



The electronic version (PDF) of this publication was scanned by the UNICRI Documentation Centre from an original paper document in the UNICRI Library.

La version électronique (PDF) de cette publication a été numérisée par le centre de Documentation d'UNICRI à partir du document papier original de la Bibliothèque d'UNICRI.

Esta versión electrónica (PDF) ha sido escaneada por el Centro de Documentación de UNICRI a partir de un documento impreso original perteneciente a la Biblioteca de UNICRI.

Электронная версия (PDF) данной публикации была отсканирована Центром Документации UNICRI с оригинальной бумажной версии, находящейся в библиотеке UNICRI.

UNITED NATIONS INTERREGIONAL CRIME AND JUSTICE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Violence in the Family

An international bibliography with literature review

(Executive Summary)

Angela Patrignani

Renaud Villé



BACKGROUND

Family violence is not an easy issue to tackle given the variety of subjects and human situations that it encompasses and the close relationship that exists between the victim and the offender. Their fragile position within the family makes it very difficult for the victims to report violence that occurs within their home and a very large proportion of the crimes included in the "dark figure" of crime statistics involves violence committed within the family. Another aspect related to family violence is the difficulty encountered by the various involved agencies in implementing the appropriate measures to ensure that the perpetrator of the violence is recognised as an offender, that the victim is guaranteed certain rights, and that both parties receive the appropriate intervention and/or treatment. This problem is not unique to any one ethnic group, class, social condition or culture. Although it may appear in different forms, and the level of people's awareness of, and reaction to the phenomenon may vary, the gravity and extent of the problem is world-wide. The family is the primary and most important social institution for the upbringing, education and protection of its members, but it can often become an arena for suffering and violence. All over the world women and children are murdered, mutilated, assaulted, battered or sold. Millions of human beings are suffering within their family "walls", and the weakest members of society are the most vulnerable: ethnic minorities, refugees, migrant families, children and women in armed conflicts. They are most at risk and have the least legal, economic and social protection.

Research into this subject helps to expose the problem, to disseminate information, to heighten public awareness of the phenomenon and to assist the community, criminal justice personnel and other practitioners to deal with it through prevention, control and treatment.

There were two main reasons behind the decision to undertake this project. First, it was a recognition of two important events within the United Nations activities: the proclamation, in its Resolution 44/82 of 8 December 1989, by the United Nations General Assembly of 1994 as the International Year of the Family; and the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held in September 1995. Secondly, it is an area of priorities as determined by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the United Nations' principal policy body in the field. Following a series of contacts with the Division for Social Development, in Vienna and later in New York, UNICRI decided to contribute to the study of this subject by preparing an International Bibliography on Violence in the Family and a review of the literature.

The compilation of a bibliography and the analysis thereof is a necessary step in order to identify the amount of literature and information available, the level of debate and the different existing experiences on the matter. This is also important for appropriate planning both in the field of research and policy formulation and implementation.

Although it does not pretend to be exhaustive, this bibliography provides an international overview of the issues and sources of information related to violence in the family.

The present paper is the executive summary of the full report included in the attached diskette. In order to have a global and therefore more objective view of the field, we strongly recommend the reading of the full report.

It was necessary, first of all, to select certain parameters. Preference was given to the most widespread and evident aspects of family violence and it was thus decided to restrict the entries to violence against children and women, in the context of traditional male-female couples who are either married or in a personal relationship. The main emphasis was placed on violence perpetrated by parents against children and by male partners against women. As for the term "violence", this is used in a very broad sense and encompasses physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect. Despite these limitations, most of the discussed issues are also valid for those aspects of violence in the family that were not included in this bibliography.

METHODOLOGY

The bibliography is mainly based on material related to criminology and criminal law available from the UNICRI library: books, journals and abstracts. The bibliography covers the period 1985 to 1992 and comprises 1,558 entries.

Each entry is composed of different elements which provide several types of information. They are presented by author(s) in alphabetical order, with a progressive number, and are correlated with a first key word related to the main field (Family, Child and/or Woman), followed by key words related to the content. Sixty-three key words have been used (see Table 2). In addition, the country of publication as well as the country under discussion are mentioned.

