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REPORT CONSTRUCTION WHEN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURROUNDS OR INVOLVES
CHILDREN

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2013

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Sociology
in the College of Sciences
at the University of Central Florida
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ABSTRACT

Household violence that involves children can be complicated situations to understand and describe for police responding to calls. Police reports are important in prosecuting cases by informing and reminding criminal justice personnel of what occurred in incidents, and inconsistencies between reports and accounts by involved persons can result in credibility loss and case dismissal (Gregory et al. 2011). Little research has been conducted on the construction of police reports, particularly in domestic violence cases involving children. This study uses three years of domestic violence police reports from a sheriff office's database in Florida to distinguish information recorded for three types of domestic violence cases: adults only, children involved, and children present. Using a social constructionist criminologist perspective, recorded information in regards to victims, offenders, and violence mentions differ by the level of children's involvement in cases. Discrepancies in report quality and details are important to social policy, as officers' perceptions of the involved individuals and resources, such as medical attention and injury photography, are guided by social narratives and stereotypes that can be improved through awareness and training.

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INTRODUCTION

Evidence collection through information documented in police reports is constructed through officers' ability to illustrate offender-victim relationship types, contexts, and types of violence. Family violence research has tended to focus on parents as abusers and children as victims, which has limited the scope of children's experiences of violence to witnessing violence, being victimized, or engaging in reactive violence (Buzawa and Hotaling 2007; Calvete, Orue, and Gamez-Guardix 2012). Conversely, research has found that 75% of children in households with domestic violence were involved as active participants and 95% experienced sensory exposure to the violence (Fusco and Fantuzzo 2008). Less is known about the details that police record to construct incident data and narratives in police reports involving children in domestic violence incidents. Report information may differ depending on if children are involved and their level of exposure to violence, such as if children are recorded as engaging in violence with parents or simply present during family violence.

Police reports are subject to an array of constraints and perceptions that threaten the accuracy and completeness of cases. The success of an investigation relies on the accurate construction of information in a police report, which is organized in chronological order and uses legal language. Discrepancies between police reports and involved persons' perceptions of what occurred can damage credibility of the involved persons, the report, and the investigation (Rock 2001; Milne and Bull 2006). Officers rephrase statements to filter out information deemed unnecessary and compose statements into narratives, which results in a loss of factual statements (Ainsworth 1995; Milne and Bull 2006; Rock 2011; Cauchi and Powell 2009; Lamb et al. 2000).

Additionally, when incidents are uncertain or ambiguous, police may use assumptions to construct a report that portrays a clear sequence of events (Baldwin and Bedward 1991). A study looking at investigative note accuracy of 13 police officers with 16 years of experience found that information in notes are almost completely accurate, but 68% of interview information and 40% of crime-relevant information is not included in reports (Gregory et al. 2011). Thus, accuracy and efficiency is emphasized in report writing, but what is recorded is ultimately tied to officers' training and perceptions of incidents.

Police reports involving children are distinctive from adult cases; children uniquely experience the effects of domestic violence in their homes, which are sometimes long-term. Children exposed to domestic violence incidents are more likely to have post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (Osofsky 1995; Pynoos and Nader 1993). In particular, a potential long-term effect of childhood exposure to domestic violence could be incarceration, as 90% of incarcerated girls reported childhood exposure to domestic violence (Odgers, Robins, and Russell 2010). A national study of female inmates at local and state prisons found that nearly half (41% to 57%) had experienced physical or sexual abuse (Greenfield and Snell 1999). DeHart (2008) interviewed 60 incarcerated women on how child abuse or partner abuse caused them to engage in prostitution, property offenses, or violent acts. Compromised health is another long-term effect, as childhood victimization predicts injury and risk of injury in adolescence, as well as their physical health condition and number of hospitalizations in young adulthood (Odgers, Robins, and Russell 2010). Despite the serious repercussions of childhood exposure to domestic violence, incidents involving children as a form of child maltreatment are difficult to address for

social services due to violent acts being hidden by families to avoid scrutiny (Stanley, Miller, Foster, and Thomson 2011).

Through a social constructionist criminologist framework, this study analyzes police reports by considering recorded situational details from police report narratives and focusing on how child involvement is handled in police report construction. The term “children” is used to describe individuals based on their relationship with their parents, so children are not necessarily under eighteen years old in this study. As police arrive on scene and assess individuals involved in situations that at least one individual deemed necessary of formal intervention, police must construct narratives based on any indicators of criminality and demonstrate through report writing protocol that criminality occurred. Therefore, each variable pulled from police reports is analyzed as a construction; each variable signifies value to police in order to be recorded in a report to illustrate a criminal event. Variables such as age and gender are viewed through this theoretical lens as well because these factors influence how police navigate incidents. Literature on police interactions with children compared to adults, children in domestic violence, and the emphasis on physical violence by police is reviewed in order to assess how report construction differs by records of adults only, children involved, or children present. Using domestic violence police reports entered into a database from 2011-2013 in a Sheriff’s Office in Florida, logistic regression is utilized for determining predictors such as records of offender-victim relational context, repeat offending and victimization, medical attention sought, injury photography, and non-violent abuse on records of children’s level of exposure to domestic violence in reports.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relational Context in Domestic Violence: Adults and Children Adults and Children: Offenders or Victims?

Adults and children encounter different circumstances in domestic violence cases and responses by police in several ways, such as with presenting as legitimate victims, whether police are called, injury extent, and authority use by police. Each aspect of officers' response to domestic violence is guided by expectations and norms based on minor or adult status, family relationship types, and family contexts such as reliance or cohabitation between offenders and victims (Goudriaan et al. 2004; Schnebly 2008).

