

The Bidirectional Spectrum: Examining New Research on Intimate Partner Violence and Its Implications for Victims

International Post Graduate Course on
Victimology, Victim Assistance and Criminal
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Why Bidirectionality?

- Recent and exciting developments
 - They challenge traditional perspectives and open up new avenues for study and intervention.
- Cutting-edge research
- Direct implications for responses to IPV





What is
Intimate Partner Violence ?

Physical violence

Sexual violence

Psychological aggression &

Controlling abuse

Financial abuse

Legal & administrative abuse

WHAT ARE
THE TYPES
OF IPV?

What is the general perception of IPV?



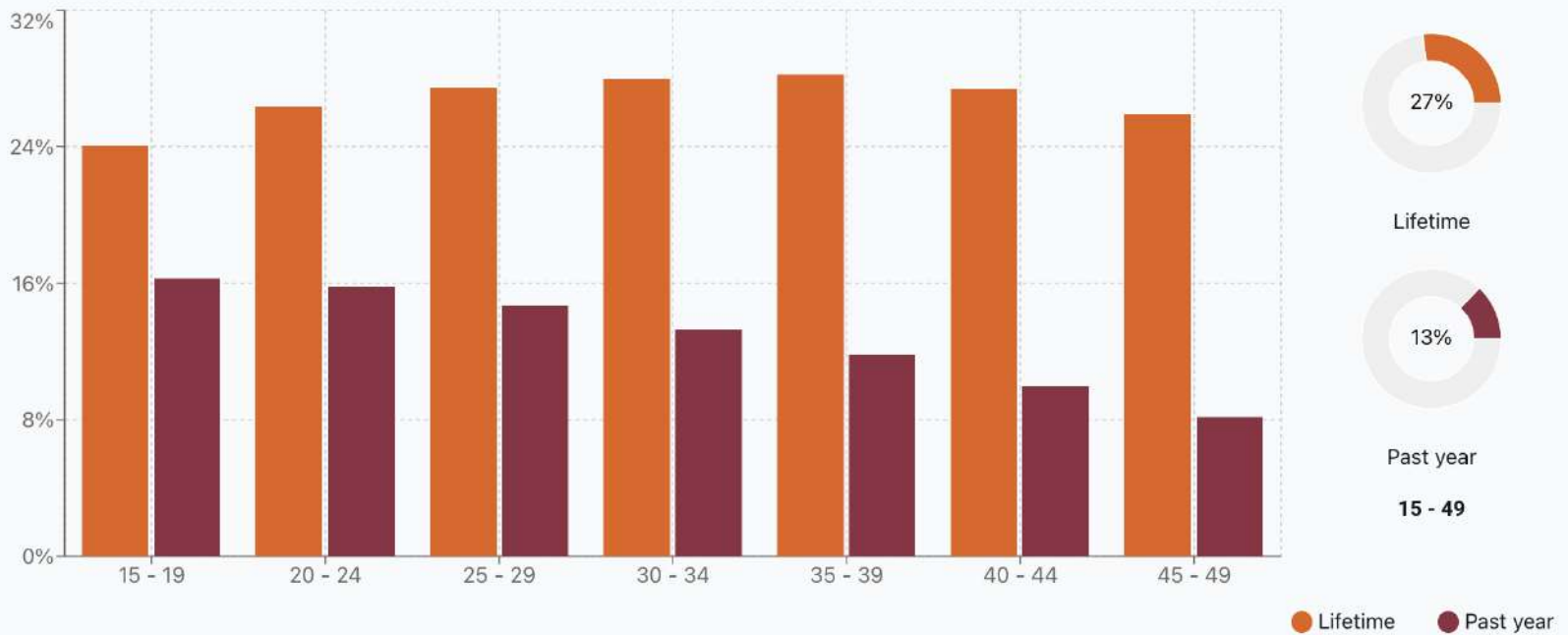
Violence Against Women (WHO, 2023)