The distribution of the entries by year of publication is relatively equal across the period under survey (1985-1992), with a maximum of 222 publications in 1989 and a minimum of 164 in 1988. Whereas the distribution by year is relatively equal, the distributions by country of publication and by country under discussion show a clear trend toward anglophone countries. About 79% of all entries are published in the United States of America. If to these are added the 139 entries published in the United Kingdom, the 22 published in Australia, and the 20 published in Canada, these countries account for approximately 91% of the bibliography. The other two significant countries with regard to place of publication are the Netherlands (3%) and the Federal Republic of Germany (1%). The other 17 countries represent 5% of the bibliography. Concerning the distribution by country under discussion, the same four countries (United States of America, United

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Kingdom, Canada and Australia) represent approximately 86% of the bibliography and, again, the other important country is the Netherlands with 3%. The other 31 countries represent about 8%. The category "International", which represents 3% (52 entries) of the bibliography, refers to entries with more than one country of reference and are usually comparative studies.

Three main categories were used in the bibliography, namely Family, Child and Woman (see Table 1).

The distribution of the three categories is not equal in terms of number of entries. The entries related to the child represent about 65% of the bibliography, and less than a third of the bibliography is related to the woman. The third category, about 9%, concerns all kinds of references connected with violence in the family in general and not specifically related to women or children.

	No.*	%
Family	138	8.9
Child	1,008	64.7
Woman	473	30.4

* The total is greater than 1,558 since a number of entries were multi-classified.

The analysis of the distribution of the 63 key words shows that the child issues are more oriented towards social and care areas (effects on the victim's personality, role of care personnel, victim treatment and therapy), while those for the woman are more oriented towards the criminal justice system (police intervention and response, criminal justice system). These two orientations are also present when the entire bibliography is taken into account.

What is of greater importance is the analysis of the contents of the bibliography, so as to identify the actual situation, trends, and different approaches, theories and debates for each aspect of the fields under study, with the aim of presenting an overview based on the entries making up the bibliography. In order to provide a more concise and structured analysis, it was decided to arrange all the key words in a number of main fields. In Table 2 the key words are grouped into seven fields: Family violence: background, approaches, and extent; The context; Forms of violence; The victim; The offender; The criminal justice system; Responses to the problem. The literature review in the attached diskette mainly follows the above-mentioned structure and is of a descriptive nature, in order to allow the reader to form his/her own critical view.

From an analysis of the literature collected in this work, it is possible to confirm, yet again, an important finding: data, information and knowledge of the problem

merely represent the tip of an iceberg, a tip that is still considered by many as a "private" domain. In many national laws violence in the family is not recognised as a crime, and most of the systems do not include family violence in their crime records. The majority of available studies and information come from a very few regions/countries - North America, Australia and Western Europe - and this is strongly reflected in the bibliography, from both a geographical and linguistic point of view. Very little is known about family violence outside the Western world. Furthermore, most information related to this problem in the Third World is reported by Westerners who view these countries from a Western perspective. This bias is also due to the problem of the diffusion of the literature coming from some regions of the world, a literature which is not usually distributed internationally due to linguistic or other reasons, and to which access is often difficult. This orientation has to be kept in mind when reading the literature review so as to avoid any inappropriate generalisation of the findings. This also points to an urgent need for studies of violence in the family within the context of developing countries and countries of different cultural backgrounds.

Table 2

Division of all key words into seven fields: numbers and percentages*

Family violence: background, approaches, and extent (312 / 5.5%)

- Family violence
- Feminism
- Literature review and bibliography
- Statistics

The context (541 / 9.5%)

- Adoption and foster parent
- Divorce
- Family stress
- Intergenerational transmission of abuse
- Single parent
- Social and cultural environment
- Social and economic status
- Structure of the family
- Urban and rural area
- Victim-offender relation

Forms of violence (1,777 / 31.3%)

- Abuse
- Child and domestic violence
- Domestic violence
- Emotional abuse
- Fatal abuse
- Incest
- Marital rape
- Münchhausen syndrome by proxy
- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

The victim (686 / 12%)

- At risk
- Characteristics of victim
- Childhood history
- Effects on victim personality
- Female victim
- Male victim
- Reaction of the victim
- Victim delinquency
- Victim substance abuse

The offender (404 / 7.1%)

- Characteristics of offender
- Father offender
- Mother offender
- Offender substance abuse
- Prediction of abuse
- Recidivism

The criminal justice system (903 / 15.9%)

- Allegation, witness and investigation
- Anatomically correct doll
- Court
- Criminal justice system
- Legislation
- Police
- Police intervention and response
- Prosecution
- Report
- Sentence