Juveniles are less likely than their parents or other adults to be seen as legitimate victims by police (Buzawa and Hotaling 2007). Violence by less powerful individuals, such as children, towards more powerful individuals, such as parents, challenges perceptions of power and cycles of abuse in families (Agnew and Huguley 1989). For instance, police were more accepting of some violence in relationships as long as the victim was not weaker than the offender and willing to use violence themselves, such as in cases when wives injured husbands (Finn and Stalans 2002). This suggests that individuals who express a willingness to harm incite less sympathy from authorities, which might mean that children who express aggressiveness also incite less sympathy from adults in their lives and police.

Whether police involvement is called on is influenced by age and relational contexts for families. Willingness to report to police differs throughout the lifespan, as a national-level probability survey of 134,000 residents in the United States found that the emotional and physical abuse of children is difficult for children to formally report because of their reliance on adults, similarly to how elderly parents are more reliant on their adult children, less able to be

physically aggressive, and less likely to report abuse and violence (Kang and Lynch 2014). This study also found that parents who seek formal assistance against their abusive children are able to involve authorities more than other family roles are because parents don't typically rely on their children for their livelihood (National Center on Elder Abuse at the American Public Human Services Association (1998; Kang and Lynch 2014). Parents are able to gain authority over their children through formal sanction without risk. Also, parents at the ages of 47-54 have children reaching adulthood and may experience less nurturing relationships and as a result, feel more confident in calling the police on them (Kang and Lynch 2014). Parents with unrealistic expectations and adequate communication skills are also a risk factor for child-parent violence (Kennedy et al. 2010; Paulson et al. 1990; Peek et al. 1985). Poor parental discipline and supervision, as well as hostile parenting, are important risk factors for the development of antisocial behaviors in adolescence (Loeber et al. 1993; Yoshikawa 1994). Minors who engage in violence with their parents or experience maltreatment from their parents are constrained by reliance on their parents, which leaves police to compose reports while unaware of these experiences.

Discrepancies between the treatment of adults and children by police are tied to social norms and officers' beliefs about how an individual should behave based on their age. When social norms and expectations are challenged, officers' use of authority and arrest are more likely to occur (Brown, Novak, and Frank 2009). Juvenile status alone has been found to correlate to arrest (Brown, Novak, and Frank 2009; Brown 2005; Brown & Frank 2005, 2006; Mastrofski et al. 1995; Novak et al. 2002; Visherm1983). A study of 617 suspects was achieved through systematic social observations of police behavior during their shifts (Brown, Novak, and Frank

2009). When juveniles were disrespectful with police, police used greater levels of authority, but were not more likely to arrest them and adults were more likely to be arrested when disrespectful. Similarly, when juveniles were intoxicated, they were likely to be arrested, but experienced no greater police authority, whereas adults were likely to be arrested, as well as exposed to authoritative actions by police when intoxicated (Brown, Novak, and Frank 2009; Liederbach 2007). Police are harsher with adults who misuse the legally approved act of drinking alcohol than juveniles who are breaking the law by drinking alcohol because of the enhanced misbehavior. For this reason, minor status matters in how officers perceive criminality and respond to incidents.

In addition to age and relational context, types of family relationships and abuse are critical to look at in domestic violence research because the closeness between offenders and victims is linked to the extent of injury to the victim. Violence against a close relative is linked to greater severity in injury regardless of the age of the offender and the sex or age of the victim (Heller, Ehrlich, and Lester 1983). In 320 domestic violence calls from police records, cases of child-to-parent and sibling assault had increased the odds of arrest for domestic violence more than for other kinds of relationships and had much higher odds of arrest than adult intimate partner relationships in particular (Buzawa and Hotaling 2007). Violence between parents and children is between close relatives, so higher levels of injury severity and police intervention should be recorded in police reports.

Individuals experience violence and police responses based on the perceptions and consequences of acts, age and role of the individuals involved. This relates to adults and children

in domestic violence incidents, as records of violence involving a minor may be associated with more severe police records of the incident than if children are simply present.

Patterns of Violence: Violent Households and Repeat Offending and Victimization

Domestic violence incidents extend beyond intimate partner violence to family members and household members. Rather than identify as victims and witnesses, children may engage in violence or perpetrate violence against their parents. Children may begin to use violence in their family unit because it is the context that they were first exposed to violence and thus, it was part of interaction (Agnew and Huguley 1989). Children who use physical and verbal tactics against their parents are more likely to be exposed to domestic violence and physically or verbally abused by another member of their household (Kennedy et al. 2010; Gallagher 2004). Children engaged in domestic violence influence reports by their gender and minor status in society, and may experience maltreatment that influences future offending.

Child-to-parent violence (CPV) was formally named over thirty years ago by Harbin and Madden (1979), and it is still a less researched form of family violence (Walsh and Krienert 2007). Tew and Nixon (2010) described child-to-parent violence as an abuse of power that allows the child to dominate, coerce, and control others in their family. Particularly in families characterized by a lack of limitations and permissive parenting, child-to-parent violence may be caused by the negotiation of authority (Calvete, Orue, and Gamez-Guadix 2012). As teen batters witness violence that was modeled in their households, teen battering intervention programs teach that acting violent is a choice and healthy models of relationships (Buel 2008).

Overall, children are in a submissive role to adults within their families and even more so under legal authority as minors in society. When children become engaged in domestic violence in their households, they act in ways that mimic adults because they have witnessed shifts in

family roles (Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System 2004). For instance, children shift the adult authority roles in the family to their responsibility and thus, take on one or more adult roles (such as caretaker to a parent and sibling or as the abuser's confidant). They have difficulty assuming the role of the child when expected to (Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System 2004). Thus, parent/child violence in domestic violence conveys a message of sanction for deviance that is uniquely tied to the involvement of minors and thus, roles attached to familial and societal hierarchies.

