In defence:
The presence of children during intimate partner violence
and the likelihood of retaliation

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The majority of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is perpetrated by men against their female partners; A smaller proportion of women use violence against their husband: – A woman is more likely to use violence if they have previously experienced violence
Background (con’t)

- It is unclear:
  - How much of the violence used by women occurs because the woman who has already experienced abuse was acting violently in anticipation of further abuse
  - How much was due to women initiating abuse without any known immediate threat
  - How much violence is used in retaliation or defence against to the violence being experienced
Methods

- Data were drawn from the NZ Violence Against Women Survey*
  - Population based cluster sampling scheme;
  - Eligible participants were women aged 18-64 years, usually resident in Auckland or North Waikato, who resided in private homes;
  - Face-to-face interviews in the participant’s own home;
  - 2,855 women were interviewed;
  - 843 (30%) reported that they had ever experienced physical or sexual IPV in their life-time

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Methods (con’t)

- Two items measured women’s use of violence:
  - During the times that you were hit, did you ever fight back physically or to defend yourself?
  - Have you ever hit or physically mistreated your husband/partner when he was not hitting or physically mistreating you?
Analysis

- Multinomial logistic regression to identify the factors associated with women’s use of violence:
  - Never
  - Once or twice
  - More than once or twice
843 study members had experienced IPV

During a violent episode

36% reported that they never fought back

31% reported that they fought back once or twice

33% fought back more than once or twice

32% V stopped

9% decreased

38% Violence Got Worse
Fighting back*

- **Severity of violence experienced**
  - Increased likelihood of fighting back once or twice (OR 1.4) or more (OR 3.5) when severe violence experienced

- **Children present during the abuse**
  - Fought back more than once or twice when children present several (OR 5.1), many or most of the time (OR 4.7)

- **Effect of violence experience on mental health**
  - Women reporting “A lot” of effect of violence on mental health was associated with fighting back once or twice (OR 2.0) and more than once or twice (OR 3.5)

- **Self-reported alcohol problems**
  - If both respondent and partner experienced alcohol problems, she was more likely to have fought back once or twice (OR 3.2), or more (OR 2.1)

*All results adjusted for age and ethnicity*
843 study members had experienced IPV

Outside of a violent episode

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81 %</td>
<td>never mistreated their partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>mistreated partner once or twice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>mistreated her partner more than once or twice</td>
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Initiating violence*

- Self-reported alcohol problems
  - Respondent only: Increased likelihood of her initiating violence more than once or twice (OR: 4.5)
  - Respondent and partner: Increased likelihood of her initiating violence once or twice and more frequently (OR 7.5)

- Exposure to IPV in childhood
  - Respondent only or partner only: Increased likelihood of initiating violence more than once or twice (OR 2.7; OR 3.0)

- Her recreational drug use
  - Current users more likely to initiate violence once or twice (OR 2.2) or more often (OR 2.5)

- Number of violent partners
  - >3 violent partners Increased likelihood of initiating violence once or twice (OR 3.9) or more (OR 3.8)

*All results adjusted for age and ethnicity*
What do these results tell us?

- Women’s use of violence in the context of a violent episode appears to be defensive:
  - When the children are present
  - When the violence she is experiencing is starting to impact on her mental health
  - When she has experienced severe violence

- Women’s initiation of violence maybe in response to lifetime experience of violence
  - When she has been exposed to IPV in childhood or had other violent partners

- There is a heightened risk of violence when the respondent is experiencing problems with alcohol and/or drug abuse
Comparison with previous research

- Women who had been victims of child abuse and their mother’s exposure to violence and who subsequently experience IPV vow not to be like their mother
  
  "and most of all, not a victim"
  Seaman’s et al (2007)

- Violent teenage girls: ‘often victims of turbulence’, ‘violence is embedded as a norm for these girls’
  (Swift, 2013).

- Alcohol consumption makes it harder to resolve conflicts peacefully by enhancing the likelihood that verbal and non-verbal cues will be misinterpreted (Hoaken, Assaad, & Pihl, 1998; Klostermann & Fals-Stewart, 2006)
Implications

- Need to understand the use of violence in the context of victimisation
- Treatment is required for physical, psychological and mental injuries suffered and assurance required that her children are safe
- Fragmentation of services responding to abused women and their children will limit their ability to provide adequate safety for all survivors in a family
- Services that specialise in drug / alcohol treatment need to address women’s experiences of and use of violence
Strengths & Limitations

- Population-based data
- Comparable internationally (WHO Multi-country study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence Against Women)
- Only reports from women who have experienced IPV
- Only reports from the woman
- Cross-sectional data
www.nzfvc.org.nz

- New Zealand’s national centre for family and whānau violence research and information.

- We work to support and inform the links between family violence work in research, policy and practice.

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Understanding connections and relationships: Child maltreatment, intimate partner violence and parenting

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Key Messages

This Issues Paper explores the system responses required to support children exposed to child maltreatment and intimate partner violence. Guiding principles for protecting children exposed to child maltreatment and intimate partner violence include:

- Provide holistic care and integrate family violence services
- Ensure access to legal and disability services
- Foster collaborative approaches between child health services and family violence services
- Develop and implement policies and practices to support children and families
- Promote awareness and education about family violence and its impact on children and families
- Encourage research and evaluation to inform best practices

Policy and practice implications: Child maltreatment, intimate partner violence and parenting

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THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN KIDS AND CAREGIVERS DETERMINES OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN.
Fundamentals for ensuring children thrive
http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pub/healthy_infants.html

- Safe, Stable and Nurturing Relationships
  - Safety- Requires being free from fear and secure from physical and psychological harm
  - Stability- entails providing children with an environment that is coherent, consistent, predictable and manageable
  - Nurturing-involves caregivers being available and capable of sensitively responding to children’s physical, developmental and emotional needs.
Impact of IPV on Mothering

• Women subjected to IPV may have impeded abilities to parent well
  – develop mental health, physical health, or substance abuse issues as the result of the abuse
  – Can be at increased risk of inconsistent parenting, neglect, or maltreatment of children
  – Can be emotionally volatile or withdrawn
  – May try and keep the children under control in an attempt to prevent violence, or use punitive measures to protect children from harsher treatment by their father
  – The repetitive nature of the abuser’s attacks on the mother-child relationship can lead to difficulty in the woman empathizing with or delighting in their children
Impacts of IPV on Mothering

- Direct attacks by the Perpetrator of IPV on women’s abilities to mother, e.g.
  - Ridiculing mothers in front of children
  - Favouring one child over another, provoking rivalries between siblings, leaving mother to deal with the aftermath
  - Tell children that mother is stupid, unfit, doesn’t love them
  - Controls financial resources in ways that undermine mother’s abilities to meet children’s needs
  - Portray themselves as the only legitimate authority
Mother’s vulnerabilities are often a consequence of the perpetrator’s violence.

- Women were 8 times more likely to hurt their children while living with their violent partner, compared with when they were safe from his violence (Walker, 2000)

- Women’s parenting can significantly improve in the first six months after leaving their partner, if the violence ceases (Holden, et al. 1998)
Policy and Practice Implications

- Provide holistic support for children
- Support the non-abusing parent
- Support the mother-child relationship
- Hold the perpetrator accountable
- Be culturally responsive