Responses to the problem (1,059 / 18.6%)

- Family treatment and therapy
- Institution and placement for victim
- Offender treatment and therapy
- Policy prevention
- Role of care personnel
- Role of mass media
- Role of medical personnel
- Role of school personnel
- Role of the community and neighbour
- Role of the family
- Training of care personnel
- Training of criminal justice system personnel
- Victim treatment and therapy

* Multiple key words for each entry

This executive summary of the literature review is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the context and also covers elements concerning the background, approaches to, and extent of family violence. The second part concerns the actors (the offender(s) and the victim(s)), whilst the last part deals with the responses to the problem, including those provided by the criminal justice system.

While family violence is neither a new nor a circumscribed problem, research into this area is relatively recent and the process of the criminalisation of family violence has met with serious obstacles, if not as a matter of law, at least as a matter of practice. During the last few decades the issue has received greater research and political interest. The United Nations has produced several instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993) that focus on particular aspects of human rights of women and children, and on several official occasions violence against women and children has been addressed as a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At least in some countries, the problem of violence in the family has received greater attention in terms of domestic legislation, creation of support services for the victims, and by the mass media attracting the attention of the public in general. It has also become the object of more research. Attention has been drawn to the various harmful effects that family violence produces not only on victims but also on the family, the offender and, more generally, on society. Suggested measures are oriented towards involving the community and sensitising and heightening its awareness, in particular through highlighting the individual, community and social costs and consequences. Despite these positive changes and the important role played by the feminist movement, the family is still considered, on the one hand, the basis of society and, as such, tends to be protected and respected by legal, cultural and religious norms, thereby giving secondary importance to the needs and rights of victims of family violence, and, on the other hand, as the temple of privacy where others and/or the state are not allowed to interfere. Much value is still placed on the unity of the family as opposed to the rights and needs of the individual, thus implicitly placing at least part of the blame on the victim. Moreover, the importance of the criminalisation of violence in the family is still not appropriately recognised in the majority of national laws.

THE CONTEXT

Official records on the extent of violence against women or children are grossly inadequate. The sources of information mentioned in the bibliography include case studies, official data from hospitals, shelters, courts and police, local/national surveys on victims, offenders and operators. There is an enormous fragmentation of data and information even within the same country and, generally speaking, lack of co-ordination and poor filing procedures can be observed in practically all sectors and during all the stages of intervention, from the reporting of the case

through the various forms of intervention and treatment. Insufficient attention has been given to the methodological issues in research, such as data sourcing, sampling, design and measuring. There is a clear need for regular studies, *ad hoc* reports, centres for data collection, targeted and co-ordinated participation of the various agencies involved, more qualitative research, greater accuracy in concepts and terminology, and longer periods for follow-up studies.

The problem of violence in the family is present in all the social, ethnic and religious groups and some factors, such as poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, low social status, marginalisation, and so forth, place women and children at a greater risk. The above-mentioned characteristics are also the characteristics of those social groups that are more likely to come into contact with, and be subjected to, the welfare system, public hospitals, shelters, prisons, etc. Women and children belonging to the upper social strata may not require or seek the use of public services or refuge shelters, and are therefore less visible. This means that the "risk" element is often assessed on the basis of partial and incomplete information concealing the fact that family violence cuts across class, culture and ethnicity.

Whether or not there is an increase in the various forms of abuse of children or women is difficult to say. The national and local data provide different pictures and any apparent increase could be related either to a real increase in family violence, or to a broader definition of the problem and a greater tendency to report the offence.

The increased interest in violence within the context of the family represents a challenge to the anthropological, sociological, judicial and practical theories and establishment. The existing theories and policies related to violence in the family seem inadequate both for explaining the complex nature of violence in the family and for providing clear-cut directions for prevention, control and treatment. Explanations regarding violence in the family and/or factors contributing to an increase in violence differ greatly. Some tend to focus on the personal characteristics of the offender (for example, medical or psychological problems, stress, and substance abuse), while others stress the relationships between individuals and society (such as the effects of unemployment or financial problems). Others focus on the personality of the victim, or on the victim-offender relationship (traditional male/female sexual role expectations and their crisis). A consensus is emerging to consider the context of family violence as a highly complex one which cannot be adequately explained by a single factor. There are several variables and relationships related to the context, personal behaviour, social ties and cultural environment that appear significant in describing and understanding the phenomenon. This calls for a multisystem and multidiscipline approach with an emphasis on qualitative research in that it is able to capture and monitor over time many variables that cannot be grasped by quantitative research.

