PERSONALITY ISSUES IN INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE / HOMICIDE

2009 BISC-MI CONFERENCE – BATTLE CREEK, MI

CONCORD, N.H. — One young mother was trying to escape her home and husband. Another woman was beaten to death at the hands of her husband as two of her children watched, with one of them dying.

Police say both men killed their wives, then killed themselves, in a 24-hour stretch of violence in New Hampshire that left another man hospitalized and still another woman dead in an unsealed building.

London, Ont., police say four homes in a city were hit early Wednesday night and early Thursday. Three people were hospitalized, unconscious and severely injured. Police said they were beaten repeatedly with an object; they did not specify what it was.

Yvon Verreault, a 49-year-old brother whose wife died Thursday, police said an alien to his husband, 38-year-old Yvon, and later found him dead near his car in Niceville, Fla.

Meanwhile, in Manchester, police say 29-year-old Melissa Charbonneau was shot inside her home Thursday — a day after she filed for divorce from her husband, Jonathan Charbonneau, 32. She also filed a domestic-violence complaint against him, saying he had choked her.

Authorities say Jonathan Charbonneau was out on bail on a charge of simple assault when he opened fire on Charbonneau and her father, John Cantin. Both were shot Wednesday night, police said. Charbonneau died late Thursday night.
Personality and Intimate Partner Violence
Risk Factors

- Homicides where victim-offender relationship is known:
  - Approximately 38% are victims of domestic violence homicide (current husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend)
  - Approximately 90% of those are female victims

- Homicides of females where victim-offender relationship is known:
  - Approximately 40% - 50% of female homicide victims are killed by current or former intimate partners

Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

- There are various motivations for killing an intimate partner (e.g., insurance, romantic triangle, unwanted child)
- However, most intimate partner homicides are in response to:
  - Undeniable narcissistic injury
    - Termination of a relationship (rejection)
    - Infidelity (real or perceived)
    - Custody issues, Restraining orders, Garnishing wages
Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

- One key to understanding lethal intimate partner violence is to:
  - Not only understand the most prevalent risk factors
  - But the relationship between those factors and the offender’s personality

 Particularly regarding response to narcissistic injury

Sexual Assault and Offender Characteristics

Presentation Overview
Presentation Overview

- Risk Factors associated with lethality in intimate partner violence
- Personality Issues associated with lethality
  - Narcissistic
  - Antisocial
  - Borderline
  - Dependent
  - Psychopathic

Sexual Assault and Offender Characteristics

Risk Factors
## Personality and Intimate Partner Violence
### Risk Factors
- Perception of threat by the victim
- Threats to leave
- Infidelity
- “Dramatic” moments
- Prior general criminal history
- Prior emotional / physical violence
- Stalking and approach behaviors
- Substance use
- Threats
- Weapons
- Stressors
- Violation of protective order
- Externalizing blame
- Pervasive jealousy
- Intense sense of entitlement
- Perception of loss of power or control
- Depression

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### Risk Factors
- **Perception of threat by the victim**
- **Threats to leave**
  - Primary motivation in intimate partner homicides is the woman threatening to leave, or leaving, the relationship
- **Infidelity (real or perceived)**
  - Expectation of fidelity extends beyond termination of the relationship
Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

Risk Factors (Continued)

- **“Dramatic” moments** (i.e., physical separation, court filings/orders/rulings, victim dating someone else)
  - Typically involve third party which adds to the humiliation (e.g., restraining order served at work)
- With homicides that occur after physical separation:
  - Approximately 50% occur within two months
  - Approximately 90% occur within one year

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Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

Risk Factors (Continued)

- Prior general criminal history
- **Prior domestic violence** (majority of relationships ending in homicide had a history of physical or psychological abuse)
- **Stalking and approach behaviors** (e.g., “chance meetings,” showing up unannounced)
  - 90% of victims are stalked prior to murder

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Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

Risk Factors (Continued)

- **Substance use:**
  - Studies show 70% - 90% of offenders in intimate partner homicides were under influence of drugs or alcohol at time of crime
  - 45% had been under the influence of drugs or alcohol on a daily basis for the month prior to the crime
  - The most common substances of abuse among stalkers is alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and methamphetamines

Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

Risk Factors (Continued)

- **Substance use (Alcohol):**
  - Alcohol decreases the flow of serotonin ("inhibiting" chemical) in the central nervous system. Low serotonin levels are associated with depression, suicide, obsessive behavior, impulsive behavior, aggression, violence, and risk-taking.
Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

Risk Factors (Continued)

- **Substance use (cocaine/meth):**
  - Cocaine and methamphetamines (psychostimulants) stimulate paranoid and narcissistic states of mind and arouse “fight or flight” autonomic state.

