



EUROPEAN  
CONFERENCE ON  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Abstract book

# EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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## ABSTRACT BOOK

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controlling behaviour only. Social vulnerability was the most common factor among female perpetrators. Divorce or separation were identified in 23 of the cases. Conclusions and implications: The result contributes to a deeper understanding of contextual factors and the characteristics of relationships that together with gender, influence the risk for perpetrating or becoming a victim of IPH. The result enables detection and prevention of intimate partner homicide

#### Intimate partner homicide: male and female perpetration and the role of close relatives

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**Background and Purpose:** The IPH-STOP study identified all cases of intimate partner homicide (IPH) in the Västra Götaland Region in Sweden during the years 2000-2016. This presentation is focused on two parts, the first part will give background data comparing male and female perpetrated IPH cases, focusing on differences in weapon used, court verdicts, sentences, and in life circumstances at the time of the crime (published data). The aim of the second part was to investigate what relatives knew about the relationship, if control tactics and violence were ongoing, any abuse involved, feelings of guilt afterwards and other factors. **Methods:** Data for the first part emanates from court records and preliminary inquiries. In all 58 IPH cases, 48 male perpetrated and 10 female perpetrated cases were identified. Descriptive statistics and a register-based case-control study presents data on life circumstances at the time of the crime. The interview study identified and asked close relatives for an interview, 22 interviews were performed. Simple content analysis was used to extract the main content. **Results:** There were striking differences in conviction and sentences between men and women. Only male perpetrators were sentenced to life imprisonment, while women were given fixed-term sentences. Male perpetrators were more often unemployed as compared to male controls. Female perpetrators were lower educated as compared to the controls. The interview study confirmed that control tactics and partner violence were at hand in cases but the informants expressed various difficulties in acknowledging and act upon it. Some of the interviewees consented to pangs of conscience after the killing due to not having interfered, but few considered the possibility to seek help and support from an authority. **Implications:** To reduce number of IPH cases, close relatives could form an important part if supported by the health and social sectors.

#### The limits to self-defense claims in case of domestic violence homicides

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Domestic violence is a serious social concern, cross-sectional to social classes and countries. It is mostly a gender inspired issue and the victims are in the most part women. Domestic violence develops in cycles: it starts with the building of tension, then takes place the incident of abuse and last happens the reconciliation, or honeymoon. As time goes by, the shorter these phases become and the greater and more severe are the attacks. Death is not

rarely the outcome to the victim of abuse. But in some cases, the victim stops the abuse by killing the aggressor. The victim commits a homicide, but usually, after the aggression has taken place. This poses a question: should this victim be punished by the crime of homicide or is it thinkable that she may claim she acted in self-defense? To answer this question, we must revisit the requirements demanded by the law so that the self-defense claim is admissible as exemption of criminal responsibility – as a justification of the fact and exclusion of its unlawfulness. The main problem with self-defense claims in such cases is that the law requires the act of aggression to be present or imminent so that it is permitted to the victim to take her defense into her own hands. If the episode of aggression has already taken place, we fail to fulfill this requirement, unless we interpret the concept of actuality of the aggression broadly, as follows: domestic violence is a permanent offense, so, for as long as the victim stays under the domain of the aggressor, the aggression will remain present and allow self-defense claims to be admissible. It will only be left to answer whether the victim acted within the legal requirement of the necessity of the means used in her self-defense.

The Portuguese Domestic Homicide Review Team

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Portugal has implemented a Domestic Homicide Review Team. This Team has the aim of retrospectively analyzing homicide situations that have occurred in the context of domestic violence. That goal is achieved by the retrospective analysis of definitively finalized penal procedures concerning homicides that occurred in the context of domestic violence. The purpose of this analysis is to create knowledge that allows assessing what may have gone less well, in procedural terms, allowing the adoption of more efficient means of intervening preventively in the phenomenon of domestic violence, and, particularly, in the escalation effect that it contains. As a result of its efforts, the Team produces and publishes case reports and recommendations, thus trying to enlighten a large range of public and private institutions involved with domestic violence issues about the “best practices” to embrace. The purpose of this oral presentation is to introduce the conceptual framework inherent to the Portuguese Domestic Homicide Review Team, exemplify its scope of action and demonstrate its virtualities in changing practices and consolidated institutional options. Some examples of specific case reports will be addressed to demonstrate the concrete efforts made by the Team to emphasize what practices should be reinforced, or abandoned, in future similar situations, thus demonstrating the practical importance of this kind of analysis. This presentation is intended to make foreign researchers, practitioners, and policy makers, aware of the possibilities of this kind of retrospective analysis, with the aim of seeing it replicated in other countries and/or deepening collaboration networks in countries that have similar mechanisms for studying the phenomenon of domestic homicide.