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DYNAMICS AND PROFILES OF DOMESTIC AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE and the MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

EFJCA ONLINE NETWORK MEETING
17 January 2022

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Intimate terror: project in the Netherlands

- Project: Intimate terror → FJCs Sterk Huis, Fier and Filomena in several regions in the Netherlands, together with the EFJCA
- First part of the project: recognizing dynamics of intimate terror on the field → training program for professionals
- Second part: working towards a customized response and multidisciplinary approach of intimate terror
- Intimate terror is an often still hidden but very severe form of domestic and gender-based violence. In many cases it takes long for victims to seek and find the right help. Often this dynamic isn't recognized.



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Intimate terror, profiles and dynamics of domestic and gender-based violence

- In the work with domestic violence, several profiles are recognized by research, evidence-based, practice-based.
- The Verwey-Jonker Institute recently researched the profiles and dynamics of domestic violence, as reported to the official referral centers (Veilig Thuis) in The Netherlands
- FJC Antwerp integrated in autumn 2021 the profiles as described by the Verwey-Jonker Research
- In this session we will have an insight in the profiles and dynamics and talk about the first experiences working with the profiles in FJC Antwerp
- The profile intimate terror is the focus of the conference on 7th of June, we will work largely on this profile during the conference

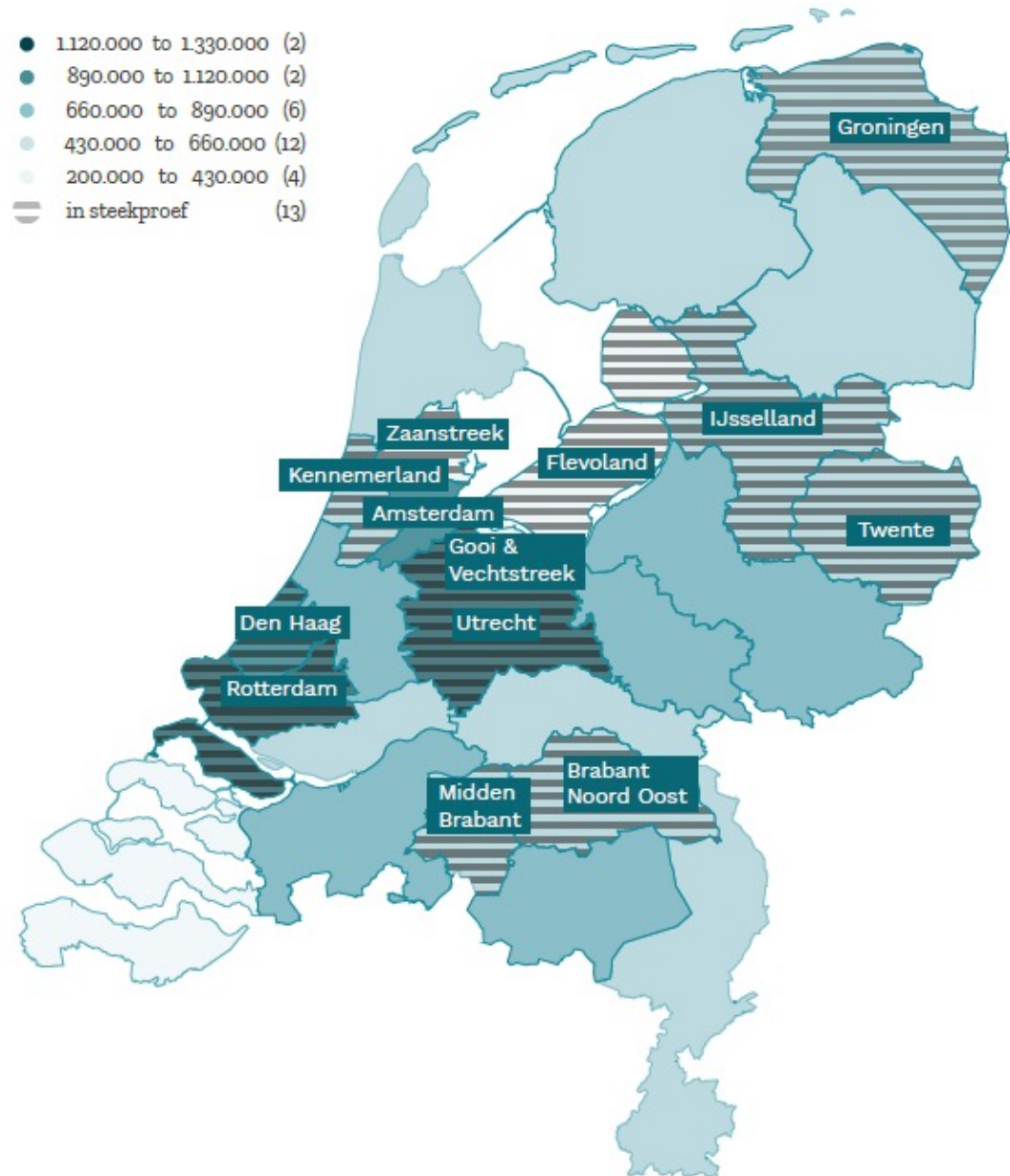
Majone Steketee
Bas Tierolf
Katinka Lünemann
Milou Lünemann