Practitioners working with at risk families should be made aware of the social, economic and cultural environment and other factors that can influence family relationships, and should receive training towards more adequate and appropriate types of intervention. It is essential to adopt an approach which allows for understanding and intervention in context and from a dynamic perspective.

Multisystem studies, analyses, and interventions seem better fit to understand the cultural mechanisms at play in socialising individuals towards the acceptance of social norms, and to predict and prevent factors that generate, as well as those that reduce violence in the family.

In the case of family violence, and more specifically in the field covered by the present analysis, there are a number of actors. There are obviously the offender and the victim, but in addition, secondary family members may be involved, such as the mother in cases of father daughter incest, or the child witness of domestic violence. Mostly due to the infinity of variables at play, to attempt to define the typical profile of the actors is very risky and arbitrary. The difficulty in predicting an abuse or victimisation is also due to methodological problems, and while certain risk factors can be identified, they cannot provide definitive conclusions and cannot determine any predestination.

THE ACTORS

Women and children are at a greater risk of abuse within the family than outside. Almost the majority of assaults against children occur in the home (the percentage is even higher in cases that result in a death) and home assault represents the more serious type of violence. This is also true for violence by husbands or former partners against women and, according to some studies, around 70% of wife homicides occur at home.

Concerning the link between the type of victimisation, age and gender, girls are twice as likely as boys to experience maltreatment. The most common form of abuse for both girls and boys is physical, followed by neglect for boys and sexual abuse for girls, even if many of the victims suffer from multiple abuses. The age of the victim emerges as a strong indicative factor of the severity of physical and sexual violence. Generally speaking, males are the predominant perpetrators of family violence while females are the main victims.

Single parent status was also identified as an important factor in the case of child abuse. Although no relationship was found between the gender of the single parent and child punishment, fathers are mainly responsible for sexual molestation while mothers appear more responsible for neglect. Early parenthood, previous criminal records and marital instability are also found to be correlated with a greater risk of child abuse. The most widespread hypothesis is that the particular socio-economic marginalisation experienced by single parents, and sometimes

even adolescent parents, leads to the creation of a chain of processes that can have repercussions on the family environment.

The types of abuse, the relationship with the abuser, the circumstances, as well as the degree, frequency and length of exposure to violence may result in different consequences for the victims. Almost all recent studies related to the effects of abuse on victims as well as to their characteristics also deal with their childhood history. Notwithstanding the limits of the available research and the lack of a standardised assessment procedure, the long term effects of abuse seem to have been established and this is reflected by the number of adults who continue to report and demonstrate the negative effects of childhood maltreatment. In this context, an important issue is the intergenerational transmission of violence or abuse (the maltreated/maltreating cycle across generations). According to the cycle of violence hypothesis, violence has a strong impact on the socialisation process of a child, and children who are victims of abuse or who are witnessing domestic violence are more likely to become abusers when they become adults and to act aggressively both within their family and outside. Men who have been abused during their childhood are also more likely to start an earlier criminal career. Moreover, specific forms of childhood violence seem to be associated with specific patterns of adult violence, i.e. people who were physically abused as children are most likely to become physically violent adults, and sexually abused children have a greater probability of becoming sexual abusers during their adulthood.

However, early socialisation affected by violence can be corrected by social and cultural support during adolescence and adulthood, and although the experience of child abuse presents a greater risk factor and produces a stronger impact than severe economic or other types of stress, it is only one of a series of potential factors leading to family violence. Therefore, while recognising the importance of the intergenerational transmission of violence, the idea of the inevitability of this pattern of violence suggested by the learning theory with its single cause approach, is inadequate alone for explaining such a complex problem as family abuse or victimisation.

Clinical tests to identify, describe and measure particular personality traits such as psychopathology, mental illness, anxiety, stress, depression, lack of self control, and low self-esteem, that could be symptomatic of violent behaviour are commonly used. Surveys show that people are aware of the widespread nature of family violence but, at the same time, the majority of them view abusers as abnormal-deviant persons. Notwithstanding difficulties in prediction, the use of tests may be of some value for understanding violent behaviour. Yet, the findings are not uniform and the data are insufficient; therefore, these instruments cannot be unique in providing a reliable and valid prediction/description of the "typical offender".

