

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE – AN EXPLORATION OF THE LITERATURE

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## **Key Points:**

- The last 15 years has seen a growing body of research emphasising that not all intimate partner violence (IPV) is the same. There are key differences in terms of the presence of control, gender perpetration, severity and impact.
- Work on differentiation is diverse. It includes research exploring different types of IPV, as well as different types of male and female perpetrators of IPV.
- There is great interest in the potential of differentiation to assist in more appropriately targeted interventions for victims, perpetrators and any children of the relationship. In particular, in the area of family law in Australia, along with Canada and the United States, there has been some interest expressed in the potential for differentiation to provide for more nuanced responses that take account of the type of violence or perpetrator when making determinations about ongoing parenting arrangements.
- A range of important concerns and criticisms have been raised about the methodology of various typologies, as well as concerns about their translation into practice. They suggest that there is still much more work to be done on the articulation of typologies before a useful tool can be developed to assist delineation in practice.

## **INTRODUCTION**

*It is no longer scientifically or ethically acceptable to speak of domestic violence without specifying, loudly and clearly, the type of violence to which we refer (Johnson 2005, p. 1126).*

A body of research has grown over the past fifteen years emphasising that intimate heterosexual<sup>1</sup> partner violence (IPV)<sup>2</sup> is not homogenous but rather heterogeneous, with key differences in type, gender, motivation, severity and impact. This research is diverse. It includes: analysis of different kinds of IPV (for example, Johnson 2008; Johnston & Campbell 1993; Pence & Dasgupta 2006); different types of male perpetrators (for example, Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart 1994; Jacobson & Gottman 1998); and analysis of different female perpetrators of IPV (for example, Miller & Meloy 2006; Swan & Snow 2003).

In various ways, this research seeks to highlight differences in the perpetration of IPV, for example: whether the use of violence is motivated by coercive control; whether it is one-off or conflict based; whether the violence is used in response to person's own experience of violence; whether the person uses violence beyond the family setting; and whether there are other factors (for example, psychological) which are also important to understanding that person's use of violence. By exploring these questions, researchers have identified key differences in the use of IPV and have subsequently formulated different types or categories of IPV.

The proponents of typologies argue that recognising these differences is important to future work on IPV and that differentiation can lead to a range of potential benefits. These include: better designed and articulated research; more appropriate policy formation; and the development of better targeted

services and programs for those that use violence, as well as for those that experience it (Cavanaugh & Gelles 2005; Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart 1994; Jacobson & Gottman 1998; Kelly & Johnson 2008; Pence & Dasgupta 2006; Ver Steegh & Dalton 2008).

This work on differentiation is not without debate (see Bailey et al. 2010; Kaye et al. 2003; Meier 2007; Wangmann 2008; see also Ver Steegh & Dalton 2008). A wide range of concerns and criticisms have been raised, including questions about methodology (for example, how was the typology formed; how is coercive control operationalised; is it possible to draw clear boundaries between types?) and concerns about how these typologies are translated into practice, such as the risks associated with misapplication and concerns about the skills and knowledge of the people who are tasked to make these assessments. Many of these concerns centre on whether the use of typologies will enhance or diminish the safety of those who experience IPV (predominantly women and children).

As, overwhelmingly, the research on IPV differentiation and typologies comes from the United States (US), much of the material explored in this literature review emanates from that jurisdiction. However, there is considerable interest in this research in Australia, particularly from practitioners and researchers in the family law arena (see ALRC & NSWLRC 2010; Altobelli 2009; Chisholm 2009; Family Law Council 2009; Moloney et al. 2007). The use of typologies within the Australian family law arena has continued apace, with a small number of judicial officers in the family law system relying on, or referring to, this research in their decisions,<sup>3</sup> and the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia specifically advocating this approach in their recent *Family Violence Best Practice Policy* (2011).<sup>4</sup>

Despite this interest within family law, there is little understanding about the nature of the various typologies, how they were developed and the strengths and limitations of the differing approaches. This literature review aims to fill some of these gaps. It draws together the disparate strands of research

on differentiation, providing an overview of each typology and its development, as well as providing an outline of the key concerns and criticism raised about them. The Issues Paper is divided into three parts:

1. Research on typologies or differentiation:
  - Research on different types of IPV (with a focus on the work of Michael Johnson and colleagues, and Janet Johnston and colleagues)
  - Research on different types of male perpetrators of IPV (with a focus on the work of Amy Holtzworth-Munroe and colleagues, and Neil Jacobson and John Gottman)
  - Research on different types of female perpetrators of IPV (with a focus on the work of Suzanne Swan and colleagues, Susan Miller and Michelle Meloy)
2. Concerns about, and limitations with, the proposed typologies:
  - Methodological concerns
  - Practice concerns
  - Areas that require further investigation
3. Concluding remarks.

Ultimately, research on differentiation and commentary on that work are concerned with how IPV is defined and understood, that is, the extent to which we look at incidents; what we think incidents tell us about the experience of violence; and an increasing acknowledgment that context is important in understanding IPV. Various disciplines and professionals have adopted different definitions in their work, in particular, different approaches to the role of gender in understanding perpetration and victimisation. This wider definitional and theoretical context of how IPV is understood is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is important to recognise that work on typologies sits within, and reflects on, some of these differences in definition.

## PART I: RESEARCH ON TYPOLOGIES OR DIFFERENTIATION

### Different types of IPV

Since the 1990s, a number of researchers have argued that IPV is not a 'unitary phenomenon and that different types of partner violence [are]... apparent in different contexts, samples, and methodologies' (Kelly & Johnson 2008, p. 480). This section focuses on the work of Michael Johnson and colleagues, and Janet Johnston and colleagues. However, many other researchers have made similar observations. For example, Murray Straus (1983) sought to distinguish between 'ordinary violence' and more serious forms of violence between intimates and Clare Dalton and colleagues (2003), drawing on the work of Desmond Ellis and Noreen Stuckless (1996), have suggested a distinction between 'conflict-initiated violence' and 'control-initiated violence'.

#### *The work of Michael Johnson & colleagues*

Michael Johnson's work on typologies and IPV is arguably the most notable and extensive. Indeed, Johnson's work has been described as 'the most influential of the typologies proposed in the past two decades' (Anderson 2009, p. 532). Johnson first posited that there were different types of IPV in the early 1990s and since that time has been writing extensively on this conceptualisation, further developing and refining his approach.

Initially, Johnson argued that there were two distinct forms of IPV: 'patriarchal terrorism' and 'common couple violence' (1995). Over time, on his own and with colleagues, Johnson has expanded his typology. In 2000, with Kathleen Ferraro, Johnson outlined four categories of IPV: intimate terrorism; violent resistance; common couple violence; and mutual violent control. In his most recent work with Joan Kelly (Kelly & Johnson 2008), five distinct forms of IPV have been outlined:<sup>5</sup>

- **Coercive controlling violence.** This term is used to describe the form of IPV that is most commonly conjured by the term domestic violence, that is, violence primarily perpetrated by a man against his female partner in order to control her. It involves a 'pattern of emotionally abusive intimidation, coercion, and control coupled with physical violence...' (Kelly &
- Johnson 2008, p. 476). Initially, Johnson named this category 'patriarchal terrorism' and later 'intimate terrorism'; this was amended in recognition that 'not all coercive control was rooted in patriarchal structures and attitudes, nor perpetrated exclusively by men' (p. 479). The term 'terrorism' was also removed due to the reluctance of the legal system to employ such language (p. 479).
- **Violent resistance.** This form of violence is used by a person in response to coercive controlling violence. Kelly and Johnson note that other researchers may also refer to this as 'female resistance, resistive/reactive violence, and, of course, self defense' (2008, p. 479). In this category, the person, typically a woman, uses violence in order to resist or react to the coercive controlling violence used against them. Johnson and Ferraro (2000, p. 949) do not use the label 'self-defence', as this has a particular meaning in law and fails to capture the wide range of ways in which women may respond to coercive controlling violence.
- **Situational couple violence.** This form of violence is not motivated by control, rather it is used in response to a particular conflict or situation. It is perpetrated equally by men and women, and Johnson suggests that it is '[p]robably the most common type of partner violence' (2008, p. 11). Originally named 'common couple violence', this terminology was 'abandoned' as it was interpreted as 'minimizing the dangers of such violence' (Kelly & Johnson 2008, p. 479). Such abuse is generally minor and infrequent. However, in some cases it can also involve serious violence that causes injury (Johnson 2008, p. 11). Even though men and women may equally perpetrate this form of violence, it can still have a gendered impact with women being more likely to sustain injuries and to be fearful of their partner (p. 21).
- **Separation-instigated violence.** This category reflects violence that has occurred in the context of separation. There is no history of violence nor does it continue after separation, rather it is confined to the period of separation and reflects the trauma or context of that event. This type of violence is a sub-set of situational couple violence (Hardesty et al. forthcoming).
- **Mutual violent control.** This category describes relationships in which both partners use violence to control the other and, hence, can be viewed as 'two intimate terrorists battling for control'

(Johnson & Ferraro 2000, p. 950). This form of violence is 'rare' and little is known about it (p. 950). It is important to understand that this is not about the 'mutual' use of violence but rather mutual use of coercive controlling violence (Johnson 2008, p. 12).