Children involved in domestic violence incidents differ by gender and police response. In domestic violence cases girls are more likely to experience violence, victimize family, and to be arrested over violence involving family, while boys more often experience violence involving friends and acquaintances (Feld 2009; Strom et al. 2014). In a study of child-to-parent violence, girls and boys were found to use physical violence similarly, but girls used verbal abuse more than boys (Calvete, Orue, and Gamez-Guadix 2012). Furthermore, a study by Strom et al. (2014) looking at the decreasing gender gap in child-on-parent assaults through the implementation of domestic violence arrests laws and increased police involvement in family disputes found that arrests of both boys and girls were significantly more likely to occur in states with pro-arrest or mandatory arrest policies. Controlling for other factors, girls were more likely to be arrested over a 5-year period (Strom et al., 2014). As involvement in family violence by children is influenced by the gender of child offenders and victims, gender likely influences how officers perceive domestic violence incidents and document evidence.

The damaging effect of participation by children in domestic violence is tied to relationships and violence in the family, such as intimate partner violence between parents.

Household participation in violence leads to further offending and victimization for children. Domestic violence between intimate partners puts children at risk for maltreatment (Banks, Landsverk, and Wang 2008; Steen 2009). Intimate partner violence is tied to physical abuse, harsh psychological punishment, and neglect of children (Hartley 2002; Zolotor et al. 2007). From an online survey of child welfare and intimate partner service providers, law enforcement, and children's protective service investigators, providers dealt with child maltreatment and intimate partner violence when a parent didn't leave an abusive household (Coulter and Mercado-Crespo 2015). Intimate partner violence and child maltreatment may also be connected to sibling violence and children's offending and victimization later in life (Hoffman and Edwards 2004; Edwards, Desai, and Gldycz 2009; Palazzolo, Roberto, and Babin 2010). As a result, various types of abuse co-occur in families and should be considered when officers document a domestic violence call.

Domestic violence incidents that involve children may change report records, as children experience maltreatment, perpetration of violence and non-violent abuse, and differing levels of engagement in violence based on gender. Police may record evidence differently based on children's involvement in violence.

Recorded Physical and Non-violent Abuse in Domestic Violence

Along with different types of victims and offenders, the ranges of abuse in domestic violence cases vary in meaning for the criminal justice system and are recorded with differing priority by police. Physical signs of domestic violence are emphasized and valuable to police in order to make arrest decisions and provide probable cause for arrest (Buzawa and Hotaling 2007; Finn and Stalans 2002). Photographs of injuries provide greater ease in showcasing evidence for abusers to be held legally responsible for their actions, whereas emotional abuse is difficult to

demonstrate in the formal setting of courtrooms (Finn and Stalans 2002; Peterson and Bialo-Padin 2012). Domestic violence reports rarely include children's experiences but when children's distress was documented, it stemmed from verbal abuse (Stanley, Miller, Foster, and Thomson 2011). Moreover, non-violent abuse may be recorded in association with report incidents involving children more than in intimate partner violence due to this finding.

Issues arise when emphasizing physical abuse, as the current "violent incident model" values assaults and severity of injury without as much value on frequency and duration, which is the long-term situation of battered women (Stark 2012). However, physical injuries do not always dictate arrest outcomes similarly in every domestic violence case. By analyzing police reports from one year, the number of people involved and the types of relationships in domestic violence incidents influenced arrest outcomes (Connolly, Huzurbazar, and Routh-McGee 2000). In domestic violence events with more than one offender, arrest is more likely to occur when there is serious injury even though incidents with more than one offender resulted in less serious injuries than single offender incidents (Connolly, Huzurbazar, and Routh-McGee 2000). Also, when the involved individuals are married and the crime is assault or greater, arrest is more likely to occur when compared to non-spousal relations (Connolly, Huzurbazar, and Routh-McGee 2000). Dual-arrests in domestic violence cases are likely to occur when police knew that both parties were injured, when the police officer was more experienced, and when the police officer knew their department would support dual-arrests (Finn et al. 2004). In these cases, the number of people involved, the relationships between them, and officers' department's standards influenced responses to incidents, so when children are involved, multiple people involved

(siblings and parents) likely impact information collection by officers (Buzawa and Hotaling 2007; Finn and Stalans 2002; Connolly, Huzurbazar, and Routh-McGee 2000).

As for children's injuries and medical attention in domestic violence cases, a study by Christian et al. (1997) examined children's injuries secondary to intimate partner violence (children caught in the middle of a violent family event by being involved or being held by the caregiver) at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and found that nearly half of children were under 2 years old (48%) and of those, most injuries occurred to the head and 59% were injured when being held by parents. Most injuries were minor (57%), yet 40% were moderate injuries needing medical attention and 9% needed hospitalization (Christian et al. 1997).

A survey completed by 480 paramedics concluded that emergency medical service providers receive little formal education on domestic violence and reported wanting more training on helping abused women by providing treatment to their injuries, as well as support and resources (Mason et al. 2010). Hence, emergency medical services personnel influence if offenders and victims seek medical attention despite lacking ample training in domestic violence, which impacts information documentation by officers. Physical violence recorded through medical attention sought and injury photography may differ between reports with records of adults only, children involved, or children present, as violence differs by relational context and can overlap among intimate partner violence and parent/child violence.