Can domestic violence and child abuse really stop? A long-term issue

EFJCA online network meeting 17 January 2022



| | T0 | T0-T1-T2 |
|---------------------------------|------|----------|
| Gezinnen | 1024 | 576 |
| Ouders | 1150 | 633 |
| ■ Moeders | 848 | 472 |
| ■ Vaders | 302 | 161 |
| Kinderen 3-18 jaar | 1545 | 978 |
| ■ Kinderen 3-12 jaar | 1077 | 584 |
| ■ Kinderen 13-18 jaar (19/20) | 468 | 394 |
| Kinderen 8-18 jaar zelf (19/20) | 362 | 156 |



Background data

- Men (29%)
- Migration background (31% - NL 25%)
- Poverty (46% - NL 14%)
- Unemployment (47% - NL 5%)
- Single parent family (58% - NL 25%)
- Youth protection measure (25% - NL 1%)
- History of Domestic Violence (46% - NL 10%)

Education level comparable to NL

Well-being parents and children

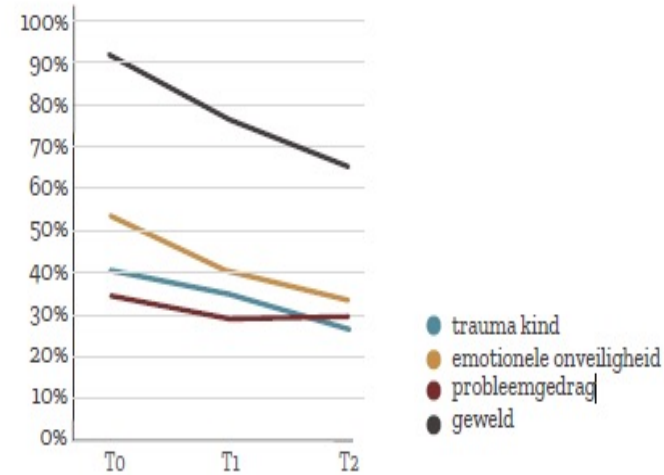
Well-being of parents increases

- Trauma complaints decrease
- Parenting stress decreases
- Safety perception is increasing

Well-being of children increases

- Decrease in trauma complaints
- Increase in emotional security
- No difference in adhesion

De problemen van kinderen die mogelijk het gevolg zijn kindermishandeling.



gezinnen waar het geweld helemaal is gestopt, is het welzijn van ouders en kinderen toegenomen tot bijna het niveau van de algemene NLse bevolking.

But all these complaints are still higher than in the general Dutch population.

Family profiles

- Interviews with 59 mothers, 18 fathers, 22 children (74 families)
- The two worlds of feminist and child protection meet each other:
- Family profiles and patterns of violence:
 - Intimate terrorism / Coercive control (23 women)
 - Family under stress / situational violence (10 women, 5 men)
 - Child behaviour in the foreground and parental stress (13 women, 3 men)
 - Long term care (5 women, 2 men)
 - Complex conflict divorce (8 women, 8 men)

Coercive Control and Intimate Terror

- Use of control and fear, intimidation, humiliation
- Restriction in freedom of movement and isolation
- Often serious physical violence and sexual violence
- Escalation of violence often unpredictable
- Children often witness and co-victim
- Leaving doesn't stop the violence
- Impact on the victims is large (PTSS, depression, physical symptoms)
- Impact for children also large (isolation, fear, trauma, behavioural problems)
- Perpetrator (family only/antisocial)

In the profile “intimate terror” there is a (large) power difference between the partners. One partner, usually the man, exerts coercion and control over his partner: by limiting her freedom, isolating her and by using, often serious, violence, including sexual violence. The victim and the children constantly feel threatened and unsafe.

Families under stress – Situational Violence

- Stress because of severe problems on (multiple) life-domains leads to conflicts and escalations of violence
- Women and man can be victim
- Often related with addiction
- Violence can be serious and structural, especially when the balance in the family is under pressure
- Control over the partner is not prominent
- Victims do not continuously feel threatened
- Violence not aimed directly at the children, but children are often witness
- Most women in this profile get divorced and then the violence stops (after a while)

In the profile "family under stress" the family members experience a high degree of stress due to an accumulation of factors. This repeatedly leads to conflicts in which (serious) violence can occur. This is often accompanied by alcohol abuse by one (or both) of the partners. The children can be victims and witnesses.

