

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TODAY

## PART 4: RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

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## VIOLENCE FROM WITHIN

- < From interviews with battered women, Walker (1984), determined that violence by male batterers follows a three-stage cycle. The table below depicts the man's behaviors in each stage, and the behaviors of his victim:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>First Phase: Tension Building</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Batterer</u></p> <p>Moody, sullen, and tends to nitpick. Withdraws affection, engages in isolating and crazy-making behavior, criticizes, yells and puts her down. He threatens, breaks things</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Victim</u></p> <p>Tries to calm him down, agreeable and passive, but feeling as if walking on eggshells. Nurturing, reasonable. Silent or talkative. Withdraws. Cooks his favorite dinner</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Second Phase: Battering Event</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Batterer</u></p> <p>Pushes, shoves, punches, chokes, beats up, uses weapons; humiliates, rapes, imprisons</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Victim</u></p> <p>Tries to protect herself any way she can. Responds in self defense, or tries to calm partner. Leaves. Someone else calls the police</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Third Phase: Contrition</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Batterer</u></p> <p>Says he's sorry, promises he'll "never do it again," begs her forgiveness, cries. Promises to seek counseling, go to church, or go to A.A. and get sober. Sends her flowers, brings her gifts, professes his love to her, wants to make love. Enlists support of family</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Victim</u></p> <p>Agrees to stay, takes partner back. Stops legal proceedings. Obtains counseling for partner. Feels happier and more hopeful</p>

- < After years conducting batterer treatment groups, Dutton (1998) has found that male batterers who conform to Walker's three-stage model also suffer from Borderline Personality Disorder, with its three-phase defense structure as formulated by Gunderson:

The descriptions of personality Gunderson gave were remarkably like the descriptions of actions that Walker's battered women gave...Phase 1 of the borderline individual's shifting personality consists of an internal buildup of tension; Gunderson called this a "dysphoric stalemate" in which the person feels depressed and irritable but doesn't know how to verbalize the psychic discomfort. In relationships, the borderline personality caught in a dysphoric stalemate is trapped in a deepening downward spiral of bad feelings, urgently in need of soothing and intimate connection but not able to recognize or express this need

The dysphoric stalemate is made even more problematic by another essential clinical feature of borderline individuals - that the intimate other serves the function of integrity of the self. Whereas nonborderline persons can maintain their own self-integrity, the borderline individual requires another person to sustain this process. Thus, the loss of the other carries a risk of feeling a loss of self. In the vernacular, this is described as "coming unglued" or "coming apart at the seams." It is experienced as a profound terror with no distinct origin. The borderline person converts this into abuse through (1) the belief that the intimate partner should be able to ameliorate the bad feelings and (2) conversion of the terror into rage. As the distancing builds, borderline individuals act in a way that self-fulfills their "prophecy" or belief about being alone or abandoned. They become increasingly withdrawn and verbally abusive, generating in their partner self-protective withdrawal ("walking on eggshells"), the opposite of what the borderline wants but is unable to detect or ask for. Underneath the increasing anger is an intense demandingness, the plea for self-survival. John Bowlby used the phrase "arches away angrily while simultaneously seeking contact" to describe the actions of separated children upon reunion with their mother. Borderline adults appear to recreate this intimacy conflict. This first stage, I believed, was the "tension-building" phase of the abuse cycle, during which frustrations increase...

According to Gunderson, the unexpressed irritability builds until the borderline person erupts into an angry outburst (Phase 2) - in other words, the abusive outburst. If the angry outburst drives away the significant other, the borderline personality engages in desperate attempts to "ward off the feeling of aloneness (Phase 3). Binge drinking, drugs, and promiscuity are examples of such attempts most frequently cited. It seemed to me that the contrition phase of the abuse cycle also fits this category. The abuser promises anything to get her back. These behaviors persist until the woman has tentatively returned; the gradually the man's attempts to appease her subside, and the cycle eventually repeats itself" (pp. 59-60)

- < Violent lesbians have similar intimacy issues, but their minority status, and the fact that both parties are female, complicate the borderline picture:

