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The Issue

The reason why there continues to be such concern about domestic violence, despite this sort of ebb and flow of social problems of the day, and so many other social problems on the table in front of us these days, not only in terms of attention, but in terms of budget -- it's because the obvious part is the impact it has on the fundamental social fabric of our society, sociologists would say. And not only is it an impact on the, particularly the women, but it also very much effects men who have this relationship broken and have such a distorted sense of women and what women bring to our fuller humanity as men. But the impact that it has for children, that we know are much more likely, in homes where there's been violence directed at the mothers, that are going to grow up as having problems of their own in adult life.

The Debate

Well as long as I can remember working in this field, there have been questions, objections, different perspectives that we've encountered. Long standing tension between a conventional mental health perspective or a family systems perspective on relationships, as opposed to a broader more social-problem-oriented perspective... I think initially with domestic violence it was definitely that sort of adversarial relationship between different perspective and what turned out to be different factions. I think that increasingly, with more cross training and more public awareness, and a realization that there are a lot of different agencies, from police to alcohol and drug treatment, that have stake in this and encounter different pieces, that brings us more and more together.

Mandatory Arrest

I think the effectiveness of mandatory arrest very much hinges on what's done after the arrest and how the cases are processed. To what degree there is a responsiveness to the woman's perspective, concerns and the issues that she's going through with finances and the children. How long this abuse has been going on and the nature of it and whether the courts follow through if the man is not compliant to the referrals that they make or the requirements to go to a batterers program specifically. Whether the woman gets additional support and services beyond just the court hearing, whether there's a protection order. I think it's very simplistic to make a decree about the nature and impact of mandatory arrest.

Batterer Intervention Programs

Trying to assess the effectiveness of batterers programs from what we would call a biomedical perspective in the sense that we are giving a pill or fixing a broken leg by

going to a hospital is a misrepresentation of what really is going on and how intervention as a whole works. There is a very conscientious academic movement I think to try to broaden the approach of evaluation... We see a moderate effect that's very impressive considering the men coming into the programs and the problems that they bring. So our studies have produced that with several different statistical approaches, and there's been at least two or three others that have a similar kind of outcome.

Impact of Criticism

I think the impact of the criticism [of the Duluth Model] is diverse as you might expect. At one end there's certain jurisdictions and states that are reexamining their batterer program standards, their policies for domestic violence intervention, even more broadly in light of this criticism. It's opened the door to different factions getting more attention, and the fathers rights movement getting a greater foothold in some court areas, whether that appears in some people's minds very much as a backlash, if there's extreme elements to this that grab onto and use this information or this stance for their own purposes. I think at the other end it has prompted some further discussion, exploration, self examination within, what I consider and believe is, a continually evolving field of domestic violence intervention, particularly batterers programs. What are some of the areas that we might sharpen or be able to articulate a little better? How do we move beyond the plateau of where you are? So I think that's heightened kind of an energy and discussion that can be a positive thing