to treat successfully many of the families that came to me, breaking the machinery of violence that had operated in those families for many past generations. It is now my intention to establish specifically designed self-help treatment programmes, specialising in the care and rehabilitation of entire violence-prone families. Once again, violence is intergenerational. Therefore, programmes must be developed that will not merely and ineffectually punish the members of violent families but that will also, through skilled intervention, break the family histories of violence before any more future generations of children are addicted to violence.

Tables

Table 1: Proportion of men who were violent and proportion of men who were jealous

Nonviolent (n=2)	Violent men (n=98)	Jealous (n=82)	Not jealous (n=11)
2%	98%	88%	12%

Table 2: The proportion (and numbers) of battered and violence-prone women who experienced a violent childhood

Battered women	Violence-prone women
Violent childhood	Violent childhood
20% (n=7)	64% (n=35)

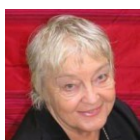
Table 3: The length of time or relationship and of experiencing violence (in years) of battered and violence-prone women

Battered women	Violence-prone women
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Years of relationship (n=38)	Years of violence (n=37)	Years of relationship (n=62)	Years of violence (n=60)
8.50 years	6.08 years	7.6 years	6.25 years

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About Erin Pizzey

Erin Pizzey is founder of Chiswick Womens' Aid, the first ever refuge in the world for victims of domestic violence. She is a lecturer and advocate, and has authored books on domestic abuse, including the seminal "Prone to Violence." Her latest effort is her autobiography, titled "This Way to the Revolution." She is also an Editor-at-Large and adviser for A Voice for Men on domestic violence policy.

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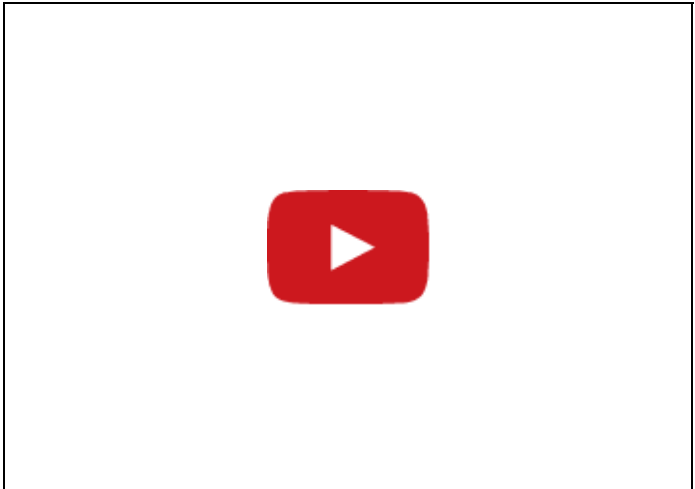
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