ADDRESSING VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Child-to-Parent Violence in Adolescents: The Perspectives of the Parents, Children, and Professionals in a Sample of Spanish Focus Group Participants

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Abstract This study explored the characteristics of child-to-parent violence (CPV) in Spain based on the narrations of adolescents who perpetrate this kind of violence, their parents, and the professionals who work in this area. A qualitative design was used. Focus groups were asked about the risk factors associated with CPV, such as exposure to family violence, discipline, and psychological characteristics of the adolescents. Interviews were videotaped, transcribed, and reviewed independently by each investigator to identify and group distinct comments into categories with specific themes. Results suggest that CPV is mainly linked to exposure to marital conflict and family violence, permissive discipline, emotional disengagement in the father-child relationship, and symptoms of emotional stress and substance consumption in the children. Lastly, acts of CPV seem to be an attempt by the children to gain power in the context of family relations in which the parents display their incapacity to establish control. As several family and personal characteristics appear to be involved in CPV, it is recommended that family and individual approaches be considered for treatment.

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Abuse of parents or child-to-parent violence (CPV) has traditionally been defined as any act perpetrated by a child that makes his/her progenitor feel threatened, intimidated, and controlled (Paterson et al. 2002). As with other types of maltreatment, it can adopt the form of physical, psychological, emotional, and financial maltreatment (Cottrell 2001). Despite the fact that the identification and description of this phenomenon is relatively long established (e.g. Harbin and Madden 1979), the scarce amount of research carried out is surprising (see Kennair and Mellor 2007). This sparse research is particularly remarkable when taking into account that CPV is a relatively frequent phenomenon. For example, a number of studies in the United States, Canada, and Spain indicate prevalence rates ranging from 4.6 to 21 % for physical assault on parents (e.g., Calvete et al. 2013; Calvete et al. 2011; Ibabe and Jaureguizar 2009; Nock and Kazdin 2002; Pagani et al. 2004, 2009; Ulman and Straus 2003). Psychological aggressions against parents are much more prevalent than physical aggressions (Calvete et al. 2011; Pagani et al. 2009). With regard to the gender of the adolescents, some studies (mostly based on clinical samples of young offenders) have found a higher prevalence of physical aggression in boys than in girls (Boxer et al. 2009; Walsh and Krienert 2009), whereas other studies have found no statistically significant differences in violence rates between boys and girls (Calvete et al. 2013; Pagani et al. 2004, 2009; Ulman and Straus 2003). Furthermore, recent reviews indicate that CPV rates are increasing (Coogan 2012). The present study was conducted in Spain, where the increasing number of official complaints by fathers and mothers alert us to this growing problem. Namely, according to the annual report of the General State Public Prosecutor's Office, in 2008 there were 4,200 complaints filed by parents against their children in Spain, which was a 56 % increase over the previous year (Infocoponline 2009). The purpose of the present study was to identify some of the

circumstances that concur in CPV cases, based on the narrations of their protagonists. Among the circumstances to be explored, we considered some factors that were suggested as risk factors for CPV in previous studies, such as exposure to family violence, permissive style of parental discipline, media and peer influence, and some psychological traits of the adolescents, which are reviewed below.

Many studies have indicated that exposure to family violence is a risk factor for CPV (Boxer et al. 2009; Browne and Hamilton 1998; Calvete et al. 2011; Howard and Rottem 2008; Wilson 1996). For example, Kennedy et al. (2010) found that adolescents with CPV antecedents were more likely to have been exposed to domestic violence and victimized by family members. Likewise, Calvete et al. (2011) found that adolescents who assaulted their parents had been exposed to more family violence than adolescents who did not assault their parents, and Boxer et al. (2009) obtained high overlap among CPV, parent-to-children violence, and marital violence. Moreover, some studies have suggested that, of the two types of antecedents of violence (parent-to-children violence and marital violence), it seems that the former is more closely related to CPV (Ulman and Straus 2003).

In addition to exposure to violence, it has been suggested that the parent-children relationships associated with CPV are characterized by deficient attachment and emotional privation (Agnew and Huguley 1989; Paulson et al. 1990). For example, Paulson et al. (1990) found that adolescents who perpetrate CPV lack close relationships or emotional interactions with their parents. In a recent study conducted with a large sample of Spanish adolescents, lack of emotional support by parents was strongly associated with the risk of performing CPV (Calvete et al. 2014).

