



## Strategies for Reducing Violence

This Factsheet introduces two general strategies aimed at producing a reduction in violent behaviour and evaluates some examples of the interventions that have been generated by each approach. Guidance is given on writing effective examination answers on violence reduction and the terms in bold are explained in the glossary. You will also be able to test your knowledge in exam style questions.

The examiner will expect you to be able to:

1. Describe two contrasting strategies of violence reduction.
2. Describe some ways that these strategies have been implemented and provide an evaluation of those implementations.
3. Support your answers throughout with reference to published research.

### A. Introduction

To give just one indication of the size of the problem posed by violent behaviour, an estimate by UK Peace Index, put the cost to the UK economy at more than £124 billion a year. This is equivalent to about £5000 per household or about 8% of GDP. The size of this sum alone justifies the research effort that psychologists, social workers, and others put into trying to deal with the problem. Essentially, two approaches are used, namely primary prevention and secondary prevention strategies.

### B. Strategy No. 1: Primary Prevention

The idea behind primary prevention is that if some of the causes of a problem are addressed, then it is probable that fewer instances of that problem will emerge at a later date. So, in the case of violence, if intervention can be appropriately directed to situations and individuals when violence has occurred, the number of violent incidents occurring in the future should be reduced. An example from everyday life is trying to reduce the injuries caused by road accidents by offering extra training to new drivers.

*Exam Hint: Make sure you show that you understand the difference between a general strategy and the specific methods that implement the strategy. An example from everyday life can often help.*

Two assumptions lie behind this approach to dealing with violent behaviour. First, that there exists a set of **risk factors**, such as low achievement in education, that are associated with involvement in violence. These factors are helpful to identify individuals who may be “at risk”. Secondly, it is assumed that there are also **protective factors**, such as being in contact with positive models of behaviour, which can be used to help turn an individual away from involvement in violence.

### C. The Olweus Programme

Could “Just looking” be construed as a form of bullying in a situation like this?



An example of a primary prevention programme for violent behaviour is the Norwegian anti-bullying programme, which was developed as a response to the suicides of three teenagers (Olweus, 1993). The programme aimed to reduce violent bullying by facilitating behavioural change at the individual, class, whole school and community levels. In the initial study, two thousand five hundred children from 5th to 8th grade participated in the programme over two years. The programme began with an anonymous student questionnaire designed to assess the level of bullying in the school and training was given to help teachers and parents deal effectively with the problem and offer positive role models. Other actions followed that were designed to make bullying more difficult, such as introducing new classroom rules about behaviour, increasing the level of supervision around the school, and using co-operative learning strategies in the classroom. There was also intensive individual work with students who had been identified as bullies or victims.

*Exam Hint: You should offer at least one example of a treatment method for each prevention strategy you discuss and show clearly why it is an application of that strategy.*

### Was the Olweus Programme Effective

Olweus (1993) reported evidence that suggested that the programme was successful, including a 50% drop in self-reported bullying incidents within two years of the intervention beginning. Antisocial behaviour, including theft, vandalism, and truancy, also diminished, and the general social climate of the school improved. Students’ self-reports showed higher satisfaction with school life, improved order in the classroom, better discipline, more positive social relationships, and a more positive attitude toward schoolwork and the school in general. Overall, the reported results of the program suggest that it was highly effective. However, other studies, such as Roland, 2000 have been unable to replicate Olweus’ results. It is argued that when they occur, gains are often short-term and in fact were only sustained for two years in the original Olweus project as observed by the periodic visits by the researchers to follow-up and give feedback (Galloway and Roland, 2005).

### D. The Jigsaw Classroom

“Bullying Prohibited” Sign Outside a US School.

A different approach to primary prevention of violence in schools is Aronson’s **Jigsaw Classroom** (Aronson, 1979). The jigsaw classroom is a **co-operative learning** technique that Aronson developed as a way of defusing the violence caused by social and racial divisions in the newly desegregated school system in Austin, Texas in the early 1970s. The problem was acute: Aronson reported that the hostility between different ethnic and racial groups was so longstanding and so great that regular episodes of physical violence regularly disrupted the school day.



Aronson believed that it was the competitive environment of the classroom that was fuelling the violence. His response was to introduce compulsory co-operation across the racial divide in a randomly selected sample of classes. Jigsaw classes were split into racially mixed groups to work on small problems, and each student contributed something essential to the solution. Just as with a jigsaw puzzle, each piece is essential to the completed picture. Aronson argued that this made the strategy very effective.