These different types of violence vary by reference to the presence or absence of coercive control, not by the frequency or seriousness of the violence (Johnson & Leone 2005, p. 324). It is important to note that Johnson (2008, p. 11) is talking about the *pattern* of control throughout the relationship, not simply in terms of a particular incident. While the presence or absence of control is central to how Johnson makes distinctions, this is in addition to the presence of violence. Physical violence is present across all five types posited by Johnson and the presence or absence of other controlling acts is used to make delineations. The emphasis on physical violence and the way that control is operationalised is an area of criticism and is explored in Part III.

Johnson's work on typologies was developed in response to the starkly different findings generated by feminist researchers and family violence researchers using act-based survey instruments,<sup>6</sup> that is, the different sides to the question whether men and women are equally violent in their intimate relationships. Family violence researchers using act-based survey instruments (most notably the Conflict Tactics Scales, CTS<sup>7</sup>), with large community or population samples, have found that men and women use violence at equal rates (that is, that it is symmetrical), and in some studies that women use violence at even greater rates than men (Straus 1990; Headey et al. 1999; Fergusson et al. 2005). Numerous studies, using the same or similar research instruments, have reached this result.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, feminist research, largely employing qualitative research methods accessing clinical or agency samples (via refuges, police, courts or hospitals) has argued that IPV is asymmetrical, with women the predominant victims.<sup>9</sup>

Faced with these disparate and seemingly irreconcilable findings, Johnson (2008, pp. 18-23) argues that this is not an either/or debate; rather, because of the samples that they rely upon, the two groups of researchers are tapping into entirely different populations. Johnson argues that family violence researchers capture a particular type of IPV, 'situational couple violence'. This is because the sample relied upon (randomised population surveys) is assumed to produce unbiased results but is biased

by the rate of refusal. Victims of coercive control may be more likely to refuse to participate as a result of fear, particularly if the perpetrator is present at the time the survey was conducted (Johnson 2008, p. 19).<sup>10</sup> Further, Johnson argues that feminist research that relies on clinical or agency samples is biased towards capturing cases of 'coercive controlling violence', as these cases are typically those which are reported to the police or cause women to seek refuge accommodation or medical assistance (p. 18).

This is a persuasive argument. However, it is worth noting that many of the criticisms of CTS-based research (or act based research more generally) extend beyond this resolution. They go to the concept formation underpinning CTS-based research: its basis in conflict theory (see Bagshaw & Chung 2000, p. 56; DeKeseredy & Schwartz 1988, pp. 2-3; Ferraro 2006, p. 40; Yllö 1993, pp. 51-53); the initial emphasis on physical acts of violence (DeKeseredy & Schwartz 1998, pp. 3-4; Dobash & Dobash 2004, pp. 329-330); the assessment of discrete acts devoid of context (Bagshaw & Chung 2000, pp. 5-6; DeKeseredy & Schwartz 1998, pp. 3-4; Dobash & Dobash 2004, pp. 327-328); the fact that it is generally confined to asking about acts that took place in the past year (Bagshaw & Chung 2000, p. 6; Kimmel 2002, p. 1341); its discounting of the way in which different acts might have different meanings in different cultures (Dasgupta 2002, p. 1371-72); and assumptions that men and women provide 'unbiased, reliable accounts of their own violent behaviour and that of their partner' (Dobash & Dobash 2004, p. 327).

Johnson tested his theory by conducting secondary data analysis. While there are limitations with this approach (Boslaugh 2007, pp. 4-5; Johnson 2008, pp. 91-92; Kaye et al. 2003, p. 14) (for example, because the data set relied on was not specifically designed to test the concepts which are now being explored), Johnson argues that one of the benefits is that if 'one finds similar patterns from study to study, one can be confident that they are not an artefact of the way one measured his/her concepts' (2008, p. 92). One of the datasets Johnson has explored extensively is the 'Pittsburgh data' (Frieze & Browne 1989; Frieze & McHugh 1992), which includes community and clinical (court and shelter) samples. Through an analysis of this data, Johnson confirmed his typology. Men and women in the community sample were more likely to use situational couple violence (86% of the cases), when compared to men and women in the clinical samples (2008, pp. 20-21). In the

clinical samples, Johnson found that more men were involved in intimate terrorism (the language Johnson used at this time) than women, whereas women were more likely to have used violent resistance or situational couple violence (for example, in the court sample 46% of men and 7% of women were classified as intimate terrorists, and 37% of men and 31% of women were classified as using situational couple violence, while a further 41% of women were classified as using violent resistance) (2008, pp. 20-21). However, Johnson was surprised at the extent of situational couple violence in the clinical samples. He explains this unexpected result by the fact that even situational couple violence can be serious violence, resulting in injuries (as various community surveys have revealed) (2008, p. 21).

Research conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) (for example, Graham-Kevan & Archer 2003) has lent broad support to Johnson's differentiation between coercive controlling violence and situational couple violence. To a more limited extent, support has also been given by Frye et al. (2006) in the US, who posed questions for future research regarding whether coercive controlling violence exists along a continuum and raised the possibility that moderate and low levels of control may also be important in delineating types of IPV.

Ellen Pence and Shamita Das Dasgupta (2006) from the Duluth program in Minnesota, US have also drawn distinctions that largely correspond to Johnson's work. Three of the categories outlined in their research directly correspond with Johnson's: (1) battering (coercive controlling violence); (2) resistive/reactive violence (violent resistance); and (3) situational violence (situational couple violence). Pence and Dasgupta add two further categories: (4) pathological violence (that is, violence caused by pathologies such as mental illness, extensive abuse of alcohol and other drugs where the treatment of such pathologies will address the violence); and (5) anti-social violence (where the perpetrator uses violence outside the family).

Over a ten year period assessing men and women involved in criminal and civil proceedings in Duluth, Pence and Dasgupta (2006, p. 15) found that 95% of men were batterers, with a 'significant number being alcohol addicted and/or behaviourally anti-social'. They also found that, overwhelming, the woman used 'resistive violence, often simultaneously linked to pathological violence connected to drug and alcohol addiction' (p. 15). A further 4% of men appeared to use violence 'exclusively because

of substance addition' (p. 15). The authors note that there is likely to be a 'lower percentage of "batterers"' in samples not derived from the court system (p. 15). Like Johnson, Pence and Dasgupta emphasise the 'concept of power and control', noting that differentiation is not meant to 'undercut the centrality' of that theoretical approach, rather that it is about recognising that not every act of violence by an intimate partner is 'battering' (p. 4).

The Wingspread Conference on Domestic Violence and Family Courts was a highly significant event in the debate about typologies and the formulation of areas of agreement in the context of family law. The conference articulated categories of IPV, largely corresponding with Johnson's typology: 'violence used by a perpetrator in the exercise of coercive control over the victim'; 'violent resistance or self-defense'; 'violence driven by conflict'; and 'separation-instigated violence' (Ver Steegh & Dalton 2008, p. 458). The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts organised the conference, held in February 2007, bringing together 37 practitioners and researchers 'to discuss ways to meet more effectively the needs of families experiencing domestic violence' (pp. 454-455). Attendees included 'members of the domestic violence advocacy community; family court judges and administrators; lawyers and mental health, dispute resolution and other professionals working in the family court system; and academics from the fields of law and social science' (p. 455). This conference was seen as ground breaking and has been referred to very positively in the Australian literature (Altobelli 2009, p. 43; Chisholm 2009, p. 35-41; Family Law Council 2009. See also Moloney et al. 2008, pp. 294-295).