National estimates 2000 - 2018

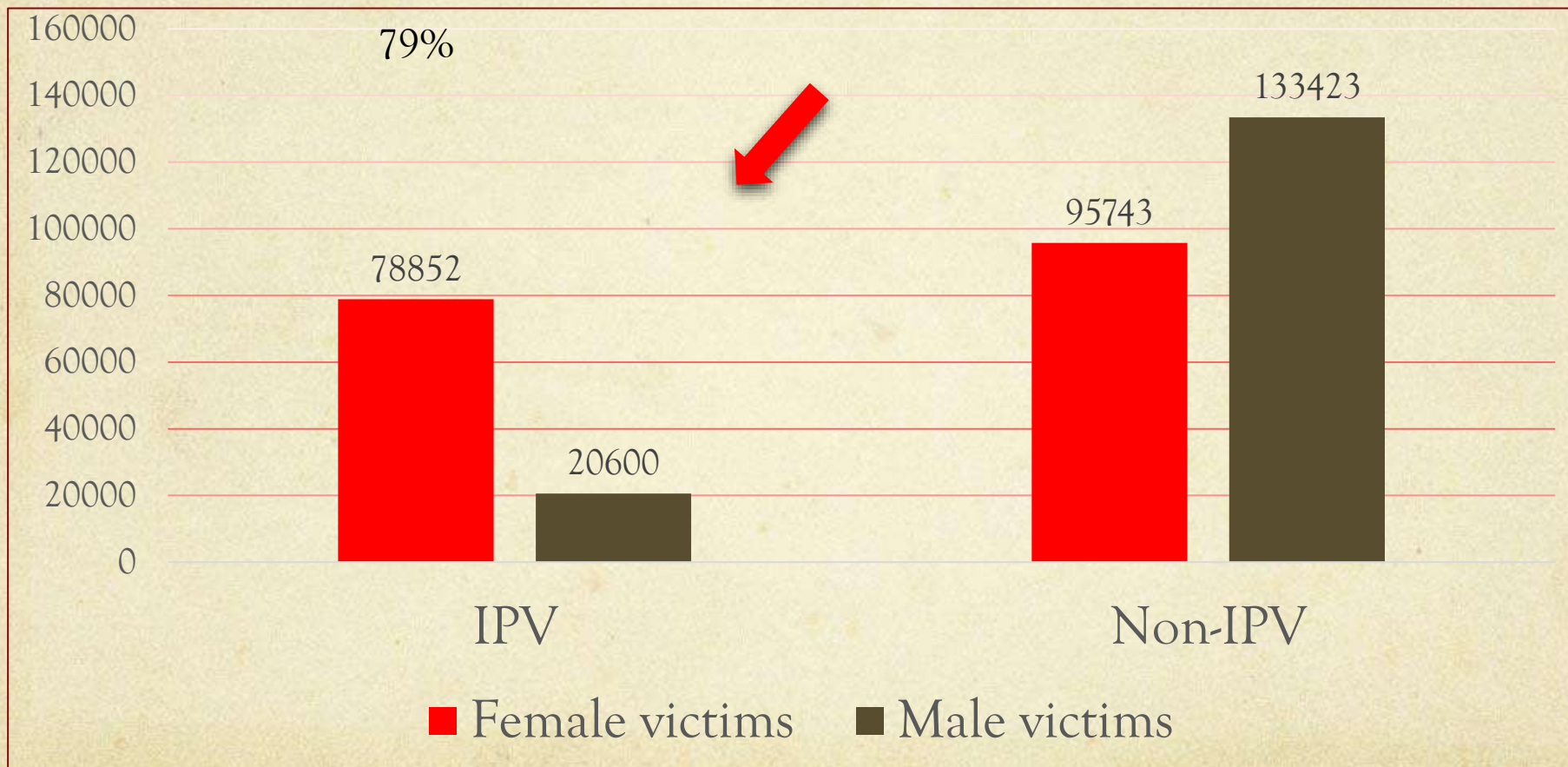
Violence type: Physical and/or Sexual IPV
Region: World: World
Country/area: Select one or more
Filter

World: World Physical and/or Sexual IPV

Clear selection



Victims of **police-reported** intimate partner and non-intimate partner violence, by victim sex, Canada, 2018



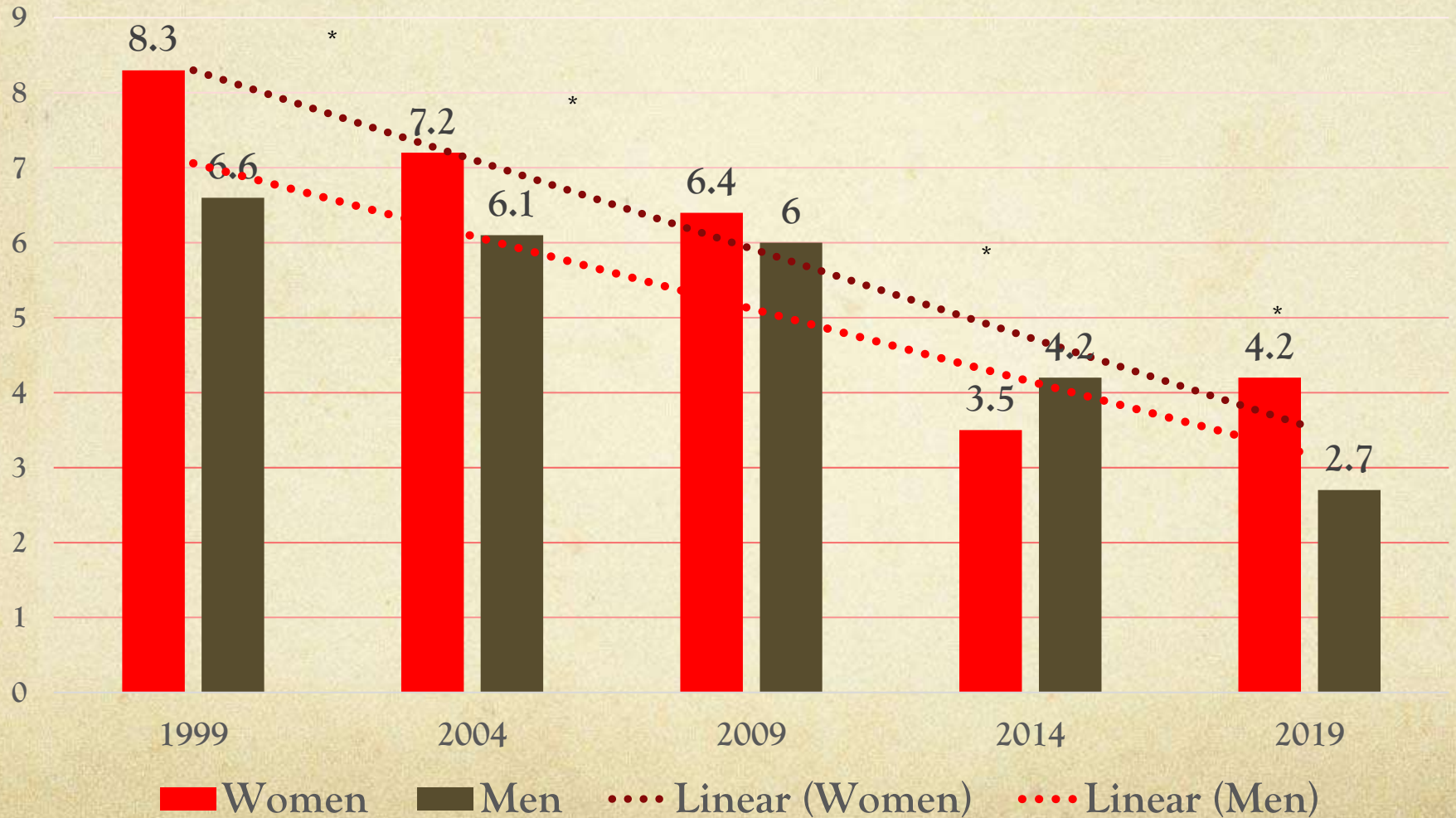
Note: IPV - Intimate Partner Violence

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey (Conroy, 2021).



