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Intimate Partner Violence: A Guide for Social Workers: Part 1

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Part I

Understanding Intimate Partner Violence

Voices of Victims

[We had] confrontations over jealousy and...[because] I wasn't giving him enough money. I didn't work enough, and of course, I went and got two jobs because I thought, 'Well, maybe this will make it better. There will be more money.' Well, there was never going to be enough money.

Voices of Victims

Taking the telephone to work was not just him being mean, but that was him showing control. His control over me, saying, 'Well, you're not going to be able to talk with anybody.'

Voices of Victims

Yeah, he made it seem like I wasn't a good wife.... He used to say, 'If I don't get it at home, I'll get it somewhere else.' You know, things like that. And I'd start to think maybe I did do something wrong, maybe I'm not a good wife.

Introduction and Overview

- 1. The scope and prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV)**
- 2. Definitions and types of IPV**
- 3. Important issues about IPV**

Scope and Prevalence of IPV

How common is violence?

- **National incidence**

(National Coalition Against Domestic Violence)

- 1 in 4 women will experience IPV in their lifetime
- most cases of violence are not reported to police
- young women aged 16-24 at greatest risk
- 1/3 of murders of women committed by partners
- 1/3 of women seeking injury-related services in a hospital emergency room were injured by a current or former intimate partner

How common is violence?

- **International incidence**

(World Health Organization research)

- women around the world suffer physical and sexual violence by intimate partners at rates from 15% to as high as 71%
- in most geographic areas, the prevalence of IPV is between 29% and 62%

Definitions and Types of Violence

Distinctions and Typologies

Abuse: More Than Just Physical

- **Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person**
- **Includes any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone**

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Various Terms

- **Domestic Violence (DV)**: a pattern of abuse and coercive behaviors used to gain power and control over an intimate partner
- **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)**: abuse in all intimate relationships

Various Terms

- **Other terms**
 - men's violence against women
 - interpersonal violence
 - partner violence
 - battering

Physical Violence Types

- ***Intimate terrorism*** (battering)
 - usually male
 - the individual is violent and controlling
 - potential for more serious injury and escalation
- ***Situational couple violence***
 - the individual is violent, but not necessarily controlling
 - can be mutual

Michael Johnson, Penn State

Physical Violence Types

- ***Violent resistance***: the individual is reactively violent in the face of control and/or violence
- ***Mutual violent control***: both partners are violent and controlling

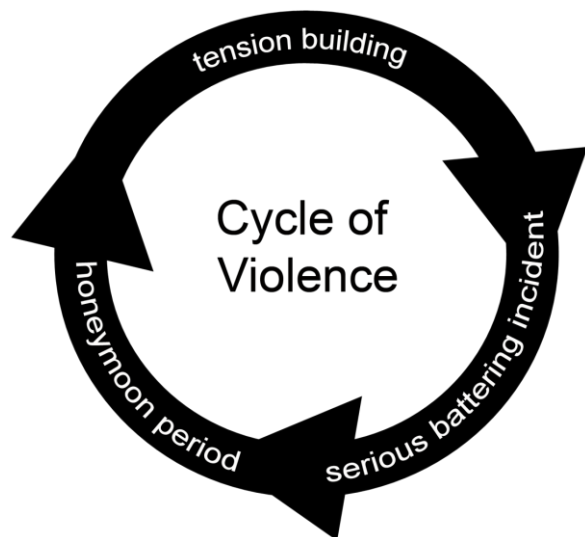
Michael Johnson, Penn State

More on Intimate Terrorism

- **Coercive control**
 - violence
 - a willingness to punish – intimidation
 - surveillance
 - wearing down resistance
 - undermining means to resist

Cycle of Violence

- **Stage 1: Tension Building**
- **Stage 2: Acute Battering**
- **Stage 3: Honeymoon**



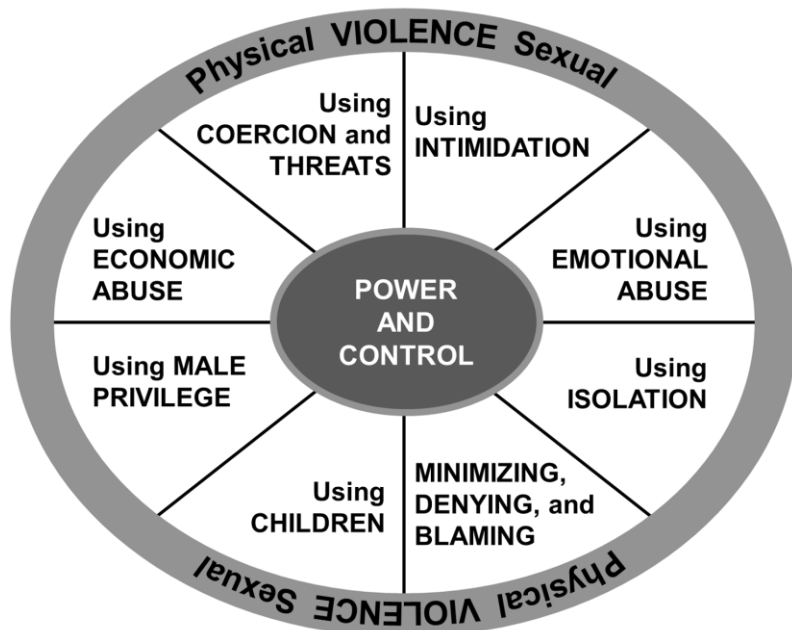
Other Typologies of Intimate Terrorists

- Types of violent perpetrators
 - family only
 - antisocial
 - dysphoric-borderline (needy or dependent)
- Dependent (Pit Bull)
- Antisocial (Cobras)