The recent best practice principles document released by the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Magistrates Court of Australia (2011, p. 6) also refers to types of IPV that accords with Johnson's typology.<sup>11</sup>

### **The work of Janet Johnston and colleagues**

Janet Johnston is a notable researcher in the area of differentiation. With Linda Campbell (1993), Johnston identified four profiles of 'interparental violence' on the basis of three primary motivations for the use of violence (within the perpetrator him/herself, within the interactions between the couple and in the context of 'potent stressors'<sup>12</sup>):

- **Ongoing or episodic battering by males.** Like Johnson's 'coercive controlling violence', this type of violence 'resembles the battering spouse/ battered wife syndrome' (Johnston & Campbell 1993, p. 193). The male perpetrator in this category has a 'low tolerance for frustration, ... problems with impulse control, and [are]... angry, possessive, [and]... jealous [in response to] ... any perceived threat to their potency, masculinity, and "proprietary male rights"' (p. 193). Thus, this category describes more severe violence used to control the woman; it is chronic and continues after separation. Johnston and Campbell note that women who are victims of this form of violence generally do not 'provoke, initiate or escalate' the violence 'at least not intentionally' and often live in fear not knowing when the 'next attack might occur' (pp. 193-194).
- **Female-initiated violence.** This category describes physical violence initiated by women that appears 'to have its source within their own intolerable internal states of tension and stress' (Johnston & Campbell 1993, p. 195). It is generated in response to the male partner's 'passivity or failure to provide in some way' (p. 195). Johnston and Campbell note that these women 'would nag, badger, and eventually throw objects at or pummel the husband in the hope of provoking some action' (p. 195).
- **Male-controlled interactive violence.** This category describes violence that arises in response to a specific 'conflict of interest or disagreement' (Johnston & Campbell 1993, p. 195). It usually commences with mutual verbal abuse but escalates to involve physical violence. Johnston and Campbell note that while both parties might initiate the physical incident 'the overriding response by the man was to assert control and prevail by physically dominating and overpowering the woman' (p. 195). It is contrasted to the first category as it does not entail 'beat[ing] up' but rather just enough force 'necessary to gaining ... [the man's] goal of compliance' (p. 196). While this form of violence might be repeated and may be severe, it is likely to cease on separation.
- **Separation or post divorce violence.** This describes 'uncharacteristic acts of violence' in response to separation or 'traumatic post divorce events...' (Johnston & Campbell 1993, p. 196). There is no history of violence in the relationship.

Within the first two categories, Johnston and Campbell identified a further subgroup: perpetrators with 'psychotic and paranoid reactions' (1993, p. 197-198). For these perpetrators, the 'violence was generated by disordered thinking and serious distortions of reality that involved paranoid conspiracy theories' (p. 197). This may be linked to drug use or mental health issues. The violence here could be moderate to severe and unpredictable (hence, very frightening).

Johnston and Campbell developed these profiles through two separate studies of divorcing parents who were involved in disputes over parenting following the breakdown of the relationship. The first study involved 80 parents with 100 children, and the second 60 parents with 75 children. All the families 'were referred by family courts in the San Francisco Bay area for counselling and mediation' (1993, p. 192). The focus of the two studies was on the resolution of the parenting arrangements, rather than the issue of violence. However, unsurprisingly, a detailed account of the violence was gathered in the research process. It is important to note that the definition of violence operationalised in this research was physical violence.

Many similarities and overlaps can be clearly seen in the work of Michael Johnson and Janet Johnston, and it is worth noting that Johnston's most recent book with colleagues employs Johnson's terminology, rather than that outlined above (2009).

## Research on different types of male perpetrators of IPV

A number of researchers have also explored whether there are different types of male perpetrators of heterosexual IPV. This research, and the recognition that male perpetrators are not a homogenous group, has been long-standing with research published in the 1970s (Faulk 1974; Elbow 1977), 1980s (Caesar 1986; Hamberger & Hastings 1986; Gondolf, 1988), and growing extensively in the 1990s. This literature review will focus on the work of Amy Holtzworth-Munroe and colleagues, and Neil Jacobson and John Gottman.

### *The work of Holtzworth-Munroe and colleagues*

Amy Holtzworth-Munroe and Gregory Stuart (1994) proposed three types of male perpetrators of IPV. This typology was developed through a review of the existing literature on heterogeneity in male

perpetrators that revealed concurrence along three 'dimensions': severity of the violence used; whether violence was confined to the family setting; and whether the perpetrator had any 'psychopathology or personality disorders'. As a result, Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart outlined three major types of male perpetrators of IPV:

- **Family only.** This category describes those male perpetrators who generally only use violence against family members. The violence tends to be less severe and the man is 'less likely to engage in psychological and sexual abuse' (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart 1994, p. 481). These men also 'evidence little psychopathology and either no personality disorder or a passive-dependent personality disorder' (pp. 481-482). The authors estimated that approximately half of male perpetrators drawn from community and treatment samples would fit this profile (p. 482).
- **Dysphoric/ borderline batterers.** This category describes those men who engage in 'moderate to severe wife abuse, including psychological and sexual abuse' (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart 1994, p. 482). These men generally confine their violence within the family, however there may be some violence perpetrated outside the family setting.

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*These men are the most dysphoric, psychologically distressed, and emotionally volatile. They may evidence borderline and schizoid personality characteristics and may have problems with alcohol and drug abuse (p. 482).*

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The authors estimated that approximately one-quarter of batterer samples would be comprised of this type of perpetrator (p. 482).

- **Generally violent/ antisocial batterers.** This describes those men who engage in 'moderate to severe marital violence, including psychological and sexual abuse' (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart 1994, p. 482). These men are more likely than the other two types of perpetrators to use violence outside the family. As a result, these men tend to have more extensive criminal records. They are also 'likely to have problems with alcohol and drug abuse, and are the most likely to have an antisocial personality disorder or psychopathy' (p. 482). The authors estimate that one-quarter of batterer samples would be comprised of this type of perpetrator (p. 482).

This typology was later extended to include a fourth category: 'low level antisocial' batterers who fall between the family only category and the generally violent/antisocial category (Holtzworth-Munroe et al. 2000). Holtzworth-Munroe and colleagues see this further delineation as important as it aided the clarification that the 'family only' category perpetrated much less serious and less frequent forms of violence, thus meaning that this category resembles the 'less violent men found in studies of community samples' (2000, p. 1016). Holtzworth-Munroe and colleagues suggest then 'that it is possible to conceptualise these three violent clusters [family only, low-level antisocial, and generally violent/antisocial] as following along a continuum of antisociality. ...[whereas] the ...[borderline/dysphoric] cannot be so easily placed along this continuum' (p. 1016).

Holtzworth-Munroe and Jeffrey Meehan noted that research conducted since 1994 broadly supports this typology (2004, p. 1373).

### **The work of Jacobson and Gottman**

Jacobson and Gottman (1998) took a different approach examining physiological changes in male perpetrators when they use violence. This study involved couples recruited via a public advertisement who were then divided into groups reflecting the male partner's use of violence (p. 24):

- those who were batterers (that is, where the woman reported six or more incidents of 'low-level violence' in the past year, such as pushing or slapping, or two or more incidents of 'high-level violence', such as kicking or hitting with a fist [n=63])
- those that exhibited some violence but insufficient to be classified as battering (n=27)
- couples dissatisfied with their marriage but where there was no violence (n=33)
- those who were happily married (n=20).

This enabled comparison across a range of factors and an ability to control for matters such as marital dissatisfaction and stress.

The primary subject of Jacobson and Gottman's book is the group classified as 'batterers'. Jacobson and Gottman defined battering as:

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*... physical aggression with a purpose: that purpose is to control, intimidate, and subjugate another human being. Battering is always accompanied by emotional abuse, is often*

*accompanied by injury, and is virtually always associated with fear and even terror on the part of the battered woman (1998, p. 25).*

Jacobson and Gottman employed multiple methods in their study: laboratory observations of non-violent arguments; structured interviews with male perpetrators and their female victims; psychiatric assessments of both parties; assessment of both parties for 'emotional arousal at the physiological level' (for example, heart rate, blood flow, bodily movements, sweating) during an argument. This last stage was videotaped and played back to participants who were asked how they were feeling at various stages during the argument. Most of these steps were repeated two years later to assess stability in the relationship and use of violence.

As a result of this work they identified two types of male perpetrators of IPV:

- **The 'Cobra'** whose heart rate decreased when using violence. This represented 20% of the batterers examined and was a 'counterintuitive' result as '[t]hese men looked aggressive, ... sounded aggressive, ... acted aggressively: yet internally they were calming down' (1998, p. 28). Not only was the heart rate different between this group and the 'Pit Bulls', the 'Cobras' were also more likely to be 'emotionally aggressive toward their wives at the very start of the interaction' and 'more severely violent than the other batterers' (that is, they had used or threatened to use weapons against their spouse) (p. 29). 'The Cobras showed evidence of severe antisocial, criminal-like traits, and were also highly sadistic in their aggression' (p. 30). They were also more violent toward people outside the family. Female partners were less likely to leave these relationships, with none having separated two years later compared to half of the Pit Bull relationships having ended (p. 30).
- **The 'Pit Bull'** whose heart rate increased. These men built up their anger and aggression during an argument. In these interactions, the female spouse 'did not appear as intimidated' as the 'wives of the Cobras' and 'often argued as vociferously as their husbands did' (1998, p. 30). Unlike the Cobras, Pit Bulls were more 'emotionally dependent' on their wives, they feared 'abandonment' and, therefore, were likely to have 'jealous rages' and to seek to 'deprive their partners of an independent life' (p. 38). Pit Bulls

were more likely than Cobras to confine their use of violence to the family, particularly to their intimate partners (p. 38).