Inadequate parental discipline has also been identified as a potential risk factor for children's subsequent violent behavior. Namely, it has been suggested that an indulgent and permissive parenting style contributes to CPV (Calvete et al. 2011; Tew and Nixon 2010). Spanish families have evolved from an authoritarian parenting style to an indulgent and permissive style (García and Gracia 2009). A few years ago, parents imposed their authority to resolve conflicts at home, but currently, in a growing number of cases, parents give in to the desires of their children (Etxebarria et al. 2009). This change in parenting style should be understood within the context of the profound transformation that is taking place in parent-children relationhips in Western societies, which are increasingly symmetric (Etxebarria et al. 2009). Tew and Nixon (2010) described this transformation as a substantial change in the power cycles within the family. Support for the role of changes in discipline in the development of CPV was obtained in a community sample of adolescents, in which aggressions against the parents were significantly associated with lower scores in various forms of parental

discipline (Calvete et al. 2011). In that study the parents of adolescents who perpetrated CPV were more permissive and made fewer attempts to administer consequences when their children behaved inappropriately. Specifically, the most robust results were obtained for the use of punishment and supervising the children's behavior, which were significantly lower for the adolescents who later assaulted their parents.

In addition to family circumstances, the influence of media and the peer group could also act as risk factors for CPV. There is an impressive body of research that suggests that media violence increases the likelihood of aggressive and violent behavior in both immediate and long-term contexts (e.g., Anderson et al. 2003; Huesmann and Eron 1986). Moreover, a number of studies have found that adolescents who carry out CPV frequently interact with adolescents who display behavioral problems (Agnew and Huguley 1989; Cottrell and Monk 2004; Paulson et al. 1990). More recently, Kennedy et al. (2010) found that youths who were violent toward parents were more likely to have peers who own guns and belong to a gang than other violent. Calvete et al. (2011) also found that interacting with friends who, in turn, present aggressive behavior problems is an important risk factor for CPV.

Lastly, although little is known about the psychological characteristics of youths who perpetrate CPV, some studies have revealed that they are more likely to present some behavioral and psychological problems. Kennedy et al. (2010) found that those adolescents who were violent toward parents experienced greater psychological distress than those who were not. Moreover, they were more likely to have been psychiatrically hospitalized and medicated, and more likely to have attempted suicide. Other studies have also reported that these adolescents are characterized by feelings of unhappiness, low self-esteem, and depressive symptoms (Calvete et al. 2011, 2013; Ibabe and Jaureguizar 2009; Paulson et al. 1990). Finally, it has been reported that substance consumption problems are habitual in adolescents who perpetrate CPV (Calvete et al. 2011; Evans and Warren-Sohlberg 1988; Ibabe and Jaureguizar 2009).

The above-mentioned characteristics of adolescents who carry out CPV and their parents are suggestive, but, as noted, they proceed from a small number of studies. Furthermore, many of the studies are relatively old, so they may not reflect current circumstances of this type of violence, which, as mentioned, seems to be increasing. Moreover, most of the previous studies were based on survey methods or studies of case files. These methodological approaches would be enriched by qualitative methods that explore the experiences of the protagonists of CPV. Therefore, the present study assessed, by means of a qualitative method, the perspectives of adolescents who had carried out CPV, their parents, and the professionals who intervene in CPV.

Aims of the Study

The current study adopted a qualitative approach, through the use of focus groups, to investigate child-to-parent violence in Spain. The specific aims were to assess the following: (a) the characteristics of families associated with CPV, including factors such as exposure to family violence and parenting; (b) the psychological characteristics of adolescents who perpetrate CPV; (c) the influence of peers and the media; (d) the nature of the CPV acts and the context in which these acts take place; and (e) gender differences in CPV. In assessing these topics, we integrated the perspectives of the adolescents, the parents, and the professionals who intervene in CPV.

Method

Study Design

A focus group is a carefully designed discussion that aims to determine the participants' perceptions about a topic of interest in a quiet and non-threatening environment (Krueger and Casey 2000). Four focus groups were carried out with: (a) mothers of children who had been violent toward their parents, (b) fathers of children who had been violent toward their parents, (c) adolescents who had been violent toward their parents, and (d) professionals who worked in the area of CPV. We decided to form these four groups in order to understand the different viewpoints of CPV.