Are There Any Other
Sources of Data on IPV?

General Social Survey: Trends in IPV in Current & Former Relationships, 1999-2019, by gender, %



Definitions

Bidirectional IPV

- instances in which a person reports both perpetrating and being the victim of violence;
- does not imply that the frequency, severity, motivation and consequences of the violence are the same between partners

Mutual IPV

- partners are both violent toward each other, not in self-defence or response to the other's partner's abuse
- suggests a mutual power balance

Case Study: Depp & Heard

- Couple's therapist testifies that Amber Heard and Johnny Depp engaged in 'mutual abuse' (3 min)
- <https://youtu.be/JfjdRydjT0w?si=DLpONDbhMZgJmbCk>

AP



Discussions Around Bidirectional / Mutual Violence

- First, as a controversial issue (e.g., Murray Straus's recollections on his experiences with publishing the data on "gender symmetry")
- Recently, more as a valid issue (The Conversation, 2022)

Depp v. Heard verdict is a turning point in discussion of intimate partner violence

Published: June 8, 2022 2:40pm EDT

Johnny Depp waves to supporters as he departs the Fairfax County Courthouse on May 27, 2022. (Craig Hudson/AP Photo)

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ADAURIS *Great journalism deserves to be heard*

Author

 **Alexandra Lysova**
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Johnson's Typology of IPV: Simple Version

Situational Couple Violence

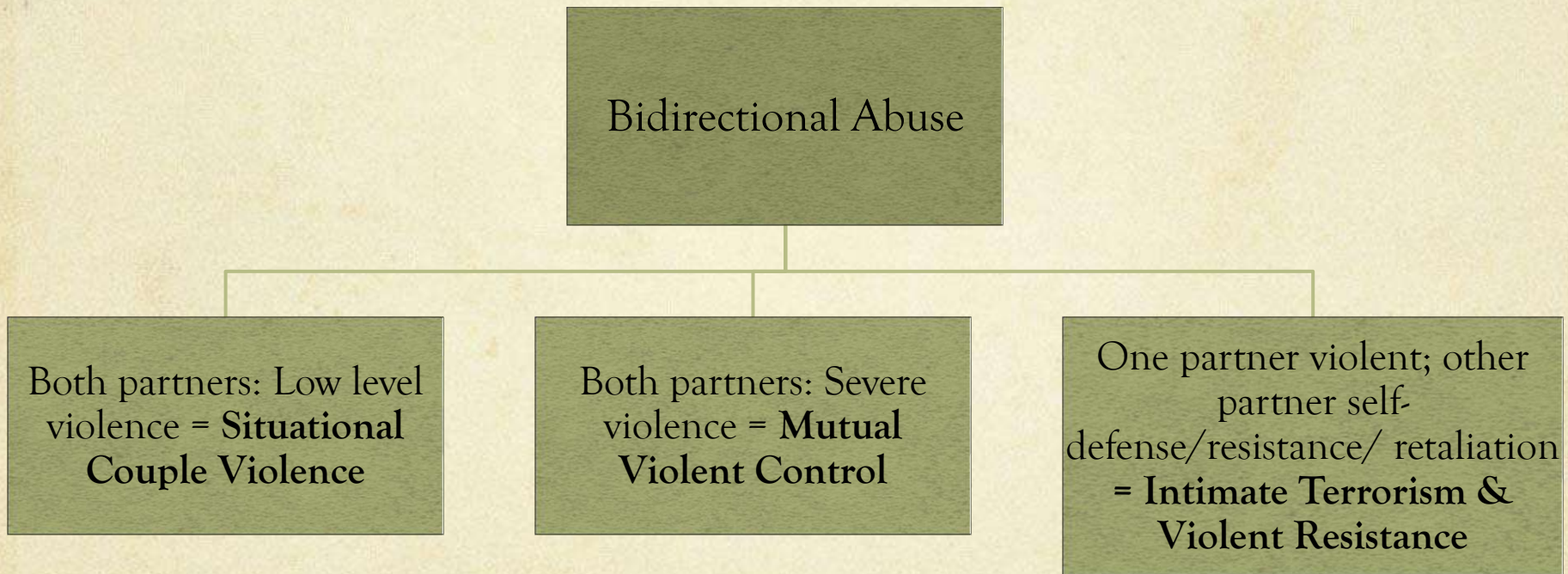
- Mostly milder forms of violence, but can be severe
- Often bidirectional (both partners use violence)
- Controlling motive is not dominant

Intimate Terrorism

- Mostly severe forms of violence
- Often one-sided (perpetrated by one partner against the other who is not violent)
- Controlling motive is dominant

Types of Bidirectional Violence

(based on Johnson's typology)



How Often do these Different Manifestations of Bidirectional Violence Occur?

