The Johnson typologies of intimate partner violence: An investigation of their representation in a general population of New Zealand women

Abstract

Typologies of intimate partner violence (IPV) can inform practice and aid with the development of interventions. To maintain utility, typologies should be constantly reviewed in light of emerging results generated from internal and external validation. The presented study is an empirical exploration of the Johnson (2008) typology of IPV using data gathered from the New Zealand replication of the World Health Organisation Violence Against Women survey. We could not identify all types of IPV described by Johnson, and we suggest that mutually exclusive types of violent relationships do not exist. Further exploration of the validity of the Johnson typologies, including an exploration of the utility of categorisation for suggesting appropriate responses to IPV, is required.
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A ‘typology’ is a system of groupings, the members of which are identified by postulating specified attributes that are “mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive” (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2014). The value of typologies for understanding intimate partner violence (IPV) lie in whether they are appropriate to inform practice and aid with the development of interventions (Islam, 2012). When determining a good quality typology, Skinner emphasises the interplay of theory development and empirical analysis (Skinner, 1981). He describes a continual process of theory formulation, internal and external validation, and the need for typologies to be constantly reviewed in light of emerging results generated from internal and external validation.

The implication of a typological approach to IPV is that different interventions and prevention strategies will be appropriate depending on the type of violent relationship (M. P. Johnson, 2008a). In order to ensure that the appropriate interventions and prevention measures are put in place, it is important that the typology used accurately describes the phenomena under investigation. “Typologies...are less durable than classifications in that their descriptions are accepted only to the degree that they continue to provide solutions to problems” (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2014).

A number of typologies of IPV have been described in the international literature. For example Emery (Emery, 2011) conceptualises the degree of order within the relationship (chaotic vs ordered), the power balance within the relationship and the perceived legitimacy of the use of violence as determining factors in the type of violence experienced. Other researchers have focussed on the frequency, impact and severity of the violence when categorising IPV experiences (Dutton, Kaltman, Goodman, Weinfurt, & Vankos, 2005; Swan & Snow, 2002). Typologies also exist that focus solely on the categorisation of male perpetrators of IPV. For example, Holtzworth-Munroe and colleagues describe a continuum of three violent clusters (family-only, low level anti-social, and generally violent/anti-social) who vary on the severity and combinations of violence perpetrated, and the
degree to which that violence is also perpetrated outside the family (Holtzworth-Munroe, Meehan, Herron, Rehman, & Stuart, 2000). A fourth category of batterer is also described – the dysphoric/borderline batterers who are considered “the most dysphoric, psychologically distressed and emotionally volatile... and may have problems with drug and alcohol abuse” (pg 482 (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994)). Jacobson and Gottman labelled their male perpetrators as ‘pitbulls’ or ‘cobras’. The pitbull build up their anger and aggression during an argument, while the cobra would initiate an interaction aggressively, looking aggressive and sounding aggressive, but internally calming down (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan have suggested that the cobra appeared to reflect the generally violent/anti-social perpetrator, while the pitbull appeared to reflect the dysphoric, borderline batterer (Holtsowrth-Munroe & Meehan, 2004).

One of the most widely known typologies of IPV is Johnson’s (2008). Michael Johnson originally developed his typologies of IPV in an effort to resolve some of the misunderstandings and disagreements that existed (and continue to exist) in the area of IPV. His view was that these misunderstandings and disagreements evolved, at least in part, because of a failure to make distinctions about different types of violent relationships (M. P. Johnson, 2008a). The Johnson typology describes four types: (1) Intimate terrorism; (2) Violent resistance; (3) Situational couple violence and (4) Mutual violent control (M. P. Johnson, 2008a). The defining characteristic of intimate terrorism is that, within the relationship, the predominant aggressor is primarily motivated by the need to control their partner – violence becomes a mechanism to reinforce the control exerted on the relationship (“violence deployed in the service of general control over one’s partner”, pg 6 (M. P. Johnson, 2008a)). In some cases (mutual violent control), both parties use violence as mechanism of control. In contrast, situational couple violence is not motivated by control, but is a physical reaction to anger or frustration. Violent resistance describes the acts by the predominant victim, who responds to intimate terrorism, and seeks to protect themselves through use of violence. Johnson argues that it is intimate terrorism that most researchers are interested in.
Empirical studies have been used to validate Johnson’s typologies. However, not all of these studies have included measures of control as experienced by the victim (Simpson, Doss, Wheeler, & Christensen, 2007), instead providing only a measure of different levels of severity of violence experienced. Indeed, it is the measurement of control within a relationship that many researchers have struggled to operationalize (Wagmann, 2011). Dutton and colleagues acknowledge the contextual, interdependent and interactive nature of control within a relationship, highlighting the need for a nuanced and thorough measurement of this construct (Dutton, Goodman, & Schmidt, 2006).

