

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TODAY

PART 2: CONTEXT

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PHYSICAL ASSAULTS AND OTHER FORMS OF ABUSE

1. Verbal

The NFVS, as well as numerous studies drawn from clinical or shelter samples, tells us that physical aggression is usually accompanied by verbal aggression. The most severe incidents of physical violence also tend to include the harshest, most derogatory forms of verbal abuse

However, it is not the case that verbal abuse necessarily leads to physical aggression. The average person who engages in verbal abuse does not follow this with a physical assault

Likewise, certain types of severe batterers can be generally abusive verbally but only strike out physically on occasion

2. Emotional abuse and coercive control

Research has shown a strong relationship between emotional abuse and physical violence. In a longitudinal study of young married couples, Murphy and O'Leary (1989) found that the incidence of physical assault is much more likely following emotional and psychological abuse. Simonelli and Ingram's (1998) study of 70 male college students indicated that received emotional abuse, as measured by a gender-inclusive version of the Psychological Maltreatment of Women inventory, was correlated with expressed violence; and that received violence was correlated with emotional abuse. Other studies (e.,g., Johnson, 2000; Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2002; Shupe, et al., 1987) reveal a close association between physical violence and the use of coercive control tactics, especially in case of more severe assaults. As we will see later in the section on power and control, this applies to both male and female perpetrators

VIOLENCE: UNILATERAL OR MUTUAL?

- The NFVS found that in 48.6% of assaults, both the wife and the husband were violent. The husband was the sole perpetrator in 25.9% of the cases, and the wives 25.5% of the time. The wives reported that they initiated the violence 53.1% of the time, and their husbands 42.3% of the time. They could not remember who started the violence in the remaining 3.1% of cases
- Between 48% - 58% of the couples interviewed in the National Youth Survey (Morse, 1995) engaged in mutual violence
- Vivian, et al. (1994) examined domestic violence among couples seeking counseling at a mental health clinic. Out of 57 couples, 32 (56% engaged in mutual violence). In 25 cases, the violence was unilateral, perpetrated by the man in 15 of those cases, and by the woman in the remaining 10
- A study of 200 couples, in which the police had responded to domestic violence call, indicated that 83% of the cases involved mutual assaults (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, et al., 1995)
- At the 21-year mark, a longitudinal study of 1,037 New Zealanders (Moffitt & Caspi, 1999) found that most cases of partner violence were mutual
- A sample of 108 inner-city women arrested for domestic violence (Swan and Snow, 2002), reported that they had perpetrated an average of 16.0 assaults on their male partners in the previous 6 months, and that their male partners had perpetrated an average of 14.4 assaults against them
- Dunning (2002) found that 76.0% of men, and 85.7% of women, mandated to a batterer treatment program in San Joaquin County, California, had physically assaulted their partner at least once in the past year. 74.0% of the men, and 76.0% of the women, reported assaults by their partners
- In a sample of couples participating in a court-mandated domestic violence treatment program (Shupe et al., 1987), the man was the one arrested in the majority of cases. But the woman initiated the assaults one-third of the time

SELF-DEFENSE

- When battered women assault, it is often in self-defense. For instance, 39% of one sample (Saunders, 1986) reported to have used severe violence exclusively in self-defense, and another 42% said that self-defense was the motive at least half the time. 31% used less serious violence exclusively in self-defense, and another 44% indicated that self-defense was the motive half the time. It is not known how many *male* victims of serious battering also react in self-defense, due to a lack of quantitative data
- Browne & Williams (1989) found that female-perpetrated spousal murder rates (but not those for men) dropped significantly in states that instituted tough anti-domestic violence laws
- Jurik (1989) found that 21% of female spousal murderers claimed to have experienced prior abuse, or the threat of abuse
- In Felson and Messner's (1998) analysis of 2,000 intimate partner homicides, self-defense, defined as protecting oneself from bodily harm, accounted for 9.6% of female-perpetrated killings, and only .5% of male. A definition that included previous physical attacks, with or without self-defense, yielded rates of 46.2% and 11.1%
- In Mann's (1988) study of spousal murders in several large urban areas, 60% of the women killers claimed self-defense. However, 58% of the murders were determined to have been premeditated. Furthermore, 30% of the women killed their partners when they were incapacitated - either drunk, bound or asleep; yet, the majority of this subgroup (60%) also claimed self-defense
- In Follingstad's (1991) survey of dating couples, 17% of the men and 18% of the women said they had hit in self-defense. 29% of the men and 13% of the women said they retaliated after being hit first
- Other representative sample surveys indicate that self-defense is not a major motive for partner assaults in the general population

