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Terminological (In)Justice: Terminology and Reality in a Coordinated Community Response to Intimate Partner Violence

Julio Montanez MA
University of Central Florida

Amy Donley PhD
University of Central Florida



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Terminology and Reality in a Coordinated Community Response to Intimate Partner Violence

Abstract

Definitions and terminologies are paramount for operationalizing the community-wide effort against intimate partner violence (IPV). However, definitions and terms that do not reflect reality are of little use. This is particularly true in IPV coordinated community responses that attempt to harmonize data collection and legal apparatuses at the federal, state, and local levels. Using qualitative (e.g., focus group and interview data from survivors, interviews with system actors) and quantitative data (e.g., Uniform Crime Reports) from a year-long study in a large southeastern county, the current study aims to answer the following research question: Do IPV-related terms (in data collection and law) accurately reflect the realities of IPV in a county-wide coordinated community response? Results indicate, while some concordance is existent, formal terms and definitions of IPV are generally detached from the realities of IPV. Accordingly, some aspects of the multi-level system employ terminological injustice—a mismatch between terminology and reality in IPV response.

Background

Community Coordinated Responses

Community coordinated responses (CCR) to domestic, family, and intimate partner violence intertwine various agencies and services in the community (Shorey et al., 2014):

- Advocacy.
- Law Enforcement.
- Housing.

However, across entities within a CCR, barriers to communication may exist (e.g., administrative turnover, high case loads). Terminology can be argued to be one of these barriers. Among providers in a CCR, terminologies can mismatch, resulting in fragmented

The Research Problematic

While not an institutional ethnography, the current research borrows a tool from institutional ethnography—the research problematic (Rankin, 2017). The research problematic is basically a mismatch between people’s realities and ruling relations’ assumption of reality. The current research reframes these research problematics as “tensions” among terms and data.

Methods

The current study featured a year-long investigation in a large county in the United States, particularly regarding its domestic violence system.

The current study included:

- Survivor interviews.
- Provider interviews.
- Analyses of existing data.
- Statute reviews.
- Assessment form reviews from providers.

By triangulating these data sources, the current study aims to expose and mend the tensions between system-level terminologies and the realities indicated by the data and people within the system.

Results

Table A. Terminological Tensions in the Community Coordinated Response

| Tension | Issue Term | Contradicting Data | Explanation |
|---------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | <i>Intimate Partner Violence</i> | Provider Interviews | While researchers used the term intimate partner violence, providers used domestic violence. |
| 2 | <i>Lovers Quarrel</i> | SHR Data | The gender asymmetry of homicide contrasts with implied symmetry of “quarrel” in “lovers quarrel.” |
| 3 | <i>Intimate Partner Homicide</i> | Supplemental Homicide Reports Data | Intimate partner homicide also claims non-partner victims (e.g., children, other family members). |
| 4 | <i>Homelessness</i> | Survivor Interviews and Provider Intake Assessment Questionnaires | Fleeing domestic violence can be seen as a homelessness subcategory. |
| 5 | <i>Domestic Violence</i> | Statute, Provider Interviews | Dating violence should be considered alongside domestic violence. |

1. Tension #1: Intimate Partner Violence

Table B. Interview Data on the Mismatch Between the Terms Intimate Partner Violence and Domestic Violence in the Coordinated Community Response

| Example | Interviewer Question | Interviewee Response |
|---------|---|--|
| 1a. | “So, for the purposes of this interview, <u>intimate partner violence</u> includes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression, including coercive tactics by a current or former intimate partner, spouses, boyfriends, girlfriends, ongoing sexual partners. And I’m wondering if you can tell me a little bit more about [Your organization] for as well as your role [in it].” | “...You know, we do have incidents of domestic violence in some of our programs. We also get referrals from <u>domestic violence</u> shelters...” |
| 1b. | “...And are there dedicated officers or division to respond to <u>intimate partner violence</u> or is there a more general victim services division?” | “So the way that we do it here at [agency] is that all of our officers are trained [on] <u>domestic violence</u> .” |
| 1c. | N/A | “The state of Florida does not talk about <u>intimate partner violence</u> in the statute. And that is a major issue because the police only abide by the statute [which] clearly dictates what they are supposed to do and how they’re supposed to handle crimes. So again...organizations that address those crimes are not gonna talk to you about intimate partner violence here... Why would we talk about domestic violence? Because that’s what the statute talks about. 741 point 30 is a statute that talks about <u>domestic violence</u> .” |

2. Tension #2: Lovers Quarrel

Table C. Gender Configurations of Lovers Quarrel Homicides, 1996-2020

| Characteristic | n | % |
|-------------------------------|----|------|
| Relationship Configuration | | |
| Male Offender/Female Victim | 16 | 70.0 |
| Female Offender/Male Victim | 2 | 8.7 |
| Male Offender/Male Victim | 5 | 21.8 |
| Female Offender/Female Victim | 0 | 0 |