There have been a number of reviews and revisions of the Johnson typology since it was originally proposed in 1993 (J. R. Johnson & Campbell, 1993). However, the majority of this work has been conducted with samples from the United States (e.g. (Anderson, 2008; Leone, Johnson, & Cohan, 2007)) or the United Kingdom (e.g. (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003)) and have been based on court and shelter samples rather than randomly selected population-based samples. The study presented in this paper is an empirical exploration of the Johnson typology using data gathered from the New Zealand replication of the World Health Organisation Violence Against Women survey (García-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005).

IPV exposure in New Zealand is similar to that in the United States (lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual IPV in New Zealand 35.4% (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004); 35.6% of women in the United States have experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Black, et al., 2011)), as are rates of out of home care for children with substantiated findings of abuse or neglect (Gilbert, et al., 2011). As such, this investigation in a larger cross section of the population will have implications for New Zealand and the United States.

The survey instrument includes validated measures of women’s exposure to violence by intimate partners, control, and the use of violence by women within and independent of the context of experiencing violence by their male partner. As an extension of the Johnson typology, and to seek to
understand how violent behaviours may cluster across the whole population, this investigation was conducted in all women who had ever been married or partnered, not only those who had experienced IPV.

Methods

Study Design

The data reported here were gathered as part of the New Zealand Violence Against Women Study, a cross-sectional survey conducted by the School of Population Health at the University of Auckland (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004). This study replicated the WHO Multi-Country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence (Garcia-Moreno, et al., 2005).

Setting and sampling strategy

A population-based cluster-sampling approach with a fixed number of dwellings per cluster was used. The interviews were conducted in the Territorial Local Authorities (TLA) of: Auckland City, Manukau City, Waitakere City, North Shore City (Auckland), Hauraki, Matamata-Piako, Waikato and Waipa Districts (Waikato). Meshblocks were the primary sampling unit within each TLA. Within each meshblock a randomly selected street and street number was used as the starting point for interviews. Interviewers approached 10 households within each meshblock. In Auckland, interviewers approached every 4th house; in the Waikato, interviewers approached every second household.

Recruitment and Participants

The study population for the current investigation was women aged 18-64 years, who were usually resident in Auckland or North Waikato and who resided in private homes. Recruitment took place over the period March to November, 2003.
In selected households with more than one eligible respondent, one woman was randomly selected. If the woman selected was available to talk, consent was sought and an interview arranged, otherwise contact details were obtained and further attempts made to set up an interview. To maximise the chance of obtaining an interview, a minimum of three return visits were made to each household at different times and on different days.

The interview was conducted in the woman’s home in a room where no other people over 2 years of age were present. If the interview was interrupted, the interviewer switched to a neutral subject (such as nutrition) to ensure the safety of the study participant.

All interviewers were women. Prior to conducting the interviews, all of the interviewers participated in a week long training module. Within this training module the interviewers covered the ethical and safety considerations of research on intimate partner violence, as developed by the World Health Organisation (Watts, Heise, Ellsberg, & Garcia-Moreno, 2001).

In total 2,855 women were interviewed. This study uses the data from 2,674 women who reported they had ever been married or had a male sexual partner. The remaining respondents reported that they had never been married or had a male sexual partner.

Questionnaire development

The base questionnaire was developed by the Core Technical Team of the WHO Multi-country study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence (Core Technical Team, 2003). Minor modifications were made to increase the appropriateness to the New Zealand context, and the revised questionnaire was pilot tested for acceptability. The questionnaire was produced in English and Chinese, as Mandarin/Cantonese speakers were the largest group that could not complete the questionnaire in English. Multi-lingual interviewers were used to conduct the Chinese interviews.