Risk Factors (Continued)

- **Threats**
  - Threats, in general, are not highly correlated with violence
  - However, in intimate partner homicide:
    - **Threats of suicide**
    - **Threats against children**
## Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

### Risk Factors (Continued)
- Common law relationship vs. marriage
- Having a child living in the home who is not the offender’s biological child
- Offender / victim age difference of 10+ years

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### Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

### Risk Factors (Continued)
- **Weapons**
- Access to/recent acquisition of weapons
- Prior use or threatened use of weapon
- **Stressors**
  - Marital, financial, employment, legal, etc.
- Violation of protective order

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Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

Risk Factors (Continued)

- **Externalizing blame**
  - Blaming the victim for personal problems
  - Viewing self as the victim
  - Devaluation of the victim

- **Pervasive jealousy (Sexual jealousy)**
  - Intense sense of entitlement
  - Perception of loss of power or control

  Typically manifest through controlling behaviors

Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

Risk Factors (Continued)

- **Depression**
  - Severe cases can manifest psychotic symptoms
  - Tend to view life experiences and future in extremely negative frame of reference
  - Seek to rectify or re-establish relationship as means of maintaining self esteem
  - Limited options / not open to possibilities
  - Suicide and homicide associated features

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Risk Factors (Continued)

- **Sense of desperation**
  - Lack of alternatives
- **Social isolation / lack of social support structure**
  - Lack of external reality check

Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

Personalities Associated With Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
Personality can be thought of as the characteristics of an individual that account for consistent patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaving.

Defining and understanding:
- what those characteristics are
- how they were shaped or developed
- and the relationships between those characteristics and perceptions of self, others, and the world in general

can provide tremendous insight into the motivations for why any given individual might behave within a particular context.
### Personalities Associated With IPV

#### Personality Features Associated With Intimate Partner Homicide:
- Narcissistic
- Antisocial
- Psychopathic
- Borderline
- Dependent

Exhibit Strong Narcissistic Components

Controlling Behaviors

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### Personalities Associated With IPV

#### Controlling Behaviors
- “Paranoid” like behaviors
- Result from a basic distrust and suspiciousness
- In the form of jealousy and possessiveness
- Typically manifests early in the relationship
Personalities Associated With IPV

- Controlling Behaviors (Cont.)
  - Their interpretation of their partners reactions with others can represent a loss of control and the potential dissolution of the relationship
  - Jealousy asserts a continuing entitlement. Not just to the relationship, but to fidelity as well
  - *Not if, but when…*

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![Venn Diagram]

- Antisocial Personality Disorder
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Narcissistic Personality Disorder
- Psychopathy

- Antisocial Behaviors and Attitudes
  - Empathic deficits
  - Lack of fear conditioning

- Borderline Personality Disorder
  - Poor self/other differentiation
  - Poor interpersonal relating
  - Boundary disturbance

- Narcissistic Personality Disorder
  - Grandiose sense of self, sense of uniqueness & entitlement

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Narcissistic Personality Disorder

- Pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior)
- Sense of superiority
- Sense of entitlement
- Need for admiration
- Lack of empathy

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## Narcissistic Personality

Narcissism can be thought of as existing along a continuum:

- Hypervigilant / Vulnerable Narcissist
- Oblivious Narcissist

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## Oblivious Narcissism

- Unaware of reactions, hurt feelings, communications of others
- Arrogant and aggressive
- Seeks to be center of attention

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Adapted from
Gabbard, 1989

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Hypervigilant/Vulnerable Narcissism

- Very sensitive to others’ reactions
- Feelings easily hurt
- Vigilant for slights, criticism, humiliation
- Inhibited and shy
- Directs attention outward
- Avoids being center of attention

Adapted from Gabbard, 1989

Narcissistic Personality
Narcissistic Personality

The greater the gap between the ideal image and reality, the greater the level of internal conflict and anxiety; and the greater the fluctuation in self-esteem.

Desired ideal Image (Fantasy)

Ideal Image (Fantasy)

Oblivious Narcissism

Vulnerable Narcissism

Conscious awareness of vulnerabilities (Reality)

Conscious awareness of vulnerabilities (Reality)

Stability of Self-Esteem

Low

High

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Narcissistic Personality (Continued)

The degree to which (1) success has closed the gap between the fantasized self-image and the underlying feelings of vulnerability, or (2) the underlying vulnerabilities have been repressed, denied, or in some other way made inaccessible.

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Narcissistic Personality (Continued)

The more impenetrable the veneer around these vulnerabilities, the greater the fusion between fantasy and reality; and the further one falls on the oblivious end of the spectrum. However, anything that threatens to widen that gap between fantasy and reality will cause internal conflict and will have to be defended against.