Holtzworth-Munroe; Dutton; Jacobsen and Gottman

Emotional or Psychological Abuse

- Isolation
- Monopolization
- Economic abuse
- Degradation
- Rigid sex role expectations
- Psychological destabilization (gaslighting)
- Withholding emotional responsivity
- Contempt
- Shaming
- Name calling
- Mocking



More on Situational Couple Violence

- The most common in surveys
- More amenable to treatment
- More likely to be bi-directional

Other Issues to Consider

- Abuse as a lack of intimate justice (ethical dynamics of caring, fairness, and equality)
(Jory & Anderson)
- Abuse as an attitude: “An act carried out with the *intention* of, or an act perceived as having the intention of, physically hurting another person.” (Steinmetz, 1987, p. 729)

Dating Violence

- As (or more) common as other forms of IPV – difficult to know prevalence
- Three main terms
 - dating violence
 - sexual assault
 - stalking

Sexual Assault

- **1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men have experienced an attempted or completed rape**
- **Nearly 7.8 million women have been raped by a partner at some point in their lives**
- **Sexual assault or forced sex occurs in approximately 40-45% of battering relationships**

Examples

Before I left, it was getting a lot more physical. He got on this rape kick.... To quote him, 'You're a wife so that word don't apply. You're too stuck up to give me what I want.' And he was drunk and slobbering and stumbling and threatening to call the police and shoot them so they'd shoot him...just crazy stuff.

Stalking

- **1 in 12 women and 1 in 45 men have been stalked in their lifetime**
- **81% of women stalked by a current or former intimate partner are also physically assaulted by that partner; 31% are also sexually assaulted by that partner**

**Working with Couples or Those in Relationships is Violence Work
(whether we realize it or not)**

Why does it happen?

Important Issues: Causes and Risk Factors

- **Partner abuse is a multicausal, multifaceted phenomenon – occurs in all types of couples**
- **Many myths about intimate partner violence**

Sample Myths

- **Victims ask for it**
- **IPV is caused by alcohol or drug use**
- **Women are just as abusive as men**
- **It doesn't affect the children**

Abuse is Complex

If you can not focus on the negative, things are always better. If you live in your dream world with the rainbow and all that stuff, it's always much easier to cope.... If he was bad about everything, then I had to be bad, too.

Abuse is Complex

They would think I was stupid for putting up with it. Shoot, I'm embarrassed. At least if it's on my arm or my legs, I can cover it up. I've walked around with black eyes or fat lips...I'm just getting over a fat lip here...they know and make me feel like an idiot because I stay with him. Nobody can figure it out.

Risk Factors

- **Substance and alcohol abuse**
- **Partner isolation (male)**
- **Violence in family of origin**
- **Stress (economic, general)**
- **Gender inequality**

***REGARDLESS OF RISK, PEOPLE
CHOOSE WHETHER OR NOT TO
ABUSE***

Important Issues:

What are the costs of IPV?

Costs

- Individual trauma
- Child trauma
- Social costs
- Economic costs

Individual Costs

I was powerless. I felt trapped and I felt like I was paralyzed. I couldn't get out of it and I started struggling with moral issues and spiritual issues and feeling like I wanted to get out of it. But honestly, I was so terrified of the process and the aftermath of what that would mean...it was easier to just stay in that situation and deal with [it] than to make things worse by getting out.

Individual Costs

I was pulled upstairs. I was pushed downstairs.... One of the worst was [when] I was eight months pregnant, and it started because I didn't want to have sex that night. And it just escalated to where I was standing in the hallway and he just picked me up and threw me into the bedroom, onto the bed, flat on my stomach. And he basically forced himself on me.

Individual Costs

One day I went to the mall and I had no idea what I liked anymore. Nothing. And that's when I realized you just totally lose your whole person.

Trauma

I'm never going to be able to close my eyes with another person [lying] beside me and not think, 'Are you going to hurt me? Are you going to jump on top of me? Are you going to force me to have sex with you?' I'm never not going to be able to do that. He's taken that away from me to the point that I don't even know if I could love anybody anymore.

Trauma

I still feel like I have a hard time confronting pretty much anybody for anything. I have a hard time saying what I feel in certain situations. Even if I know logically there's no reason for me to be afraid in a situation or of a particular person. There's something in me that has been conditioned to try and stop myself, to not rock the boat, and to pacify.