FRAMEWORK

Social constructionist perspectives on crime and deviance inform this study, and in particular how certain acts are labeled and defined by society and authorities (Henry 2009). This view recognizes that if individuals define situations as real, then they are real in their consequences, which means that if incidents named or labeled as domestic violence are categorized as behaviors, events, or experiences similarly, then they appear as representations of reality with real positive or negative effects. Particularly in regards to labeling deviance, the labeling perspective by Howard D. Becker (1963) argues that crime and deviance are not indicative of the act a person commits, but of the signifying and identifying of behavior by society as important, as well as good or bad. Deviance exists from the interaction between individuals' behaviors and the reactions of others to them and thus, private issues become public harm through the successful labeling of offenders (Henry, 2009). Domestic violence occurs between people who know each other privately, but domestic violence becomes a public issue in need of the criminal justice system due to being unacceptable in society. Furthermore, police collect information from individuals for the purpose of demonstrating criminality to other criminal justice personnel and society overall in order to successfully sanction certain behaviors, events, and experiences. Police reports are not representations of reality or truth, but constructions of assumptions and indications of potential criminality that lead to the labeling of offenders and victims.

PRESENT STUDY

The particular focus of this study is to examine how information collection differs in incidents involving children compared to incidents without children in regards to their level of involvement and aspects such as physical injury, non-violent abuse, and repeat offenders and victims by police. Domestic violence involving entire households (including children) in the form of child-parent or parent-child violence is hypothesized to record more incidental and situational information than in reports mentioning the presence of children. Although domestic violence incidents are harmful overall, the behaviors, events, and experiences of children involved violence may be recorded with more information for evidence than other incidents due to the deviance associated with child abuse and parent abuse. Each variable, including age and gender, are analyzed as constructions due to the meanings that each holds to be perceived, assessed, and ordered by importance by police officers writing reports. For instance, when police officers arrive on scene, the identification and recording of the offender and the victim by police is influenced by the involved individuals' age, gender, relationship type, and a variety of situational factors (Buzawa and Hotaling 2007; Kang and Lynch 2014; Brown, Novak, and Frank 2009; Brown 2005; Brown & Frank 2005, 2006; Mastrofski et al. 1995; Novak et al. 2002; Visherm 1983).

Domestic violence is about shifts in power and control in the family structure that allows an individual (adult or child) to assert harm on their family or household members (Calvete, Orue, and Gamez-Guadix 2012; Tew and Nixon 2010). Florida is a pro-arrest state, which means arrest is not mandatory, but encouraged when probable cause exists in domestic violence incidents. Violence between family members is included under Florida law as domestic violence.

Florida defines domestic violence as “any assault, aggravated assault, battery, aggravated battery, sexual assault, sexual battery, stalking, aggravated stalking, kidnapping, false imprisonment, or any criminal offense resulting in physical injury or death of one family or household member by another family or household member” (FL §741.28).

Research Question and Hypotheses

Do records of adult only violence differ in association with physical injury, non-violent abuse, and repeat offending and victimization compared to records with children involved or children present?

Hypothesis 1: Information recorded for the purposes of narrative writing by police officers will differ between reports involving adults only, children involved in violence, and children present during violence.

Records of children involved in violence should be uniquely associated with the independent variables compared to adults only and children present because past literature indicates that children’s engagement in violence with parents is tied to household violence and intimate partner violence among parents, which in turn influences physical violent, non-violent abuse, and repeat offending and victimization. Violence by children occurs in households undergoing the negotiation of authority and children may take on adult roles (Calvete, Orue, and Gamez-Guadix 2012; Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System 2004). Additionally, the household is where children are first exposed to violence (Agnew and Huguley 1989). Intimate partner violence and child maltreatment in households is connected to sibling violence and children’s offending and victimization later in life (Hoffman and Edwards 2004; Edwards, Desai, and Gldycz 2009; Palazzolo, Roberto, and Babin 2010). Therefore, children involved violence is tied to parental and sibling violence, which influences imperative information

collection, such as identification of victims, offenders, and injuries differently than adults only or children present.

Hypothesis 2: Police will be more likely to record physical abuse (medical sought and injury photography) and non-violent abuse in association with reports of children involved in violence than in reports of adults only or children present.

As physical signs of incident are emphasized and valuable to police for holding individuals accountable, cases with specific records of children involved in violence should be more likely to be associated with records of medical attention and injury photography than when there are children present. Children involved in violence should be associated with more injuries, as violence against a close relative is associated with greater severity in injury (Heller, Ehrlich, and Lester 1983). A study of children injured from domestic violence found that most injuries were minor (57%), yet 40% were moderate injuries needing medical attention and 9% needed hospitalization (Christian et al. 1997). Non-violent abuse is a less emphasized aspect, but past research shows that struggles in power and control in the family structure bolster an individual's (adult or child) choice to use violence against their family or household members (Calvete, Orue, and Gamez-Guadix 2012; Tew and Nixon 2010). Also, children's distress was identified as caused by verbal abuse when involved in domestic violence incidents (Stanley, Miller, Foster, and Thomson 2011). Children involved in violence provide an opportunity for medical attention, injury photography, and non-violent abuse to occur and be recorded by police more than adults only or children present because of the enhanced deviance associated with child-parent violence or parent-child violence that may need to be demonstrated in reports.

