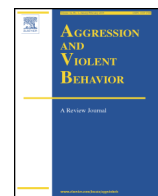




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# Aggression and Violent Behavior



## A literature review of intimate partner violence and its classifications

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### ABSTRACT

Intimate partner violence is an important issue and attempts to distinguish typologies of intimate partner violence are necessary to understand the complexities of intimate partner violence, its various causes, correlates, and consequences. Over the last two decades, much research was aimed at classifying types of violence depending on the similarities and differences in patterns of violence. However, it is difficult to find a single account that provides a succinct and up-to-date overview of these classifications. As a result, considerable effort is required to identify and retrieve relevant papers to understand each typology or classification of intimate partner violence. This article provides a succinct and up-to-date integrative review of various classifications of intimate partner violence. Typologies by form of abuse, type of violence, type of perpetrator (men and women) are critically reviewed in the light of available literature and the strengths and limitations of each are described. Recommendations for further research are also provided.

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### 1. Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to violence between two people involved in an intimate relationship, and it exists in all countries, cultures and societies (Ellsberg et al., 2014). The World Health

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Organization (2010) defines IPV as “behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours” (p. 11). This term helps distinguish IPV from other types of domestic abuse such as child abuse and elderly abuse. The use of this term also acknowledges that violence can be perpetrated by men as well as women without restriction to marital, heterosexual, or homosexual relationships (Anderson, 2002; Archer, 2000, 2002; Brown, 2004; Capaldi, Kim, & Shortt, 2007; Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Hamberger & Potente, 1994; Straus & Gelles, 1986).

During the past two decades, numerous typologies of IPV have been suggested: some are based on the characteristics of the violence (Abbott, Johnson, Koziol-McLain, & Lowenstein, 1995; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Johnston & Campbell, 1993), while others are based on individual characteristics of the perpetrator (Gottman et al., 1995; Hamberger, Lohr, Bonge, & Tolin, 1996; Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994; Miller & Meloy, 2006; Swan, Gambone, Caldwell, Sullivan, & Snow, 2008; Swan & Snow, 2002, 2003, 2006). Some others suggest a combination of these approaches (Chase, O’Leary, & Heyman, 2001; Ross & Babcock, 2009). Attempts to discern typologies of IPV are essential to understand the complexities of IPV (Cavanaugh & Gelles, 2005; Pence & Dasgupta, 2006), its disparate causes, correlates, and consequences (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). It is likely that the acknowledgment of the multifaceted nature of IPV would greatly facilitate the development of more appropriate and targeted interventions and more sensitive measurement of the outcomes of such interventions. Perpetrators and their victims (or survivors) represent heterogeneous groups with a multitude of precipitating and exacerbating factors. Recognizing that there may be different typologies of IPV with different etiologies and, therefore, differentially appropriate treatment approaches (Boxall, Rosevear, & Payne, 2015; Capaldi & Kim, 2007; Cavanaugh & Gelles, 2005; Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994; Jacobson & Gottman, 1998; Johnston & Campbell, 1993), has the potential to advance our definitions and understanding of IPV and development and empirical assessment of preventive approaches (Johnson, 2010; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2010a, 2010b; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Huss, & Ramsey, 2000a; Pence & Dasgupta, 2006). Developing and understanding typologies of IPV may be useful in developing appropriate and accurate screening instruments, which can be used to assess the risk of IPV (Beck, Anderson, O’Hara, & Benjamin, 2013; Johnston & Campbell, 1993; Kelly & Johnson, 2008; Wangmann, 2011). Such differentiation may also help develop family-law decisions about post-separation parenting (i.e., whether parent–child contact is appropriate, what safeguards may be necessary, and what type of parenting plans are likely to promote healthy outcomes for children and parent–child relationships), by considering the type of IPV and its effect on the victim–parent and the children (Beck et al., 2013; Johnston & Campbell, 1993; Kelly & Johnson, 2008; Wangmann, 2011). However, finding evidence related to each of these different classifications in one article is difficult. Such a review may be particularly useful for novice researchers and practitioners. This paper aims, therefore, to present a rigorous review of various classifications of IPV. Typologies by form of abuse, type of violence, and type of perpetrator (men and women) are critically reviewed in the light of available literature and the strengths and limitations of each are described.