Participants

The first group comprised seven women, all mothers of adolescent children who had assaulted their parents. The mothers were between 34 and 50 years of age (M_{age}=43.14; SD_{age}= 4.94). Except for one (Latin American), all were Spanish. Four were married, two divorced, and one was a widow. The second group was made up of four fathers of adolescents who had assaulted their parents. The fathers were between 44 and 53 years of age (M_{age}=47.25; SD_{age}=4.27). They were all Spanish and, except for one who was divorced, the rest were married. The third group comprised five Spanish adolescents (two girls and three boys; M_{age}=16.8; SD_{age}=4.71) who had acted aggressively toward their parents. The adolescents were children of the parents who made up the focus groups of mothers and fathers. The last group included five professionals (four men and one woman) who worked as clinical practitioners in the area of CPV.

Procedure

Conduct of Focus Group Sessions We contacted the participants through the Escuela Vasco Navarra de Terapia Familiar (EVNTF; in English, the Basque-Navarrese School of Family Therapy), where the participants comprising the first three groups received or had received treatment for CPV. The focus groups were carried out in the facilities of the EVNTF between November and December of 2010. Standard procedures were employed for obtaining informed consent (approved by University of Deusto Ethics Committee). In addition, parent or guardian consent was obtained in cases of youth participants under 18 years of age. The participants were told that they should not provide sensitive information or share experiences that could make them feel uncomfortable. Instead, they were encouraged to provide their views on conflicts among parents and children and the factors involved.

The facilitator of the group followed a schedule of interview questions and prompts. A cofacilitator was also present, taking notes and monitoring time and movement through the interview schedule. We used a semistructured interview, the most habitual way of carrying out focus groups (Morgan 1997). Each group lasted approximately 90 min and was videotaped. We asked the participants of the four groups a series of open-ended questions about the limits and rules at home, discipline, child-parent relations, family functioning, and the sphere of violence. All the questions were adjusted to the participants of each group. Each participant received a gift coupon for participating and efforts were made to elicit responses from all subjects

Data Analysis

The videotapes of all the interviews were transcribed verbatim with the Transana program (Fassnacht and Woods 2005) for subsequent analysis. The names of the participants were masked to ensure their anonymity. All the researchers listened to the recordings and read the transcriptions, identifying and extracting the most important comments of the groups. The research questions were used to organize the data for the analysis process. The investigators met to discuss and share their individual conclusions to reach a final consensus about the topics dealt with.
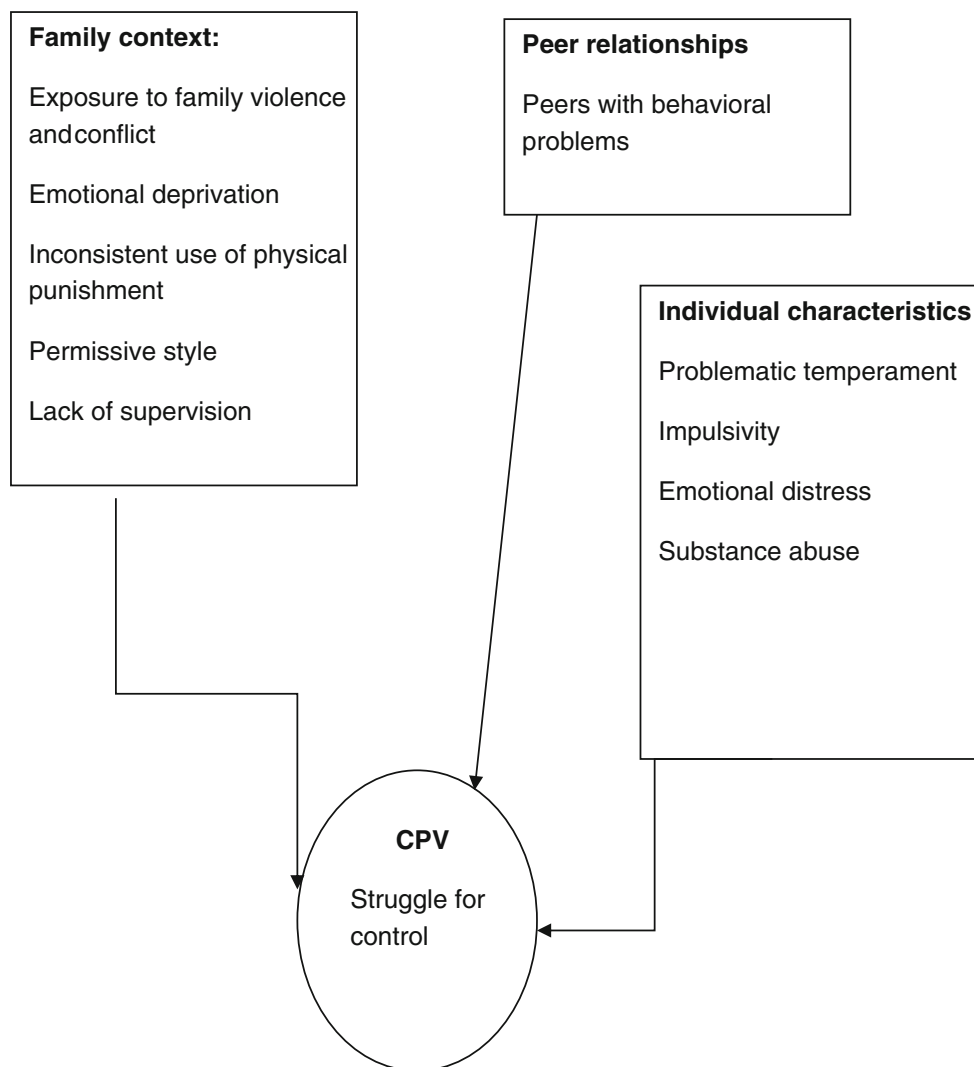
Results

