SELECTED MEN'S LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATIONS OF VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS IN FAMILIES AND THEIR READINESS FOR CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

The thesis provides an overview of the literature relevant to current practice of those working with violent men. Four men, identified by the court as having been violent in their families, are interviewed and their use of language while giving an account of their experience of family violence is analysed. The results of the linguistic analysis are related to the change process and implications for changing behaviour from violence to non-violence are presented. This research confirms the work done particularly by Adams (1995) in recent years in describing how men can justify, camouflage and maintain positions of dominance in relationships with women, and provides a reference for assisting with increased understanding of the functions of the linguistic forms used by these men. Building on the work done by those in medical and therapeutic fields, a model has been developed which provides a reference for mapping men's readiness for change and their progress through the change process.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis provides an overview of the literature relevant to current practice of those working with groups of violent men and explores the use of language by four men giving accounts of their experience of family violence. The way that these men use language is related to the change process. The functions of different linguistic forms are studied and presented in a way which builds a composite picture of a man's current position on a continuum of change from violent to non-violent family relationships. The thesis is arranged in two distinct parts. The first four chapters review literature to provide a base of understanding and theory necessary to contextualise the present research. From chapter six on, the thesis deals directly with the present research.

Chapter one seeks to provide an overview of family violence, including a discussion of fundamental concepts and terminology associated with family violence in the context of contemporary New Zealand society. It provides a thumbnail sketch of family violence in New Zealand today: What is it? Who does it? Why does it happen? What are we doing about it? Chapter two reviews the literature pertinent to family violence around men's personal and social development and in particular their fathering role. Chapter three builds on the discussion in chapter one about men's social development, by focussing on the power dynamic in relationships between men and women in New Zealand society. Chapter four surveys the change process for men who have been perpetrators of violence in their families. Factors which enable or contribute to change from violent to non-violent behaviour are discussed. Chapter five has a strong linguistics orientation in comparison to chapters one to four which are oriented to social psychology, sociology and social work. It discusses features of language commonly used by men who have been violent when they give accounts of their relationships and it establishes the present research as a discourse analysis. Chapter six describes the methodology employed in the research, while chapter seven reports the results and chapter eight concludes the thesis by discussing implications arising from this study.

CHAPTER ONE

FAMILY VIOLENCE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides information on family violence in New Zealand, discussing key concepts and terminology essential for understanding the scope of family violence in this country. It provides a brief explanation of programmes which help men to stop being violent.

1.2 THE NZ DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT

The Domestic Violence Act 1995, which became New Zealand law in July 1996, provides for the Court to make a protection order against a respondent if it is satisfied that the applicant or child in the family needs protection or if the respondent has used "domestic violence" against the applicant or child in the family. The protection order imposes conditions of non violence on the respondent. Respondents are then required to attend an education programme to provide them with the ability to stop being violent in family settings.

According to the Act:
Domestic violence refers to violence against one person by another with whom that person is, or has been in a domestic relationship.

Violence means physical abuse, sexual abuse or psychological abuse. Psychological abuse includes (but is not limited to) intimidation, harassment, damage to property, threats of abuse, any abuse of a child.

Abuse of a child includes allowing a child to see or hear, or putting the child at risk of seeing or hearing, the physical, sexual or psychological abuse of a person with whom the child has a domestic relationship.

A *domestic relationship* can mean a partner or family member or in certain cases someone sharing a household or having a close, personal relationship.

The general provisions of a protection order are to prevent contact by the respondent, to prohibit possession of any weapon by respondents, to provide speedy and inexpensive access to the Court for victims of family violence, to require respondents to attend stopping violence programmes, and to provide education programmes for victims of family violence.

1.3 FAMILY VIOLENCE

The people who can be and are violent in family settings include men, women and children. Women, children and men can be the perpetrators of violence just as they can be the victims. However, the United States of America Bureau of Statistics, 1995, shows that American women are six times more likely than men to experience violence committed by an intimate. Peter Adams (1998) quotes statistics indicating that at least one in seven New Zealand women are affected by family violence with an economic cost of 4.2 billion dollars per year. Assaults by male intimates are more likely to be severe and result in more severe injuries than assaults by others (Browne, 1993). Women are also at greater risk of assault (including rape and homicide), from a husband, ex-husband, boyfriend or ex-boyfriend than they are from a stranger or acquaintance (Browne & Williams, 1993). Most (83%) male perpetrators of violence in New Zealand families are aged from 20 to 44 years. Recent statistical information (National Network of Stopping Violence Services, 1998) indicates that of the men enrolled in Stopping Violence programmes in New Zealand during the first quarter of 1998, 35% were separated, 22% were in a de facto relationship, 20% were married and 20% were single.

1.4 SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND ETHNIC FACTORS

Male-partner violence is found across all ethnic and socio-economic groups and while low-income women report higher rates of current partner violence (11%) than middle-income women (10%), or higher-income women (8%), the difference is not great (Koss, Ingram & Pepper, 1997). The quarterly report from January to March 1998 of Te Kupenga Whakaoti Mahi Patunga/New Zealand National Network of Stopping Violence Services (NNSVS) records that 79% of men enrolled on Stopping Violence programmes earned less than $30 000

and 45% of all men enrolled earned less than $15 000. Whilst it is well documented that family violence occurs across the spectrum of socio-economic levels in society, the large majority currently referred to programmes by the court earn less than the minimum national wage. This raises serious questions about either rapid changes in offending or about a socio-economic differential in charging and/or sentencing. Reasons for a preponderance of men from lower socio-economic levels attending stopping violence programmes in New Zealand could well become the focus for subsequent research.