## 2. Methods

A search was undertaken of four databases: Medline, CINAHL, Google Scholar and PsychInfo. To identify appropriate studies various search terms including: ‘domestic violence’ AND ‘typology’, ‘IPV’ AND ‘typology’, ‘DV’ AND ‘typology’, ‘intimate partner violence’ AND ‘typology’. Alternative terms for IPV including: ‘intimate partner abuse’, ‘wife abuse’, ‘spousal abuse’, ‘women abuse’, ‘marital violence’, and ‘marital abuse’ were also used. In addition to the Boolean operators, truncation and wildcards techniques were also used. A search was also conducted

using Google to identify studies not published in indexed journals. In addition, the reference list of each article was also reviewed to identify studies that may not be listed in databases.

As indicated in Fig. 1, through literature searching 250 sources (including primary and secondary sources) were retrieved, scanned, and reviewed and 123 sources have been used in this review. Journal articles published in English in any journal during the period 1980–2015 were included to obtain only current and relevant literature. However, where needed classical work from previous years was also incorporated. Among 123 sources included in this study, 33 sources were published prior to 2000 (1986–2000). In addition, secondary sources such as books were also referred to and included in the review where needed. The review was conducted section-by-section. Each article and book was closely read and the main points and findings, strengths and limitations of each document were summarized.

## 3. Results

Various typologies are summarized here, according to the focus of the typologies form of abuse, type of violence and the type of perpetrator. We are only presenting most commonly reported and used typologies and it may be that there are some less common typologies missing from this review. These typologies consider different characteristics such as perpetrator’s gender, frequency, severity and intensity of violence, motivation behind the violence, type of violence, physiological responses of perpetrators to different stimuli, and presence of psychopathological factors (Boxall et al., 2015; Capaldi & Kim, 2007; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2010a; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Huss, & Ramsey, 2000b; Wangmann, 2011).

### 3.1. Typology by form of abuse

One way of classifying IPV is by the form of abuse. Understanding various forms of abuse may help in identifying strategies that can be used to tackle each form of abuse. The WHO (2002) classifies IPV into physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Some policy makers have identified other categories, such as economic and social abuse, though, it is not clear, if these subcategories actually exist as separate dimensions of IPV (Hegarty, Sheehan, & Schonfeld, 1999). This classification is frequently used and reported in studies individually as physical violence, psychological violence and sexual violence or in combination (Devries et al., 2013; World Health Organization, 2013).

#### 3.1.1. Physical violence

Physical violence refers to the use of physical force to inflict pain, injury or physical suffering to the victim. Slapping, beating, kicking, pinching, biting, pushing, shoving, dragging, stabbing, spanking, scratching, hitting with a fist or something else that could hurt, burning, choking, threatening or using a gun, knife or any other weapon are some examples of physical violence (García-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005).

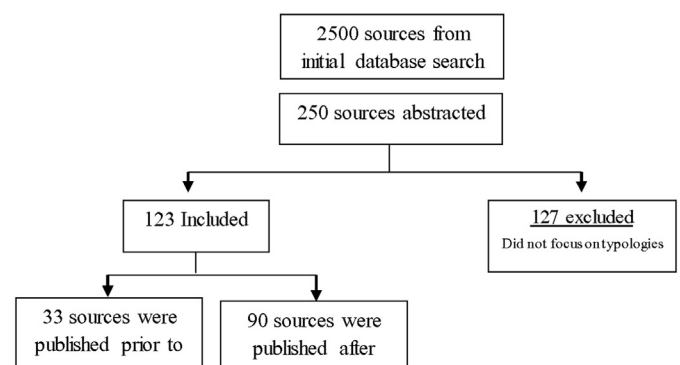


Fig. 1. Flow chart of study inclusion and exclusion.

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