Figure 1 presents the main themes that emerged in the groups. These are organized into the following blocks: family characteristics, children's characteristics, and violent acts.

Family Characteristics

Exposure to Conflict and Violence All the mothers reported that there was no partner violence against them, or any father/mother-to-child violence. However, they remarked that their children had been exposed to frequent couple arguments and

Fig. 1 Main themes associated to CPV

Family context:

Exposure to family violence and conflict

Emotional deprivation

Inconsistent use of physical punishment

Permissive style

Lack of supervision

Peer relationships

Peers with behavioral problems

Individual characteristics

Problematic temperament

Impulsivity

Emotional distress

Substance abuse

CPV

Struggle for control

conflicts. In most cases, these conflicts were prior to the CPV problem, and, after the CPV problem arose, the arguments focused on the CPV. Two of the mothers of the group had been divorced after the CPV began. In the group of fathers, one of them admitted antecedents of violent behavior, and an official complaint had been filed against him for maltreating his daughter. Like the mothers, the rest denied any prior exposure to family violence but they admitted that conflict between parents was habitual.

Four mothers added that, although there were no antecedents of exposure to family violence, the younger siblings of the aggressor children were exposed to the violence performed by the older child. One of the mothers expressly said that "his little siblings see and reproduce it."

The children confirmed exposure to frequent conflicts and arguments between their parents. They also mentioned that the arguments were mutual: from children to parents and parents to children. More important, in contrast to the opinion of parents, the children attributed the problem to the exposure

to violent behaviors at home. All the children, even the sons and daughters of mothers and fathers who had denied it, indicated that exposure to violence in the family taught them to be violent. This is how one of the children expressed it:

"If you insult your parents when you get mad at them, you insult or whatever, it's because that's what you learned, that's what they taught you. What influences me the most is what I see and experience with my parents. My parents are the ones who taught me the majority of my behaviors when I was little."

As a consequence of this learning, adolescents justified the use of violence. For them, violence was necessary, both as a method to set limits for other people and, particularly, to be respected. One of the children expressed it as follows:

"I shall have to make people respect me. Though I don't like violence and I don't like to fight with people, (…),

even if I'm scared to fight with someone the first time, I think it's better for them to see that the next time it won't be so easy."

Absence of Fathers Another point of agreement in the group of mothers is that most of them referred to the relative absence of the fathers. In some cases, the father was absent for different reasons: in one case, due to a disability, in three cases, because of a separation, and in another case, due to migration. In two other cases, the absence was psychological. That is, the mothers reported that the father was physically present but he did not pay any attention to his child, depriving him or her emotionally. The absence of the father was also mentioned in the group of fathers. One father acknowledged having been absent while his daughter was growing up, and the rest said that they would be absent if they could.