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Narcissistic Personality Disorder

- End of relationship may stimulate feelings of:
  - Loss of possession or control
  - Proprietary in nature
    - Desire for exclusive control of the woman
    - A feeling of entitlement for that control

Narcissistic Personality Disorder

- Rejection, infidelity, or other narcissistic injury
  - Intense feelings of shame / humiliation
    - Avoids these intolerable emotions by reacting with rage
      - Desires to dominate, control, hurt, or destroy
### Narcissistic Personality Disorder

- Perception of threat by the victim
- Threats to leave
- Infidelity
- “Dramatic” moments”
- Prior general criminal history
- Prior emotional / physical violence
- Stalking and approach behaviors
- Substance use
- Threats

### Stressors

- Weapons
- Stressors
- Violation of protective order
- Externalizing blame
- Pervasive jealousy
- Intense sense of entitlement
- Perception of loss of power or control
- Depression

“Good night my little babies. I hope you are resting in a different place. I love you. I wish you had nothing to do with your mother. She was evil and vicious and stupid.”
Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

Antisocial Personality Disorder

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Antisocial Personality

- Strong narcissistic component with core features of:
  - Poor impulse control
  - Poor self-discipline
  - Poor anger control

Strong biological component

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Antisocial Personality

- Inability to stop themselves from doing things they shouldn’t do (impulse control)
- Inability to force themselves to do the things they should do (self discipline)
- Lifestyle impulsivity

Antisocial Personality

- Tend not to be dependable or reliable
- Don’t do well in relationships
- Don’t do well in employment
- Tend to externalize blame for failure
Antisocial Personality Disorder

- End of relationship may stimulate feelings of
  - Violation of his rights
  - Loss of possession or control
  - Shame and humiliation
# Antisocial Personality Disorder

- Perception of threat by the victim
- Threats to leave
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## Stressors
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# Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

Psychopathy

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Psychopathy

- There is a considerable amount of confusion over the terms “antisocial,” “psychopathic,” and “sociopathic”
- So – what exactly is a psychopath?

Psychopathy

- Psychopathy is not a recognized personality disorder
- At its core, it is an inability to emotionally bond with other human beings
- Combined with
  - low level of anxiety
  - Lack of fear conditioning
Psychopathy

It is the emotional attachment to others that provides the foundation for the development of such qualities as:

- Loyalty
- Fidelity
- Commitment
- Responsibility to/for others
- Ability to feel empathy
- Ability to feel remorse
- Ability to feel guilt
- Ability to feel sadness

Psychopathy

- It is **not** an inability to feel any emotion
- Can experience certain feelings of emotional distress
  - Frustration
  - Envy
  - Hatred
  - Anger
## Psychopathy

- **Anger - two primary sources:**
  - Anything perceived as an attack/assault on grandiose self-image
  - The frustration of wish, goal, desire, urge, etc.
- Pathological narcissistic component

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## Psychopathy

- View of self revolves around not only a grandiose image - but feelings of **omnipotence**
- Omnipotence is not just the feeling of having power and control over others, but the **ultimate** power and control over others
Psychopathy

 Leads to the psychopath's primary need to exert power, control, and/or domination (omnipotent control) over others to sustain and reinforce that grandiose self

Psychopathy

 View of others

 considered weak and vulnerable, in which case they are easily exploitable, or

 if they are not perceived as weak and vulnerable, then the psychopath projects his own feelings of desired control, power, and domination onto them
Psychopathy

- The combination of their view of self and others then creates a world in which you occupy one of two positions:
  - the position of ultimate control, power, and domination over others, or
  - the one being dominated and controlled

Psychopathy

- In essence, the psychopathic world is one of *predator versus prey*
- *Sexual psychopath* – Combination of psychopathy and deviant sexual arousal
Moving along the Psychopathic Continuum

- These men tend to be domineering and controlling within the relationship
- Also most likely to kill children as an act of revenge or to punish the partner

John Battaglia with his daughters, Mary Faith and Liberty
Borderline Personality Disorder

- Unstable sense of identity
- Failure to integrate multi-dimensional aspects of self and others.
- Seeks identity through attachment to others
- Fear of abandonment is a fear of loss of identity
Borderline Personality Disorder

- Grandiose / devalued sense of self
- Idealized / devalued sense of others
- Unstable / distorted view of self
- Unstable / distorted view of others
- Alternation can be instantaneous

All good / All bad (Splitting)

Lower ability to tolerate stress, anxiety, shame, humiliation, etc.