Study & Source: Carrado, et al (1996), “Aggression in British Heterosexual Relationships.” *Aggressive Behavior*, 22,. *Sample:* 1,978 adults surveyed in a representative sample across England in November, 1994.

Yearly Assaults by Women	Yearly Assaults by Men	Reasons Given For Perpetrating Assaults	% women	% men
11%	10%	1. Thought it was the only way to get through to him/her	53	64
		2. Was getting back at him/her for something nasty he/she said or threatened to do to me	52	53
		3. To stop him/her doing something	33	43
		4. To make him/her do what I wanted	26	26
		5. I was getting back at him/her for some physical action she/he had used against me *	21	27
		6. I thought he/she was about to use a physical action against me	17	21
		7. It is my character, that’s the way I am	16	27
		8. I was “under the influence” of, for instance, alcohol	13	35
		9. Other	12	7
Total self-defense:			21	27

- These percentages are probably lower, because it is not indicated how many of these respondents acted strictly in self-defense, or out of retaliation

Study & Source: Sommer, R. (1994), Male and Female Perpetrated Partner Abuse. (Doctoral dissertation, Univ. of Manitoba, Canada.) *Sample:* 988 adults randomly interviewed in Winnipeg, Canada in 1992.

Yearly Assaults by Women	Yearly Assaults by Men	Reasons Given For Perpetrating Assaults	% women	% men
7.1%	6.6%	(This study did not ask respondents to indicate specific reasons for their assaults. Instead, after being presented each item from the Conflict Tactics Scale, respondents were asked the following questions: (1) In these episodes, were your actions in self-defense? (2) How many times were your actions in self-defense?)		
		Total Self-Defense:	10	15

Study & Source: Fiebert, et al. (1997) “College Women Who Initiate Assaults on Their Male Partners and the Reasons Offered For Such Behavior,” Psychological Reports, 80. *Sample:* 978 Southern California college women surveyed in 1995.

Yearly Assaults by Women	Yearly Assaults by Men	Reasons Given For Perpetrating Assaults (N = 280)	% women	% men
(29% during past 5 years)	N.A.	1. My partner wasn't sensitive to my needs	46	N.A.
		2. I wished to gain my partner's attention	44	
		3. My partner was not listening to me	43	
		4. I did not believe my actions would hurt my partner	38	
		5. My partner was being verbally abusive	38	

- WOMEN CLAIM SELF-DEFENSE 10% - 21% OF THE TIME, AND MEN IN 15% - 27% OF CASES. RETRIBUTION AND ATTEMPTS TO EITHER “GET THROUGH” OR TO CONTROL THE OTHER ARE MUCH MORE COMMON MOTIVES

SELF-DEFENSE: A COMPLEX ISSUE

1. California law states: “It is lawful for a person who is being assaulted to defend (himself/herself) from attack if, as a reasonable person, (he/she) has grounds for believing and does believe that bodily injury is about to be inflicted upon (him/her). In so doing, that person may use all force and means which (he/she) believes to be reasonably necessary and which would appear to a reasonable person, in the same or similar circumstances, to be necessary to prevent injury which appears imminent” (CALJIC 5.30)...In addition, the person need not retreat, but may “stand (his/her) ground...and may pursue (his/(her) assailant until (he/she) has secured (himself/herself) from danger...This law holds *“even if the assailed person might more easily have gained safety by flight or by withdrawing from the scene”*(CALJIC 5.50)
2. Obviously, the law allows a wide latitude for responding to assaults, including its misuse. Consider these facts:
 - a. Individuals who have previously been physically abused in previous relationships often project aggressive intentions on a partner that has no such intentions, or any history of assaults
 - b. The physically stronger person, usually the man in heterosexual relationships, can physically intimidate without *consciously* trying to, by failing to not adequately manage his anger
 - c. Some women are so traumatized by their batterer that they are able to invoke the “battered woman’s syndrome” defense (Walker, 1983), which postulates that severely battered women must attack when they have the chance, rather than wait until he strikes again

