

Typologies of Domestic Abuse

Much of the most recent research is showing that not all violence experienced in intimate relationships is the same. It does not all spring from the same causes; nor does it all have the same intentions/objectives, as the typology of domestic abuse drawn up by Michael Johnson, a leading researcher in the field of sociology and women's studies, sets out:

Situational couple violence (SCV)

Violence occurs because the couple has conflict which turns into arguments that can escalate into emotional and possibly physical violence.

Women as likely as men to engage in SCV but impact on women (when committed by men) can be much larger (due to physical size etc.) both in terms of physical injury as well as fear and psychological consequences.

Violence can on occasions escalate to become chronic and severe.

SCV can follow a socio-economic gradient and is more prevalent in poorer families. Substance / alcohol misuse, anger management issues and communication issues are deeply implicated.

In 40% of couples characterised by this type of violence, the SCV comprises one incident (such as a slap, or a push). The couple is horrified by what has happened, deals with it, and there is no further violence within the relationship. For the remainder, there is chronic violence (ranging from a few incidents per year to chronic arguing that frequently turns to violence).

Intimate terrorism

Involves a pattern of coercive control and abuse in which one partner uses a variety of violent and non-violent tactics to try to take complete control over their partner (vast majority of this type of violence in heterosexual relationships perpetrated by men).

Can include coercion and threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, economic abuse and abuse of partner's children.

Men who are more typically 'traditional' in terms of their gendered identity more likely to be involved in intimate terrorism than in situational couple violence.

Alcohol is not a major factor in the incidence of violence in intimate terrorism (although alcohol does affect the severity of violence given the relationship between alcohol and escalation of violence).

Sub-types of intimate terrorism (psychological dynamics). This is sub clinical:

- *Emotionally dependent* – men who love their partners but have attachment issues, fear of loss of their partner, and try to exert complete control in order to keep them. High score on symptoms of borderline personality.
- *Anti-social* – men who are violent towards their partner and others, may be involved in the criminal justice system; manipulative, aim to get what they want by any means (Jacobson and Gottman (1998))

Violent resistance

Perpetrated by a victim of intimate terrorism (can include self-defence, but also violence that is not self-defence, e.g. retaliation).

Can include partner (i.e. predominantly women) murdering abusive partner (predominantly men) in context of being attacked or in context of imminent attack on her or her children.

“The critical distinctions among types of violence have to do with general patterns of power and control” (Johnson 2008)