Another factor that is often taken into consideration, in particular during the analysis of the offender's personality, is substance abuse. It is important and useful to examine the interactive influences of alcohol and other substances on violence. Alcohol is strongly associated with higher risks of repeated injury, recidivism, danger to the life of family members, and non compliance with treatment. Whilst the link between violent behaviour and substance abuse exists, it has to be interpreted with caution because substance use does not necessarily produce violent behaviour in everyone and, in any case, the use of alcohol or drugs should not be regarded as a justification or excuse for violence.

Empirical data on domestic violence are very limited, but it is nevertheless possible to provide a tentative description of the situation. Although wife abuse appears in all strata of society, high levels of marital conflict and low socio-economic status emerge as the primary predictors of a higher likelihood of wife abuse. Patriarchal ethos, a sexist cultural environment, and changes in the marital balance of power also seem to be important influencing factors for domestic violence as well as for physical child abuse. Many studies have shown that common gender role stereotypes are often used to explain, justify and legitimise the male abuser and even, at times, to blame the female victim for the act. This can be explained within the context of social control which is generally based on a social structure that condones men's domination over women. Without this cultural acceptance and the structural support of men's authority over women, violence would be less effective as a means of domination. Particular case studies on marital homicide have revealed that, when perpetrated by men, it is usually an offensive act while in the case of women it is usually used as a form of extreme defence.

A rather high percentage of women victims of domestic violence remain involved in the relationship or become involved in a new abusive one, often irrespectively of the frequency or seriousness of the abuse. However, the links between wife abuse and marital status have received little attention. In fact, although one would expect the violence to cease when a marriage comes to an end, this does not necessarily follow. The traditional question of why women remain in abusive marriages needs to be qualified so as to include the problem of victimisation of women by their former spouses and what steps women actively take to improve their life condition. It should also be taken into consideration that in the majority of cases the victims' position changes little, if at all, and too often the only place to which the victim can return is the family.

Numerous factors can contribute towards ending violence in the home and many strategies can be adopted. Bearing in mind that those perpetrators of violence that are most resistant to these strategies live in social networks that support violence, family violence must be viewed from an individual, environmental and social context. What is important is not to focus on a "typical" profile of offenders, but to accept that each case may present different characteristics and problems, so as to allow for the use of specific, targeted *ad hoc* treatment and/or intervention.

THE RESPONSES

Various agencies deal with family violence: the criminal justice system, the health care system, therapeutic organisations, social workers, and the responses of these agencies vary. Each of them may intervene in different stages proposing different responses. But their intervention is usually reactive in that it is applied as a reaction to the violent behaviour; therefore emphasis should also be placed on preventive interventions and the treatment of families and individuals at risk.

In many countries the approach exists to consider family violence as a “private matter” and this has to be borne in mind when developing intervention strategies. The question of interfering with the privacy of the family in the cases of family violence is also becoming much more problematic in the context of acceptable - or unacceptable - patterns of intimacy in families belonging to different ethnic groups. Often social services and, to some extent, the criminal justice system, are faced with the dilemma of protecting children and women against abuse and the need to respect cultural diversities in family life.

The involvement of the criminal justice system in the field of family violence is obviously fundamental, but questions arise as to the extent of the “intrusion”, particularly in personal matters and in terms of personal rights. Family violence has to be seen as a dynamic process involving all the relationships among the members of the family, and should not therefore be viewed as a problem which can be solved exclusively by criminal law and criminal justice.

Modern law reform often involves an increased attention towards family violence and the requests for its criminalisation, by compulsory interventions based on the enforcement of criminal law provisions. The existence of legislation is essential for the criminalisation of certain types of violence, as is the existence of adequate institutional structures and a political will towards implementation. However, the lack of all or some of these is often the case. Another aspect to be taken into consideration is that the law cannot immediately change public opinion even if it can provide a long term positive educational effect. This point is of great importance because new policies cannot be successfully implemented without the co-operation of the public, the social services and the legal system, as well as the victims.

The main tasks of the criminal justice system are to consolidate the recognition of acts of family violence as crimes, to guarantee the rights of the victims and provide them with appropriate assistance, to maintain records, to investigate, to provide placement and, in appropriate cases, to arrest and prosecute. Collaboration with other agencies is essential throughout the whole criminal justice process. One of the most important fields of collaboration between the criminal justice system and other services is in the reduction of secondary victimisation that results from the usually long and traumatic passage of the victim through the criminal justice process, and in particular during appearances before courts.

