



The exposure of children to intimate partner violence: Potential bridges between two fields in research and psychosocial intervention



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Research and interventions often focus on a specific form of violence without considering other forms of victimization

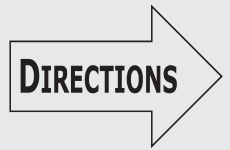
Child maltreatment (CM) and intimate partner violence (IPV) undoubtedly constitute the two most studied types of family violence. The social acknowledgment of these two problems and the severity of their consequences for the victims have led several countries, states, and provinces to formulate psychosocial intervention policies and programs to respond to the needs

of violence-affected families. Knowledge and social responses for IPV and CM have developed independently, becoming specialized, distinct fields. Over the last 15 years, however, research has highlighted numerous situations in which these two problems occurred simultaneously in concerned families. Since the publication in 1998 of a large meta-analysis conducted by Anne Appel and George Holden,

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articles on this two-dimensional problem have multiplied at a phenomenal rate. Indeed, there are now more than a hundred articles in

English and in French that mention the co-occurrence of IPV and CM in the abstract or title and that have been published from 1998 to 2014 in social science and health databases,¹ a figure which does not include all the books, chapters, and other documents on this topic.

The goal of this article is to discuss the challenge of providing coherent, complementary, and continuous services to children and families confronted with concomitant IPV and CM. Research in the last 15 years has highlighted the need to improve collaboration between the relevant service systems. The article begins with a brief description of present-day knowledge of children's exposure to IPV and of its co-occurrence with CM. This description is followed by a discussion on three important issues that might help us to better understand why it is so difficult to provide coherent, continuous services to children and families confronted with IPV and CM.

The first issue concerns the difficulties involved in defining the problem. With regard

to the terminology concerning IPV, it is important to underline the growing tendency in the English-language literature to replace the traditional term of *domestic violence* with *intimate partner violence*. The latter term includes post-separation violence and violence between partners who do not live together. The second issue is the challenge of building bridges among the various fields of knowledge and expertise that have tended to develop differing approaches.

The third issue involves the lack of knowledge concerning certain emerging topics and questions that should, in our opinion, be explored in future research. More specifically, we will look at post-separation violence as a priority research theme. Indeed, the empirical answers to questions raised in this regard might enhance practitioners' actions when they are faced with complex situations combining IPV and CM. The recommendations presented in the last section of the article are in keeping, at two different levels, with the general theme of collaboration—(a) collaboration between the various fields of practice and (b) collaboration between researchers and practitioners for the design, implementation, and evaluation of novel solutions.

What Is Known About Children's Exposure to IPV Concomitant With CM?

If a situation is to be defined as an important social problem in a given society, a justification needs to be provided for why the situation is problematic. Only recently have researchers empirically demonstrated that indirect forms of violence, such as exposure to IPV, can be just as damaging for a child's development as direct forms of CM, such as physical and

¹ The research was conducted in PsycInfo, PubMed, Social Services Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts, Érudit, and Cairn. The research was limited to articles which were published from 1998 to 2014 and which employed the following word combinations in the abstract or title of the article: (“domestic violence” or “intimate partner violence” or “violence conjugale” or “violence entre partenaires intimes”) and (“child maltreatment” or “child abuse” or “maltraitance des enfants” or “maltraitance envers les enfants” or “mauvais traitements envers les enfants” or “enfants maltraités” or “maltraitance d’enfant*” or “violence envers les enfants”) and (co-occurrence or cooccurrence or concomitant or concomitance or concurrent)). The bibliographies of a few key documents were also read, which made it possible to identify a few more relevant articles, for a total of 121.

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