Childbehaviour in the foreground and Parenting Stress

- Personal problems of children (physical, mentally disabled, personality disorder, drugs, delinquency) lead to parenting stress
- Difference in parenting style cause conflicts
- In a number of cases this is accompanied by (physical) partner violence (from father to mother)
- Violence influences behavioural problems of children
- Children are witness.
- Sometimes violence from child to mother.
- Sometimes violence from father to child.
- The children are often removed from home (50%)

This profile mainly concerns child behavior and parenting stress. The (serious) behavioral problems of children can be a reaction to violence in the home or arise from congenital problems. The behavior can also cause conflict and violence between both parents or between parent and child. There is a lot of stress and insecurity for family members.

Long Term Care

- Parents need long term care, due to intellectual disability, psychiatric problems
- Especially verbal abuse, throwing things
- Vulnerable families (low income, low education, unemployment)
- Unsafe situation for the children because care cannot be guaranteed.
- Relatively many children removed from home.

In the profile "long-term care" it is paramount that one (or both) partners require long-term care because of a disability or psychological problems. Violence between partners can also play a role in these families. In addition, due to the problems of parents, there is often an unsafe parenting situation for the children and neglect often occurs.

Complex Conflict Divorce

- Relationship is broken and conflict is usually about children's visitation and co-parenting
- Loyalty issues in the children
- Sometimes stalking
- Only women tell about violence during the relationship or one serious incident as reason for divorce

*The characteristic of the “complex conflict divorce” profile is that the problems mainly revolve around the relationship after divorce: mainly psychological violence and a legal battle for the children.
Children suffer from parental conflict.*

Profiles: Useful or Useless

- Continuum between situational violence and coercive control
- Also in other profiles can be situational violence or coercive control
- Risk factors as alcohol, debts, psychological problems, personal events that causes stress appear in all profiles

Tackling domestic violence

Intimate terrorism: The only option is to leave the relationship

- Leaving needs support: ask, support, make a safety plan.
- Womenshelter, trauma specialised help, forensic psychiatry
- Contra indications for couple therapy and systemic therapy:
- Joint custody not self evident
- Criminal law

Family under stress: couple and family therapy can be useful

- Ask for violence, who does what against whom
- Motivate men, focus on trust,
- Family therapy and couple therapy, but also both own therapist
- Support and relieve parents (parenting stress)
- Exonerate children, own confidential person
- Special parenting support during divorce, divorce mediation

Welcoming the 5 profiles of the research @ FJC Antwerp





Working with the profiles!

- Helpful in understanding what is going on in the situation of the family
- In each profile certain problems are more prominent
 - Within one situation: characteristics of several profiles are possible
- Characteristics can be used in a tailored approach
- Each plan of action starts with reflecting which profile can be recognised
- Since 6 months ago we integrated a profile based plan of action for each case
- In combination with attention for risks and protective factors

Our stories





Coercive Control and Intimate Terror

In the profile “intimate terror” there is a (large) power difference between the partners. One partner, usually the man, exerts coercion and control over his partner: by limiting her freedom, isolating her and by using, often serious, violence, including sexual violence. The victim and the children constantly feel threatened and unsafe.

- Regularly intimate terror cases at the Family Justice Center in Antwerp.
- Intimate terror will be the focus of the International conference on 7th of June.
- For further exploration of intimate terrorism we refer to this conference and to the results of the project “Intimate terror”



Families under stress – Situational Violence

In the profile "family under stress" the family members experience a high degree of stress due to an accumulation of factors. This repeatedly leads to conflicts in which (serious) violence can occur. This is often accompanied by alcohol abuse by one of the partners. The children can be victims and witnesses.

Profile often seen at the Family Justice Center in Antwerp



Families under stress – Situational Violence

Couple with strong mutual dependence, who can't let go of each other. The couple has a very limited social network.

Both have issues with substance abuse, that are difficult to discuss and they drop out of help.

Both have a childhood trauma, involving amongst others being victim and witness to domestic violence.

They have very different coping strategies: very open and extravert versus very introvert.

There are a lot of financial issues and debts. There has also been violence outside of the couples relationship.



How to approach the situation?

- Key characteristics:
 - Relational dynamics are at the heart of the violence, distinction between victim and offender is blurred, importance of trauma and childhood experiences
- Tackling the situation:
 - There are a lot of 'red flags' present in this relationship. Important not trying to resolve everything at once, but trying to prioritise.
 - Paying attention to trauma and victimisation of both partners, and the differences in handling these experiences.
 - Trying to stimulate motivation towards substance abuse treatment and cooperation with judicial measures. The judicial measure includes treatment for substance abuse and anger management. Because the man is open to talk about his childhood trauma, the treatment services are asked to include this in their treatment. Taking into account his motivation, he takes the initiative towards the treatment services and gets a positive answer.
 - Attention for couple dynamics, and creating room for both partners to tackle their own issues.