### Was the Jigsaw Programme Effective?

Although students were engaged in jigsaw problems for only a small proportion of their time in class, Aronson observed a decrease in prejudice and negative stereotyping and the consequent decrease in violent behaviour outside class after only eight weeks. Compared to those in classes which hadn't operated the jigsaw technique, participating students liked both **in-group** and **out-group** members more, showed higher levels of self-esteem, performed better on standardised exams, liked school more, reduced absenteeism, and mixed more with students of other races in areas other than the classroom. However, it has been observed that violence is a complex phenomenon that must be addressed at social, cultural, individual, and socioeconomic levels and not all school-based programmes are as effective as the Jigsaw Classroom programme. [Guerra et al. \(2006\)](#) have suggested that this is because there is no single solution to school-based violence and anti-bullying programmes must be tailored to fit specific school situations.

**Exam Hint:** A brief evaluation of the research you have described will be needed. If possible, include evaluations from independent researchers to support the points you make.

### E. How Effective is Primary Prevention as a General Strategy?

An investigation by [Smithey and Straus \(2004\)](#) into the effectiveness of programmes intended to counter violence in intimate relationships found evidence of some positive effects. They found, for example, that up to 67% of students who were exposed to these programmes had become more knowledgeable about the nature and consequences of intimate violence. However, no data were offered on how this would translate into an actual reduction in violent behaviour.

[Brozo et al. \(2002\)](#) conducted an investigation, into whether a Primary Prevention programme could be effective at changing attitudes to violence in a target group of 14 students of Hispanic and African-American descent in the 7th Grade (age about 12-13 years). Among other tasks, they completed a survey about their experience of violence and a TV viewing diary and engaged in group discussion. The researchers reported a significant reduction in self-reported violence within the group when attitudes before and after the intervention were compared. For example, their responses to statements dealing with the role of violence in supporting masculine pride and honour had changed. Students who had initially offered responses such as “*Real men protect their families by fighting*” had changed their response to “*you protect them better by having a good job and a good house*”.

### Assessing the Evidence

The work by [Brozo et al. \(2002\)](#) suggests some reasons why evaluation studies need to be approached carefully. Some studies only look for immediate or short-term effects of Primary Prevention. However, a long-term follow-up is also needed if the strongest data is to be obtained. One review found the longest duration study in the USA had continued for 16 months ([Edleson 2000](#)), and there is doubt whether this would have been long enough to observe any

long-term preventative effects. Furthermore, positive conclusions may be undermined if the sample size is small; some studies focus only on attitude change in relation to violence rather than the impact of the intervention on actual behaviour. The results may be specific to the culture in which the intervention occurred and so cannot be generalised to other cultures with any confidence.

### F Strategy No. 2: The Secondary Prevention Strategy

Secondary Prevention is a strategy that tries to reduce the immediate harm caused by problem behaviour. In terms of the example from everyday life mentioned earlier, Secondary Prevention is like the ambulance that deals with the results of a car crash by taking the injured to hospital. Thus, when violence is the problem, Secondary Prevention attempts to change the behaviour of those individuals who have already engaged in violent acts, and who often have a considerable history of engaging in such behaviour. The aim is both to prevent further violence, and reduce its harmful effects with **Group Therapy**, which is often the technique of choice for both perpetrators and their victims. Group work with these clients focuses on identifying the causes of the violence, which may not be the same for each individual. By bringing the roots of violent behaviour into the open in a supportive environment and encouraging reflection on its consequences, Group Therapy tries to bring about cognitive change in the form of changed perceptions of the self and others. This process reduces the probability of re-offending.

A Men's Therapy Group in Session.



### G. Secondary Prevention: The Duluth Model

The Duluth Model is a group therapy programme developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota, USA, which is based on an information structure called the Duluth Power and Control Wheel ([Pence and Paymar, 1993](#)). This was developed because workers on the project wanted to develop a more effective approach to working with their victims of domestic violence and the perpetrators.

The wheel provides a structured approach to conceptualising and describing domestic violence so that communication about relationship abuse with victims, offenders, and criminal justice system professionals can be more effective. For example, it may be used to help victims identify specific abuser tactics that have been used on them. It can also help re-educate perpetrators who are abusive by helping them to identify the tactics they have used in the past so they can begin to change their attitudes and behaviour.

The Duluth Power and Control Wheel



### Is the Duluth Model effective

This approach has been widely used in the US and elsewhere and has attracted both positive and negative evaluations. A 2005 study led by an expert on violence intervention programmes at the University of Illinois found that of the 30 intervention programmes in one county in Illinois, only 15% of violent participants who completed the programs were rearrested for domestic violence, compared with the 37% of those who had dropped out of the programs before completion (Bennett, 2005). Bennett also suggested that participants who complete domestic violence programs are likely to be more motivated than others to improve behaviour and would thus be less inclined to offend again.