PHYSICAL INJURIES

- < According to the 1985 NFVS, approximately 3.0% of physically assaulted women said that they had suffered physical injuries severe enough to seek medical attention. The rate reported by men was 0.4%, which is seven-and-a-half times less

- < These statistics are often interpreted to show that women are seven times more likely to be injured than men in domestic violence incidents. However:
 - 1) The data refers to the number of individuals who sought medical attention, not necessarily those who needed it. Men are less inclined to seek medical help in general, or to admit to having been injured by a woman
 - 2) Even if correct, the data only represents severe injuries, and not injuries in general

- < According to the NVAWS, 41.5% of the 4.5 million women, and 19.9% of the 3 million men, who had been physically assaulted by their partners reported injuries. The total number of individuals injured were 76% women/24% men - a ratio slightly more than 3:1

- < In Archer's comprehensive review of the literature (2000), the total number of individuals injured by their partners were 62% women/ 38% men - a ratio somewhat less than 2:1.

- < Small scale studies (e.g., Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1995; Johnston, 1995) show a wider ratio in cases of severe violence. The NVAWS reported that 11.7% of assaulted women, and 4.3% of men, needed medical attention. Overall the ratio of women needing medical attention, compared to men, was 4:1. However, in Archer's review the gender differences for severe violence were the same as for overall injuries - about 2:1.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF PARTNER VIOLENCE

- < There was a higher correlation for women surveyed in the NFVS (Straus, et al., 1990), compared to men, between assaults suffered and psychological injury, including: days at home due to illness, high stress, psychosomatic symptoms and depression. These were only correlations, and did not prove causation. Still, the relationship between assaults suffered and depression was especially strong in the female direction, as the table below illustrates:

Percent Reporting High Level of Depression by Violence Level and Gender

	No violence	Minor violence	Severe violence
Women	20.9	33.4	58.3
Men	13.7	29.5	29.8

- < In a study of dating couples (Makepeace, 1986), 31% of the women, and 15% of the men, had serious emotional effects following a partner assault
- < In another study of dating couples (Follingstad, et al, 1991), assaulted women reported three times greater fear and anxiety than assaulted men. 56.5% of the women, and 38.8% of the men, reported being emotionally hurt. The incidence of sadness or depression was more equal, reported by 34.7% of the men and 35.5% of the women
- < The National Youth Survey (Morse, 1995) corroborates Follingstad's high levels of fear reported by women relative to men. Depending on what year they were interviewed in this longitudinal study, between 9.5% and 13.5% of the men said they "felt in physical danger," whereas 29.0% to 30.1% of the women said that they had felt this way
- < The actual psychological distress suffered by men may be higher than some studies indicate. Society socializes men to suppress feelings that render them vulnerable. Men tend to under-report assaults against them, and are highly reluctant to being perceived as victims (e.g., Archer, 1999; Follingstad, et al., 1991; Mihalic and Elliott, 1997). When men admit to being victimized by their wives, they are often met with ridicule and scorn (Cook, 1997)
- < Linda Marshall (1992a; 1992b), drawing from samples of college students

and community residents in Texas, found that men minimize both the physical, and the emotional harm, of partner assaults. The impact weights they gave for each of the 46 items of violence, or threat of violence, on her Violence Against Men Scales were lower than the corresponding items on the Violence Against Women Scales

One could argue that because men know there is a lesser possibility of physical injury, they should be less distressed. But this doesn't explain why the emotional impact of being burned, or shot with a gun, should be less for men. Unlike being punched or pushed, these assaults that are not dependent on physical size. The emotional toll from having a pot of scalding water poured over one's head, or suffering a gunshot wound to the abdomen, ought to be equally devastating to a petite woman or a burly, 300 pound man

- < Simonelli & Ingram (1998) examined the effects of physical, verbal and emotional abuse on a sample of college men. Physical and verbal abuse were based on the CTS, and emotional abuse was measured according to a revised, gender-inclusive version of Tolman's Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory, which included subscales for social control, diminishment of self-esteem, jealousy and withdrawal. Effects were based on a 30-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ).