Childbehaviour in the foreground and Parenting Stress

This profile mainly concerns child behavior and parenting stress. The (behavioral) problems of children can be a reaction to violence in the home or arise from congenital problems. The behavior can also cause conflict and violence between both parents or between parent and child, because of a difference in parenting style. There is a lot of stress and insecurity for family members.

Several situations at the Family Justice Center in Antwerp.



Childbehaviour in the foreground and Parenting Stress

Family with two children. One of the children has multiple problems: he has vision problems, a lot of anxieties, substance abuse and there are indications of psychiatric issues.

Several escalations have occurred. The boy has threatened his siblings and has physically assaulted his mother. He is very dominating towards all family members.

Mum has stopped working. She is at the end of her mental capacity and she does everything for her son in order to put an end to the violence.

The boy suffers from the situation as well. At times he shows remorse and he has experienced suicidal thoughts. The violence is recognised, but at times has been difficult to start treatment or to intervene. The parents want their child to enter a residential treatment, but so far this has not happened because of a variety of reasons.



How to approach the situation?

■ Key characteristics:

- Serious congenital and behavioural problems in one of the children, differences in parenting and problems regarding communication

■ Tackling the situation:

- Safety planning with every family member, in order to prevent further escalations.
- The difference in parenting styles were key. The parents developed more insight in the importance of being partners in parenting rather than opponents. Because of this they became more open in accepting the role of context factors. They became more motivated towards investing in positive parenthood. The 'secrecy' between the family members ended, and family meetings in which the problems could be discussed got started.
- The balance between stress factors and coping mechanisms was seriously disturbed. Therefore it was important to look for ways in which more support mechanism could be launched. Before, the family was never open towards support, but because of an outreaching approach willingness to accept help was reached.
- All family members were involved in analysing the factors which had played a role in the problems. The son got to explain his views in a safe environment, but also the parents were given the opportunity to look back towards their own childhood experiences.
- Psychiatric and medical treatment were as started for the son, in combination with working towards acceptance of the mental problems while at the same time 'not being crazy'.



Long Term Care

In the profile "long-term care" one (or both) partners require long-term care because of a disability or psychological problems. In addition, due to these problems of parents, there is often an unsafe parenting situation for the children.

Several situations at the Family Justice Center in Antwerp.



Long Term Care

Young couple with a new born child. They are not living together and there are a lot of uncertainties concerning the activities and whereabouts of the father.

The father of the child has had a long history as a juvenile delinquent. He suffers from sever autism and his mental capacities are very limited. He has automutilated and threatened with suicide. So far, no approach has been found that has successfully motivated father towards behavioural change. He is very opposed to diagnosis and treatment, amongst others because of negative experiences. He can be very aggressive, especially because he finds it difficult to interpret social interaction.

Because of his history he has a very hostile attitude towards police. He has convinced his girlfriend of this attitude, which makes it very unlikely that mother would contact police even when she is in danger.

There is a lot of stress because of the baby, especially because father finds it challenging to cope with the unpredictability of parenthood.



How to approach the situation?

- **Key characteristics:**
 - Individual troubles, unsafe family situation
- **Tackling the situation:**
 - Importance of care services that come to the house and monitor the welfare of the baby as well as providing support to the parents.
 - The disabilities and problems of the father have an important effect on the family. However, father continues to have difficulties recognising his problems. There is a continuous search for adequate care and getting father to accept treatment. Because of this, referral to treatment has been integrated in the judicial follow-up. Because even this has failed to motivate father adequately, judicial pressure will even be increased.
 - Attention is very much focused on the mother. The young mum is supported in coping with the problems of the father and what they mean for the care for the child. Child services monitor the situation closely. The couple's dynamic is also an important part of the approach because she has become very protective and controlling towards her partner. This partly motivated by the fact that she grew up without a father, because he died when she was still very young. She is very afraid that her child will grow up without a father too. Learning to cope with these emotions is very important for her position as a partner and as a parent.
 - The family is strongly involved in the care for the baby and monitoring his well being, especially the grandmother.



General lines of approach

- Safety planning
- Psycho-education and working towards insight in relationship dynamics, victimisation and the effect on children
- Overcoming negative experiences with police or treatment services and building trust
- Creating safe spaces for all parties involved to speak their mind, in confidence
- Finding out what causes violence, substance abuse, ... and looking for adequate support
- Looking for ways in which parties involved can find intrinsic motivation for change and avoid drop-out
- Following the pace of the family and opting for a step by step approach
- Finding family or friends who are willing to support in providing (emotional) care for the children
- Involving children and helping them to overcome feelings of guilt
- Involving judicial and child care authorities if cooperation is insufficient



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