The involvement of the criminal justice system in a case of family violence usually commences with a report of the abuse. The sources of reports are divided into two main categories. The first is related to mandatory reports coming from hospitals, law enforcement agencies, schools, social service personnel, public health professionals, etc. The second is related to reports from non-mandatory sources such as self-referral or reports from concerned citizens, neighbours, anonymous persons, relatives, etc. This distinction between mandatory and non-mandatory reports is based on the related legislation and therefore varies from country to country. The most common source of reporting is the police for abused wives, and child protection services and the police for abused children. Even where it appears that there is public consensus as to the unacceptability of almost any type of violence and its willingness to label such behaviour as wrong, there is still a reluctance to report such cases to the police.

Historically, typical police responses to incidents of family violence and in particular to domestic violence can be described as follows: few cases of family violence are formally addressed by the police, the police prefer not to intervene in family disputes, and are reluctant to make arrests. Trends related to the methods of police intervention go from apparent indifference, through compassionate mediation to firmer control and mandatory arrest, and it is therefore difficult to provide a clear definition of the current trend although, in practice, at least in some countries, there is a tendency towards arresting the suspect. One advantage of this policy is the recognition of family violence as a crime. Nevertheless, the mandatory arrest policy has also received a lot of criticism, in particular with regard to its real deterrent effects, and hence the long term safety of the victim.

The police officer's decision as to what kind of action to take (mediation, arrest, removal of the victim from the family, etc.) depends on the country's legislation, but also on the cultural and personal attitudes towards the parties involved. Police intervention in a family crisis is far from easy, bearing in mind the dual role of the police: on the one hand, to protect the victim, and on the other, to assure that the offender is brought to justice.

The difficulties for practitioners in dealing with family violence cases is not only due to the fact that family violence is "new" in terms of intervention, and that it is still to some extent a taboo, but also to the complexity of the situation. An appropriate intervention of the police in cases of family violence is as much a matter of clear guidelines and information as it is essentially a matter of changes in the police culture and the professional profile of the police officer. General lack of knowledge related to family violence illustrates the importance of training, especially in the area of determining the appropriate intervention following a call or report of abuse. Issues to be addressed and balanced include victim protection, arrest, advice on social services, treatment, etc. The need for training is funda-

mental for all practitioners in contact with families for the improvement of knowledge and capacities in dealing with and treating family violence.

A new debate related to the criminal justice system and its interventions and responses is linked with the recent recognition of and, at least in some countries, apparent increase in the number of reports of sexual abuse of children. The debate is focused mainly on three elements: the interviewing of the child, the instruments used during such interviews (such as, for example, videotapes and an anatomically correct doll), and the role of the child as a witness in the court.

The interviewing of the alleged abused child is an important element in the judicial process. The police are faced with delicate problems in interviewing the child, and often there is a lack of co-ordination and collaboration with other professionals (social workers, psychologists, etc.). The key question is to evaluate the credibility and validity of reports of child sexual abuse. One of the instruments used is the videotaped interview between the child and police officers and/or other practitioners investigating, or assisting in the investigation of the allegation. The second often used instrument is the anatomically correct doll. It is based on the interpretation to be given (as evidence of abuse) to some of the child's behaviours when in contact with the doll and to allow the child to answer questions by illustration and demonstration. The correct use of the doll and the related interpretations are extremely important since the results of the special interview are (or could be) used before the court. The same system of investigation and validation of allegation is used with the child's drawings. Professionals should be trained to use these instruments in an appropriate and adequate way, and therefore to increase the power of validation.

The other important issue related to the victim is his/her witness role. The problems are mainly twofold: the risk of secondary victimisation, and, to a greater degree for a child, his/her credibility based on the concepts of memory and level of cognition development. The victim appearing before the court should be under the "protection" of professionals whose role it is to give support, help, advice and protection during contacts with the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system should also actively protect the victims/witnesses against unnecessary traumas, fear and/or worsening of family problems that may be caused by a direct confrontation. Often the solution in case of family abuse allegation is to allow the victim to provide evidence without a face-to-face confrontation with the offender through the use, for example, of a videotape or closed circuit television.