The professionals agreed that many fathers neglected to perform their parental functions. Thus, one of the professionals stated: "what is more salient is not so much the violence that some fathers carry out against their children but instead their negligence to perform their functions as fathers." In fact, in consistency with the opinions provided by the mothers and fathers, several professionals noted that such negligence often adopts the form of the "father's absence." This absence is symbolic, because although it may sometimes actually be the result of a death or a separation, more frequently it occurs because the father is present, but passive and indolent. This was explained by one of the professionals:

"Either the fathers are present but completely indolent and passive, or they do not exist because of death, divorce, …. This is the only thing that I've seen in common in practically all the families with CPV".

This absence could be gradual, so that at the beginning the father-child relationship was adequate but at some point of the developmental process the father did not know how to adapt his responses to the adolescent's new needs. Later in the interview, one of the professionals expanded the description of the above-mentioned neglect, suggesting that there was also a deficit in the affective component, which involved some emotional deprivation: these fathers are "very much focused on behavior, and very little on affective aspects."

Inconsistent Use of Physical Punishment The mothers in general acknowledged the use of physical punishment. Either they or the fathers had used it. Moreover, in two cases, they indicated that they did not use it when their children were younger, but only later on. They used it "belatedly" when the situation had got out of hand. One mother said she was sorry for not having been harsher before. Likewise, in the group of fathers, although they initially said that they disapproved of physical punishment, in the end they admitted that they approved of spanking, and provided examples of having punished physically their children. The children reported that their parents had hit them. One girl said that her father used to hit her until she began to defend herself. Another boy said his father hit him without any explicit reason. The group of professionals did not provide any information about the use of physical punishment.

Permissive Style All the mothers except for one acknowledged they had been permissive when administering discipline. For example, one of the mothers said that her daughter was doing very well at school, so she was allowed to do anything she pleased. When explaining this permissive style, they mentioned various elements. One of them is the lack of agreement about rules between father and mother. Another is the failure to apply the consequences of behavior. For example, various mothers reported that, when their children were very young and were punished, they cried and eventually the mothers gave way and withdrew the punishment. The same thing occurred with the rules they made later on: in the end, it was difficult to make the children obey them, and the children ended up ignoring them. One mother expressed it thus:

"I would have liked to be harsher with him because before, if he misbehaved,… I punished him and told him he was not going to watch TV for a week. He'd come home in the afternoon and… later, well… he knew I would give in…"

A third element that was mentioned when explaining permissiveness is that, as the mothers worked outside of the home and spent relatively little time with the children, they avoided arguments and punishments: "hell, the little time I spend at home…how am I going to punish him?" Another mother said she changed jobs to have a work schedule that would allow her to better supervise, and this had helped: "You have to choose between being a professional and being a mother. Both things at once are impossible"

Fathers also referred frequently to the permissive style. They indicated that their children could get whatever they wanted without any effort and that often, in order to forestall arguments and conflict, the parents had given in. Moreover, among the fathers there was a tendency to attribute the responsibility of the situation to institutions. In their opinion, the governments, schools, and even the law are guilty for not setting limits to their children.

Consistently with the fathers' and mothers' testimony, the children reported that there were rules (e.g., about what time to come home) but the rules were not clear and each member of the couple said something different. They also noted that, although their fathers and mothers set rules, they [the children] ignored them and their parents would not punish them, so it is

not very effective: "she takes away the computer but I go to my dad's place and hook up there." Three of them said that it would be better if the rules were clearer: "(…) they must say things clearly and be firm about what they say, but not say one thing and then they feel sorry, so they say the opposite." Two of the children reported that their mothers seek symmetric "girl-friend relations." The professionals corroborated the permissive parenting style that characterizes families with a CPV problem.

Poor Supervision As a result of the above-mentioned permissive parenting style, there is a lack of supervision of the children's behavior. Both the mothers and the fathers said, for example, that they did not know where their children were: "At some time, they switch friends and you lose track of them." When they ask their children about this, the children often respond by lying. The children also reported that their parents had no idea where they were or what they were doing.