From a very young age, little girls learn to define themselves in relation to others...; consequently, women tend to have less rigid ego boundaries and a greater capacity of identification with others. As noted by Elise (1986), “the lesser degree of differentiation of the female ego may result in a greater capacity for the lesbian couple to relate intimately, but also leads to a tendency for the couple to become more intrapsychically merged” (p.309). This tendency toward merger in lesbian relationships is heightened by a tendency for the lesbian community, as a function of its small size and minority status, to become a closed system. As a result, the potential for dependency and loss of individual identity is increased. Although the individual with borderline personality disorder longs for merger, closeness intensifies feelings of need and the fear of abandonment, resulting in periodic episodes of withdrawal...In an attempt to create distance and avoid the stimulation of abandonment fear, an individual may resort to the use of arguments and/or physical fights (Coleman, 1994, p.146)

- < A key feature of this violence is that it is unrelated to situational variables. The batterer may blame the victim for having provoked the assaults, but there is nothing that the victim has done to warrant such a response. The batterer is playing out a psychic drama, originating in childhood abuse and/or attachment disturbance, projected upon the situation. The violence emerges from within, in response to internal cues, rather than to interactional sequences involving the partner
- < Although Dutton focused only on male perpetrators, Gunderson’s typology is applicable to both sexes. The research discussed earlier on violent, borderline females, together with male victims accounts by Cook (1998), Pearson (1997), Shupe, et al (1987) and Steinmetz & Lucca (1988), suggest a similar 3-stage cycle for female perpetrators
- < Victim responses, as shown in the chart, are thought to be generally passive. Walker theorized that female victims suffer from a type of “learned helplessness,” known as “battered women’s syndrome.” But there are flaws in the cycle part of the theory, which was based on the use of limited samples and interview protocols high in demand characteristics. Furthermore, research with female victims who have come to the attention of the police (Apsler, et al. (2002) indicate that as many as 61% think future abuse is “not at all likely” or only “slightly likely.” The same study brings into question the validity of “learned helplessness” as well, in that only 48% reported to have been “not at all afraid” or only “slightly afraid” of their

perpetrator. Finally, women often stand up for themselves and leave, or fight back (Faigman, 1986). According to Johnston & Campbell (1993),

...Not all the women from episodic or ongoing battering relationships reflected the 'battered wife syndrome.' A subgroup of them did not tolerate the abuse. They left the marital relationship early, soon after the abuse was first manifest. These were assertive women with high self-esteem and good reality testing

A journalist filed this report on a talk by Erin Pizzey, founder of the world's first battered women's shelter (Laframboise, 1998):

Pizzey says her years of experience have taught her that there are two kinds of battered women. "One of them I call innocent victims of their partners' violence," she says in her soft British accent. "They were genuine victims who were coming in, bringing their children. They needed refuge, they needed help, they needed legal advice." Pizzey says many other abused women don't belong in this category. She describes them as "violence prone" people who, in addition to being battered by their partners, behave violently themselves - towards their husbands as well as their children...Of the first 100 battered women she gave refuge to, "62 were as violent or even more violent than the men they'd left."(p. 2)

And while a "battered man's syndrome" exists (Steinmetz, 1978), Johnston & Campbell (1993) remind us that men are better able to protect themselves:

Mrs. B was an emotionally volatile, dependent woman married to a staid, intellectualizing professor...When he became absorbed in his work or spent time with his children by his first wife, she would become resentful and demanding. Mr. B would passively avoid her demands, and her rages would escalate to the point where she would throw objects, destroy his possessions, or lunge at him, scratching his face or breaking his eyeglasses. Mr. B would fend her off in self-protection or restrain her until she calmed down (p.195)

## INTERACTION VARIABLES

In their work with male batterers, Jacobsen and Gottman (1998) found a small number of couples, which they called “Bonnie and Clyde” couples, whose relationships featured mutual, severe, pathological violence. Because their study focused on male batterers, and because male victims of severe abuse are especially reluctant to admit to being victims, much less volunteer for research projects, it is uncertain how prevalent such violence is in the general population. Emotional dependence, however, plays a significant role in many mutually-violent relationships. Shupe, et al (1987) tell us about male and female participants at the Tyler Family Preservation Project:

The men and women often come from the same backgrounds, such as having violent home lives with one or both parents emotionally indifferent to them. As a result each partner brings the same weaknesses to adult relationships: emotional dependence, childlike insecurity, and a generally low self-image. That is why... these persons attract each other. They form a partnership of mutual dependency, shoring up each other’s weaknesses and isolating each other from a world they believe is cruel and stress-laden (pp. 60-61)

According to Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, less than half of battering relationships are characterized by the kind of severe, characterologically-based violence described by Dutton. The other half are the “family-only” types, afflicted with little, if any, pathology, and whose violence is less severe. This may in fact only be a subset in the great majority of partner violence, nearly 75% of which falls in the “high conflict” category. This is the type of violence that, according to Neidig, involves “hitters.” To a large extent, it arises out of the situation, rather than wholly from internal tension, and it is often characterized by mutually escalating conflict:

< In their five years of marriage, Joseph and Karen had always had an intense relationship...And from the beginning, they had fought passionately, more often than they liked. But, despite the yelling and hurt silences, they loved each other very much, they said, and had never felt that their arguments seriously threatened their marriage - until about six months ago when the fighting began to turn physically violent. They weren’t sure why this had started to happen: maybe Karen’s recent joblessness had brought on more anxiety about money and more tension about roles for them both. At any rate, things were rapidly spiraling out of control

Both agreed about the basic scenario of these battles: Joseph said something to Karen that she felt was demeaning and provocative, such as she’d “better lay off the desserts” or she’d “end up big as a house.” When she snapped back at him, he would up the ante with more unpleasant remarks, and Karen, increasingly furious, would demand apologies

which he, of course, would refuse to provide. At points like this, beside herself with rage, Karen often “lost it” and attacked Joseph - pushing, hitting and kicking him. Joseph would grab her to restrain her or, occasionally, hit back (Ziegler & Hiller, 2002)

- < Mr. and Mrs. C had a mutually demeaning relationship marked by continuous verbal assaults and frequent refusals to give in to each other. In an escalating interaction, they would call each other names (“conniving bitch,” “sadistic brute”), each goading the other on. She would wave a finger in his face, and he would stab the air in front of her. Both seemed to derive some erotic pleasure from their verbal bantering and sniping. However, at some point, they would become physically abusive with one another. She would make a particularly offensive remark, then push or poke at him. Mr. C had an especially macho self-image and was concerned about appearing weak and letting himself be pushed around by a woman. When his wife’s provocation became physical, he would decide that she needed to be put in her place. If she did not accede to his attempts to control or restrain her, he would take a swing at her or slap her. Both would then become increasingly angry, and the physical abuse would escalate to acutely dangerous levels, where she was at greater risk (Johnston & Campbell, 1993, p.196)

Below are several laboratory-based studies that address the relationship dynamics of this more common type of domestic violence. Although they tend to focus on male perpetrators, rather than female, they provide a wealth of useful information about the dynamics of partner violence:

- In a study by Burman, et al. (1992), wives of abusive husbands responded to both negative-offensive statements (e.g., criticism, insult) *and* negative-defensive statements (disagreement, “yes/but”) with negative-offensive statements of their own. The husbands, however, typically responded to negative-offensive statements with negative-defensive ones. These findings indicate that abusive couples engage in attack/defend cycles, characterized by a tendency for men to become more despairing and to withdraw as the conflict escalates
- Babcock, et al. (1993) found that violent husbands and their wives were equally likely to make demands of the other, or to withdraw in response to their partner’s demands, thus ensuring continuation of the conflict, as well as further resentments and power struggles
- Jacobsen, et al.(1994), observed that husbands are more domineering and defensive, but the wives were rated as more angry, belligerent and contemptuous. All the male subjects had perpetrated either several acts of serious violence, or at least one act of very serious violence, in the past year. In spite of the self-selective nature of the sample, the authors later asserted

that approximately half the wives would have qualified for batterer treatment themselves

- There were additional gender differences worth noting in the Jacobsen study. As would be expected from a study on male batterers, the wives expressed a much higher degree of fear than their partners, as well as more sadness. There was also an important difference in how the violence escalated. Nothing a wife did, including withdraw from the conflict, could effectively stop the husband's violence once it began, whereas the wife's violence escalated only in response to the husband's violence or emotional abuse and would desist once he withdrew