While there are many differences between the two types of batterers, control remains central to the exercise of violence for both groups:

*The Pit Bulls dominate their wives in any way they can, and need control as much as the Cobras do, but for different reasons. The Pit Bulls are motivated by fear of being left, while the Cobras are motivated by a desire to get as much immediate gratification as possible. The Pit Bulls, although somewhat less violent in general than the Cobras, are also capable of severe assault and murder, just as the Cobras are. Although one is safer trying to leave a Pit Bull in the short run, Pit Bulls may actually be more dangerous to leave in the long run. (p. 38)*

While Jacobson and Gottman's work focuses on these two subtypes of batterers they also draw attention to relationships in which violence, but not battering, is present, that is, relationships where a man uses violence but it is not of a level classified as battering (a 'low-level violent couple'). In these relationships, the use of violence remained relatively stable and did not escalate over time:

*...we discovered that there is a stable group of couples who periodically have arguments that escalate into pushing and shoving, but never reach the point that we would call the men batterers. These couples exist in large numbers, and often show up in the offices of couples therapists... Their low-level violence often goes undetected by therapists, in part because the partners do not consider it significant. (1998, p. 25)*

This group appears to resemble Johnson's and Johnston's category of situational violence.

Although Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan (2004, p. 1373) note that the 'cobra' appears to resemble the generally violent/anti-social male perpetrator suggested by Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, while the 'pitbull' resembled the dysphoric borderline batterer, Jacobson and Gottman's typology was unable to be replicated by Meehan and colleagues (2001).



## Research on different types of (or motivations for) female perpetrators of IPV

Unlike work on male perpetrators of IPV, there has tended to be less focus, particularly by feminist researchers, on women's use of violence against their intimate partners (with the exception of studies that explored women's use of lethal violence) (Johnson & Ferraro 2000, p. 949). However, from the 2000s, there has been considerable growth in this area. Much of this research has been concerned with gender differences in the motivation, context and impact of IPV, rather than the theorising of different typologies for women's use of violence. This work has often been generated in the context of an increasing arrest rate of women for domestic violence offences in the US as a result of the application of mandatory arrest policies or laws (Swan & Snow 2003, p. 75; see also Bair-Merritt et al 2010; Belknap & Melton 2005; Melton & Belknap 2003).

In a review of the literature on women's use of violence against their intimate partners, Suzanne Swan and colleagues found that there were differences (as well as similarities) in the forms<sup>13</sup> of violence used by women compared to men (for example, studies have generally shown that women and men use physical violence at the same rate. However, men were more likely to use sexual coercion and coercive control against their female partners). Most significantly, the experience of victimisation has been identified as an 'important contextual factor' in understanding the woman's motivation for using violence (Swan et al. 2008, p. 306). As Swan and colleagues concluded, 'many domestically violent women – especially those who are involved with the criminal justice system – are not the sole perpetrators of violence' (p. 306). Furthermore, the literature shows that women's use of violence tends to be motivated by factors such as self-defence, protection of children and retaliation, rather than control (pp. 308-309).

In their research on women's use of violence, Suzanne Swan and David Snow (2002; 2003) have also explored differences in terms of motivation, reaching similar conclusions to those cited above. For example, in their study of 108 women who had used violence against their intimate partner in the previous six months (almost all of whom had also experienced violence), women nominated multiple motivations for their use of violence: self-defence (75%); retribution (to get even with

their male partner for something he had done) (45%); and to exert 'control' (to get their partner to do something or refrain from doing something) (38%) (2003, p. 95). Unlike other studies, Swan and Snow identified a typology of women's use of IPV by examining women's experience of victimisation and perpetration of IPV (physical violence, sexual violence, emotional abuse, injury and coercive control). They identified three types:

- **Victims.** Thirty-four per cent of women fell within this category (that is, their male partner used 'more severe violence against them than vice versa') (Swan & Snow 2002, p. 301). Swan and Snow further recognised two sub-types of victims: one where the male partner 'used more of all types of violence than the woman', and one where the man used 'greater levels of severe violence and coercion but the woman committed more moderate violence and/or emotional abuse' (p. 301). The primary motive for these women using violence was self-defence (Swan & Snow 2003, p. 102).
- **'Abused aggressors.'** Twelve percent of women fell in this category. Swan and Snow note that this is a 'surprisingly small number' given that women were recruited to the study specifically because they had used violence against their partner (Swan & Snow 2002, p. 301). This category describes those relationships in which the women used both physical violence and coercive control against her male partner. Again this category was split into two, almost evenly divided, subtypes: (1) where the woman used 'more of all types of violence' and (2) where the woman used 'greater levels of severe violence and coercion, but the partner committed more moderate violence and/or emotional abuse' (p. 303). Compared to the other groups of women, this group were more likely to be motivated by retribution and control (Swan & Snow 2003, p. 102).
- **Mixed relationships.** Half of the sample was classified as mixed relationship, that is, either 'mixed-male coercive relationships' or 'mixed-female coercive relationships' (Swan & Snow 2002, p. 303). In the first subtype, while both the man and the woman used violence (and in some cases the woman used more severe violence), the male partner used more coercive control than the woman. The authors note that this suggests that 'even when women inflicted more severe violence...they were not necessarily in control of their partner's behaviour' (p. 303). In

the second subtype, the 'woman's use of coercion was equivalent to or greater than her partner's' (p. 303). Swan and Snow suggest that this last subtype could be the same as Johnson's 'situational couple violence' as this group had the lowest level of abuse and lowest frequency in the use of violence. However, they also emphasise that the violence is still of concern, being repeated and occasionally causing injury.

Suzanne Miller and Michelle Meloy (2006; see also Miller 2005) identified three categories of 'female offenders' in their study of 95 women who had been ordered to attend treatment programs generally as part of their probation following conviction for a domestic violence offence. These categories are largely reflective of the motivational context for using violence (Miller & Meloy 2006):

- Generalised violent behaviour. This category described women who used violence more generally; that is, it was not confined to the family setting. This comprised 5% of women in the study. However, even here the authors noted gender differences:
 

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*... the women who used or threatened to use violence against intimate partners or others did not have control or power over their targets. The women were not able to control or change anyone's behaviour; in fact, the victims did not fear them nor change their behaviour out of a sense of intimidation – responses that would be typical in a scenario with female victims abused by men (p. 98).*

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- Frustration response. This category encompasses 'end of her rope' behaviours. Women in this category generally had a history of IPV from their male partner (or in some cases from a previous relationship) and had responded with violence after having unsuccessfully tried other measures to stop his violence (Miller & Meloy 2006, p. 100). Approximately 30% of women fell in this category (p. 100). Here, the woman's use of violence 'did nothing to change the abuse or power dynamics in the relationship' and the woman used violence because she felt she 'had no other options' (p. 101).
- Defensive behaviour. In this category, the woman used violence in order to 'get away during a violent incident or were trying to leave to avoid

violence when they knew their partner was about to become violent' (Miller & Meloy 2006, p. 102). Most women (65%) in this study fell in this category (2006, p. 102). A number of these women used violence in order to protect their children. In most cases, the male partner initiated the violence.

Miller and Meloy conclude their article by drawing connections with the categories proposed by Johnson (detailed above). They note that no woman in their study was involved in perpetrating intimate terrorism, that two groups of women used violence in response to this form of IPV being used against them (with defensive behaviour being like Johnson's 'violent resistance', and frustration response being 'an expressive act that conveyed frustration with an abusive situation that seemed beyond their control'), and that women in the generalised violent behaviour category were most similar to Johnson's 'mutual violent control' (2006, p. 104). Miller and Meloy found no cases of 'situational couple violence' (p. 104). What is interesting about Miller and Meloy's discussion exploring possible convergence with Johnson's model is that they seek to extend or at least recognise the range of responses women might have to their own experience of IPV, beyond what is described as 'violent resistance'.

As a result of their research, Miller and Meloy conclude that a 'one-size-fits-all approach to female offenders fails to distinguish between real batterers and victims who use force in self-defense or for other reasons' (2006, p. 108), echoing other research on differentiation.

Shamita Das Dasgupta (2002), while not proposing a typology of women's use of IPV, makes an important contribution to emphasising the need for a contextual analysis of the differences in men's and women's use of violence that reflects on the historical and cultural acceptance of such violence. This emphasis is important, not only for understanding the multiple ways in which women respond to their own victimisation, but also for understanding men's use of violence. The critical importance of context, beyond a typological approach, is discussed in Part III.