A separate evaluation of several programs that used the Duluth Model (Gondolf 2003, 2004) is considered to be a benchmark study because of its careful design and implementation. It was found that, at 30 months after initial treatment, less than 20% of the abusers had been violent towards their partner in the previous year. At the 48-month follow-up, this dropped further to approximately 10%. Moreover, over 66% of the victims said their quality of life had improved, and 85% felt “very safe” at both follow-up points

However, substantially negative evaluations of the Duluth Model have also been published. For example, a 2003 study conducted by the US National Institute of Justice found the Duluth Model to have “little or no effect”. Similarly, a 2011 review of the effectiveness of spousal abuse intervention programmes (which mostly used the Duluth Model) found that “there is no solid empirical evidence for either the effectiveness or relative superiority of any of the current group interventions,” and that “the more rigorous the methodology of evaluation studies, the less encouraging their findings” (Cluss and Bodea, 2011). Finally, Shepard (1992) investigated the effectiveness of the Duluth Model by examining **recidivism** rates five years after a Duluth intervention finding that 40% of the abusers who had completed the programme had later either been convicted of assault or had been the subject of police attention for that reason.

Some criticisms of the Duluth Model have centred on the programme’s feminist doctrine that men become violent perpetrators because they have grown up under a patriarchal system in which male violence is accepted, if not actually condoned, and women are forced to become violent to defend themselves (Rizza, 2009). This position is based on feminist theory. Women and children are seen to be at risk in a patriarchy because they lack social and economic power and are thus also disempowered politically. Domestic violence is a third way (along with their disproportionate share of economic and political power and **social status**) that men are able to control their partners within a **patriarchal ideology**.

Cook (2009) however points out that when homosexual domestic violence occurs, the patriarchy is absent: there is no male dominance of women in same-sex relationships. In fact, female on female abuse is reported more than twice as frequently as male on male abuse (Dutton, 1994).

The Duluth Model has also been criticised for ignoring research that links domestic violence to **substance abuse** and psychological problems, such as **attachment disorders**, childhood abuse or neglect,

or inadequate socialisation.

Others criticise the Duluth model for being confrontational rather than therapeutic, and for focusing solely on changing the abuser’s actions and attitudes rather than dealing with underlying emotional and psychological issues.

### H. Conclusions

The two strategies discussed can be seen as having both similarities and differences in their response to the problem of violence in society. Both have their successful aspects even though their overall success may be debated. Primary prevention studies could be said to take a broader perspective as they try to tackle what are seen as the background sources of the problem. One could argue that they represent complementary approaches, with each addressing different parts of a large and extremely complex problem.

### Glossary

**Attachment disorder:** A condition in which a person is unable to form healthy emotional bonds with others.

**GDP:** Gross Domestic Product. A measure of the total size of an economy in terms of the value of all goods and services produced within a country in a specific period.

**Group therapy:** A cognitive-behavioural treatment led by a skilled facilitator and involving group discussions, role play, and other similar activities in order to change attitudes, emotional responses, and behaviour.

**In-group:** The social group to which you belong and which is the primary source of your social identity, e.g. ethnic group, or the political party you identify with.

**Jigsaw Classroom:** A teaching and learning technique promoting co-operation in which study tasks are divided among a small group of students who have to work together to achieve the goal.

**Out-group(s):** The social groups to which you do not belong but which also contribute something to your social identity, e.g. someone may identify themselves as not a Labour voter.

**Patriarchy:** A form of social organisation in which most of the power is held by men.

**Patriarchal ideology:** The set of ideas promoted by (some) members of a patriarchal society in order to justify male dominance.

**Protective factors:** Those aspects of a person’s life or social environment (such as academic success) that may help him/her avoid involvement in violent behaviour.

**Recidivism:** A return to an undesirable behaviour, such as violence, after having received treatment to help overcome it.

**Risk factors:** Those aspects of a person’s life or social environment (such as gang membership) that may predispose him/her to engage in violent behaviour.

**Socialisation:** The social learning necessary to enable a person to fit in to society.

**Social Status:** The esteem in which one is held by the other members of society.

**Substance abuse:** The use of a drug in ways or amounts that are harmful to the person concerned.

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### Worksheet: Strategies for Reducing Violence

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Explain the difference between a primary and a secondary prevention strategy and give one example of each.

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2. Olweus devised a treatment programme to address bullying in schools. Name three of its key features.

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3. What is the Duluth Power and Control Wheel? Explain how it can be used in helping female victims of relationship abuse.

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4. In what ways does Group Therapy seek to address the problem of domestic violence?

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5. What were the main “protective factors” that were employed in the Olweus study?

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6. Outline the idea behind the “Jigsaw classroom”. How effective was it?

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