Children's Characteristics

Problematic Temperament Mothers referred to the existence of different temperamental traits in their violent children. They even compared siblings to each other. They sometimes insisted that the violent child had a difficult temperament from an early age. One of the mothers said the following: "maybe my children have my genes or are naughty because I used to be very naughty, …" or "I'm very nervous and so is he….". One of the fathers mentioned his son's inability to mature.

In contrast, among the children, the predominant viewpoint was that violence is learned from what is witnessed. Only one believed that temperament also influences: "maybe I get excited and angry easier than other people."

The professionals also mentioned problems of impulsivity, low frustration tolerance, and problematic temperament. One professional described it this way: "a characteristic aspect is impulsivity, low frustration tolerance, immediacy, and not setting long-term goals." Lastly, the professionals concluded that the problem cannot be attributed exclusively to the parents or to the children. Rather, the key is in the interaction between the child's temperament and parenting styles. A certain temperament concurs with some family characteristics.

Other Associated Psychological Problems The mothers and fathers often reported a history of consultations to psychologists and other specialists. During the interview, they mentioned cases of borderline personality disorder and eating disorders. Moreover, in practically all the cases, there were substance consumption problems (alcohol, cannabis, and other drugs). This consumption was confirmed in the interview with the adolescents. All the adolescents of the group consumed, although they said it does not make them more violent.

They explicitly said that abstinence is what can make them violent.

The mothers indicated that their children were emotionally distressed before the CPV acts. One mother explained it this way: "and when they are distressed, with whom do they get upset? Whom do they mistreat? The person who is there, whom they love and whom they can trust. In the end, he lashes out at me because he knows he can. If he hits a police officer, he goes to jail, and this means that he's telling me that he is really distressed…"

Such emotional distress was also mentioned in the interview to professionals. Some of them interpreted the adolescents' violent behavior as an expression of depression: "Somehow, their violent behavior has the function of avoiding a depressive breakdown"

Influence of Peers and the Media The mothers and fathers mentioned the role of friends' influence. Four of the mothers stated that the change of friends was related to the change in their children' behavior. Lastly, all the children of the group attributed the problem partially to exposure to TV violence and videogames. They said that watching violent scenes in these media contributed to activating their hostile mood.

Violent Acts

The Context When asked about the context of the aggressions, topics such as arguments about what time to get home, the people they go out with, studies, and money emerged. Three mothers said that their children often did something they knew would upset the mothers, such as throwing or breaking something they valued.

Moreover, the topic of control emerged recurrently during all the interviews. CPV was interpreted as a struggle for control. The children could not abide for their parents to attempt to control their lives (especially their outside life). They interpreted their parents' reactions in the same sense: the parents get furious because they cannot control their children. The goal seems to be for the father/mother to lose even though they (the children) do not win. One son expressed it this way: "the more they forbid something, the more you want it." In other words, what is at stake is to do exactly whatever was being forbidden.

A professional took this idea further and suggested that the adolescents want to destroy their parents through self-destruction. The children block any possibility of the parents' winning, even though this means they too will lose.

Instrumental Violence The professionals described the violent acts as characteristic of instrumental or proactive violence; that is, aimed at obtaining some benefit. In their opinion, the violent acts are performed with a lack of empathy. Nevertheless, although instrumental or proactive violence is

characteristic, some professionals considered that, at the beginning, it could have been reactive violence and as such, activated by the children' distress. Moreover, in the beginning the violence was verbal, later evolving to forms of physical violence: "(…) in the developmental unfolding of the cases, we see that what is now physical violence did not begin as physical violence, it began with an 11-year-old child shouting or punching the wall, or slamming his fist on the table."

Gender Differences In the interview to professionals, they reported that in case of boys there were some common traits (impulsivity, low self-esteem, academic failure, consumption, low frustration tolerance, immediacy, lack of long-term goals), but that it was more complex in the case of the girls. Furthermore, physical violence is more characteristic of boys whereas psychological violence is typical of girls, possibly due to a question of physical strength. All the professionals but one agreed that, in the case of girls violence is more latent and less overt. It can adopt self-defeating forms, such as risky sex behavior, substance consumption, and academic failure, because in this way they destroy what is most important for their parents.

Discussion

This study contributes to our understanding of the characteristics of families in which CPV takes place by providing the perspectives of parents, children, and professionals. Findings suggest that CPV is a complex phenomenon that involves several family and individual risk factors.