## How do these various ways of differentiation fit together? Do they?

While there is a common theme in all this research, that not all IPV is the same, it is not entirely clear whether and how these typologies fit together. Are the researchers describing the same categories? Are there any differences? Are these differences important and do they require further investigation? Johnson and Ferraro have argued that they 'believe that major advances in our understandings of the origins of partner violence will come from bringing together and extending the work on types of violence and types of perpetrators' (2000, p. 950). This may well be the case but, at this stage, various researches have merely been suggesting similarities and convergence.

For example, Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan, while noting that there is disagreement on what to name the 'lower levels of violence', considered that their category of 'family only' was similar to Johnson's situational couple violence (2004, p. 1370). Johnson and Ferraro made a similar correlation (2000, p. 950). However, it is not entirely clear why these categories are similar; while similar in terms of lower levels of violence and being less likely to entail other forms of abuse, Johnson has never suggested that violence only directed towards an intimate partner is less likely to involve coercive control. Johnson and Ferraro further suggested that the remaining two types in the Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart model are 'subtypes' of intimate terrorism (2000, p. 950).

Kelly and Johnson have also suggested that Johnson's category of coercive controlling violence is similar to 'male battering' outlined by Johnston and Campbell, and that situational couple violence is similar to Johnston and Campbell's 'male controlling interactive violence' (2008, p. 479). However, given that Johnston and Campbell make reference to some male control, as evidenced by the term 'male controlling interactive violence', it is not entirely clear the extent to which such categories are similar.

While there have been these attempts at integration (or at least reflection on convergence), any such correlation is not yet clear and is yet to be tested. Many questions remain about whether this variable work on differentiation fits together. How can research that has only focused on male perpetrators of IPV fit with that which has sought to explain differences in IPV where both men's and women's

use of violence is considered?<sup>14</sup> This is particularly so, given that we do not know the full extent of the ways in which women's use of violence is different to men's nor how any of these reflect on the emerging work on women's use of violence. In addition, more work needs to be done on how victims experience these perceived different types of IPV or different modes of perpetration. While Johnson and Janel Leone reported that women who experience coercive controlling violence were more likely to suffer injuries, exhibit more of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome, use pain killers, take time off work, attempt to leave their partner on multiple occasions and seek refuge accommodation (2005, p. 344), than those experiencing other types of IPV, it is far from clear the extent of differences across the types of IPV or victims more broadly. For example, there is a dearth of research on whether these differences in IPV impact differently on children living in the household (Hardesty et al. forthcoming).

## What are the benefits to be gained from differentiation?

Research on differentiation clearly sits within our continuing attempts to 'grapple with the complexities of intimate partner abuse' (Pence & Dasgupta 2006, p. 15) and has added critical dimensions to work on IPV, increasing our knowledge about the causes, nature and consequences of different forms of IPV (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, p. 1994). This is clearly beneficial to continuing work in this field and debates about the most effective responses, whether we raise concerns about differentiation or see it as an important future development.

The key benefit that potentially flows from differentiation, that is invariably highlighted by all proponents, is the ability to move away from a 'one-size-fits-all' approach and move towards targeted and, hence, more effective interventions for victims, perpetrators and children (Altobelli 2009, p. 215; Pence & Dasgupta 2006, p. 5). This includes the ability to:

- develop more appropriate and accurate screening tools (Johnston & Campbell 1993; Kelly & Johnson 2008). This may assist in better identifying risk, as well as identifying cases appropriate for mediation in the family law arena, and conversely those cases that require judicial determination (Altobelli 2009; Ver Steegh 2005)

- formulate more nuanced family law decisions about post separation parenting, by taking better account of the type of IPV and its effect on the victim-parent and the children (Birnbaum & Bala 2010; Johnston et al. 2009, p. 312; Kelly & Johnson 2008, p. 478; Ver Steegh & Dalton 2008)
- develop more targeted offender programs (for men and women). Various researchers have argued that more serious, entrenched forms of IPV characterised by control require a different intervention than is required for those perpetrators who use less serious forms of violence sporadically and without the motivation of control (see Cavanaugh & Gelles 2005; Gondolf 1988; Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart 1994; Jacobson & Gottman 1998; Johnston & Campbell 1993; Saunders 1996). This has also been a key argument in research focusing on women arrested for IPV offences where, without differentiation, they have been ordered to attend programs designed for male perpetrators of coercive control, rather than a program better suited, for example, to their context of victimisation (as well as use of violence) (Dasgupta 2002; Miller 2005; Oshtoff 2002).

### PART III: CRITICISMS AND CONCERNS ABOUT TYPOLOGIES AND DIFFERENTIATION

A number of risks or problems have been raised about the articulation of typologies of IPV and perpetrators of such violence. These criticisms are wide ranging and centre on the formulation of typologies (methodological concerns) and practice issues. In some cases, the researcher who developed the typology (for example, Johnson, 2008; Holtzworth-Munroe & Meehan 2004; Pence & Dasgupta, 2006) has also canvassed these cautions in their own work or emphasised the 'infancy' of this research.

#### Methodological concerns

The main issue underlying the methodological concerns outlined in this section is the notion that context is important to understanding the role and meaning of an act or behaviour in a relationship, whether that act is one of physical violence or control and whether such acts or behaviours should be viewed as discrete measures of IPV at the outset.

The importance of a contextual approach has relevance not only to how the various typologies might be operationalised in research or practice but also to the formulation of the typology itself. For example, Johnson's argument that sample bias provides an explanation about the different emphasis on gender in the results of family violence research and violence against women research appears compelling. However, it does not grapple with the various criticisms of CTS-based research that it is not possible to conclude that a person has experienced IPV on the basis of incidents alone; the context of the act is needed to assess that meaning (Dobash & Dobash 2004, pp. 327-328).

The report from the Wingspread conference acknowledged the importance of context (Ver Steegh & Dalton 2008, pp. 456-457) and provided an illustration that demonstrates this:

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*Consider the situation where partner A slaps partner B. First imagine that when the incident takes place there is no prior history of physical violence or of other abusive behaviours between A and B. Then imagine that, although this incident is the first instance of physical violence, A has previously undermined B's efforts to seek*

*employment, denigrated B's parenting in front of the children, and isolated B from her family and friends. Then imagine a situation where A broke B's nose the week before and A is threatening to kill B and harm their children. The act of slapping is the same in each situation but the impact and consequences are very different (Ver Steegh & Dalton 2008, p. 457).*

This scenario illustrates that violence is not all the same and the inadequacy of the tools (research and screening) that ask about discrete acts of violence, albeit about more than one, yet struggle to effectively capture the way that individual acts operate together and reflect on each other. This point is expanded further below when considering how coercive control is measured. In this regard, Jaffe and colleagues have recommended an approach that involves multiple-methods, asking multiple informants, at multiple points in time (here, they were specifically referring to different stages in family law proceedings) and with increasing levels of intensity depending upon what is being reported (Jaffe et al. 2005, p. 25-29; see also Ver Steegh & Dalton 2008, p. 460).

### **How is coercive control measured?**

Given the key role played by control in delineating different categories across some of the typologies, it is important to consider the way in which control is defined and measured. It would appear that the dominant way in which coercive control is operationalised is as a discrete item that can be measured and added to other discrete items of violence (physical, sexual and so on), rather than as an overarching mechanism which describes how all the various acts that might be used in a relationship combine and reflect on each other. For example, in Swan and Snow's (2003, p. 105) typology of women who use violence, they note that one of the limitations of their methodology was that the control items were discrete and did not take account of the context or impact of those acts. One of the risks of itemising controlling behaviour without context is the risk of misidentification; for example, a woman's threat to leave her partner if he does not stop his violence (that is, a threat to do something if he/she does not do something or continues to do something) could be viewed as a control item, rather than an acceptable action (Dutton & Goodman 2005b).

Another issue centres on the number of control items that need to be present to equate with coercive control. For example, in Johnson's secondary

analysis of the US *National Violence Against Women Survey*, high control was identified by the presence of three or more control items (Johnson 2008, p. 93). Frye et al. (2006, p. 1304) have pointed out two issues with this approach: (1) that it assumes that each control item is of equal weight; (2) that perhaps we should be concerned about the presence of any control item, not just three or more.