Hypothesis 3: Police will be more likely to record repeat victimization and offending, multiple victims, and secondary reports in association with records of children involved in violence than with records of adults only or children present. Domestic violence involving children occurs in households, which involves adults and different types of familial relationships that can foster repetitive visits by police officers for domestic violence. Children are exposed to violence through interactions in their households and may use physical and verbal abuse against their family due to experiences of abuse by other members of the household (Agnew and Huguley 1989; Kennedy et al. 2010; Gallagher 2004). Child maltreatment and intimate partner violence was identified by child welfare and intimate partner service providers, law enforcement, and children's protective service investigators when a parent didn't leave an abusive household (Coulter and Mercado-Crespo 2015). Repetitive involvement by law enforcement should be anticipated in domestic violence situations, as abuse is ongoing and characterized by times of fear and times of decision-making (Stark 2013). Therefore, reports of children involved in violence is likely occurring in a context of familial violence that is characterized by repetitive offending and victimization, as well as multiple victims and secondary reports among violence in a household with children involved

METHOD

Data and Sample

This study uses a dataset of 824 domestic violence police incident reports created by one county Sheriff's Office in Florida during the period of January 2011 through December 2013. The dataset was derived from a police report database called "Pass-On", which includes a subset of police reports that have been selected by supervisors for agency-wide distribution and therefore is not an inclusive collection of all domestic violence police reports from 2011-2013. Reports placed in "Pass-On" do not represent any selection bias, but administrative bias, as certain supervisors were more diligent about their officers uploading reports after their shifts. The sample for this study consists of every domestic violence report filed in "Pass-On" between January 2011 and December 2013 (n=824 reports) by law enforcement and is a secondary analysis of these previously identified domestic violence cases, with a specific focus on incidents involving children and parents of any age group.

Police incident reports are organized in two main sections, with the first being predefined boxes called "Incident Data" and the second section is the narrative section, where police record notes from their perception of the incident and interviews. Details from the domestic violence police reports were coded from these fields, which allowed researchers to code a variety of additional contextual variables box by box on the police incident reports. The "Incident Data" section fill-in answers and narrative summaries are largely consistent across reports, as police are trained to follow protocol that prepares the report for assessment by other criminal justice personnel. Both the "Incident Data" and narrative recorded information are subject to differences in perceptions among police, but narrative information is further subject to differences in

interactions, environmental factors, writing skill, and time constraints due to the diary style of writing employed. The intent of the narratives are described in a domestic violence statute of the state that explains,

When a law enforcement officer investigates an allegation that an incident of domestic violence has occurred, the officer shall handle the incident pursuant to the arrest policy provided in statute 901.15(7), and as developed in accordance with subsections (3), (4), and (5). Whether or not an arrest is made, the officer shall make a written police report that is complete and clearly indicates the alleged offense was an incident of domestic violence. Such report shall be given to the officer's supervisor and filed with the law enforcement agency in a manner that will permit data on domestic violence cases to be compiled. Such report must include:

- (a) A description of physical injuries observed, if any.
- (b) If a law enforcement officer decides not to make an arrest or decides to arrest two or more parties, the officer shall include in the report the grounds for not arresting anyone or for arresting two or more parties.
- (c) A statement, which indicates that a copy of the legal rights and remedies notice was given to the victim (FL §741.29).

Dependent Variables

Binary logistic regression is employed to examine the narrative characteristics recorded in these domestic violence reports. The regression models consist of three dependent variables that influence recorded information. The first dependent variable is adult only violence, which is recorded (1) yes and (0) no. Adult only violence is any domestic violence report that involves adults with relationship types of any sort with no children involved or present. In this study,

individuals who engage in violence with their parents are referred to as children, but they are not necessarily minors. Thus, the term “children” is used to describe individuals by their relationship to their parents, not their minor status. Children involved in violence were coded as (1) yes and (0) no. In this study, the group “children involved in violence” are composed of reports of parent-to-child, child-to-parent, mutual violence, and accidental violence occurring between parents and children regardless of biological or legal relationship type. Due to small numbers of reports, any report involving parent/child violence of any type was grouped together. Next, the recording of children present at the time of the incident, (1) yes and (0) no, means that children of the offender or victim were mentioned as present and witnesses of violence and/or the Department of Children and Families was notified.

Independent Variables

As the social constructionist criminologist perspective argues, criminality is based on the reactions of others more than the actions of individuals. Thus, information collection by police constructs an offensive event with various indicators. The analysis includes several independent variables that may affect information collection by police in domestic violence cases dealing with children. Past literature exemplifies the importance of physical injury for arrest and prosecution, so the narrative variables showing the seriousness of physical injury “medical sought” and “injury photography” coded (1) yes and (0) no are used. Medical attention sought is recorded when emergency medical services are requested by police and/or involved persons at the scene. Injury photography is recorded when police photograph evidence that involves the body of an individual in relation to physical violence of any sort. Domestic violence involves shifts in control and authority within households, so records of non-violent abuse (jealously, controlling, coercive behaviors) are analyzed (1) yes and (0) no. Repeat victimization and

offending, as well as multiple victims in one report are also considered, as patterns of violence within households may differ. Repeat victimization and offending (1) yes and (0) no represents more than one report of an individual as a victim or offender by officers. Multiple victims were coded for when there is more than 1 victim in one report of domestic violence, (1) yes and (0) no. Report type was coded as (1) primary and (0) secondary. Secondary reports might be associated with cases with multiple victims and further evidence collection.

Control Variables

The recorded age and sex of the offender, as well as the recorded age and sex of the victim are placed into the model in order to examine demographic influences on recording. Age for the offender and victim is a continuous variable and sex is coded (1) male and (0) female.

RESULTS

Table 1 illustrates the specific variables used in the analysis and the distributions of the values of these variables from the entire sample (n=824 reports). Past literature indicates that there are many factors that influence officers' information collection process when constructing police reports. The independent variables in this study (medical sought, injury photography, non-violent abuse, repeat victimization, repeat offending, multiple victims, and report type) are factors that contribute to the documentation of a domestic violence incident. Reports of adults only account for the majority of cases (68%), whereas reports with children involved account for 10.3% and reports with mentions of children present account for 21.6% of the total reports. Report type as primary or secondary was not significantly different across the models. Multiple victims were significantly different across all three models. Repeat victimization was not significantly different across the models, but repeat offender was significant for adult only cases versus children involved and children present.