- Over many years providing treatment to abusive couples, Neidig and Friedman (1984) have observed that a very common dynamic that precedes violence

is for one party, usually the man, to withdraw by refusing to communicate further. In many cases, husbands report that they cannot keep up with their wives, who seem to think and speak faster and generally seem to have the advantage in any verbal conflict...The husband may signal that he fears he is about to “lose it” and demand that his wife “back off.” She, in turn, experiences this withdrawal as a sign that he doesn't care or is not taking her concerns seriously, and this misunderstanding is likely to increase her efforts to break through to him by moving closer, speaking more loudly, or physically preventing him from leaving. The conflict escalates through this pattern of circular feedback as each partner misunderstands the intentions and behavior of the other” (pp. 62-63)

- However these findings are interpreted, it remains the case that relationship dynamics themselves are an additional cause of partner violence, along with stress, personality and childhood socialization factors

According to Burman et al. (1992), the dynamics of violent couples more closely resemble high-conflict, nonviolent relationships than happily married ones. Earlier research had come to the same conclusions:

Several findings suggest that couples in battering relationships are similar to other couples in treatment. They have low self-esteem; they have greater difficulty with communication; and they experience greater dissatisfaction and disagreement in their marriages than satisfied spouses. Therefore they are likely to need and respond to interventions such as communications training, negotiating, and other skills typically used by marital therapists. Emphasis to V (violent) couples that the content of their

problems is no different from most married couples seems valuable for their self-esteem and for rapport...Our violent couples were found to exhibit more passive and aggressive behaviors and less assertive behaviors than the comparison couples. This patterns suggests that the V couples have difficulty in expressing wants, needs, and feelings directly, and that instead they operate in a passive-aggressive manner. The violent outburst presumably results in part from the inadequacy of this pattern in terms of getting one's needs and wants met. Assertion skills training would appear to be a fruitful direction to pursue for professionals working in this area (Telch & Lindquist, 1984, p. 247)

Thus, in most violent relationships verbal and physical aggression emerge out of conflict, when needs and wants are unmet or are in opposition. According to the NFVS (Straus, et al., 1980), conflict is most often caused by arguments over housekeeping; then sex and intimacy, social activities, money and, lastly, children

Another theory, resource-exchange, sheds further light on the dynamics of partner violence:

- Resource-exchange theory (Bagarozzi & Wordarski,1977; Gelles, 1983) postulates that the health and stability of relationships depend on the balance, or perceived balance, of interpersonal resources - “rewards” in behavioral terminology. If the distribution of rewards from one party is not adequately reciprocated by the other, the principle of “distributive justice” is thereby violated, and the result can be anger, conflict escalation and violence. Anger, in this scheme, serves as an inner warning (like a home smoke alarm) that alerts the individual that something is amiss in the distribution of resources. Individuals verbally and physically abuse one another in order to restore the actual or imagined imbalance But there are social controls, such as prevailing laws and ethical norms about the use of violence, that limit the extent of the abuse and how it is carried out. The abuser must factor into his/her decisions the costs to being abusive, such as the possibility of getting arrested, losing a partner's love and respect, or violating his/her personal sense of right and wrong. In intimate relationships, however, social controls may be weak, due to the private nature of families, and the fact that nothing less than the fulfillment of core needs (e.g., love, belonging) is at stake. It is for these reasons that the family is the most violent institution in society
- Teichman & Teichman (1989) identified the interpersonal resources, or rewards, exchanged in relationships as the following: love, status, information, money, goods and services. He further classified these

according to how universal or particular each one might be. Love is a significant resource partly because of its highly particular nature (love from one's partner can only be gotten from that partner). The person allocating this resource thus maintains power over the other

- The use of aggression to restore “distributive justice” is fraught with consequences, which the perpetrator may not be able to recognize until later. Efforts to restore equity often lead to increased control by the aggressor over resources controlled and provided by the partner. This forces a new balance of resources in favor of the aggressor, which the other will inevitably seek to change, leading to further conflict escalation
  