The questionnaire was administered as a face-to-face interview, in the participants own home.
This study received approval from the University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee (Ref 2002/199).

Consistent with definitions from the WHO Multi-Country Study (2005), intimate partners included male current or ex-partners that the women were married to or had lived with, or current male sexual partners. Where the respondent was divorced or separated from her partner, she was asked to consider the most recent or last partner when responding. Information on all variables was collected from the respondent only.

**Analyses**

We used latent class analysis to explore the number of classes (types) of relationships experienced by the women surveyed in the NZVAW population (Lanza, Dziak, Huang, Wagner, & Collins, 2014).

Latent class analysis uses individuals’ responses to observed variables to identify underlying subgroups within a population. This analytical technique can be used to explore complex behaviour patterns and variables that predict high risk behaviour to identify those most at risk. The best model for the population (that which most accurately describes the number of underlying sub-groups that exist within a population) is determined by reviewing model fit indices, described below. For each model, a group of indicator variables (those that are observed and adequately measured within the study population) are selected. The selection of these variables are based on previously published research describing the underlying subgroups.

Latent class analysis was conducted using SAS 9.2. Don’t know, don’t remember, refused and no answer responses were considered ‘missing data’. Missing values were excluded from the analyses. Indicator variables used in the latent class analysis (described below) were quarrelling, number of controlling behaviours experienced, number of emotionally violent behaviours experienced, number of sexually violent behaviours experienced, number of physically violent behaviours experienced,
women’s use of violence in the context of a violent episode, and women’s use of violence outside a violent situation.

As there are no absolute measures that describe the fit of a latent class model, we explored the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), the Schwarz Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), the consistent AIC (CAIC) and the entropy statistic. Information criterion measures provide an estimate of model fit based on the number of parameters specified (smaller values are preferable), while the entropy statistic provides a measure of the relative stability of the model (entropy values approaching 1 indicate a better delineation of classes (Celeux & Soromenho, 1996)).

Individuals were assigned to groups based on the posterior probabilities of group assignment, calculated from the level of violence they had experienced (or perpetrated in the case of those women who reported physically mistreating their partner).

**Descriptive measures**

To determine if there were differences in the subgroups identified through latent class analysis, we investigated differences in “before relationship” and “within relationship variables” (Abramsky, et al., 2011) that have been shown to relate to current experience of sexual or physical violence in New Zealand women (Fanslow & Gulliver, 2014). In addition, we sought to determine if there were differences in experiences of: quarrelling; control; emotional, physical and sexual violence; the severity of physical IPV; and women’s use of violence. We also investigated the situations that lead to the partner’s violent behaviour.

Descriptions of the variables investigated are presented in Table 1. Descriptive statistics (chi squared) were used to determine differences in population sub-groups.

**Measures included in latent class analysis:**

Experience of violence
Current or previously partnered women were asked whether they had experienced any of the following forms of physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner (current or any other):

Emotional violence (4 items, cronbach’s alpha for scale (ever married/partnered women) = 0.82): Insulted, belittled or humiliated in front of other people, scared or intimidated, threatened to hurt them or someone they care about.

Physical violence (6 items, cronbach’s alpha for scale (ever married/partnered women) = 0.87): Slapped or had something thrown at them that could hurt them; pushed, shoved or had their hair pulled; hit with a fist or something else; kicked, dragged or beaten up; choked or burnt on purpose; threatened with, or had used against them a gun, knife or other weapon.

Sexual violence (3 items, cronbach’s alpha for scale (ever married/partnered women) = 0.82): Physically forced to have sexual intercourse when the woman did not want to; having had sexual intercourse because she was afraid of what her partner might do; forced to do something sexual that she found degrading or humiliating.

The summed number of positive responses on each scale was used to determine each scale score (1=yes, 0=no).

Controlling behaviours displayed by partner

Respondents were asked if their current or most recent partner tried to keep them from or restricted contact with friends or family, insisted on knowing where they are, ignored them/treated them indifferently, got angry if they speak with another man, was suspicious about unfaithfulness, expected them to ask permission before seeking health care (7 items, cronbach’s alpha for scale (ever married/partnered women) = 0.81). ‘Yes’ responses were scored 1 (no=0). Positive responses were summed to produce a scale score.
Quarrelling

Respondents indicated how often they quarrelled with their current or most recent partner.
Response options were rarely, sometimes or often.