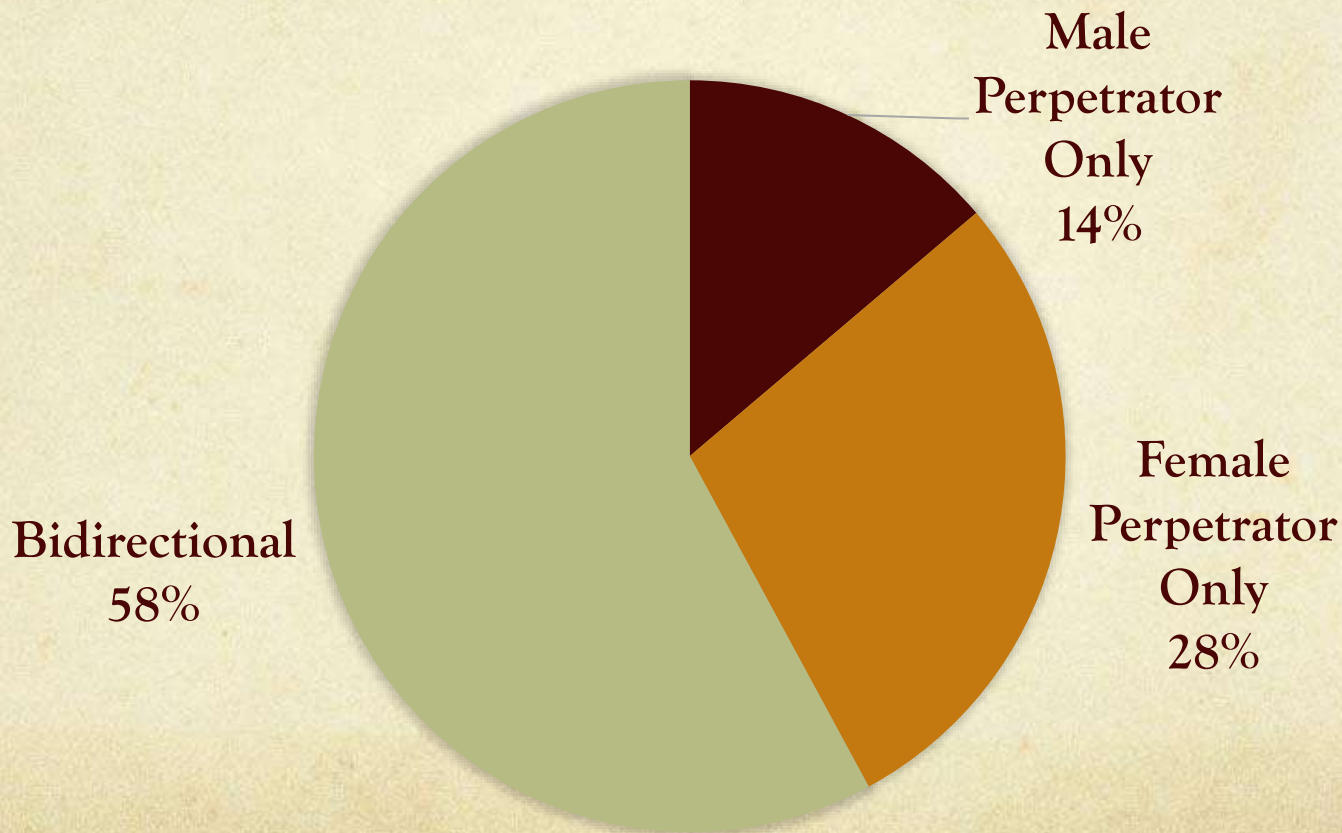
- We need more research on this.
- Most large-scale studies only assess victimization
- All other studies are convenience samples, mostly of women as victims





Research Results

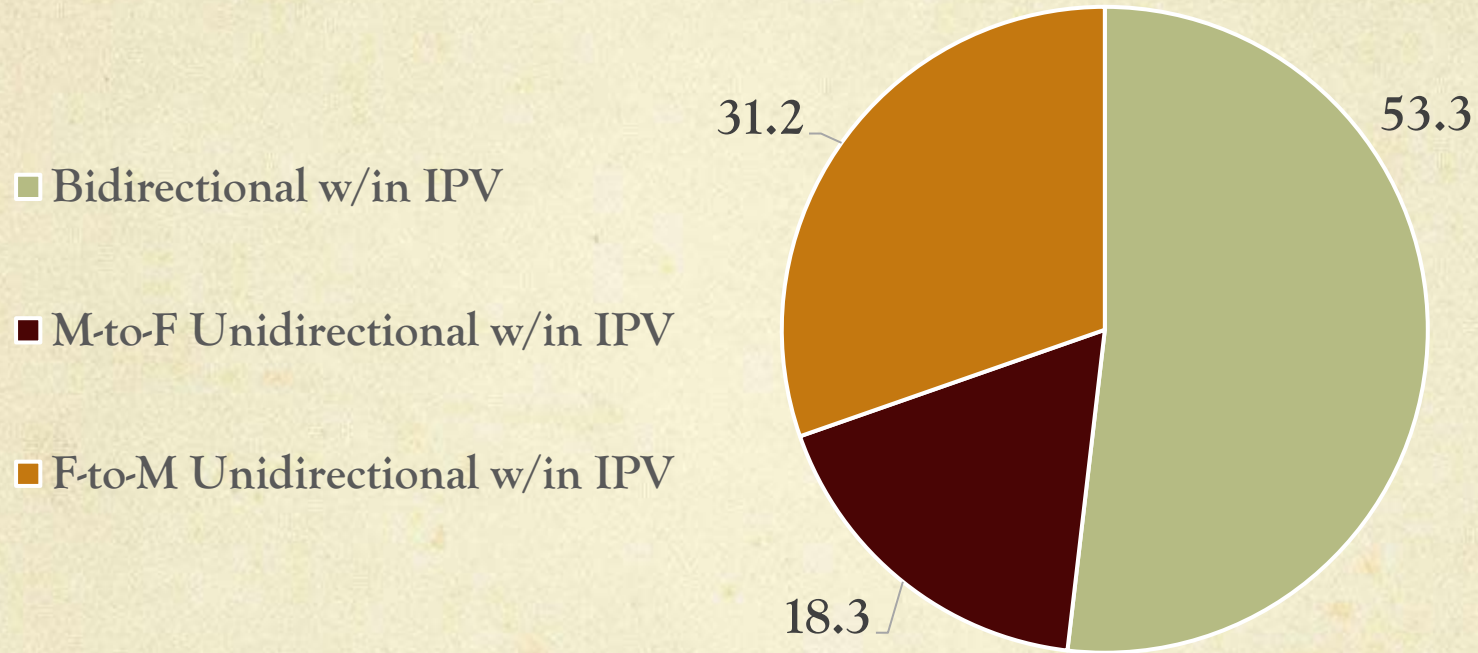
Prevalence of Different Types of Physical IPV in Heterosexual Relationships