Self-Doubt – Blame

“When he’d get real stressed out, he’d freak out and then do the apologizing thing and then he’d turn around and say, ‘Well it’s your fault anyway.’ Make it make a whole lot of sense. To make it really look like it was my fault. That just kept on and on until I started believing that.”

Coping and Minimization

Physical violence is so inconsistent with expectations of an intimate partner that most women perceive the first instance as an exceptional aberration. A tremendous emotional commitment is threatened by recognition of battering, and most women protect that commitment through techniques of rationalization.

Coping and Minimization

These techniques draw on cultural scripts, excuses by abusers, and reactions of acquaintances and institutional actors to provide these women with accounts of the battering that preserve the image of intimacy between the partners.

Health Costs

- Chronic pain
- Stress-related problems
- Headaches
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Gynecological problems
- Depression/anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Suicide
- Self-esteem damage

Effects on Children

- **Physical abuse risk**
- **Emotional damage**
- **Guilt/anxiety**
- **Anger**
- **Internalized/externalized behavior**

Social Costs

- **Burden on community**
- **Culture of violence reinforced**
- **Isolation**
- **Fear**

Economic Impact

- **The cost of intimate partner violence exceeds \$5.8 billion each year, \$4.1 billion of which is for direct medical and mental health services**
- **Victims of intimate partner violence lost almost 8 million days of paid work because of the violence perpetrated against them by current or former husbands, boyfriends, and dates – this loss is the equivalent of more than 32,000 full-time jobs and almost 5.6 million days of household productivity as a result of violence**
- **There are 16,800 homicides and 2.2 million (medically treated) injuries due to intimate partner violence annually, which costs \$37 billion**

Other Things That Come Up

Important Issues:

The Attitude of the Abuser

Intentionality: Stance

When I'm in this mode, it's like she's nothing to me. I'm superior. I really don't want to be with her. I want to hurt her.

Intentionality: Stance

[I would do] anything that I could think of: physical; emotional things that I could say; put her down in every way that I possibly could; say everything that I possibly could to hurt her; make her cry....

Intentionality: Stance

I lash out and want to either make him hurt or show him how badly I'm hurting.

Intentionality: Stance

I'm angry and hurt so I'm going to let it out...I want you to know...how upset I am...If I can't inflict this on you, like make you upset too, you're at least going to know how upset I am.

Intentionality: Control

I would start off small, grabbing her arm as she's trying to walk away, not put too much force behind my actions, to instigate her to go even further so that I could justify going a little bit further myself, when she pushes me too hard.... In my mind I say, 'Thank you for giving me what I wanted, pushing me. You hit me hard so I'm gonna come back and I'm gonna hit you just as hard or even harder.' So I'd push back. I'd do whatever I wanted....

Intentionality: Control

It's like the sting of the slap is making me grin...it's like... 'You don't know what the heck you just did. It's just what I wanted.... Thank you.' Now I can take it a step further myself, and I'll lash out on her [with] all the anger, frustration I'm feeling at the moment.

Intentionality: Control

I try to be [laughing]...very cruel, devilish. The darker side of me will come out. I'm a very manipulative person when I want to be.

Distortions and Rationalizations

If I put a bruise on her arm, I'd say, 'Well, you know you bruise easily,' when I know that I actually hit her harder than I was supposed to. Because sometimes she bruises easy, and I try to use that to my advantage.

Distortions and Rationalizations

I'd say, 'Well, I wouldn't have done it if you wouldn't have hit me. If you wouldn't have touched me I wouldn't have touched you, and we'd be okay.'

Distortions and Rationalizations

Well it didn't hurt. I just pushed you to the ground. It didn't hurt you.

Gender and Violence

What about women who are violent?

Gender and Violence

- **In one survey, 12.1% of women and 11.3% of men reported having committed at least one violent act against their spouses in the preceding year (Hampton, Gelles, and Harrop, 1989)**
- **However, women are much more likely to get severely hurt, and are much more likely to be terrorized/traumatized/controlled by their partner**

R: *Did you ever exaggerate his good qualities or the good qualities of your relationship in order to help yourself feel better?*

P: *Yeah, the good father thing...I mean I'm not saying he's an awful father, even now that we're divorced. He was always there. He changed diapers, and even now, I mean, he's a good dad, but he's not because he's very self-absorbed. I'd say, 'Yeah, he works really hard. Yeah, he's moved up at his job. Yeah, he does really great. Yeah, he makes a lot of money.'*

Well, he's the man so he should be in control because...[that is] how he grew up...his father was that way. So, I think his perception is that the man is always in charge. And the man takes control, and the woman is to be submissive. And, of course, that's the way I thought I was supposed to be...not just because of what I saw growing up, but...that's the image that I grew up seeing. Not necessarily with my mother, but just overall. You know, 'I'm supposed to do what he said,' or even hearing that religiously....

Recap: Common Threads and Underlying Issues

- **Control as a key issue**
- **Intentionality**
- **Contempt**
- **Distortion**

Resources

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:
800-799-SAFE (7233)**
- **National Resource Center on IPV:
<https://www.nrcdv.org/>**

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