90% of the men received at least one incidence of emotional abuse, and one incidence of verbal aggression. 29% had been the targets of severe physical aggression. Received physical abuse predicted 37% of the variance in depression. Received emotional and verbal abuse were also significantly related to general emotional distress and depression. Emotional abuse, for example, predicted 14% - 33% of the variance in depression

- < Hines & Malley-Morrison (2001a) point out that most research on the effects of violence focus on internalizing symptoms, such as depression, which are typically reported with greater frequency by women, and they recommend that research also look at externalizing symptoms. Their study of 116 college men (Malley-Morrison, 2001b) showed that emotionally-abused men are more likely to evidence symptoms of PTSD and problem drinking than those who have not been abused

VICTIM EXPERIENCES

Below is a sample of how it feels to be a victim of partner violence, as told by female victims (Jacobsen & Gottman, (1998), and male victims (Cook, 1997):

Women's Experiences	Men's Experiences
<p>“Her whole body was transformed, and she was now <u>afraid</u>”</p> <p>“Vicky began to feel that familiar combination of <u>pain and numbness</u>”</p> <p>“She remembers begging him to stop, and how <u>little effect the begging had</u>”</p> <p>“When Vicky turned off the TV while George was watching it, on another day he might have just stomped out of the house...Not only is the violence <u>unpredictable</u>, but it is also <u>uncontrollable</u> by the battered woman”</p> <p>“Battered women live in a constant state of <u>competing emotions</u>...We saw much effort on the part of battered women to contain their anger, but it tended to leak out anyway. At the same time, even as they were feeling the fury and the frustration of trying to reach this unreachable, man, they were fearing for their safety”</p> <p>“She pressed him because she <u>wanted him to be rational</u>, to understand, to sympathize with her, to acknowledge that she had done nothing wrong.”</p>	<p>“She would cry and beg forgiveness. But <u>she had done damage</u>. Not only emotionally and psychologically but physically”</p> <p>“I got the baby away from her, and she ran up from behind and bit me...I could have dropped the baby.” <i>Did you go to the hospital?</i> “No, I didn't. The bites were pretty deep, though; I still have scars that don't look like they are ever going away. It really did <u>hurt a lot</u>.”</p> <p>“She would...tear the glasses off, kick me in the testicles five, six, seven times...You <u>couldn't control her</u>.”</p> <p>“You couldn't tell how she was going to react; she was very <u>unpredictable</u>”</p> <p>“One night I was sitting on the side of the bed, taking off my shoes, and she just came at me, kicking and swinging, <u>no warning</u>, nothin”</p> <p>“She'd slap at my face, and then keep slapping and trying to scratch me. I'd put up my arms or just grab and hold her hands. I never hit her back. I was just taught that <u>you never hit a woman</u>.”</p>

Women's Experiences	Men's Experiences
<p>“She cried as she remembered the black-and-blue bruises on her arm. But she told us that <u>she lets these things go</u> because it does no good to bring them up later.”</p> <p>“Martha...had never been quite as frightened as she was at that moment (when he was choking her) because she was <u>totally dependent</u> on his mercy”</p> <p>“She went down in a fetal position, and George kicked her. Then he left the apartment...screaming, “I’m not going to stay here and take this shit,” <u>as if he were the injured party.</u>”</p> <p>“Gene <u>apologized</u> for being angry, but <u>denied</u> that he had beaten Ruth up. Even when Kay (a roommate) confronted him with his beating, he screamed, ‘You’re both conspiring against me. You know as well as I do that nothing happened’ ... Ruth <u>didn’t know what to think.</u></p>	<p>“Not knowing there are other men in the same situation adds to the sense of <u>disbelief</u> over the contrast between the public perception of themselves and their mates as well as to the <u>sense of isolation</u>”</p> <p>“Not knowing what else to do, many <u>withdraw.</u>”</p> <p><i>Were you <u>embarrassed</u> because she’s a woman doing this and you’re a man?</i> “(Chuckles) Yeah, kind of...”</p> <p>“I didn’t tell anyone because I was <u>afraid of being called a wimp</u>”</p> <p>“<u>For the man with apparent physical injuries, they would make excuses, just as battered women often do.</u> If someone would ask about say, their black eye, they would say that they walked into a door.”</p> <p>“She threw things...When I got mad, I would throw things, too, but not at her, like she did. After these arguments, we would make up, and <u>she would say how sorry she was,</u> then want to make love”</p>

The reader may want to identify the similarities and differences in the situations presented. What are the primary emotions of female victims? Of male victims?