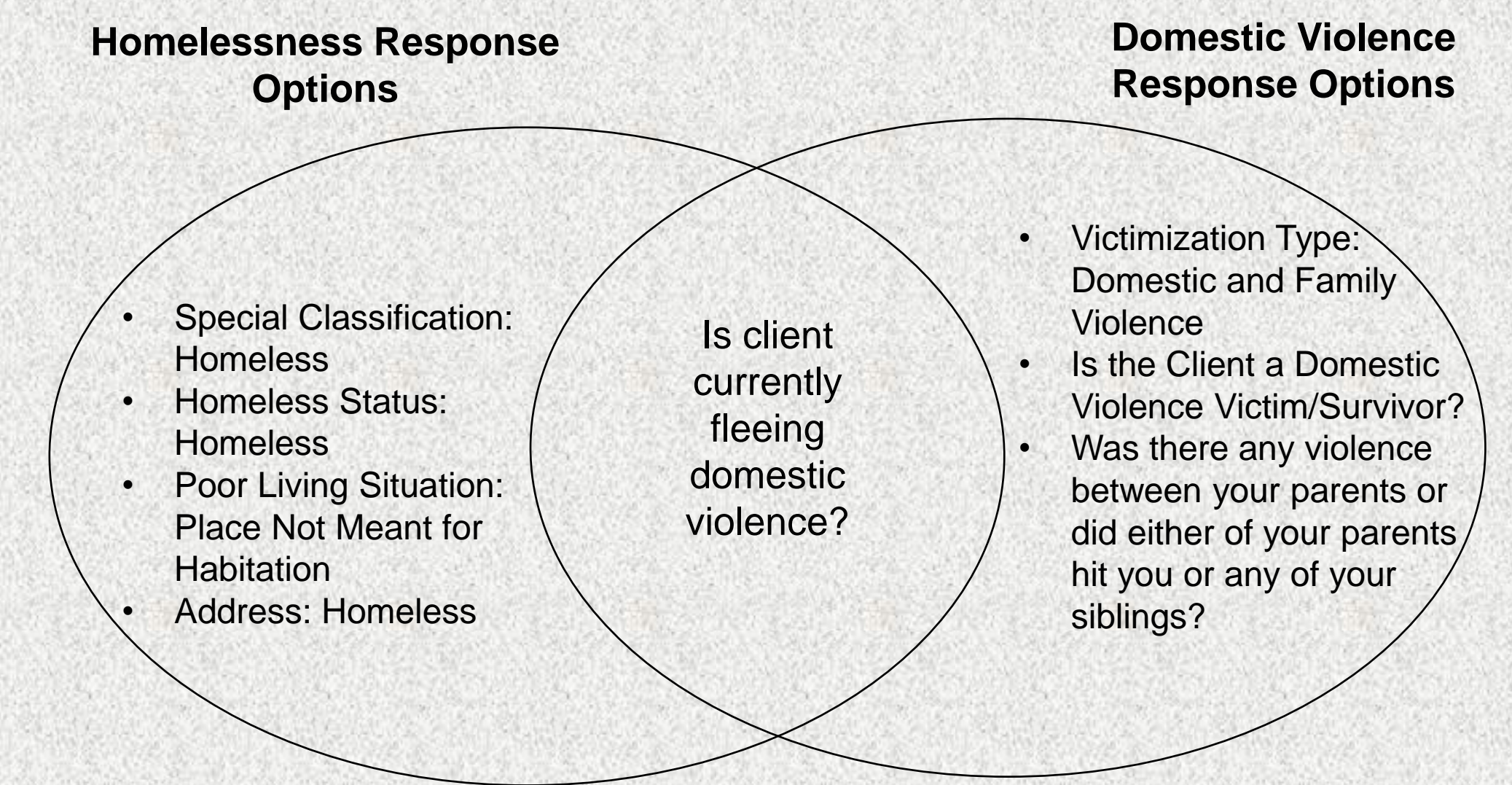
3. Tension #3: Intimate Partner Homicide

Table D. Intimate Partner Violence-Related Collateral Homicide Victimization in Miami-Dade County, 1996-2020 (N = 67)

| Relationship | n | % |
|--------------|----|------|
| Spouse | 20 | 29.9 |
| Child | 15 | 22.4 |
| Other Family | 7 | 10.4 |
| Cohabitant | 3 | 4.5 |
| Other | 21 | 31.3 |
| Unknown | 1 | 1.5 |

Note. “Other” involves strangers, acquaintances, coworkers, and other relationships.

4. Tension #4 : Homelessness



Survivor Data: Survivors mentioned going from the domestic violence shelter to the homeless shelter.

5. Tension #5: Domestic Violence

Statutes:

Fla. Stat. 741.30(6)(g) – Domestic Violence Injunctions:
A final judgement on injunction for protection against domestic violence must, on its face, indicate that it is a violation...for the respondent to have...any firearm or ammunition.

Fla. Stat. 784.046 – Dating, Repeat, and Sexual Violence Injunctions:
[Silent on firearms and ammunition]

Interviews:

“Dating violence is domestic violence.” (Stakeholder)

Implications/Recommendations

- Un-“silo” the fields of research on domestic violence, particularly for the domestic violence-homelessness intersection.
- Lovers Quarrel is a term that should never be used.
- Use the term domestic/intimate partner violence.
- Use the term domestic/intimate partner homicide.

References

Rankin, J. (2017). Conducting analysis in institutional ethnography: Guidance and cautions. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1-11.

Shorey, R. C., Tirone, V., & Stuart, G. L. (2014). Coordinated community response components for victims of intimate partner violence: A review of the literature. *Aggression and violent behavior*, 19(4), 363-371.

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