Exposure to Family Violence and Emotional Neglect

Several references to exposure to family violence emerged in the interviews. However, whereas the children indicated explicitly the influence of exposure to violence in their own behavior, the mothers and fathers denied the existence of previous family violence. Only one of the fathers admitted having maltreated his daughter. Parents were less reluctant to admit the exposure to frequent conflicts and arguments between the couple members, which were highlighted by all of the participants. Interestingly, Brezina (1999) proposed that CPV could be partially understood as an attempt to manage and cope with family tension and stress. However, this attempt fails because its outcome does not put an end to the arguments between the couple members; it only changes the focus of these arguments, which becomes the CPV itself.

Moreover, the study reveals that emotional neglect and deprivation may be involved in the origin of CPV, which is expressed in psychological absence (especially the father's). Such emotional deprivation could occur at a certain moment of the developmental process, and is sometimes linked to specific events (i.e., the father's illness, separation because the father goes abroad, etc.). But in other cases, the father is physically present and the absence is psychological. Previous studies have also indicated that CPV is often associated with parents being detached, distant, and disengaged from the children (Agnew and Huguley 1989; Calvete et al. 2014), and with lack of closeness, trust, and caring (Paulson et al. 1990; Wells 1987). Thus, the present study contributes to understanding this influence by considering the perspectives of all of the individuals involved in CPV. Furthermore, taking into account the discrepancies between children and parents about the existence of a history of exposure to violence, future epidemiological research should address the perspectives of all concerned parties in order to obtain a more complete and integrated view of this problem.

Permissive Parenting Style

Consistent with the results of previous studies (e.g., Calvete et al. 2011; Howard et al. 2010; Micucci 1995), fathers, mothers, children, and professionals all acknowledged a predominantly permissive parenting style. They all said that there were rules but they were not clear and, moreover, the parents allowed their children to disobey them in order to avoid conflict. Furthermore, when the parents attempted to establish consequences for disobeying the rules, they did not know how to maintain them. That is, they forgave their children or the children found ways of not fulfilling the punishment. Likewise, although physical punishment is acknowledged by all, it seems that in some cases, physical punishment was belated, representing a failed attempt to reduce the problem of CPV. One of the consequences of the permissive parenting style is the lack of supervision of the children's behavior. Both the mothers and the fathers admitted that they often did not know their children's whereabouts.

The Violent Acts

The violent acts are described as instrumental or proactive. The permissive parenting style (Howard et al. 2010) and the loss of power in the parents (Coogan 2012; Tew and Nixon 2010) could contribute to an instrumental use of aggression against parents in order to obtain certain positive reinforcements (e.g., money) or to avoid unwanted tasks. During the interviews, the aggressions are described as a struggle for power and control. It is a power relation; practically all the time, they talk about "them and us," not letting the other win, not letting the other side get away with it. Furthermore, CPV often involves self-defeating behaviors. In those cases, the goal is for the parent to lose, even though the adolescent does not win either. In this regard, studies conducted in other countries have found that adolescents who perpetrate CPV feel entitled to use controlling, abusive, and violent behavior

to get what they want (Howard et al. 2010). These feelings of entitlement are consistent with proactive aggression and with the culture of consumption in which youth are often raised in current Western societies. In this culture, which reaches its zenith in adolescence and youth, parents play the role of providers (Shim et al. 2011).

Consistently with the motivation for control, the children hold beliefs of justification of violence as a method to earn others' respect (in this case, their parents'). This justification of violence is a strong predictor of aggressive behavior in children and adolescents (Calvete 2008).

Characteristics of the Children

In all the focus groups, substance consumption emerged as a habitual practice of these youngsters, and is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Calvete et al. 2011, 2013; Ibabe and Jaureguizar 2009). Moreover, in some cases, it was noted that the child had a problematic temperament or had even shown symptoms of psychological disorders, such as borderline personality disorder or eating disorders, along consistent with previous results (Ibabe and Jaureguizar 2009; Kennedy et al. 2010; Ghanizadeh and Jafari 2010). However, at this point, the perspective varies depending on information source (fathers, mothers, professionals, or the children). Finally, as in previous studies (Boxer et al. 2009; Calvete and Orue 2011; Calvete et al. 2011), the gender differences habitual in other forms of aggressive behavior were observed, with girls frequently performing more verbal than physical aggressions.