- In treatment, an important goal is helping clients understand the effects of their behavior, through a cost-benefit ratio analysis. Threats of incarceration, hanging over the heads of perpetrators in treatment diversion programs, have proven to be effective in suppressing violence (National Research Council, 1998); but clients may change based on other costs, such as the potential loss of a partner's love and damage to one's self-esteem. Therapists can help foster appropriate guilt, and show clients how violence leads to a cycle of resentment, retribution and further violence. Expectations about who *should* command what resources, and under what conditions, whether they come from society-wide norms or from the individuals own unique perspective, need to be identified and challenged:

Changes in the provision of interpersonal resources and in the relative need for resources of each family member alone produce only short-term effects. If core attitudes and beliefs about the relationships between men and women are unchanged, if mutual expectations are unrealistically biased, if the communication difficulties between the spouses persist, and if behavioral (e.g., social skills) deficits remain unchanged, the actual or imaginative resource-deficit will reappear and violence may erupt again (Teichman & Teichman, 1989, pp. 140-141)

## ATTACHMENT THEORY AND INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS

It is well-known among psychotherapists that individuals with intimacy fears resist closeness, rather than seek it compulsively, and find superficial ways to relate. This provokes strong feelings in their partners, who feel unloved and abandoned. The partner may become angry, and attempts to connect with aggressive and abusive behaviors. Fear of intimacy and fear of abandonment meld together in a pathological dance.

Attachment theory is therefore of greatest benefit when the violence is viewed from a systemic framework (Mills, 2003). Among the first researchers to investigate the interactional possibilities of the “dance” were Roberts and Noller (1998), who measured attachment along two dimensions – Discomfort with Closeness (the extent to which one feels uncomfortable in intimate partner relationships), and Anxiety over Abandonment (the extent to which one fears abandonment from one’s intimate partner.) These two underlying dimensions correspond with other models, such as the one by Brennan, et al. (1998), in which the two underlying dimensions are Anxiety and Avoidance (see chart), around which their *Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire* was constructed. Individuals high on the dimension of Anxiety have a need for approval and fear abandonment; those high in Avoidance are uncomfortable with intimacy and resist closeness. For the sake of simplicity, the Roberts and Noller terminology will be used, and abbreviated to D/C (Discomfort with Closeness) and A/A (anxiety over abandonment.)

Using a community sample consisting of university students and clients at various counseling centers in Queensland, Australia, Roberts & Noller investigated how attachment style, relationship satisfaction and communication affects couples violence, and the way that these variables interact with each other. The subjects and their partners were administered standardized tests to measure these variables, and to provide information about their relationship. In contrast to securely-attached subjects, relationship conflict caused anxiety for both high D/C and high A/A subjects, but especially the latter. High D/C individuals experienced anxiety because their partner’s attempts to resolve problems led to discussions involving difficult issues which, if acknowledged, might bring up painful childhood memories of abuse and abandonment. Individuals high in A/A would, on the one hand, want to continue the interaction, in hopes of connecting to the love object that continues to elude the; and on the other hand, worry that the disagreements might undermine their relationship and lead to rejection.

Faced with high levels of anxiety, the researchers speculated, high A/A subjects would have three basic options: (1) submit to their partner's wishes, and achieve a sort of pseudo-closeness, (2) avoid abandonment by making aggressive, hostile demands, thus intensifying the conflict and prolonging the interaction, albeit negatively, or (3) withdraw. High D/C individuals would have the same options, but would exercise them for other reasons. That is to say, avoiders might submit to avoid prolonging a discussion that might lead to more intimate subject matter, or use aggression to push their partner away.

The choices each subject made in times of conflict, and their partner's subsequent responses, were of particular interest to the research team. How would the couple's communication moderate, or intensify the level of conflict? Would violence be a function primarily of attachment style, as in Dutton's Borderline men, or rather of couples communication and interaction dynamics? And would any particular pairing of attachment styles correlate with higher levels of violence? Among the findings:

- A/A's were more emotionally expressive than D/C's, who tended to suppress their feelings, but A/A's were also hypervigilant to negative affect in their partners.
- Although the communication skills of both groups were good outside the relationship, A/A's displayed poor assertiveness skills around their intimate partners, while D/C's had poor overall communication and both exhibited poor problem-solving skills and were resistant to productive negotiation or compromise.
- Attachment predicted violence by women, but not by men.
- Men and women both were more likely use violence against their partners when they, the perpetrators, feared abandonment. Women also tended to perpetrate violence upon partners high in abandonment anxiety.
- For both sexes, the association between one's abandonment anxiety and their use of violence was significant only when the partner was uncomfortable with closeness.