Our Team's Review

- With Kenzie Hanson (CAN) and Jenny Mackay (UK)
- We updated Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al.'s 2012 review
- Identified 64 articles reporting bidirectional rates between 2012 and 2022
- Focused on research in five countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and USA

Our Results: Consistency with the 2012 Review



Langhinrichsen-Rohling, et al., 2012:
Bidirectional IPV: 57.5%
Male-to-Female Unidirectional: 14%
Female-to-Male Unidirectional: 28%

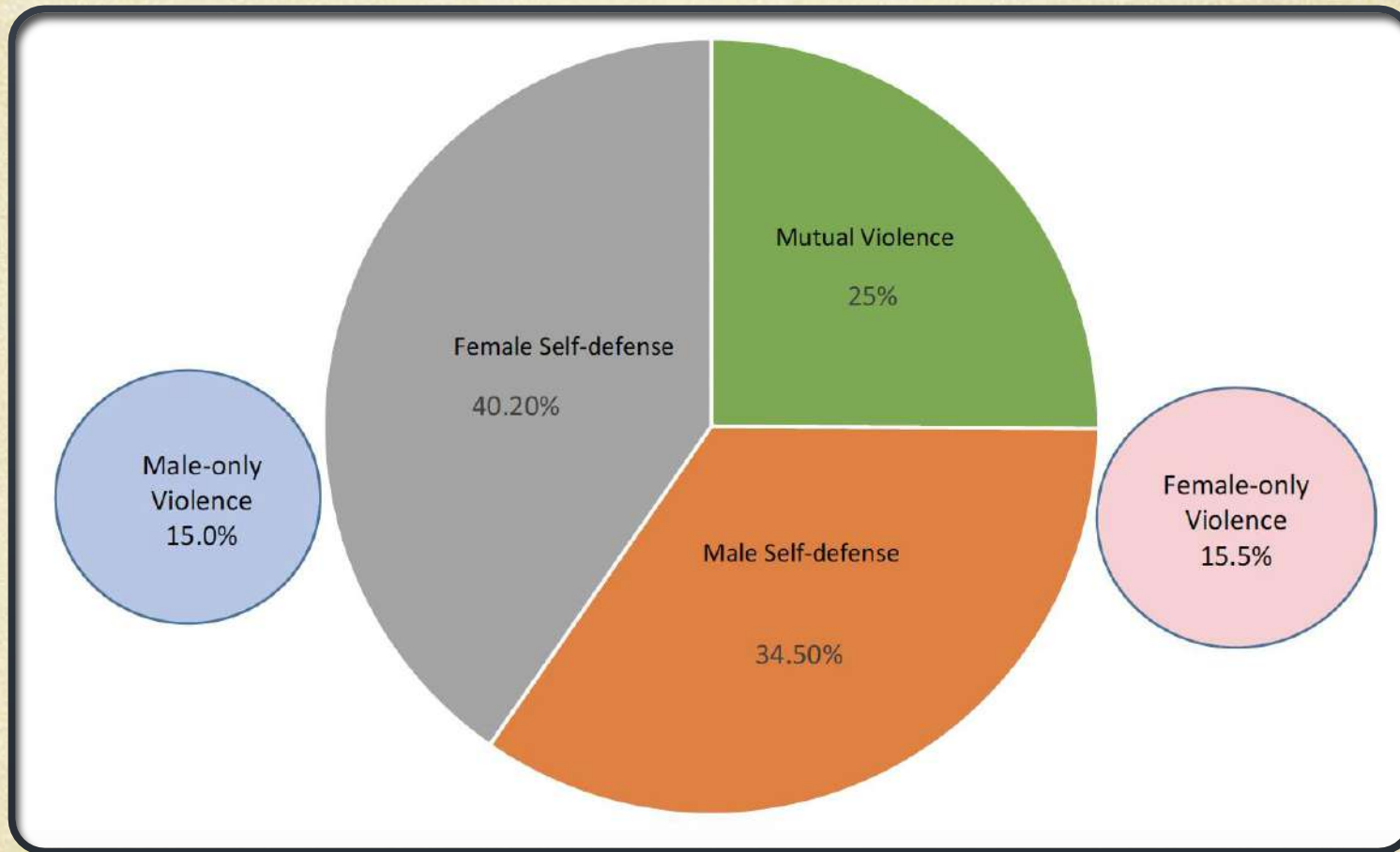
The percentages don't add up to 100% because they were collected from different studies.

