



Understanding Domestic Violence

with [Richard Davis, ALM](#)

Beyond absurd: Analyzing the IPADV training guide

To those who understand the complexities of domestic violence, this "training" seems more a polemic ideological rant than an intervention program

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The National Research Council report entitled [Advancing the Federal Research Agenda on Violence Against Women](#) warns public policy makers that many domestic violence programs and policies are driven by ideological stakeholder interest rather than plausible theories and empirical evidence. This warning seems not to trouble Maine public policy makers, the administrators of the Maine Criminal Justice System, or the authors of the law enforcement training guide, [Identifying Predominant Aggressors in Domestic Violence Cases](#) (IPADV).

In my 21 years of law enforcement, more than 20 years of domestic violence research, and 15 years of law enforcement academy and college teaching, I have never read a more prejudiced and biased law enforcement training program than the IPADV. The IPADV appears, at least to people who understand the multifaceted complexities of law enforcement domestic violence intervention, more a polemic ideological rant than a domestic violence intervention program.

A Complex Multifaceted Phenomenon

In the first two sentences of the IPADV the authors intertwine "domestic violence" and "battering" as if they are the very same behaviors. They are not. I have explained some of those differences in my column, [The many different faces of domestic violence](#). Two of many self-identified feminists who clearly document the importance of understanding the difference

between “domestic violence” behavior in general and “battering” behavior in particular are [Ellen Pence](#) and [Michael P. Johnson](#).

The IPADV claims that domestic violence is common across the socioeconomic educational strata of society. It is true that domestic violence is not confined to those who lack wealth or education. However, it is also true that domestic violence is not equally common across all social classes. This is the same for crime in general.

The [2008 Annual Report](#) from the New York City Mayor’s Office to Combat Domestic Violence, the Ms. Foundation report [Safety & Justice for All](#), the Bureau of Justice Statistics report [Intimate Partner Violence/Domestic Violence](#), and the National Institute of Justice report, [When Violence Hits Home: How Economics and Neighborhood Play a Role](#) are just a few of the reams of data that demonstrate as income and education increase, offending and victimization decrease. This is the same for crime in general.

Socioeconomic educational disparities are not unique to domestic violence. They are the same for all crime regardless of the relationship between offender and victim. It is difficult to impossible to manipulate homicide data and both domestic violence homicide and homicide in general document very dramatic racial, ethnic, educational and income disparities.

The IPADV authors often seem completely disconnected from — or are unaware of — empirical, evidence-based data. A most glaring example is when they repeat the claim that domestic violence is the leading cause of injuries to women between the ages of 15 and 44 in the U.S. — more than traffic crashes, muggings and rapes combined. Apparently they are they are not aware that this has no empirical support, and in fact this misconception has been disproved more than once by Richard J. Gelles (most recently in [The Politics of Research: The Use, Abuse, And Misuse of Social Science Data](#)).

Probable Cause

I agree that if a domestic violence incident involves a “single or isolated injurious beating or episodic psychological battering,” for at least temporary safety an arrest needs to take place regardless of the desires of those involved. This should be true even for incidents lacking specific probable cause concerning who is the offender and who is the victim.

Studies demonstrate that the number one reason for being hit is when you hit someone else first. This is true for assaults in general and for domestic violence assaults. Anyone who initiates the assaultive behavior needs to accept some if not all the responsibility for the incident.

The IPADV training ignores the findings from the [National Violence Against Women Survey](#) that document the majority of intimate partner violence (IPV) is relatively minor and consist of pushing, shoving, or non-injurious hitting. The National Institute of Justice study [The Effects of Arrest on Intimate Partner Violence](#) reports that regardless if an arrest was made or not, the

majority of suspects committed no subsequent assaults against the victim. The authors of the same report also conclude that making an arrest for every minor incident may determinately effect a community's resources and its ability to arrest and prosecute the most violent offenders while hindering the communities ability to provide the services and resources victims need.

The Decision Tree Bias

You must read IPADV to understand its bias. PoliceOne has posted IPADV in its entirety so [please read it here](#). In it, the authors present a series of vignettes in attempt to convince the officers that it will always be the man who is at fault.