Couple interaction and communication was thus found to be a mediating variable between attachment and violence, lending credence to a systemic interpretation of partner violence:

Attachment security may interact with couple communication to create an environment in which violence is more likely to occur. For example, individuals who are anxious over abandonment may perceive their partner's withdrawal from conflict as highly threatening (relative to those who are securely attached), because withdrawal is interpreted as an act of emotional abandonment. Violence may then be

used as a means of preventing the distancing behavior of partners. Alternatively, a person using withdrawal to escape a distressing conflict interaction may be pursued by the partner (i.e., the demand-withdrawn pattern of interaction). In this case, a person who is insecurely attached may be so distressed by this ‘pursuit’ that he or she uses violence as a means of halting the partner’s pursuit. However, in both cases, it is the interaction between individuals’ attachment and couple communication patterns that predicts the occurrence of violence (Roberts & Noller, 1998, p. 327).

A subsequent study of dating couples by Bookwala (2002) echoed the findings of Roberts and Noller, that the most violent pairings consist of a fearful attachment type and a preoccupied attachment type. In many cases, such pairs fall along gender lines (refer to Neidig’s observations in the previous section on “demand-withdraw patterns), with the man taking the D/C role and the woman taking the A/A role. But these roles are often reversed. Partner violence is multi-determined, and cannot entirely be explained by either an attachment paradigm or gender role socialization.

Bookwala also found that propensity for violence was high when a preoccupied attachment style was paired with another preoccupied attachment type. Even securely attached individuals became aggressive when frustrated by a dismissive partner. Of course, violence perpetrated by either partner, whatever the underlying reason, dramatically increases stress in the relationship, and that stress is highly correlated with intimate partner violence. We know that the use of violence by one individual is predictive of future violence, by that same individual or by their partner (Straus, 1990).

#### **Dimensions of Intimate Partner Attachment**

Attachment Type	Intimacy/abandonment orientation	Views of self and partner	DV type
Secure	Low anxiety over abandonment Low avoidance of intimacy/ low discomfort with closeness	Positive view of self Positive view of partner	Family only
Preoccupied	High anxiety over abandonment Low avoidance of intimacy/ low discomfort with closeness	Negative view of self Positive view of partner	Family only
Dismissing	Low anxiety over abandonment High avoidance of intimacy/ high discomfort with closeness	Positive view of self Negative view of partner	Generally-violent/antisocial
Fearful	High anxiety over abandonment High avoidance of intimacy/ High discomfort with closeness	Negative view of self Negative view of partner	Borderline

## TYOLOGIES OF VIOLENT RELATIONSHIPS

Partner violence involves two individuals, and much of it is mutual. Typologies such as Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart's are therefore limited. The three typologies below expand upon those models, and provide an understanding of the dynamics of violent relationships

1. Johnson's (2000) model, an attempt to reconcile survey data showing comparable rates of violence between the sexes (e.g., NFVS), and agency/archival data, which often show a high degree of gender asymmetry, was derived from both community and court-mandated/shelter samples

His four categories, based on physical violence, coercive control and degree of mutuality, are as follows:

Mutual violent control - Both parties are violent and controlling

Intimate terrorism - Only one person is violent and controlling. High number of, and more severe, assaults

Violent resistance - One person is both violent and controlling; the other is violent (assumed to be in response to the other)

Common couple violence - Both parties are violent, but neither is controlling. Lesser number of, and less severe, assaults

Johnson determined that "intimate terrorism" represents only 11% of all couple violence, and that it is perpetrated by the man in 97% of the cases. "Violent resistance" and "mutual violent control" were estimated to be rare phenomena, the former overwhelmingly female. This model has some merit; however, conceptual and methodological flaws limit its usefulness:

*Methodological:* Only women were surveyed. Also, the questions on control were derived from the Duluth Model, which focus on male tactics