- Is there a victim profile? In her pioneering work, Walker (1979) found that abused women could be found among middle-class and professional, as well as blue collar families. In their review of the literature, Hotaling & Sugarman (1986) found that only witnessing violence in one’s family of origin was consistently associated with a woman being a victim of partner violence

PARTNER VIOLENCE: A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD?

- Men's superior size and strength, in most cases, give them a physical advantage in domestic violence encounters. Men can intimidate with the threat of physical force, direct or implied, far more effectively than women. And some sociopathic and borderline men can terrorize their partners without having to use very much physical force at all
- However, the advantage is not absolute. Because of their smaller size, society allows women more latitude than men, so they have less reason to hold back in their assaults. Furthermore, women compensate for their physical limitations by using objects and weapons, and carry out their assaults when their partners are in a vulnerable position (McLeod, 1984; Steinmetz, & Lucca, 1988; Shupe et al., 1987.) In Mann's study, 30% of the female-perpetrated spousal murders were committed when their partners were drunk, bound or asleep.
- A battered woman would be foolish to ever severely assault a "Cobra" batterer. But as the stories from Cook illustrate, the majority of men are reluctant to assault women, even when physically attacked. Men are restrained by their own conscience, and by societal norms that prohibit them from hitting women. When they do hit, men often "pull their punches" out of fear of seriously harming their partner. Also, thanks to the women's shelter movement, society is finally taking seriously the problem of domestic violence, and men who batter now face criminal charges for their behavior. In a later section, we will see the establishment of psychological control need not be based on superior strength. Patricia Pearson (1997) sums it up this way:

"On the whole, men do indeed have a more powerful left hook. The problem is that the dynamic of domestic violence is not analogous to two differently weighted boxers in a ring. There are relational strategies and psychological issues at work in an intimate relationship that negate the fact of physical strength. At the heart of the matter lies human will. Which partner - by dint of temperament, personality, life history - has the will to harm the other?" (p. 117).

CATEGORIES OF PARTNER VIOLENCE

The table below arranges intimate partner violence according to four categories. *High conflict* involves verbal and symbolic aggression (e.g., breaking things.) *High conflict violence* includes assaults leading to no, or negligible injury. This represents the majority of violence, and is perpetrated primarily by women. Individuals in high conflict violent relationships use various “dirty fighting” tactics, such as mind-reading or cross-complaining, which reflect poor communication skills and a desire to win arguments; but typically engage in lesser levels of isolation, diminishment of other’s self-esteem and other abusive/controlling tactics. *Common battering* involves the perpetration of more serious assaults leading to visible injury, and is usually accompanied by moderate levels of emotional abuse/control tactics. The *severe battering* category is comprised of men and women who engage in very serious violence and high levels of emotional abuse/control. Men account for approximately two-thirds of the first battering type, and a somewhat higher proportion of the latter. However, extent of physical abuse and emotional abuse/control do not correlate perfectly. Some domestic violence, therefore, may be considered “battering” regardless of physical injury, when the non-verbal abuse has reached extreme levels. This type of abuse, perpetrated at approximately equal rates by men and women, can also be characterized as *emotional battering*.

Type	Characteristics
Severe Battering	Very serious violence; serious injuries High levels of emotional abuse/control
Common Battering	Serious violence, injuries Moderate to high use of abuse/control
High Conflict w/violence	Minor/serious assault w/slight or no injuries “Dirty fighting;” low-moderate use of abuse/control
High Conflict (no violence)	Low and moderate use of abuse/control Symbolic abuse, “dirty fighting”

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