Women’s use of violence against her partner

Two separate questions were used to determine whether women who were exposed to violence also used violence, either to defend themselves (i.e., in the context of a violent episode) or outside of a violent episode, when not being mistreated by their partner. The questions were:

   During the times that you were hit, did you ever fight back physically or to defend yourself?

   Have you ever hit or physically mistreated your husband / partner when he was not hitting or physically mistreating you?

Response options were never, once or twice, several times, many times.

Results

Latent class analysis was conducted for all women who reported that they had ever been married or lived with a male partner (n=2,673).

Data fit statistics for each model are presented in Table 2. As highlighted in the methods, lower values of AIC, BIC and CAIC are indicative of improved model fit, while entropy values closer to 1 (range 0-1) are indicative of a more stable model, which is desirable. Our initial two models included control as an indicator of a latent class, along with the other measures of violence. There was very little difference between the models in any of the information criterion (AIC, BIC or CAIC), however, the 3 class model suggested better delineation between the classes (higher entropy statistic). We experimented with using control as a co-variate rather than an indicator of class membership, acknowledging the interdependent and interactive nature of this variable for women living in violent relationships. The fit statistics produced by removing control as an indicator and using it as a co-
variate suggested a substantial improvement in model fit for the 3 class solution. There was 63% of the study population grouped into class 1, 23% grouped into class 2 and 14% grouped into class 3.

IPV experiences for each of the three classes are described in Table 3, with the overlap in violence experience shown in Figure 1.

Class 1: was characterised with experiencing no, or very low levels of IPV. In this group, 97% reported no experiences of physical violence (with less than one percent of experiencing any severe acts of physical violence); 99% reported no experiences of sexual violence; and 76% reported no experiences of emotional abuse. Over all measures, 72% of this group reported experiencing no IPV. In addition, 84% of this group reported experiencing no controlling behaviours from their current or most recent partner. The majority (58%) of this class reported also that they rarely quarrelled with their current partner. Of the few women who experienced IPV in this class, 60% (32 out of 53) reported that they never fought back, while 79% (41 out of 52) reported that they never physically mistreated their partner outside of the context of a violent episode.

Class 2: All women in this group reported experiencing some type of IPV, but at less frequent and more moderate levels than were reported by women in Class 3. Seventy percent experienced some type of physical violence. Of these women, 29% reported that the violence happened once. There were 39% of the women in this class who experienced violence that was moderate in severity (32% reported severe violence). Thirty-one percent of this group reported experiencing sexual violence, with 17% reporting that it happened once. Over 96% experienced emotional abuse. 42% of the members of this class reported that they quarrelled with their partner sometimes, while a further 20% quarrelled frequently. 48% of the women in this class who had experienced IPV reported that they never fought back and 31% reported that they fought back once or twice. 78% of women who had experienced IPV reported that had not physically mistreated their partner when he was not hurting her. 64% of women in this class reported that they had experienced no controlling behaviours from their current or former partner.
Class 3: was characterised by women who had experienced high levels of emotional and/or physical IPV. Over 99% of this class reported experiencing emotional or physical violence, and 71% reported experiencing sexual violence. The large majority (95%) of the women in this class had experienced severe acts of physical violence. Of the women in this class who had experienced IPV, 32% reported that they fought back many or most of the time, although 86% reported that they had not physically mistreated their partner while not being mistreated. Over half (54%) of this class reported that they had experienced some controlling behaviours from their current or former partner.

Descriptive variables associated with class membership are presented in Table 4. Each of the variables were significantly related to class membership. Of interest from Table 4 is the relative consistency in the reporting of “before relationship” characteristics of women in class 2 and 3 for, father had hit or beaten her mother; experience of abuse as a child and problems with alcohol consumption. Among the partners of responders there was a notable distinction in the “before relationship” characteristics of the men in class 3 compared with class 2, for the proportion of partners whose father had hit or beaten their mother; who experienced abuse as a child; or who experienced problems with their alcohol consumption. Amongst these variables, positive reporting for men in class 3 was almost twice that of the men in class 2.

Situations that were considered trigger points for the IPV are described in Table 5. Compared to those in Class 2, twice the proportion of those in Class 3 reported that violence was triggered by all of the situations listed. The exceptions were for responses to: ‘no particular reason’, ‘when he was drunk’ or ‘other’ situations.