*Conceptual:* The model assumes a gender asymmetry in the use of coercive control that is unwarranted, as we will see in a later section

2. Johnston & Campbell (1993) have proposed an alternative typology, based on a sample of 140 couples engaged in child custody disputes. Unlike Johnson's their model was derived from in-depth interviews and

psychological testing, of both male and female combatants, as well as their children

The five categories are presented as follows, with a description of perpetrator and victim characteristics, and their percentage of the overall sample:

Ongoing or episodic male battering - Represents 13.6% of sample. Most closely resembles Walker's classic battering husband/battered wife syndrome. Violence unilateral, frequent and severe, and stems from internal, pathological causes. Chauvinistic attitudes. "Vulnerable to humiliation and often very dependent upon the women they abused, these men generally increased the intensity of the violence at the threat of separation" (p.194). Stalking is common. Victims fearful, chronically depressed, mostly submissive; but one subset of women were assertive, with good self-esteem

Female-initiated violence - An equal, 13.5% of the sample. Violence mostly unilateral, frequent, but not as severe as male-perpetrated battering in terms of physical injuries inflicted. Violence stems from internal, pathological causes. "The wife in these cases were assertive, willful women who neither looked nor described themselves as fearful" (p.195). Male victims depressed, passive-aggressive, inhibited in their ability to resolve conflict

Male-controlled interactive violence - Accounts for 19.3% of cases. Violence mutual, arising primarily from disagreement between the spouses. Escalation from mutual insults and verbal provocation into physical altercations. "Neither the woman nor the man appeared fearful of the other spouse. Both were assertive, feisty, and quick to respond to a perceived confrontation with a counterattack. Interestingly, in a subgroup of this profile of violence there seemed to be a degree of sexual excitement generated by their mutual brawls" (p.196). The man usually would physically dominate when the violence escalated to higher levels

Separation and postdivorce violence - The largest group, representing 46.7% of the sample. In these case, there had been no, or little, violence prior to the separation. "In general, physical violence was perpetrated by the partner who felt abandoned, and this could be either the man or the woman." Violence limited to a few incidents, some of them quite severe, during the separation and divorce. Perpetrators later expressed contrition and

embarrassment about their behavior

Psychotic and Paranoid Reactions - Only 5.7% of couples fell into this category. The separation triggered a psychotic break, wherein “the disturbed partners perceived their ex-spouses as aggressive, persecutory figures and their actions in the separation and request for custody as deeply humiliating attacks...Expecting trickery and deceit, their policy was to attack before being attacked” (p.198)

Johnston and Campbell’s typology does account for much of the heterogeneity and complexity of partner violence. The category “postdivorce and separation violence” does not, of course, apply to intact, non-divorcing relationships. For it to generalize to all couples, it would need to be re-formulated so as to broadly represent the phenomenon of infrequent, crisis-related violence

3. A limitation of these models is that the dynamics of partner violence are more complex and nuanced than what can fit into demarcated categories. The ideal scheme would place the various dimensions of violence on a continuum rather than in categories; and it would incorporate all the major dimensions of partner violence, as outlined by Holzworth-Munroe & Stuart. Obviously, this would be rather unwieldy. For now, we propose a simple model that incorporates severity of violence and degree of mutuality:

	<b>severe</b>	<b>battering</b>
	<b>common</b>	<b>battering</b>
<b>100%</b>		<b>100%</b>
<b>Unilateral</b>		<b>mutual</b>
	<b>high conflict -</b>	<b>violent</b>
	<b>high conflict -</b>	<b>nonviolent</b>