Age and gender play an important role in these factors, as offenders are overall more likely to be male and victims to be female with the exception of cases with children involved, as males account for 51.9% of victims though offenders are still more likely to be male (62.8%). Victim sex is significantly different among children involved and children present for males and offender sex is significantly different among children involved and children present for males. Victim and offender sex was not significantly different for adults only when compared to children involved and children present. The average age for offenders and victims is overall in the late 20's to late 30's, with age being the youngest among children involved incidents, followed by children present, and lastly adults only. This shows that age decreases as children's

involvement in domestic violence incidents increase, which is probably because individuals with children are generally younger rather than older. Age and gender show how life stage, family relationships, and gender roles play into domestic violence victimization and offending.

Medical attention sought was significantly different for adults only and children involved, but not for children present. Injury photography was significantly different for adults only and children involved, but not for children present as well. Non-violent abuse was significant for children involved and children present, but not for adult only cases.

Additionally, out of the 10.3% of reports with children involved violence, the largest portion of relationship type was father/son violence (35.5%) followed by father/daughter violence (27.6%). This shows that fathers are recorded as involved in child/parent violence more than mothers.

Adults Only

To examine the different types of information collected in reports of domestic violence involving adults only, children involved, and children present, logistic regression models (Table 2) are estimated with the same independent variables in Table 1. For adult only reports, multiple victims, victim age, offender age, and medical attention sought are significant predictors of adult only cases controlling for all other variables. Adult only reports are significantly less likely to have multiple victims ($\text{Exp}(B)=.266$). Victim age significantly increases by 1 unit with adult only reports ($\text{Exp}(B)=1.034$) and offender age also significantly increases by 1 unit with adult only reports ($\text{Exp}(B)=1.021$). Medical attention sought is nearly 1.5 times more likely to occur in adult only reports ($\text{Exp}(B)=1.495$). The overall fit of this model is better than children involved or children present reports.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Sample-Pooled Model.

Descriptive Statistics by Adults Only, Children Involved, and Children Present (n=824)			
Variable	Adults Only	Children Involved	Children Present
Total	68.0% (526)	10.3% (80)	21.6% (167)
Report Type			
Primary	81.9% (431)	87.5% (70)	82.0% (137)
Secondary	18.1% (95)	12.5% (10)	18.0% (30)
Multiple Victims	6.9% (35) ¹	34.2% (27) ¹	17.8% (29) ¹
Repeat Victims	33.5% (170)	28.6% (22)	39.0% (62)
Repeat Offenders	39.0% (201) ¹	56.4% (44) ²	49.1% (79) ²
Victim Sex			
Male	29.7% (151)	51.9% (40) ⁴	23.1% (37) ³
Female	70.3% (357)	48.1% (37)	76.9% (123)
Offender Sex			
Male	71.9% (369)	62.8% (49) ⁴	78.9% (127) ³
Female	28.1% (144)	37.2% (29)	21.1% (34)
Medical Sought	54.2% (284) ³	38.0% (30) ²	46.7% (78)
Injury Photography	73.2% (383) ³	72.5% (58) ²	71.3% (119)
Non-Violent Abuse	40.1% (211)	32.5% (26) ⁴	48.5% (81) ³
Victim Age	39 years (14.63)	28 years (21.29)	32 years (11.09)
Offender Age	37 years (13.44)	28 years (13.67)	34 years (11.37)
Child/Parent Violent Relationship			
Mother/Daughter		21.1% (16)	
Mother/Son		15.8% (12)	
Father/Daughter		27.6% (21)	
Father/Son		35.5% (27)	

¹Significantly differs from both other categories

²Significantly differs from adult only cases

³Significantly differs from children involved cases

⁴Significantly differs from children present violence cases

Children Involved

Records of repeat victims, repeat offenders, victim sex as male, victim age and offender age significant predictors of records of children present in reports controlling for all other variables. Children involved in domestic violence reports are significantly less likely to have repeat victims ($\text{Exp}(B) = .439$). Repeat victims are nearly 2.7 times more likely to occur in children involved cases and repeat offenders are 2.2 times more likely to occur in children

involved cases. As victim age decreases by nearly 1 unit, the more likely a report of children involved domestic violence is to occur ($\text{Exp}(B)=.969$). Similarly, as offender age decreases by nearly 1 unit, the more likely a report of children involved in domestic violence recorded ($\text{Exp}(B)=.944$). The overall fit of this model is worse than adults only or children present.

Children Present

There are two significant variables for cases with children present during domestic violence controlling for all other variables, which are multiple victims and victim age. Multiple victims are nearly 2.4 times more likely to occur in reports of children present during domestic violence ($\text{Exp}(B)=2.381$). As victim age decreases by a unit of 1, reports of children present are significantly more likely to be recorded ($\text{Exp}(B)=.978$). The overall fit of this model is worse than adult only reports and better than children involved reports.

Table 2. Binary Logistic Regression Coefficients- Divided Models by Adults Only, Children Involved, and Children Present.