Our Results:

Bidirectionality by a Sample Type

Characteristic	Bidirectional w/in IPV	M-to-F Unidirectional w/in IPV	F-to-M Unidirectional w/in IPV	Ratio of F-to-M: M-to-F
Overall	53.3	18.3	31.2	1.7
Sample type				
Large population studies	48.6	19.4	32.6	1.7
Small community samples	48.1	19.9	34.6	1.7
University or college students	59.9	14.4	27.0	1.9
Middle or high school students	47.9	13.4	33.7	2.5
Clinical samples	59.6	20.4	28.5	1.4

Distinguishing Subtypes of Mutual Violence in the Context of Self-defense



Percentage of Sample with Male-only (15%), Female-only (15.5%) and Mutual Violence and Subtypes (69.5%) (*Babcock et al., 2019*)

Straus, 2008:
Prevalence of
Bidirectional
and
Asymmetric
Violence
(IDVS sample)

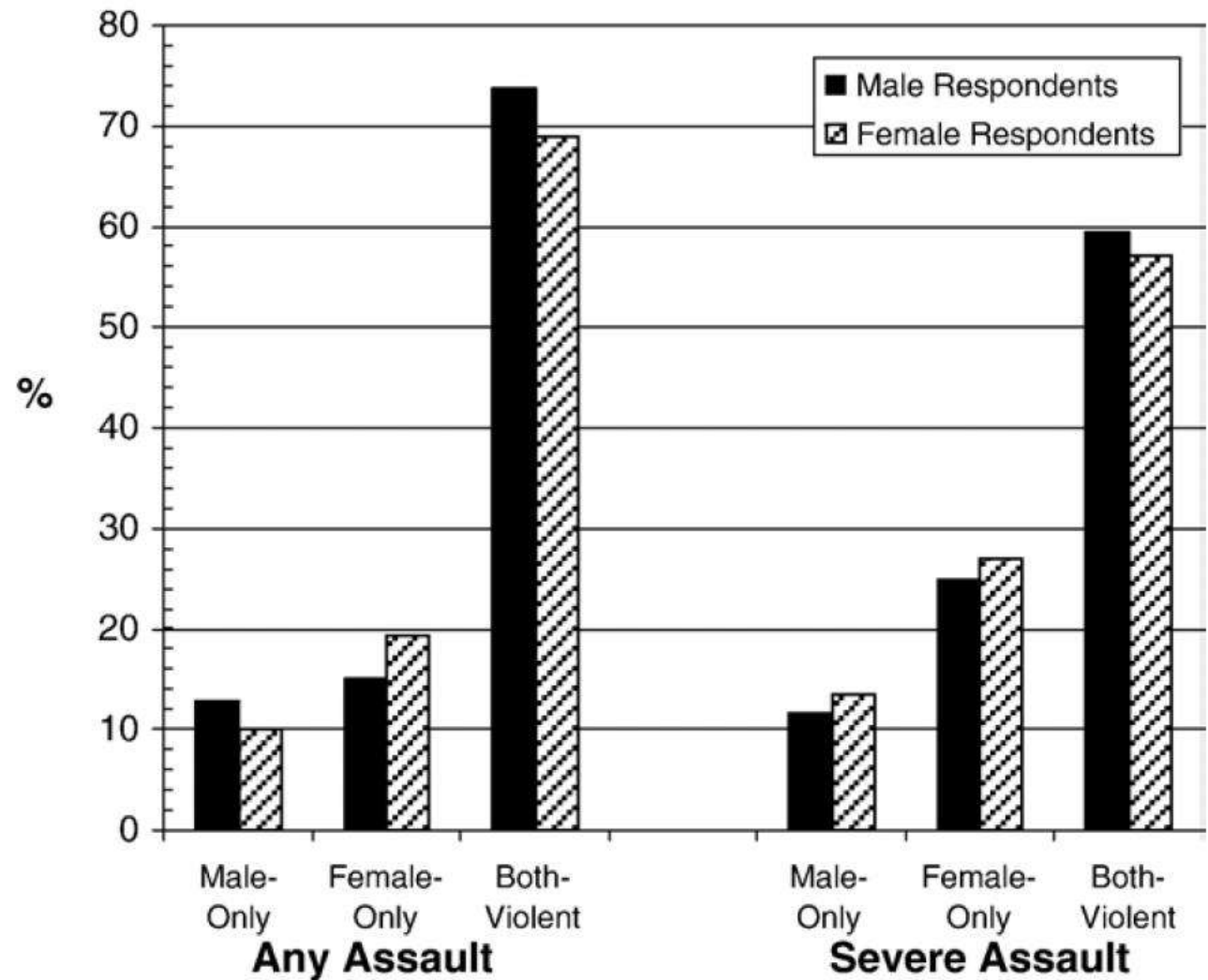
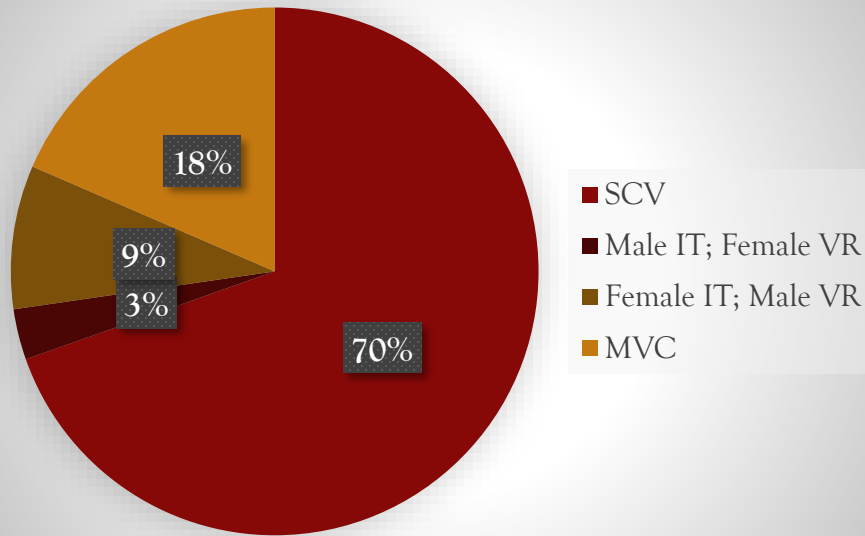


