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Introduction to the Special Issue on Violence

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the Behavior Therapist

special issue

Violence

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Richard LeBeau
RaeAnn Anderson**

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Introduction to the Special Issue on Violence

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and RaeAnn Anderson, *UCLA*

the Behavior Therapist has a long history of thought-provoking special issues that draw its members' attention to matters of the utmost importance in our field. Recently, the editorial team has focused on special issues that cover topics we feel have not received sufficient attention at our Annual Convention or in our publications. Recent examples include special issues on the role of psychologists as advocates for marginalized populations (October 2020), suicide prevention (December 2020), and Native American Issues in Behavior Therapy and Research (March and April 2021). We are grateful for the opportunity to highlight these issues of great clinical, scientific, and social importance and hope that these special issues generate meaningful discussion.

Our latest special issue is on the topic of violence. When we initially met to discuss this special issue many months ago, we concluded that it should explore topics related to violence that extend beyond those typically discussed in our field (e.g., developing and disseminating evidence-based treatments for posttraumatic stress disorder, understanding the sequelae of childhood abuse). Although these concerns are undoubtedly important and worthy of our continued attention, there are many other aspects of violence relevant to our roles as clinicians, researchers, and policymakers that should be explored.

To this end, we solicited broadly for this special issue. We reached out to numerous Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and posted on several list serves focused on topics related to violence. We were deeply impressed by the breadth,

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depth, and sheer quantity of the submissions we received. In fact, there were so many high-quality submissions that we could not fit them all in a single issue. (Several articles that were unable to be included in this special issue will appear in the fall issues of the journal.) Below, we briefly review the epidemic of interpersonal violence and provide a brief summary of the articles included in the special issue.

Why Focus on Violence?

Interpersonal violence is a pervasive public health concern that plagues clinicians, researchers, and policymakers. Approximately 3.3 million people in the United States report being victims of interpersonal violence annually, which includes physical assault, sexual assault, and witnessing community violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2019). Importantly, several subpopulations report significantly higher prevalence of interpersonal violence, including women, people of color, and other marginalized populations. Victims of interpersonal violence are at increased risk for a range of behavioral, emotional, and physical health problems which have been shown to cause lifelong consequences if not addressed (Britt, 2001; Janssen et al., 2021). Further, interpersonal violence results in difficulties for the individual who experienced the interpersonal violence, but can also have tremendous impact on the entire family unit (Stanley & Humphries, 2017).

While decades of research have focused on the overall prevalence and impact of interpersonal violence, recent attention has examined the impact of interpersonal violence on specific populations, longer-term consequences, impact of comorbid mental health disorders, and treatments to address various forms of interpersonal violence. Given the state of the literature and field of interpersonal violence, this special issue aims to highlight the exceptional work that researchers and clinicians have conducted to understand and treat interpersonal violence more broadly, while also beginning to more carefully examine interpersonal violence impact and effective treatments among at-risk subpopulations.

An Overview of the Special Issue

The first three articles in this special issue focus on unique treatment approaches to address interpersonal violence. Boniface and Grasseti (2021) specifically describe a three-pronged treatment approach to address the impact of intimate

partner violence on the entire family by simultaneously targeting adult posttraumatic stress symptoms, child posttraumatic stress symptoms, and the parent-child relationship. Dauria and colleagues (2021) describe two efforts in their own community to address domestic violence-related homicide, which address the individual needs of survivors and a system-level approach to addressing the issue. The authors describe the goals of the initiatives, along with the accomplishments and lessons learned. Given the overwhelming need for effective mental health service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with increases in rates of interpersonal violence and difficulty accessing mental health treatment during this time, Salami and colleagues (2021) describe how the use of technology can aid access to mental health services for victims of interpersonal violence. The authors describe how the use of technology may have particular benefit to marginalized populations, who may experience greater consequences associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The remaining articles address an array of unique and thought-provoking issues related to interpersonal violence. Mii and colleagues (2021) focus on adolescent sexual reoffending within the family, which is a critical type of interpersonal violence that does not receive much attention in the literature. Given the need for clinicians to understand and assess for adolescent sexual reoffending, the article outlines challenges to assessment, prevention of recidivism, and family reunification. Yenne and colleagues (2021) define and describe maternal filicide, which is a type of interpersonal violence that is often misunderstood by clinicians and the general population. The authors describe maternal filicide, then outline a specific treatment approach and the lessons learned from implementing this approach. Finally, Rieger and Allen's (2021) commentary calls on all of us in the field to examine and challenge how we conceptualize and address the pervasive problem of gender-based violence. Their commentary concludes by providing concrete tools that can aid clinicians and researchers as they rethink gender-based violence.

We hope that these articles serve as an impetus for reflection and discussion, particularly with regard to our roles in preventing and treating issues related to interpersonal violence. We would like to express our deep gratitude to all of the individuals who contributed to this issue by authoring, reviewing, and editing these manuscripts.

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