Binary Logistic Regression Coefficients- Divided Models by Adults Only, Children Involved, and Children Present.									
Independent Variable	Adults Only			Children Involved			Children Present		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
Report Type	-.301	.304	.740	.285	.503	1.329	.221	.320	1.248
<i>Victims & Offenders</i>									
Multiple Victims	-1.325	.315	.266**	.740	.388	2.095	.867	.320	2.381*
Repeat Victims	-.022	.293	.978	-.823	.420	.439*	.504	.304	1.655
Repeat Offenders	-.237	.293	.789	.980	.412	2.665*	-.240	.312	.787
Victim Sex	-.059	.209	.943	.792	.294	2.208*	-.445	.239	.641
Offender Sex	-.058	.219	.943	-.159	.310	.853	.168	.247	1.183
Victim Age	.033	.006	1.034**	-.031	.009	.969**	-.022	.007	.978**
Offender Age	.021	.007	1.021*	-.057	.013	.944**	-.003	.008	.997
<i>Violence Mentions</i>									
Medical Sought	.402	.183	1.495*	-.436	.287	.647	-.190	.199	.827
Injury Photography	-.061	.215	.941	.255	.341	1.290	-.035	.228	.966
Non-Violent Abuse	-.101	.178	.904	-.379	.291	.685	.318	.191	1.375
Constant	-.666	.475	.514	.059	.734	1.060	-.802	.509	.449
X-square (8)	21.280			5.029			6.458		
p	.006			.754			.596		
-2 log likelihood	795.407			387.429			709.633		
Nagelkerke R-square	.184			.247			.080		

*Significant at the .05 level. ** Significant at the .01 level.

DISCUSSION

Records of adult only violence, children involved, and children present influence police report construction differently. Reports involving children as participants or witnesses accounted for 31.9% of the total domestic violence cases in the “Pass-On” police report database. The first hypothesis proposed that information collection differs among records of adults only, children involved, and children present. This hypothesis was supported as multiple victims, repeat victims, repeat offenders, victim sex, victim age, offender age, and medical attention sought were significantly recorded differently among the models.

Consequently, report type, offender sex, injury photography, and non-violent abuse were recorded similarly among the models. These findings illustrate that reports are influenced by the construction of records rather than true reflections of incident details, as injury photography was consistent across the models and medical attention was not. Medical attention was only significant for adult only cases rather than in children involved or children present. This indicates that children in domestic violence incidents impact records of physical violence and injury response to be less recorded by police than in cases involving only adults. Non-violent abuse was not associated with these features of reports. Despite Stanley et al. (2011) indicating that children’s distress in domestic violence was from verbal abuse if documented, intimate partner violence is connected to child maltreatment through psychological punishment and neglect, so it is likely that non-violent abuse occurs in parent/child violence reports, but it may not be identified and recorded as important (Banks, Landsverk, and Wang 2008; Steen 2009; Hartley 2002; Zolotor et al. 2007; Coulter and Mercado-Crespo 2015).

Offender sex as male was not a significant predictor of adult only, children involved, or children present reports, whereas male victims were 2.2 times more likely to found in reports of children involved violence. Past literature exhibits that girls were more likely to engage in and experience violence in their families and be arrested for violence towards family (Feld 2009; Strom et al. 2014), yet studies on child-to-parent abuse suggest that sons abuse their mothers in child-to-parent violence incidents (Walsh and Krienert 2007; Ibabe and Jaureguizar 2010). As domestic violence incidents largely consist of male offenders, this finding adds to domestic violence literature that male victims are associated with records of children involved domestic violence. This may indicate that police are more perceptive of males involved in domestic violence in general (adults or children, offenders or victims) simply because of their involvement in physical violence, whereas police may perceive females as uninvolved or only verbally abusive. Past literature on child-parent violence found that girls and boys were found to use physical violence similarly, but girls used verbal abuse more than boys (Calvete, Orue, and Gamez-Guadix 2012). Police may perceive fathers as victims in child-parent violence more readily than in adult only or children present cases because men might have less nurturing relationships with their children than women (less nurturing relationships influence a greater likelihood for parents to call the police on children) Also, women identify as family stabilizers, which may influence them to not use formal action against their children (Kang and Lynch 2014; Zink et al. 2003).

Offender and victim age were significantly influential on reports of parent/child violence and children present. For records of children present, victim age rather than offender age was significant. Victim age significantly decreases in reports of children involved or children present,

but not in reports of adults only. Offender age significantly decreases in reports of children involved, but not in reports of adults only or children present. The findings in regards to age can be explained through individuals with children tending to be younger than individuals without.

The second hypothesis predicated that records of physical injury in the form of medical attention sought and injury photography would be more likely associated with records of children involved violence. This hypothesis was not supported, as medical attention sought and injury photography were not associated with records of children involved violence in reports. Unexpectedly, medical attention sought was significantly recorded and injury photography was not for adult only violence. Medical attention and injury photography were not significantly recorded for records of children involved violence or children present. A past finding strengthens this: married individuals with assault or greater charges experience arrests more than with non-spousal relations (Connolly, Huzurbazar, and Routh-McGee, 2000). Medical attention sought for adult only cases and not for children's cases may signify that children's injuries are hidden from police and not recorded, as past literature explains that children injured in domestic violence cases needed medical attention almost half of the time (40%) and parents hide children's involvement in domestic violence in order to avoid scrutiny (Christian et al., 1997; Stanley, Miller, Foster, & Thomson, 2011). Medically and legally relevant injuries may differ based on actual injuries in cases, yet injury photography should be significantly associated with medical attention in adult only cases for consistency in evidence collection. This illustrates that despite the emphasis on police to record physical signs of abuse, evidence collection for physical violence and bodily harm are influenced by polices' report writing rather than by case differences.

The third hypothesis proposed that records of children involved violence would be linked to repeat victims, repeat offenders, multiple victims, and secondary reports. This hypothesis is partially accurate, as report type was not significant across the models, but multiple victims was for adults only and children present. Repeat victims/offenders was significantly recorded for children involved. Repeat offenders in children involved reports is the most powerful predictor across the models violence reports, which illustrates that domestic violence calls are part of a pattern of abuse rather than isolated incidents (Trujillo and Ross 2008). These findings suggest that domestic violence can involve households of people and thus, repeat offending on multiple victims between parents and children in domestic violence cases. Past literature indicates that police expect most domestic violence calls to be isolated incidents rather than part of a pattern of abuse despite how repetitive police involvement should be anticipated due to abuse characteristics (Trujillo and Ross 2008). Even when there is little or no physical violence, abuse is usually ongoing and characterized by times of entrapment, risk, and fear, as well as by shifts to autonomy and decision-making by the victim (Trujillo and Ross 2008; Stark 2013).