Whether coercive control is identified as a separate item(s) or is seen as integral exemplifies one of the key differences between the work of Evan Stark on coercive control (2007; 2010) and Johnson's typology. Johnson's adopts the former approach (that is, it is physical violence plus or minus coercive control that defines the category of IPV). In contrast, Stark views violence as one element of coercive control and asks whether 'violence can be usefully disaggregated into discrete acts or episodes of coercion' (2010). In this way, Anderson (2008, p. 1167) argues that Stark's approach:

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*...suggests, IPV researchers should focus on the dynamics of coercive control in intimate abuse whether or not this control occurs in the context of physical violence. This would entail a substantial shift in our approach to IPV, which has historically emphasized the experience of physical violence as the key characteristic of IPV victimization. This change, however, may more accurately reflect the experience of victims, who have been telling researchers for many years that emotional control is the 'deeper and more central form of abuse'.*

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The identification and measurement of 'coercive control' is an area of current research. It has only been in recent years that Evan Stark (2007), and Mary Ann Dutton and colleagues (2005a; 2005b) have brought a 'more theoretical approach' to coercive control that moves away from merely listing and measuring the types of behaviours that might evidence its presence. A thorough discussion of these approaches is beyond the scope of this paper, however, it is worth noting that Dutton and colleagues do not approach control as a separate variable but rather acknowledge that it is contextual, interdependent and interactive.

### **Continuing emphasis on physical forms of violence**

Linked to how coercive control is defined is what appears to be a continuing emphasis on (largely) physical violence as the animating feature of many of the proposed typologies. While most of the

various typologies acknowledge the importance of other forms of violence and abuse (sexual, verbal, emotional and so on), a number of the typologies are still activated by the presence or absence of physical violence (while also talking about the presence or absence of control).

As noted above, in very simplistic terms we can view Johnson's model as being about physical violence plus or minus coercive control. As Johnson explains, 'this is after all, a framework for identifying types of intimate partner *violence*' (2008, p. 46). This is illustrated in Johnson's approach to a case which he labelled 'incipient intimate terrorism' rather than intimate terrorism as the woman had only experienced multiple tactics of control but no physical violence during her relationship (2008, p. 46). This stands in contrast to the way the woman herself described the relationship, as one in which her former husband:

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*... controlled her every move, humiliated her at every opportunity, controlled the money and gave her a carefully monitored allowance, intimidated her with fierce outbursts of anger, and quite explicitly threatened her, including telling her in detail what he would do to her and her father if she ever tried to leave him. She said she knew what he was capable of and she lived her life in a state of constant terror (2008, p. 46).*

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Kristin Anderson (2008), who sought to test Johnson's model, echoes this criticism:

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*A central limitation of the use of the IT/SCV typology is that it does not consider the effects of high relationship control apart from the context of physical violence. Indeed, women who do not experience physical violence are not identified as victims by the IT/SCV typology even if they experience extremely high levels of the controlling behaviours described as terrorism by Johnson (2008, p. 1166).*

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Similarly, while Johnston and Campbell (1993) also discuss and consider the importance of other forms of abuse and controlling behaviours in their model, it is the presence of physical violence that is defining. In his critique of Johnston's work, Lundy Bancroft notes that her typology emphasises a 'high level of physical violence as defining a batterer', whereas Bancroft notes that 'it is common for batterers to be highly physically frightening and psychologically cruel with few incidents of actual physical assault; in fact, clinical experience teaches us that they are the majority of abusers' (1998).

The emphasis on physical violence stands in marked contrast to research that has found that women victims of IPV 'consistently nominate emotional forms of abuse as the most damaging (and controlling)' (Schneider 2000, p. 65; see also Schwartz 2000, p. 819). How is this reflected in the proposed typologies? How is a case to be classified where physical violence occurs less frequently? This is particularly the case given that much research on the prevalence of IPV asks about incidents that occurred in the past year. As Michael Kimmel has argued, this is 'akin to the difference between watching a single frame of a movie and the movie itself' (Kimmel 2002, p. 1341). As Liz Kelly found in her research, some women experienced long gaps between acts of physical or sexual violence, frequently more than a year. However, these past acts continued to maintain their force and threat over the intervening period (Kelly 1988, p. 129).

It is worth considering whether typologies might play out differently in Australia where there has tended to be much broader approach to recognising acts and behaviours beyond physical violence (with a general eschewing of terms such as 'battering', which are seen to emphasise physical violence).<sup>15</sup> That is, perhaps Australia, being already accustomed to much wider definitions of IPV, is better positioned to take a more nuanced approach. However, it is suggested that we should ask questions about how well typologies formulated in the US and which emphasise physical violence, can be translated to the Australian context without further work. There are also questions about whether legal responses in Australia, despite having a broader definition, still focus on incidents as an indicator of the presence of IPV (for example, see Hunter 2006, pp. 755-756).

### **The category of violence defined at the time of separation**

Both Johnson and Johnston have proposed a type of IPV defined by separation. Both draw attention to the fact that there has been no history of (physical) violence in the relationship and that the presenting violence is directly linked to the stress and trauma of separation; it is short lived and uncharacteristic behaviour.

A number of commentators have raised concern about this category. For example, Dalton notes that this category 'belies the reality of many relationships in which longstanding abuse, primarily of a nonphysical nature, is supplemented more aggressively with physical violence when the partner

signals her determination to leave the relationship' (Dalton 1999, p. 280). The heightened risk at the time of separation for women experiencing coercive controlling violence has been well documented in the literature (Dutton 1993, p. 1212; Mouzos & Rushforth 2003, p. 2) and led Martha Mahoney to call for 'separation assault' to be named as a specific harm experienced by women who separate from their violent partners (1991). As Dalton (1999) explains:

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*When she [Johnston] speaks of the intolerable loss and sense of abandonment experienced by some partners at the time of separation and divorce, the partner abuse specialist cannot help but think of the men who have killed their partners, their children, and not infrequently themselves in the grip of precisely these emotions (1999, pp. 280-281).*

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Dalton also criticises the way in which Johnston suggests that this separation-instigated violence may cause a partner to revise how she views the relationship and previous events in the relationship. Dalton points out that Johnston 'risks discrediting the spouse whose new understanding of the relationship is now more reality based after an earlier period in which her commitment to the relationship led her to minimize or deny the abuse or to take inappropriate responsibility for it' (1999, p. 280). It also fails to take account of the way in which women's contact with specialist domestic violence services, with whom many make contact at the time of separation, play an important role in assisting women to recognise what they have experienced and to expand their knowledge about what amounts to domestic violence (for example, sexual assault and forced sexual encounters within a spousal relationship).

### **Who makes the assessment as to what type of violence a relationship falls within?**

Johnson's approach in the case of 'incipient intimate terrorism', mentioned above, privileges the researcher's assessment of what took place rather than the person who experienced it. This approach assumes that the meaning of an act or behaviour is 'readily discernable' from the act itself (Kaye et al. 2003, p. 14) and ignores the fact that meaning is generated in context, is often only discernable to the person to whom the act is directed (Kaye et al. 2003), and attains its meaning through the ongoing interaction and negotiation of the relationship (Cavanagh et al. 2001, pp. 698-99). In this way, what might be viewed as a minor, isolated incident by a researcher or practitioner, can assume a very different meaning within the relationship itself.

Clare Dalton, in raising caution about the work of Johnston, has described this as a 'clash of perspectives' (1999, p. 281) or a 'collision of paradigms' (p. 273), and it is clearly evident in the way researchers read/interpret events differently, with different lenses. Therefore, it is critical that if there is general agreement that not all IPV is the same, then a constructive discussion across theoretical or disciplinary divides is necessary so that any risk associated with the application of typologies is minimised and we can move 'toward a larger, richer, and more differentiated understanding' (Dalton 1999, p. 281). The Wingspread Conference provides a useful example of this conversation across disciplinary divisions, where the conference report noted areas of agreement, areas requiring further work and research, as well as areas where disagreement remains (Ver Steegh & Dalton 2008).

## **Practice concerns**

### **How to translate to practice**

How this research might be translated into practice is still open to much speculation. While a variety of research tools have been developed by the researchers themselves to make distinctions, at present there are 'no simple screening or assessment tools readily available for practitioners to use to distinguish between the types' (Derrington et al. 2010, p. 9; see also Johnston et al. 2009, p. 317).<sup>16</sup>

Not only is there no tool to distinguish between different types of IPV and perpetrators, there are also questions about how clearly defined the differences are, what the boundaries and parameters between each type are, and questions about violence that does not fit within any of the types that have been suggested. These questions emphasise that we need to be careful about the way in which typologies seem to offer a highly attractive simple 'demarcation' (even scientific approach) to assist practitioners, such as those working in the family law arena or treatment programs for perpetrators, in managing their workload (Bancroft 1998; Wangmann 2008, p. 144). In a similar vein, Richard Chisholm in his review of family violence within the Australian family law courts also draws attention to a risk of emphasising the type of violence rather than the needs of a 'particular case' (Chisholm 2009, p. 38).

In the Australian family law arena where there is considerable interest in this work, additional practice issues have been raised. These include the need for multiple disclosure points (Altobelli 2009, p.