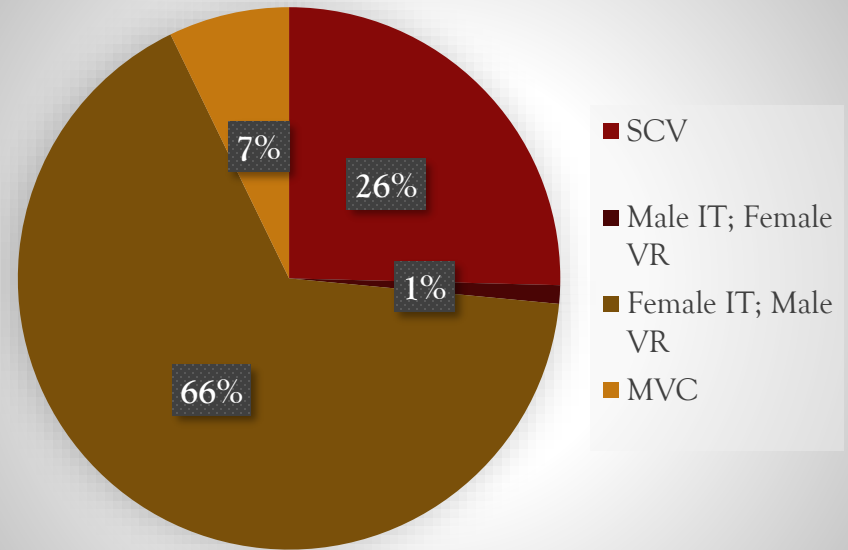
Fig. 1. Percent of violent couples in each mutuality type.

Bidirectional Abuse Among Men in Relationships with Women, US

Population-Based Sample of Men in U.S.
(227/1583 Reported bidirectional abuse)



Convenience Sample of Male Victims in U.S.
(264/589 reported bidirectional abuse)





Implications for Law Enforcement

How Has This Issue Played Out in Law Enforcement?

- Mandatory arrest policies initially led to an increase in “dual arrest”
 - Consistent with the Research on Bidirectional Violence.
- In efforts to reduce the number of women arrested and the number of dual arrests, **dominant aggressor policies** were adopted.
 - Directs officers to arrest the dominant aggressor.
 - Not consistent with the research on bidirectional violence.



How Has This Issue Played Out in Law Enforcement?

- The dominant aggressor is typically thought of as the most significant aggressor
- Criteria are not always well defined.



- Criteria typically include:
 - age
 - weight
 - height
 - criminal history
 - IPV history
 - use of alcohol & drugs
 - who called 911
 - who reports fear
 - presence of power and control
 - detail of statements
 - demeanor of parties
 - corroborating evidence

Implications and Final Thoughts

- Most IPV is bidirectional
 - Difficult to determine the perpetrator and the victim
 - Among victim samples, most victims are using violent resistance
 - Among population-based samples, most physical IPV is mutual in severity.
- Bidirectional IPV is most likely to escalate and more likely to result in injury
- Law enforcement training should be gender inclusive and explicitly challenging existing stereotypes
- Need for policy, practice, and training that's inclusive “in name and spirit”



Case Studies to Differentiate Exercise

Categories to Select from:

1. Unhappy relationship but not abusive
2. Mutual violence
3. Victim of IPV whose partner has also been a victim in a previous relationship
4. Victim who has used violent resistance
5. Perpetrator whose victim has used some violence

1. Aftab and Judi

Aftab shares that he left the hospital this morning after being stabbed in the chest by his partner, Judi. He mentions he was lucky it wasn't too deep but could have been much worse. Aftab and Judi have been in a relationship for nine years, experiencing the usual ups and downs that come with disagreements in any couple.

Over the years, Aftab reveals that the arguments gradually escalated, and Judi began physically abusing him, hitting and slapping him. Aftab has felt like he's been walking on eggshells to avoid saying or doing the wrong thing, and Judi would often get angry with him if he didn't meet her expectations. Recently, for the first time, Aftab retaliated by slapping Judi and pushing her away after she hit and slapped him. Although embarrassed to admit it, as he despises men who hit women, Aftab felt that the mental and physical abuse had gone on for too long.

During this altercation, Judi grabbed a knife and stabbed Aftab. It wasn't the first time she had grabbed a knife, but it was the first time she had used it. Now, Aftab is afraid for both himself and his son. Aftab suggests that Judi may have a lot of past stress from her childhood, which might explain her behavior.

Aftab and Judi have a 3-year-old boy, and Judi expects Aftab to look after him full-time. Aftab is willing to do so as he loves his son dearly. However, he doesn't know where to turn or what his options are.

Categories to Select from:

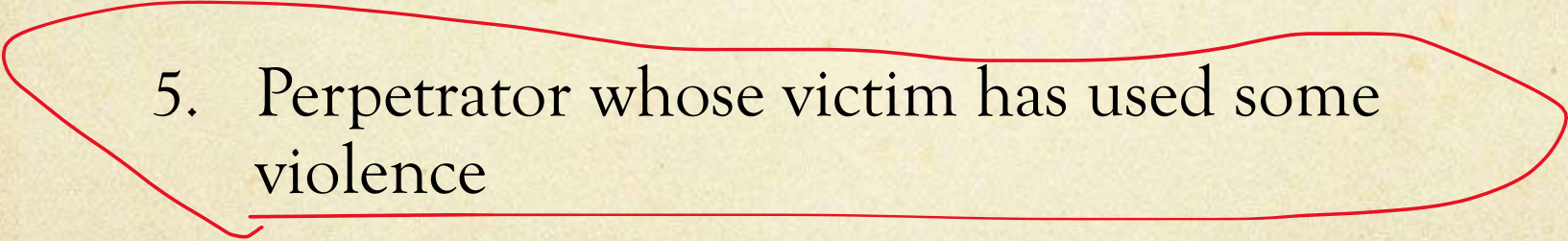
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2. Adam and Kelly

Adam describes being wrongly arrested by the police and has numerous complaints about their conduct. He claims to have been banned from his hometown due to the terms of a legal order. When questioned about how this order was obtained (considering its difficulty to obtain), Adam admits to hitting his girlfriend, Kelly, but justifies it by stating she was 'disrespecting him.'