Attribution of the Problem

One of the most striking aspects that arose in the focus groups was the difference in attribution of the conflict: mothers often referred to problematic temperament in their children while fathers held the institutions and the law responsible. According to Micucci (1995), these youths may begin by feeling alienated and misunderstood and ultimately develop more significant psychological problems. Both parents, especially the mothers, repeatedly mentioned bad company. Specifically, the mothers indicated a relation between the start of the violent behavior and a change of friends. The role of the peer group and friends has been pointed out in other studies of CPV (Agnew and Huguley 1989; Cottrell and Monk 2004).

In contrast, the children said that they had learned to behave aggressively at home because they had been exposed to family violence. The professionals pointed out that these parents delegate in the professionals the solution to the problem and that it is very difficult for them to engage actively in the change. For the professionals, it is a question of interaction between temperament and family environment. Thus, as with the existence of antecedents of exposure to violence,

attribution of responsibility emerges as a point of discrepancy. This finding suggests the need for additional research on this topic.

Limitations and Research Implications

This study has several limitations that provide opportunities for future studies. Among them is the small number of participants in the focus groups (e.g., the groups of adolescents and parents). Future research should overcome this by using larger samples of adolescents and their parents. Despite this limitation, the information established in this study is still valuable due to the scarcity of qualitative research conducted with adolescents who have committed CPV and their parents. A second limitation is that all the parents had asked for psychological help for the CPV problem, and as a consequence, the results may be different than in those families that do not attend therapy. Furthermore, in the present study, the parents provided relatively little information about their views on topics such as exposure to violence, and this may have been influenced by the group format of the interviews. The relative lack of disclosure was more evident among the fathers, whereas the mothers manifested feeling very comfortable when sharing their experiences with other mothers who had similar problems. Thus, we propose that future studies include individual interviews that facilitate disclosure among the protagonists of CPV. Finally, this study was conducted in Spain, and cross-cultural differences in family systems and aggressive behavior may have affected the results. As mentioned, previous research shows that Spanish families have swung from an authoritarian parenting style to an indulgent and permissive style (García and Gracia 2009). Thus, the findings of this research should be replicated in other cultures to identify universal and specific risk factors for CPV.

Despite the limitations, this study contributes to our knowledge about the factors involved in CPV in adolescents. Findings of the study suggest that there are several family (e.g., exposure to violence, neglect, and inadequate parenting) and personal characteristics (e.g., temperament, drug abuse, and distress) that can increase the risk of CPV. These factors should be the focus of further research.

Clinical and Policy Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for interventions as they show that CPV is a complex phenomenon. Accordingly, family and individual approaches should be considered in therapies. In particular, problems related to control should be addressed. Therefore, in interventions with parents who are victims of CPV, the need for the parents to recover their power and to reestablish the imbalance of control inherent in the parent-children relations should be underlined (Howard et al. 2010). Parent training would be valuable to

teach basic skills to parents in order to manage their children's behavior. As these parents seem to have difficulties setting limits on their children's behavior, behavior modification techniques aimed at establishing adequate contingencies for appropriate and inadequate behaviors would be especially useful. In addition, this training should start early to prevent the development of CPV, as early interventions are particularly effective for violent behavior in children and adolescents (Lochman et al. 2003). The implementation of these interventions represents an important challenge for policies.

Finally, some of the professionals interviewed suggested that CPV could be fulfilling the function of a "masked depression" that must be reached in therapy in order to achieve changes in the violent adolescent. It is therefore important for clinicians to assess the presence of depressive symptoms and to use appropriate therapeutic strategies when adolescents display symptoms of depression.

Conclusion

The study contributes to the literature the experiences of the protagonists of CPV. The results show a family profile characterized by exposure to family violence and conflict, particularly marital conflict, and by the fact that the relation between the father and the children may have been distant and lacking in emotional connection. The fathers and mothers displayed a permissive style of discipline, characterized by their incapacity to consistently establish consequences for the inadequate behavior of their children and by the lack of supervision. All the above could have contributed to the children's emotional distress, as they often displayed symptoms of emotional stress and substance consumption problems. Lastly, the acts of CPV seem to be a dysfunctional attempt by the children to gain power in the context of family relations in which the parents display an inability to establish control. These elements have important implications for treatments and policies.

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