Correlates and Consequences of Domestic Violence for Low Income Women

Comments on:

☐ Fertig, McLanahan & Garfinkel

☐ Gibson, Magnuson, Gennetian, Duncan & England

☐ Lohman, Votruba-Drzal & Chase-Lansdale

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Plan

◆ Survey the contribution of the papers

  – Individually, and

  – Jointly

  – What ground have we covered?

◆ Relationship between these results and (economic) theorizing about domestic violence?

◆ Some problems regarding statistical inference

Plan

◆ Overview and praise generously

  ◆ Survey the contribution of these papers individually and jointly

  ◆ What ground have we covered?

◆ Gratuitous insults directed at these papers in the interests of scientific integrity

  ◆ Some problems regarding statistical inference

◆ Irrelevant discussion of my own work and other issues on my mind, but not in these papers

  ◆ Relationship between these results and (economic) theorizing about domestic violence

Surveying Domestic Violence

◆ *Welfare, Children and Families: A Three City Study*
  – Low-income households (*n*=2400 kids)
  – Boston, Chicago and San Antonio

◆ *Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study*
  – 20 large US cities
  – *n*=1535 mothers not married or cohabiting with dad

◆ *Minnesota Family Investment Program*
  – 862 Single mothers receiving welfare in urban MN counties
  – Experiment: EITC + training, EITC, control group

◆ *National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies*
  – Child outcomes study: 1959 Single mothers with 3-5 year old
  – Atlanta GA, Grand Rapids MI, Riverside CA
  – Experiments, each with control groups:
    » Labor force attachment: "get a job"
    » Human capital development: "training and education"

Findings

◆ Employment reduces domestic violence

⇒ Large-scale social experiment

◆ Child support orders unrelated to domestic violence

– Although reduces violence in welfare population

⇒ Quasi-experiment (cross-state comparisons)

◆ Violence in the household undermines learning by pre-schoolers (but not adolescents)

⇒ Longitudinal data

Employment Effects: Too Big?

◆ Regression estimates:
- – Abuse by partner (standardized)
  = -0.15 * Employment (in quarters)+Xb+e

◆ Abuse
- – Mean is 28%, standard deviation is 45%
- – Thus, rewrite:
  - » (Abuse(%)-0.28) /0.45= -0.15*Employment in quarters
  - » Abuse(%) = -0.15*0.45*Employment in quarters

◆ Employment
- – Mean is 3.6, standard deviation is 3 quarters

◆ Compare:
- – Mean employment $\Rightarrow$ mean abuse $\Rightarrow$ 28%
- – Mean employment –1 sd $\Rightarrow$ abuse rate 20%-pts lower $\Rightarrow$ 8%
- – Mean employment +1 sd $\Rightarrow$ abuse rate 20%-pts higher $\Rightarrow$ 48%

Childhood Exposure to Violence

◆ Interpretation of autoregressive models:
- $\text{Outcome}_t = \rho \, \text{Outcome}_{t-1}$
  $+\beta_1 \, \text{Violence}_{t-1} + \beta_2 \, \Delta\text{Violence}_t + \beta_3 \, X$

◆ Author's interpretation
- β's reflect the effect of independent variables on _change_ in outcomes.

◆ But, $\rho = 0.5$, suggesting:
- Change interpretation:
  » $\Delta\text{outcome}_t = \beta_1 \, \text{Violence}_{t-1} + \beta_2 \, \Delta\text{Violence}_t + \beta_3 \, X \ (-0.5*\text{Outcome}_{t-1})$
- Levels interpetation:
  » $\text{Outcome}_t = \beta_2 \, \text{Violence}_t + (\beta_1 - \beta_2) \, \text{Violence}_{t-1} + \beta_3 \, X \ (+0.5*\text{Ouctome}_{t-1})$
- Which is it? Both, or neither

Child Support Enforcement

◆ Individual data: Child support orders appear to be uncorrelated with domestic violence
- Except for women on welfare in abusive relationships
- Given the (lack of) incentives to obtain an order, this is surely just a signal for something else:
  » Counter-aggression (she fights back, this is offence, she steps up defence)
  » Preparedness to invoke the state in their affairs
  » Other?

◆ Across states:
- No effect on those who were not in violent relationships at baseline
- But large increase for those who were

◆ Analysis focuses on non-cohabiting couples
- Perhaps we are just looking in the wrong place?

Bargaining Theory

◆ Intra-household allocation (of stuff, love, childcare responsibilities &etc) reflect Nash bargaining.

◆ Crucial parameters are:

– His options outside this relationship

– Her options outside this relationship

– Bargaining power (β)

Separate	His own production		Her own production
Together	His outside option	Joint production (Love)	Her outside option

$$\beta\% \ \blacktriangle \ 1-\beta\%$$
of marital surplus
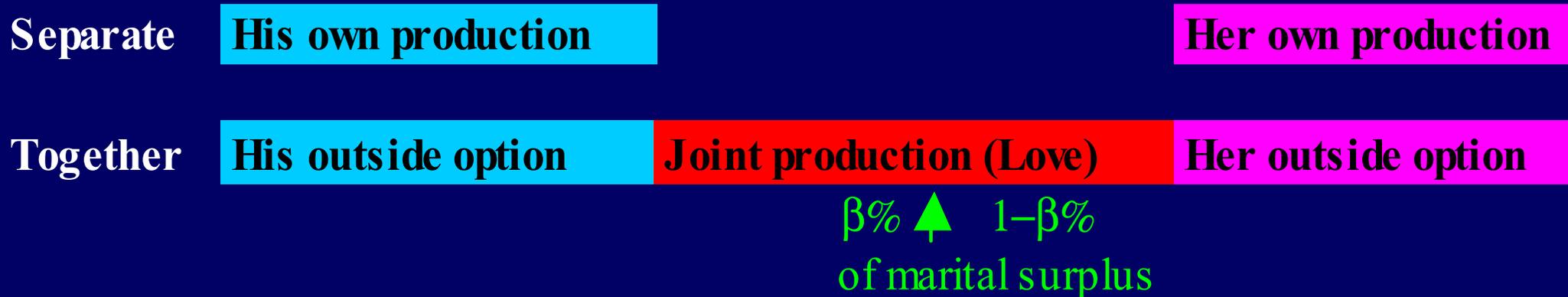
Bargaining theory: Applied to policy

◆ Child support enforcement (Fertig et al)

No child support	His production	Joint production (Love)	Her production

Child support	His outside option	Joint production (Love)	Her outside option

◆ No-fault divorce laws (Stevenson & Wolfers)

Cannot remarry	His production	Joint production (Love)	Her production

Can remarry	His outside option	Joint production (Love)	Her outside option

◆ Employment (Gibson et al)

No job	His production	Joint production (Love)	Her production

She works	His production	Joint production (Love)	Her production

Theory: A Challenge

◆ Why does domestic violence occur?

- Derives from a taste for violence
    - » But yields "efficient" violence (bargaining models)
- Violence as a threat in bargaining situations
    - » But why should the threat be exercised?
- Pathology
    - » But why do socioeconomic factors matter in predictable ways?

◆ We desperately need a theory of domestic violence that:

- Reconciles our intuitions that relative "power" matters
- Explains social and economic correlates of domestic violence
- Reveals domestic violence to be socially wasteful (a tragedy).