In a pre-school fashion, the IPADV repeatedly — again, you need to read the IPADV to believe it — capitalizes and bolds “**MAN**” to ensure the officers get their ideological message that it is **MEN** who are **ALWAYS** — regardless of any context or circumstance — the predominant aggressor and women will ALWAYS be their passive and docile victims. Further, the IPADV ideologically implies that the officers should never, under any circumstances, believe a **MAN**. This is not law enforcement training. This is a shame, a sham, and beyond absurd!

Everyone involved with establishing or approving the IPADV training should read [Men Shouldn't be Overlooked as Victims of Partner Violence](#). This research was conducted by scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) The researcher's report that IPV is often initiated by women and that their assaultive behavior is not always in self-defense. However, the IPADV training not only overlooks MEN, it ideologically proffers that MEN are the problem!

Ignoring the Obvious

Primary or predominant aggressor policies are in response to the dramatic increase in the number of [arrests of women and dual arrests](#) because of federal grants to law enforcement that [encouraged arrest](#). However, it is a fact that [domestic violence laws](#) in all fifty states are not based on battering behavior. Every state has criminalized all family or intimate partner assaults (excluding the spanking of children) or conflict regardless of severity or chronicity.

The report entitled [Explaining the Prevalence, Context, and Consequences of Dual Arrest in Intimate Partner Cases](#) reports that the number of dual arrests for same sex couples is far higher than it is for heterosexual couples.

As the IPADV training documents, the majority of law enforcement domestic violence training is biased against males. Ideological intervener training most often refers to men as the offenders and women as their victims. When there is a lack of probable cause to determine who initiated the assaultive behavior or who is most responsible for the incident, because of national based ideologically biased domestic violence training similar to IPADV, officers simply arrest the man.

Hence, dual arrests occur far more often in same sex relationships because in lesbian relationships there is no man to arrest. Officers are encouraged or mandated to make an

arrest so, lacking probable cause to determine who is guilty, they arrest both.

In gay relationships there are two men to arrest. The primary difference for same sex arrests is that, absent the male blame game training, when the officers have difficulty in determining who initiated the violence or who is most responsible, and because of mandatory or encouraged arrest policies, they simply arrest both.

Conclusion

In my 21 years of law enforcement I never once responded to or read a report that documents when the officers arrived they discovered a beaten and battered man and a woman whose only injuries were her bloodied knuckles. Both my experience and my research lead me to recognize that more often than not, when officers arrive at an injurious or lethal domestic violence incident, the person most likely to be guilty will be a man. However, criminal justice data also documents that “these men” are not representative of men in general. These men will have a history of criminal or violent behavior and most men in the general population do not.

My [experience and research](#) also documents that when the incident is minor and does not involve injurious assaults or chronicity, there is a good chance — perhaps as much as [one-third of the time](#) — it will be [a female who initiated](#) the assaultive behavior.

If law enforcement officers were trained to have prior assumptions of guilt based primarily or exclusively on “crime data” and were trained to “ignore both the social sciences and empirical evidence-based data” they would be making arrest decisions based not only on gender and but also on race. However, the only open and obvious prejudiced and biased law enforcement training is domestic violence training against males in general and not minorities in particular. However, a number of researchers, and I believe with some justification, argue because of ideological domestic violence training, minority males now face a double stereotype.

Since 1994, we have spent hundreds of millions each year to improve the safety of women. An unbiased review of the Bureau of Justice Statistics crime data documents that domestic violence assaults against women and the domestic violence homicides of women simply has mirrored the drop of crime in general, or have actually been less effective. While there are more reactive resources and shelters for victims today than in past years, still there are too few proper preventative programs in place.

Approximately 18 years ago, Massachusetts Governor Weld proclaimed a domestic violence emergency existed in Massachusetts. About 18 years later, Governor Deval Patrick proclaimed that Massachusetts is still facing a domestic violence emergency. I do believe that we can (and must) do better for families in need than doing the same thing, the same way, for almost two decades while continuing to expect a different outcome.

Too many stakeholders have interventions based on 20th century ideology or have in place policies that simply parrot dated unverified theories proposed decades ago by contemporary

stakeholders who have little to no interest in change. These stakeholders dismiss recent scientific evidence and ignore negative outcomes while they continue to control public policy.

About the author

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