## BATTERING: ESCALATION AND DESISTANCE OVER TIME

- Most studies, including general surveys such as the NFVS, indicate that prevalence rates of partner violence are highest among younger age groups, and lower among older age groups. The few studies that have interviewed subjects over time support these findings. The National Youth Survey (Morse, 1995), for instance, a national longitudinal study with a sample of 1,700 respondents, showed a decline of male-perpetrated assaults from a high of 36.7% in 1983 to 20.2% in 1992, and a decline in female-perpetrated assaults from 48.0% to 27.9% in the same period
- O’Leary, et al.’s (1989) study of 272 young couples at three points in time also showed a decline in violence: 31% of men reported violence at pre-marriage, and 25% at 30 months. For women, the rates declined from 44% to 32%. Although overall rates declined, assaults at pre-marriage and at 18 months strongly predicted violence at 30 months, with a .59 probability for men and .72 for women
- The decline in partner violence over the life span is a statistical generality, but this trend does not exist in all relationships. Many couples who experience physical violence do so infrequently, and only under periods of intense stress, like Johnston’s “postdivorce separation trauma” types. Other couples experience an increase in physical assaults. Furthermore, a decline in physical assaults does not necessarily indicate a resolution to tensions and problems. Dutton (1998) notes the tendency of male borderlines to assault early in the relationship, such as the honeymoon. And in a 2-year follow-up study involving couples with a severely violent husband (Jacobsen et al., 1996) found that the physical assaults significantly decreased in the majority of cases, but the emotional abuse continued. The authors speculated that the men, having successfully established control over their partners with physical violence, could now maintain that control with non-physical abuse
- From 38% to 43% of female battering victims (Jacobsen, et al, 1996) leave the relationship. Those who do so tend to be more assertive than those who stay. The ones who stay remain for a variety of reasons, including financial dependence, desire to protect the children, reluctance to break up the family, dependency needs, and the belief that somehow they are responsible for the abuse. Another major motive is fear; the most dangerous time for a battered woman is the period during, and immediately after, she leaves the abuser (Craven, 1997)

- Because research on male victims is so scarce, it is unknown what percentage of men leave abusive relationships. However, anecdotal accounts (Cook, 1997; Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001) indicate that abused men stay for many of the same reasons as abused women, including guilt, dependency needs, responsibility to the family, protecting the children from mom's violence, and fear of losing them in a custody dispute. In addition, men fear the ridicule that comes from admitting to having been beaten by a woman
  
- Neidig and Friedman (1984) caution us about reinforcement principles, and how they may contribute to an escalation of violence over time. Violence often has short-term benefits and rewards, such as getting the partner to stop nagging and tension relief, and it often, sadly, leads to sexual intimacy. Thus, what may have began earlier in the relationship as minor, expressive violence (e.g., a push or slap in the heat of an escalating argument) may, over time, develop into more severe and instrumental (purposeful) violence. These authors also point out that verbal abuse, sometimes dismissed as mere "venting," serves to legitimize rage, and to increase anger and the possibility of physical violence, through behavioral rehearsal
  
- Minor assaults, especially when perpetrated by women, tend to be minimized. Straus (1993), however, reminds us that all physical violence is harmful, even a slap on the face for childish behavior:

The danger to women is shown by studies that find that minor violence by wives increases the probability of severe assaults by husbands...Sometimes this is immediate and severe retaliation. Regardless of whether that occurs, however, a more indirect and probably more important effect may be that...slapping acts out and reinforces the traditional tolerance of assault in marriage. The moral justification of assault implicit when a woman slaps or throws something at a partner for doing something outrageous reinforces his moral justification for slapping her when *she* is doing something outrageous, or when he is obstinate, nasty, or "not listening to reason" as he sees it...Women must insist on nonviolence from their sisters, just as they rightfully insist on it from men (p. 79)

## AVOIDING RESPONSIBILITY

Assaultive individuals avoid taking responsibility for their actions with the assistance of various defense mechanisms and attitudes. Here are a few:

DENIAL:

The assaultive individual pretends to not remember his or her behavior, and the damage it caused. Sometimes, both partners act as though nothing serious happened, and convince themselves that it won't happen again

REPRESSION:

Abusive behavior is not available to consciousness. The victim may remember every detail of the incident, but the perpetrator has blanked out the entire event, or can only remember fragmented segments, much of it unclear

PROJECTION:

The victim is blamed for the assault. Perpetrator says, "She hit me first," or "He made me punch him."

BLAMING SOMETHING ELSE

Violence is often blamed on the use of drugs or alcohol. Other excuses include: work stress, financial problems and the rigors of childcare. An all-purpose excuse is to simply say, "I lost control"

UNDOING

Assuming that profuse apologies absolve him/her of the need to change

ENTITLEMENT

Men who claim "king of the castle" privilege, or women who justify their violence on the basis that "he's a man, and he should take it"

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