Although the role of the victim is an important element in court proceedings, the latter deal mainly with the offenders. One issue that has received a great deal of attention is court ordered treatment for abusers and the evaluation of such treatment. Court ordered treatment, be it for child abusers or spouse abusers, is considered a good method of intervention. The main problem, however, is the effect-

iveness of, and the compliance with, court ordered treatment. The most frequently used method for evaluating the effectiveness of a certain type of treatment is to evaluate the decrease or cessation of violent behaviour after a certain lapse of time following the completion of the treatment. Another important methodological consideration is the length of time that should elapse between the completion of the treatment and its evaluation. Although there is a general agreement that the rate of return to violent behaviour increases over time, comparison is very difficult and there is little consensus on the actual rates of success of treatment. This depends on numerous factors such as type of abuse, intensity and frequency of the abuse, personal characteristics, situation, etc.

The criminal justice system is not alone in dealing with family violence. The care system also plays an important role through treatment and therapy of the actors: the offender, the victim and the family as a unit. The fact that there is a high level of heterogeneity in abusive families leads to the need for identifying and assessing the problems and understanding the interrelationships in each family so as to determine the most appropriate treatment. There is a need for careful pre-treatment personality assessment, as well as for differential diagnosis and treatment, in order to enhance specific approaches.

Family treatment is a global intervention which takes into consideration all family members involved in the abuse as well as the context in which it occurs. In other words, not only the offender and/or victim, but all the members of the family should be treated as individuals, as well as the nature of their interrelationship.

Three main types of treatment approaches are often referred to. The first is a behavioural approach in that it tries to modify the behaviour of the offender(s) or of all family members involved. The second is a cognitive approach which attempts to modify the psychological profile of the offender. The third treatment approach is based on the re-establishment of appropriate relationships within the family. These three approaches are not mutually exclusive and are often applied in some mixture. While there is an on-going debate on the effectiveness of treatment, and recidivism is often registered, their value in the prevention of violence seems to be supported.

Intervention aimed towards both the family and the offender is also related, to some extent, to the treatment and therapy of the victim. The victim-offender relationship is therefore of particular relevance. The effects of abuse are difficult to treat, because abuse is very often not a single and uniform act but includes a large set of variables and elements which have to be identified and taken into consideration during the treatment of the victim. Most treatment of victims relies on a combination of individual, family and group therapy. The main objectives of the majority of the treatment programmes are to restore, whenever possible, the family to normality, in particular by helping the victim to gain a sense of self-

esteem by neutralising excessive feelings of guilt, eliminating depression and, when needed, by remedying the developmental retardation as in the case of abused children.

Another way to deal with family violence is to modify the situation by reducing the crime opportunity. Family violence is special because it occurs between persons with a close relationship and who usually live under the same roof. In this context, one of two options can be taken to prevent both abuse and repetition. The first option is to treat both the family (at risk) and the (potential) offender, with the aim of keeping the family united. The second option, which is usually implemented for child victims when the first option does not succeed, is to separate the victim and the offender, which practically means dividing (or breaking) the family temporarily or permanently. The latter is a very serious decision and needs to be based on hard and reliable information. Some of the indicators that are often associated with decisions to separate are the severity and duration of the abuse, the parenting skills, the socio-economic situation, and the family structure. To take an adequate decision concerning the removal or not of a child could be vital for his/her safety, because an abused child who stays or who returns home could be in danger of further violence, and his/her life might be at risk. In this context, the prediction of repetition could determine the decision to permanently remove children from their home.

A similar situation applies to abused women, and the importance of available shelters should be underlined. Shelters are not only seen as safe havens on a temporary basis. They also represent a chance to start a new life, a place in which women can consider ending the relationship with the violent partner. However, shelters are usually designed for short term stays, which means that the abused woman will have to leave the shelter and decide whether to return to her partner or to end the relationship. Abused women do not only need legal protection, but also well co-ordinated services to support and encourage the development of self-sufficiency and independence.

The victim of family violence is also often hopeless and alone in facing the crisis, and does not know where to seek help. Recently, in some countries, various agencies have begun to provide support, advice and help to victims, but there is a need for a more systematic and organised plan of action in order to implement adequate and global responses to the problem of family violence. Closer and improved co-operation and collaboration among the various related institutions, such as welfare, police, court, health, education, social services, etc., needs to be constantly stressed, and they can be concretely implemented by the development of a multi-disciplinary team to work on family violence including practitioners from the different agencies.