While research into the prevalence of partner abuse in different ethnic groups is contradictory, some indications are that there is no difference when socio-economic status is statistically controlled (Koss et al, 1994). Hampton and Gelles (1994) however, found that African Americans were 2.4 times more likely to experience severe violence within their primary relationship then were their European American counterparts. According to a recent report, the leading cause of death for African American women aged 15 to 34 in the USA is homicide by an intimate partner (Council on Scientific Affairs, 1992). New Zealand statistics (NNSVS, 1998) indicate that 51.52% of men enrolled on programmes in the first quarter of 1998 were Pakeha New Zealanders and 34.46% were Maori New Zealanders. The remainder were made up of 6.93% other Pacific Islanders and 7% of "other" or "unknown" ethnicity. In New Zealand the population (1996 census) comprises approximately 70% Pakeha (of European descent), a Maori population of 523 500 or 14% and 5.5% are other Pacific Islanders. Comparing these numbers with the total populations of the ethnic groups show ratios of 1:0.73 for Pakeha New Zealanders, 1:2.46 for Maori New Zealanders and 1:1.26 for other Pacific Islanders. Once again, these statistics raise questions deserving of some further investigation. How is the reason for apparent over-representation of Maori men in stopping violence programmes similar to and different from the reason that lower socio-economic groups are over-represented at these programmes?

From the literature it is possible to isolate two distinct forms of couple violence taking place within families in the U.S.A (Johnson, 1995). Some families suffer from occasional outbursts of violence from either husbands or wives (common couple violence), while other families are terrorised by systematic male violence (patriarchal terrorism).

Common couple violence is where the complexities of family life produce conflicts that occasionally "get out of hand" in some families. Recent research carried out in Christchurch suggests that as reported by children, females assault males at approximately the same rate as

males assault females (Fergusson, 1998). This female assaults male violence can be categorised as common-couple violence, which some men also practise. Other men attempt to minimise their abusive behaviours by attributing their actions to one-off occasions where they "lost it", in other words, common-couple violence. Johnson's research also highlighted that while in the case of patriarchal terrorism, violence invariably escalates, in the case of common couple violence no significant escalation was apparent. The overriding difference between these two forms of violence is in the motivation of the perpetrator. In the case of patriarchal terrorism, it is likely that a whole range of controlling tactics will be used as the motivation is for the man to exercise general control over "his" woman. The focus of the present research is on men, who may use both common couple violence and patriarchal terrorism in their family relationships.

It seems likely that causal factors involved in patriarchal terrorism are also involved in common couple violence, that many of these factors are continuous variables, and although some of them are sex-linked, there is overlap in gender distribution. Causal factors for patriarchal terrorism (Johnson, 1995) are:

- motivation to control;
- normative acceptability of control;
- inclination to use violence for control;
- physical strength differences that make violence effective;
- inclination to expressive violence;
- victim deference;
- structural commitment to the relationship.

1.5 MEN'S PROGRAMMES

Thirty three agencies which provide stopping violence programmes in communities in New Zealand are affiliated to Te Kupenga Whakaoti Mahi Patunga/National Network of Stopping Violence Services. There is a number of other agencies involved in this work which are not affiliated to the national body, usually because of enhanced ability to attract funding as an independent group. Agencies provide a range of services including separate programmes for men, women and youth. Men's programmes vary in length from 12 to 26 weeks' duration and for sex offenders up to two years.

While all programmes are developed locally, most have built on the curriculum developed by Ellen Pence and Michael Paymar for the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota (Pence & Paymar, 1990).

A programme has been developed to better meet New Zealand conditions and needs which agencies will be able to draw on to provide content and deliver suggestions of a consistent standard (NNSV/McMaster, 1998). This Living Without Violence programme has built on current best practice, and has recently been distributed to member agencies. It has the goals of ensuring people's safety, especially that of women and children, and encouraging equality-based changes in men's attitudes and behaviour.

In 1997 there were 3,483 referrals made to affiliated stopping violence agencies from family court, district court, police, CYPS, CHE and Community Corrections (NNSVS, 1998). Of that number 1,977 of the men engaged in programmes. Of those men engaging in the programmes, 21% of them managed full attendance and another 29% attended from 75% up to 99% of the sessions. A 50% attendance rate at mandated programmes does raise questions about attitudes to attendance by those involved in the programmes. The 909 men satisfactorily attending programmes compared with the total number of men referred is a mere 26%.

1.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has described the scope of family violence in New Zealand. Statistics show the prevalence of violence and discuss differences of age, ethnicity, and income within populations between those who abuse their partners and those who don't. There is a brief explanation about programmes for men for stopping being violent in their families. Within the context provided the reader is able to move on to chapters two and three which will explore some current literature on men and their development and differences in gender and power.