He also alleges having marks from Kelly's abusive behavior in the form of scratches but asserts that he was able to 'deal with her.' When asked to clarify, Adam insists that Kelly deserved the treatment, citing her argumentative nature and her awareness of his behavior. He expresses frustration that the police, in his view, sided against him because Kelly was crying on the floor when they arrived. Eventually, he admits that Kelly was on the floor because he had repeatedly kicked her. Kelly had attempted to push him off, which he described as him being abused.

Categories to Select from:

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- 

3. Dave and Julie

Dave and Julie have been together for 5 years, married for 3, and have a four-year-old daughter. Dave shares that Julie has an alcohol problem, a trait present in many of her family members. He states that Julie has physically assaulted him, including hitting and biting, even in front of other people. However, Dave also admits to hitting her, causing bruises. He has been arrested multiple times, spending a night in police cells on one occasion when he assaulted her in the street. Although cautioned and not charged, he resents the involvement with the police and blames Julie.

According to Dave, Julie is not a fit mother, and he wishes to separate from her to have custody of their daughter. He believes their daughter won't be safe living with Julie, and his extended family has always been very involved in her care. Despite both expressing a desire to separate, they continue to live in the same house as they can't sell it. Regular violence occurs between them, but Dave is unsure if their daughter has witnessed any of these incidents.

Categories to Select from:

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4. Graham and Linda

Graham divorced Linda, his wife, on grounds of unreasonable behaviour. He said she was keeping secrets about her finances and although he gave her the chance to change her ways she didn't do so.

They still live together in the same property with their 6-year-old boy. Graham tells you the divorce made him ill, He was signed off work and eventually lost his job. He now lives off benefits and pays most of the bills despite the fact that his ex-wife has a job. He complains that not only does she refuse to pay her share of the bills, but she also spends a lot of money every month buying cigarettes. Graham says he wants her out of the house, which they're trying to sell before they go their separate ways and has even thought about changing the locks so she can't get back in and he can live there with his son.

Graham is looking for advice about this and he also wants to know how he can get residence of his son.

Categories to Select from:

1. Unhappy relationship but not abusive
2. Mutual Violence
3. Victim of IPV whose partner has also been a victim in a previous relationship
4. Victim who has used violent resistance
5. Perpetrator whose victim has used some violence



Thank You!

Please stay in touch:

alysova@sfu.ca

5. Liam and Sarah

Liam is engaged to Sarah, his partner of 7 years. Sarah has three children: the oldest, 10, is from a previous partner, and she also has a 3 and 2-year-old with Liam, expecting another child. Sarah struggles with alcoholism, becoming extremely violent under the influence. While sober, she exhibits controlling and verbally abusive behavior, but Liam believes he can handle it.

Recently, the violence has escalated, leading Children's Services to intervene. Liam is aware that Sarah has been a victim of domestic abuse in previous relationships and believes this history may contribute to her current use of violence against him.

Categories to Select from:

1. Unhappy relationship but not abusive
2. Mutual Violence
3. Victim of IPV whose partner has also been a victim in a previous relationship
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Straus, 2008 (cont'd)

- The bidirectional IPV is the most prevalent; followed by female-only, and then male-only IPV - the least prevalent pattern
 - Challenges the gender paradigm
 - Chivalry?
 - Dominance by women is a risk factor for IPV
- Prevalence of bidirectional IPV even in traditionally male-dominant societies
 - Archer's (2006) work on cross-cultural differences in physical aggression:
 - *“As gender equality and individualism increased, the sex difference in partner violence moved in the direction of lesser female victimization and greater male victimization.”* (p.133)
- Self-defence?
 - Explains only a small percentage of violence (Straus)

Edited by
BRENDA RUSSELL and JOHN HAMEL

Gender and Domestic Violence



CONTEMPORARY LEGAL PRACTICE
AND INTERVENTION REFORMS

Expert's Opinion: John Hamel

John Hamel – one of the leading researchers on DV

- Editor of *Partner Abuse*
- Author of many books, reports and articles
- Licensed social worker who works with victims of DV



Bidirectional Abuse: Some Caveats



- Data on previous slide
 - based solely on men's reports
 - may not be generalizable
- Almost all of the research focuses on bidirectionality of physical IPV
 - There may be controlling behaviors, sexual assault, and/or severe psychological abuse on the part of the non-physically abusive partner that could complicate the picture.
- Role of victim and perpetrator may change
 - Over time
 - Within the course of an argument
- Rates of self-defense are low for both men and women (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, McCullars, et al., 2012).

How Has This Issue Played out in Law Enforcement?



- Police training manual scenarios almost always (in some cases, always) deem the man as the dominant aggressor (Hamel, 2011).
- Police officers often fall back on gender stereotypes and the only dominant aggressor guidelines that can be easily interpreted (relative size and strength).
- These policies are based on the false presumption that there is only one clear aggressor in most or all relationships (Hamel & Russell, 2013).
- Studies show that men are arrested more than women, even when controlling for physical injuries (Shernock & Russell, 2012).
- Men receive 63% longer sentences on average than women do; Women are also likelier to avoid charges and convictions, and twice as likely to avoid incarceration if convicted (Starr, 2015)