The second most powerful predictor across the models was the recording of multiple victims in children present reports, whereas multiple victims were significantly less likely to occur in adult only cases and not significant in children involved cases. This finding exhibits that multiple victims differ in reports with children based on children's involvement, as reports with children involved in violence don't record other children as present. This may be occurring because children are not being recorded as victims in cases directly involving children in violence, which is linked to a past finding that police accepted some violence in relationships if the victim was not weaker than the offender and willing to use violence (Finn and Stalans, 2002).

Parent victims that are not weaker than their child offender may influence police to neglect records of multiple victims despite any violence towards the offending child or child's siblings because the child offender's deviant actions overshadow the parent's actions. Any multifaceted violence, such as mutual violence or reactive violence by children, challenges perceptions of power and cycles of abuse in families (Agnew and Huguley, 1989). Moreover, children are less likely to be seen as legitimate victims by police compared to adults and it is difficult for children to formally report abuse to police due to their reliance on adults (Buzawa and Hotaling, 2007; Agnew and Huguley, 1989; Finn and Stalans, 2002; Kang and Lynch, 2014). This might influence children not to express victimization to police in cases of children involved violence.

Limitations

Police reports are not standardized throughout the United States. In fact, law enforcement agencies have their own system for reports despite every agency submitting valid data to larger government organizations such as the FBI. With different systems, there is difficulty in tracing accuracy in police data. Therefore, police report data is skewed due to flaws in the chain of reporting, but reports are the closest representation of criminal events through the criminal justice system without surveying offenders and victims. The findings from this study should not be generalized to all domestic violence incidents, as this sample was relatively small and derived from one database of reports from one sheriff's office in Florida. Keeping with the social constructionist criminologist perspective, police reports do not represent exactly what occurred, but rather what was available for police to record and construct into a clear and sequential story of a potentially criminal incident (Ainsworth 1995; Milne and Bull 2006; Rock 2011; Cauchi and Powell 2009; Lamb et al. 2000). So, findings do not necessarily represent child-parent or parent-child violence, but information making sense as a parent/child incident. Recording of race was

not included in this study, as police reports with this agency categorized race in inconsistent and outdated terms.

As this study uses police reports involving children, police officers interviewed children at these incidents, which means police interaction with children influenced information collection in reports. Past research has shown that police interaction with minors has led to legal concerns, such as questioning the judgment and maturity of minors when giving statements and confessing guilt (Malloy, Shulman, and Cauffman 2014; Grisso 1980, 1981; Kassin et al. 2010). Studies also concluded that juveniles were influenced by authoritative figures (Grisso 1980, 1981; Kassin et al. 2010; Vilgoen, Klaver, and Roesch 2005). Therefore, the reports in this study involving children may be influenced by the quality of rapport between law enforcement officers and the minors involved.

CONCLUSION

The information police record in domestic violence incidents is a less examined aspect of domestic violence research, especially in regards to children's degree of exposure to domestic violence. The main research question for this study is "Do records of adult only violence differ in association with physical injury, non-violent abuse, and repeat offending and victimization compared to records with children involved or children present?"

This study attempted to answer this using an analysis of police reports of domestic violence from one law enforcement agency and found that the unique record of children involved in violence was significantly associated with records of repeat victims, repeat offenders, male victims, decreasing victim/offender age. The record of children present was significantly more likely to occur with the recording of multiple victims and decreasing victim age. Therefore, records of violence between parents and children differ from incidents with records of adults only or children present, which shows that the documentation of violence involving children influences other evidence in the report. The consistency of injury photography and inconsistency medical attention sought throughout the models exhibits that reports differ based on records rather than in case differences. Differences in report quality and details demonstrate the features of incidents that police perceive as fitting for constructing and representing criminality to other criminal justice personnel. Overall, results show differences in influential report features (namely records of physical violence in all cases and multiple victims in cases with children). This supports the social constructionist framework of this study that emphasizes that criminality is constructed through signifying and identifying certain acts as important and bad for legal sanctioning.

Recommendations

Officers' perceptions of victim-offender relationships changed the quality and detail of reports. Future research should examine the statements of offenders and victims in police reports by comparing statements with police responses and arrest decisions in order to assess the construction of reports for legal purposes versus the desires of involved persons. The importance of enhanced awareness and training for police towards the identification and treatment of children involved in domestic violence is reinforced by this study's finding that children's recorded level of involvement in domestic violence influences other recorded evidence in police reports. Past research shows that 75% of children are actively involved and 95% of children have direct sensory experiences when domestic violence occurs in their homes (Fusco and Fantuzzo 2008). The long-term consequences for children involved in domestic violence are possible post-traumatic stress disorder, sibling violence, victimization, offending, and incarceration (Osofsky 1995; Pynoos and Nader 1993; Odgers, Robins, and Russell 2010; Hoffman and Edwards 2004; Edwards, Desai, and Gldycz, 2009; Palazzolo, Roberto, and Babin 2010; Odgers, Robins, and Russell 2010; Greenfield and Snell 1999; DeHart 2008). This study's findings along with past research on the harmful effects of domestic violence on children are relevant for social policy regarding how domestic violence incidents involving children are perceived and responded to by police. Particularly for social policy designated for the juvenile justice system, program implementation and revised protocols for how police respond to family disputes involving children can improve with consistent offers and documentations of injury photography and medical attention, as well as records of non-violent abuse and multiple victims in households.

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