- Excessive and aggressive response to threatened self-esteem/self-concept — “Narcissistic Rage” (to obliterate)
- Response can be “0 – 60”
- Excessive need for control
Borderline Personality Disorder

- Fear of abandonment
- Leads to controlling behaviors
  - Constantly dreading potential loss
  - While chronically anticipating it

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"How you doing Syl? This is me. I was just calling because I owe you an apology for the way I was acting this morning... And I just want you to know that I won’t be calling you no more. I’m gonna continue to focus on me and stay in this program and get my life together. As long as I know I’m doing the right things for the right reasons, my life will change and I will become a healthy spiritual person..."
And I also want to tell you thanks for the (inaudible). And it’s really (inaudible) helping me out. And I just want to tell you God bless you. Peace, and I love you, and I love my kids. But I’m going to work on me and I promise you. And God will do for me what He done for you…

...I tried to reach out to you, you know, and ask you to talk. And that’s cool. You have to do what you have to do. Just like I have to do what I have to do. I understand the situation, you done moved on with your life. I’m...fuck, I’m pretty sure you found you a man. That’s the reason you been treating me the way you treating me, you know. Don’t no woman do the things you doing unless she’s on the verge of moving on...

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Hey Sylvia, this old Henry again. I was just calling you, man, to let you know, man, peace be with you and God bless you. We don’t have to be bitter enemies or rivals. I’m sorry things didn’t work out. Now I want you to go ahead and make your plans to start filling out that paperwork that you said you was gonna do...

**Behavioral Science Education and Consultation Services**
All I ask you to do is just be honest and stay up with me. See you still owe me for fifteen years. You let me be the king (inaudible) be like a queen. That’s not gonna work. You and me (inaudible). We’ll have utopia. We will have peace together. We will both be rocketed to another dementia…

...You just need to be telling the truth and not cheat and lie and be a hypocrite. You can’t be woman enough to just say you fucking a motherfucker. You been fucking him all the time. All I ask is that you step up to the plate and be a woman. You can’t do that. You a damn hypocrite. Tell me the truth.
You belong to me. Your mine. I possess the power not you. Not that man. Not no motherfucker. Your not going to get away with this shit not never again. Next time I see your ugly fucking face, bitch, I want it to be the last time I see your face. Understand that. I’m coming to get you…

Borderline Personality Disorder

- Perception of threat by the victim
- Threats to leave
- Infidelity
- “Dramatic” moments”
- Prior general criminal history
- Prior emotional / physical violence
- Stalking and approach behaviors
- Substance use
- Threats
- Weapons
- Stressors
- Violation of protective order
- Externalizing blame
- Pervasive jealousy
- Intense sense of entitlement
- Perception of loss of power or control
- Depression
Dependent Personality Disorder

- Most commonly associated with intimate partner homicide
- The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior?
- Pervasive, excessive need to be taken care of that leads to submissive and clinging behavior and fears of separation
Dependent Personality Disorder

- Fears of separation and being alone
- Without instability of borderline
- Narcissistic feature can play prominent role in reaction to rejection
  - Passive-aggressive and controlling behaviors
  - Avoid direct conflict and expression of anger

Dependent Personality Disorder

- Rejection can stimulate
  - Pursuit in attempts at reconciliation
  - Anger
  - Depression
Dependent Personality Disorder

- The offender feels a loss at the end of an important relationship
- He may react to the rejection with the belief that the relationship is special and irreplaceable, and the fear that it may have been his only chance at intimacy
- This, in turn, may lead to a construction of an idealized love accompanying an obsessive pursuit of reconciliation

When ultimately confronted with the reality that there is no chance of reconciliation, the individual will typically react in one of two ways:

- he either ceases his behavior
- or he responds with anger and an escalation of behavior

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Dependent Personality Disorder

- The construct of idealized love can quickly dissolve and be replaced with feelings of anger and victimization, externalization of blame, and the devaluation of the ex-intimate partner
- Response to narcissistic injury

Dependent Personality Disorder

- Sometimes the offender will abduct (or attempt to abduct) victim with goal of:
  - Murder or murder/suicide
  - An attempt to convince her to stay with him
    - Often little or no planning past the point of abduction
    - As event unfolds suspect tends to become more disorganized
    - May end in hostage situation
    - May end in murder/suicide
Relationship ends
Believes relationship is special and irreplaceable. Engages in behavior to reconcile relationship
Obsession leads to construction of an idealized love
Ends attempts at reconciliation and goes on with life
Confronted with the reality that there is no chance of reconciliation
Feelings of anger, victimization, etc – and possible escalation of aggressive behavior

Dependent Personality Disorder

- Perception of threat by the victim
- **Threats to leave**
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- Substance use
- Threats

- Weapons
- Stressors
- Violation of protective order
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- Depression
**Dependent Personality**
- Fears of separation and being alone
- Without instability of borderline
- Depression

**Narcissistic Personality**
- Sense of uniqueness and/or entitlement
- Fantasies of ideal love

- Controlling behaviors
- Passive aggressive behavior
- Angry or aggressive response to narcissistic injury

**Behavioral Science Education and Consultation Services**
Personality and Intimate Partner Violence

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