196), particularly in relation to sexual violence (Jaffe et al. 2006), and the impossibility of making such delineations in the current environment where research has suggested that the evidence about IPV presented to courts dealing with family law is inadequate (Moloney et al. 2007, p. 119; Wangmann 2008, p. 144). There is also the additional concern about who might make these assessments. What skills do they have? Will they be trained? As Nancy Ver Steegh noted, even '[e]xperienced professionals often have difficulty detecting the existence of domestic violence – let alone accurately discerning the type of violence involved' (2005, p. 1380). If we are to take the repeated calls for further education for legal professionals as any guide (most recently see ALRC & NSWLRC 2010), then this would appear to be a very pertinent point for the use of typologies in family law. Furthermore, in their evaluation of the 2006 family law reforms in Australia, Rae Kaspiew and colleagues noted that there 'is a lack of understanding among family law system professionals of the nature of family violence and the implications it has for making parenting arrangements' (2009, pp. 245-246).

While many of the researchers in this field emphasise the need for flexibility in determining what type of violence or that there is not necessarily a clear 'cut-off' point in determining where a particular perpetrator sits (Holtzworth-Munroe & Meehan 2004; Ver Steegh & Dalton 2008, p. 459), there is a risk that such typologies are seen as more than a 'heuristic device' and instead become 'reified' or set in 'concrete in clinical and even research applications' (Capaldi & Kim 2007, p. 263). Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan provide a useful example of this risk:

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*... we have heard of misuses of our typology: for example, a battered woman was told that it was safe for her to return to her husband because he was "a FO [family only] man". Enough data are not yet available to support such uses of the typology. Until proven otherwise, it is possible to argue that although some men are prototypes of the different subtypes, the majority of men fall along dimensions of theoretical importance rather than forming distinctly identifiable groups. (2004, p. 1378).*

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Most recently, Janet Johnston and colleagues have attempted to address some of the concerns about the translation to practice. They note that the various categories (here they had been discussing coercive controlling violence, conflict-instigated violence, violent resistance and separation-instigated violence) 'are not necessarily discrete types', and that

within a type there can be considerable variation (ranging from 'relatively benign to highly volatile and dangerous situations' (2009, pp. 316-17).

In this context, Johnston and colleagues propose a 'P5' screening.<sup>17</sup> While the back drop is that there are different kinds of IPV, the P5 is not about identifying what form of violence a person used but rather what form of post parenting arrangement is suitable. The authors see that 'differentiating among different types of violence is an iterative and cumulative process involving these five factors' (Johnston, Roseby & Kuehnle 2009, p. 317):

- *Potency of the violence* – that is, its severity, dangerousness, and questions about the level of risk of injury, lethality and escalation
- *Pattern of violence* – that is, whether the violence has been ongoing and forms part of a pattern of coercive control, as well as behavioural matters ('psycho-biological and cognitive indicators') relating to a person's 'proclivity for violence'
- *The primary perpetrator of the violence* – that is, identifying who is the primary aggressor, who is resisting?
- *Parenting problems of the adults* – that is, to assess the parenting capacity of the parents in regard to providing the child with an environment that is consistent, stable, warm, with appropriate responsiveness, and that is reflective of the child's individual needs (separate from the adults)
- *Preferences and perspective of the child(ren)* – that is, to ask whether children have a preference, are they scared or fearful, are they distressed about proposed parenting plans. The authors note a variety of ways in which the views of children need to be considered and 'interpreted with caution'.

### **Risk of making the wrong assessment**

For all of the typologies proposed there are risks associated with incorrectly classifying a case as one type of IPV, rather than another. This has been recognised explicitly by many of the key proponents of typologies. As a result, it has led some to emphasise that safety must continue to be the primary criterion, and that 'it is probably wise to assume that all violence is intimate terrorism until proven otherwise' (Johnson 2008, p. 82). As noted above, Pence and Dasgupta specifically note the risks of 'battering' being mischaracterised as 'situational violence' given the way that many practitioners, particularly those working in the legal



system, emphasise incidents, which can serve to erase the full picture of the way violence and abuse is operating in the relationship (2006, p. 11). They offer one of the clearest statements about the risk of miscategorisation (pp. 16-17):

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*Practitioners and advocates may only get one chance to successfully intervene in a victim's bid to end violence and hold the batterer accountable for his behaviour. Misjudging battering for other kinds of violence ... and intervening incorrectly might make the difference between life and death for a victim. Thus, until we can create highly sensitive, valid, and reliable diagnostic tools and techniques to identify batterers, we can hardly risk any errors in our assessments. ... before such a time arrives, we would rather err on the side of caution.*

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In critiquing Janet Johnston's typology, Clare Dalton explains that the 'chief concern' is that 'Johnston's typology will encourage serious underestimation of the number of abusive relationships and the dangers they pose to abused partners and children' (1999, p. 279). Dalton asks: how frequent/serious/life threatening does the violence have to be for it to be classified as 'ongoing episodic male battering'?

Additional questions are raised about cases that are not able to be classified into any of the identified types of IPV. What happens to these cases? How are they to be responded to? Will they be considered a form of IPV warranting some form of response?

These concerns and others were raised at the Wingspread Conference where it was noted that misapplication of the typologies could jeopardise safety or mean that people are provided with inappropriate interventions. Thus, care needs to be taken in assuming that the typologies draw 'bright lines'. Instead, the complexity and fact that cases are not easily categorised needs to be appreciated. In this context, Ver Steegh and Dalton noted the need for further research and verification of the existing typologies. This included an investigation of the 'unanticipated negative consequences that could stem from their use' (2008, p. 459).

At the same time, it should also be recognised that treating all cases of IPV and all perpetrators as 'the same' with a 'one-size-fits-all' response also means that safety might be compromised or that inappropriate interventions might be put in place.

### **Slippage with popular myths**

It is also possible that typologies may inadvertently feed into popular notions or myths about what is coercive controlling violence and what is not (Wangmann 2008, pp. 137-138). That is to say that the typologies may reinforce already:

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*... stereotyped notions of what it means to be a batterer or a victim. These stereotypes in turn foster confidence among professionals that they will recognize abuse and its perpetrators when they see them and that they will know how to respond when the time comes.' (Dalton 1999, p. 282)*

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For example, typologies may reinforce such popular notions that violence is a relationship issue, that men and women are equally violent, that much violence is sourced in particular incidents and conflicts, signifying that much violence is situational couple violence. Pence and Dasgupta caution that the category of 'situational violence' may be used inappropriately to exonerate individuals who pose a serious danger to their victims' (2006, p. 5). They offer the example of a defence lawyer who may successfully be able to cast the alleged offender's behaviour as one of 'too many drinks or momentarily lost control in an uncharacteristic outburst of anger... therefore, his/her client is not a batterer and should not be treated as one' (p. 5). Similar work was conducted by Edna Erez and Tammy King (2000) who, in a study of the views held by prosecution and defence lawyers involved in domestic violence criminal offences in Ohio, US, found that the lawyers predominantly viewed the cases that they dealt with as situational violence rather than coercive control, despite Johnson's suggestion that the cases that come before the courts are much more likely to involve the latter. This led Erez and King to conclude (2000, p. 224):

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*The study suggests that attorneys' discourse of woman battering reflects batterers' accounts of battering and portrays intimate violence that reaches the court, by and large, as common couple violence. Victims' battering experiences, which are likely to reflect patriarchal terrorism, are denied, minimized, or at best referred to as a few 'true' or 'real' cases of domestic violence.*

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## Areas that require further investigation

In addition, there are also a number of notable gaps or absences within the current work on differentiation. These include:

### ***Lack of information about how different forms of IPV between parents might impact on children.***

At present there are no studies that provide information about whether different forms of IPV have a different impact on children (Hardesty et al. forthcoming). So while there has been considerable research that has revealed the detrimental impact of IPV on children it is unknown what form of IPV this was (except by drawing conclusions from the sample used in the study) and whether there are differences across types of IPV. This is a particularly significant gap given that the family law arena has shown specific interest in using typologies.

### ***Overlap between the existence of violence against different family members.***

Other research has revealed considerable overlap between the existence of IPV in a family and other forms of violence (for example, child abuse and sibling abuse). For example, Jaffe and colleagues, reporting on Canadian research, stated that 'The majority of studies reveal that in families where there is spousal violence or child maltreatment present, in 30% to 60% of the cases both forms of abuse exist' (2006, [2.4]). It is not known whether this overlap only relates to particular types of IPV and perpetrators.

***Sexual violence.*** As noted above there has been little specific discussion of the role of sexual violence in the formulation of the various typologies of IPV and

perpetrators (see also Graham-Kevan & Archer 2003, p. 1266). (An exception is the work of Holtzworth-Munroe and colleagues who do report on the extent of sexual violence across the types of male perpetrators that they describe). The absence of sexual violence has increasingly been emphasised as an area requiring particular attention in work on IPV and would appear to be a critical factor in the delineation of typologies and the role of gender.

***The need for longitudinal research.*** Few studies<sup>18</sup> have explored the extent to which the categories posited are stable over time (that is, whether the nature of the violence changes or escalates to move the violence or the perpetrator to a different category) (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart 1994, p. 493; Holtzworth-Munroe 2005, p. 1121). In this context, some researchers have asked whether Johnson's categories are discrete or part of a continuum (Fergusson et al. 2005; Frye et al. 2006). They have also asked whether the research that currently exists accurately reflects the use of violence and control across a relationship, given that many only ask about acts of violence and abuse that have occurred in the past year (see discussion above).

***Application across different cultural groups.*** It is not clear whether the typologies that have been devised are applicable across different cultural groups. Research needs to be conducted about whether and how these typologies take account of the way the practice of violence, abuse and control varies across cultures, with different cultures imbuing meaning in acts in quite different ways (Dasgupta 2002).

## PART IV: CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Research that explores heterogeneity in IPV is important. At a general level, it serves to expand and challenge our knowledge about the perpetration and experience of IPV. It may provide a useful language to be able to talk about different ways in which violence and abuse can take place in an intimate relationship, some of which involve coercive control and some of which do not. It is important to note, as the researchers themselves emphasise, this is not about making excuses for some types of violence or to suggest that some types of violence do not warrant the attention of the law. As Ver Steegh has pointed out, 'saying that [all cases of IPV] are not all the same does not diminish this fact [that all cases of IPV are also 'serious and important'] (2005, p. 1380); rather it serves to highlight the need to develop responses that are attentive to the type of IPV or perpetrator that it is seeking to address. To treat all forms of IPV as the same potentially wastes and misdirects a range of important resources, while also not marshalling other more appropriate resources.

The various cautions and critical comments (often made by the proponents of typologies themselves) suggest that there is still much more work to be done on the articulation of typologies before a useful tool can be developed to assist delineation

in practice. Of particular importance are the concerns expressed about the continuing emphasis on physical violence, limitations on how coercive control is currently operationalised and the skill and knowledge of the person making the assessment (whether as a researcher or a practitioner). The need to take better account of the context of acts and behaviours is critical in further developing work in this area. It is particularly important that a more holistic understanding of coercive control is taken into account in future work. Evan Stark's work (2007) leads us in this direction, challenging us to consider, in a more complex way (but arguably more reflective of the actual experience of IPV), how the wide variety of acts and behaviours perpetrated by one person against another operate together and reflect on each other. That is, that it is not possible to look at or ask about discrete acts as though they reveal the whole story.

This call for 'context' is not new but it is challenging to work out how this might be done, particularly in practice settings where a professional may have only one encounter with a victim or a perpetrator. Here, the skill of the person making the assessment, the skill at listening, probing further, building trust and rapport, have a significant influence on the nature and quality of information that might be revealed in that encounter and, therefore, the assessments that might be made.

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## ENDNOTES

1. This literature review is concerned with a growing body of scholarly work that highlights differences in intimate partner heterosexual violence (that is, violence in spousal, de facto, girl/boyfriend heterosexual relationships). This does not mean that violence does not take place in a broader range of relationships – but rather in recognition that, at this stage, work on differences in perpetrators and types of IPV have centered on heterosexual relationships; work on differences in the perpetration of violence in other types of domestic or family relationships has been minimal and the current research cannot necessarily be extrapolated to other relationships.
2. Many terms (for example, family violence, domestic violence, IPV, spouse abuse, battering, and wife abuse) have been used to describe the problem of violence perpetrated in intimate and familial settings. While the terms are often used interchangeably they have different meanings and usages, in some instances linked to whether gender is seen as a central issue and whether the concept includes broader familial relationships. In this literature review the term 'intimate partner violence' is used (except where the various pieces of research discussed employ a different term) to emphasise that it is in this specific context that the posited typologies have been developed. This accords with the general approach of promoting clarity in research.
3. See Altobelli FM (see Heilig v Cabiness [2011] FMCAfam 97; Carrow v Bourke [2009] FMCAfam 603; Kucera v Kucera [2009] FMCAfam 1032; Kozovska v Kozovski [2009] FMCAfam 1014; Shaw v Shaw [2008] FMCAfam 1024; Carlton v Carlton [2008] FMCAfam 440; see also Vanderhum v Doriemus [2010] FMCAfam 641 where, while the typologies are not referred to specifically in the judgments, research by Johnson and Johnston are listed); Benjamin J (see Watkins v Minnow [2010] FamCA 1059; Drummond v Eden [2010] FamCA 180); Maluka v Maluka [2009] FAMCA 647 – in relation to this last case see the appeal to the Full Court of the Family Court, Maluka v Maluka [2011] FamCAFC 72 where the Full Court agreed that the manner in which the judge sought to rely on the social science material was an appealable error. Note this is not about the content of the material but the manner in which the trial judge sought to rely on it in this case.); Brown FM (see Dafoe v Dafoe [2011] FMCAfam 151; see also Baranski v Baranski & Anor [2010] FMCAfam 918 where, while Brown FM did not find it necessary to attach a specific label to the violence alleged in this case, the magistrate did make specific reference to the lack of homogeneity; see paras [336]-[337], [399]-[400]. See also Sinistra v Sinistra [2010] FMCAfam 272 in which



- the family consultant referred to the violence used by the father as 'coercive controlling'. There may be other judicial officers who also specifically make reference to this research but have not made their written decisions available.
4. It is suggested that following the publication of this best practice document, we can expect many more judicial officers and legal practitioners to refer to this work in their practice and decision-making.
  5. It is worth noting that Jaffe et al. working in the family law arena defined similar categories to Kelly and Johnson (2008) but gave them different names: abusive-controlling violent relationships, conflict-instigated violence; violent resistance, and separation-instigated violence.
  6. This is a generalised description of the division in the research. A similar description has been employed by other researchers describing the two strands of research (see Dobash & Dobash 1992, pp. 258-84; Atmore 2001, p. 4).
  7. The CTS was developed by Murray Straus in the 1970s and has become one of the most widely used measures of family violence (Straus 1979; see also Straus et al. 1996).
  8. Michael Kimmel estimated that over 100 studies had reached this conclusion (2002, p. 1333). See also Fiebert (1997) and the electronic update Fiebert provides on studies that have also reached this conclusion many of which used the CTS or a modified version at <<http://www.csulb.edu/~mfiebert/assault.htm>> (viewed 20 September 2011).
  9. This is not meant to suggest that feminist research only employs qualitative methods, rather that there has been a traditional preference towards qualitative rather than quantitative methods (Griffiths & Hanmer 2005). Indeed, many feminist researchers use quantitative methods and mixed-methodologies, including using the CTS (for example, see feminist studies that have employed modified versions of the CTS, García-Moreno et al. 2005 and Tjaden & Thoennes 2000).
  10. It is not clear why randomised population surveys do not capture at least some cases of intimate terrorism (or indeed all types of domestic violence), given that these factors may not be operative for all victims of intimate terrorism, and the fact that the very rationale for random probability sampling is to capture a representative sample of the population. I thank Professor Julie Stubbs for raising this point with me in earlier discussions on this topic.
  11. This document makes specific reference to Kelly & Johnson (2008) when noting these typologies.
  12. These are referred to as the intrapsychic, interactional and external levels respectively.
  13. It is important to note the use of the term 'forms' to refer to the nature of the violence used (that is, physical, sexual, use of weapons, threats verbal and so on) as opposed to 'types', where in this review 'types' clearly refers to the various typologies where a person might use multiple forms of violence and abuse against their partner and be allocated to a singular category within a typology.
  14. It is useful here to consider the distinction made by Michael Johnson in critiquing the work of Jennifer Langhinrichsen-Rolling, between those typologies that are concerned with 'the nature of the violence itself or on its role in the relationship' compared to those that are concerned with the 'characteristics of the perpetrator' (Johnson 2010, p. 214).
  15. In Australia, legislation providing for civil protection orders have tended to provide wide definitions of the types of acts and behaviour encompassed under the term family or domestic violence. The Victorian and Tasmanian civil protection order legislation provide good examples of the breadth of definitional approach taken in some Australian jurisdictions: see Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic) s 5; and Family Violence Act 2004 (Tas) s7. I thank one of the reviewers for drawing my attention to this argument.
  16. Very recent articles have reported on the testing of some assessment tools: see Friend et al. 2011.
  17. Jaffe et al. (2008) also proposed a PPP (potency, pattern, primary perpetrator) screening tool.
  18. An exception to this is Holtzworth-Munroe & Meehan (2004), who followed a sample over three years.

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