**Discussion**

The aim of this investigation was to provide an empirical evaluation of the representation of the Johnson typologies of IPV in a non-US, non-UK, non-clinic based sample. Our results, based on a general population and including women who had not reported experiencing IPV, may encourage
the further consideration and development of typologies. Within our study population we identified three classes:

1. Class 1 – characterised by no or a low number of experiences of emotional, physical and sexual violence. There were 1,689 (63%) women in our study sample categorised into this class.

2. Class 2 – all of whom reported IPV, but occurring at relatively less frequently and of more moderate severity. There were 614 (23%) women in our study sample categorised into this class.

3. Class 3 – characterised by women who had experienced multiple forms of IPV, and high levels of severe violence. There were 366 (14%) women in our study sample categorised into this class.

These classes are not a typology in the strictest sense of the word (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2014), as there was overlap in the women’s experiences of IPV, as shown in Table 3. Therefore, the classes were not mutually exclusive. However, the analysis identified women who had or were currently experiencing a relatively positive relationship, as well as women who had, or were currently experiencing a violent relationship. The entropy value obtained for the three classes suggested that class assignment was comparatively stable (Celeux & Soromenho, 1996).

The classes identified do not match with those suggested by Johnson. We were not able to identify a class where there were predominantly violent relationships but where no controlling behaviours were experienced (what Johnson would call “situational couple violence”). Although 60% of Class 2 reported that they experienced no controlling behaviours, 97% experienced one or more forms of emotional violence. Our measure of control focussed on restricting access to friends or family and being concerned about unfaithfulness. Our measure of emotional violence asked about being belittled or humiliated in front of other people, threats and intimidation (García-Moreno, et al., 2005). Previous research has demonstrated being subjected to emotional violence has an effect of
controlling a partner’s activities, resulting in a woman’s loss of identity and pleasure in her own life (Towns & Scott, 2013). Indeed, items included in our measure of emotional violence are conceptualised by Dutton and colleagues as a sub-component of coercive control (Dutton, et al., 2006). Therefore we, like other researchers, have struggled to adequately operationalize the concept of control. We suggest that control as experienced by our study population may be a combination of the control and emotional violence measures used, as well as other, as yet unmeasured, relationship dynamics.

Further, situational couple of violence is reported as occurring as the result of ‘trigger points’, such as arguments over money, difficulties at work etc (M. P. Johnson, 2008a). 18% of Class 2 reported no particular reason for the IPV experienced, while 32% reported that the IPV occurred when he was drunk. An additional 13% reported that it occurred when he was jealous (Table 5), highlighting a general lack of identifiable trigger points for the IPV experienced by women in Class 2.

Lack of mutuality of violence also points away from Class 2 being equivalent to the categories of violent resistance or mutual intimate control. For example, only 20% of the women in Class 2 who had experienced physical violence reported that they fought back several times, many or most of the time. Only 4% of the women in this class who had experienced physical violence reported that they used violence against their partner when he had not been violent to her (Table 3).

We suggest that Class 3 is more akin to Johnson’s “intimate terrorism” group than to “violent resistance” or “situational couple violence”. Of note is that 14% of our overall sample fell into this group, a substantially greater proportion of the overall population than hypothesized by Johnson (M. P. Johnson, 2008b). Over half of this class had experienced one or more controlling behaviours, 99% had experienced three or more emotionally violent acts, and 95% of this group experienced severe acts of physical violence. 71% had experienced all three forms of IPV measured. Even though 32% of this class reported hitting back many or most of the time when they were being abused, we hypothesise that this group is more closely associated with “intimate terrorism” based on the finding
that only 14% of this class reported physically mistreating their partner when they were not being abused, which argues against fulfilment of the criteria for mutual violent control. This finding is consistent with some reports by Johnson, which highlights that women who exist in a relationship with intimate terrorist may have also used violence at one time in their relationship, however, their use of violence is less frequent (males reportedly used violence 13 times more frequently than their partners) and less severe (M. P. Johnson, 2008a).

Research, Policy and Practice Implications

As stated earlier, the classes identified through this research do not strictly meet the criteria for “good” typologies, as they are not mutually exclusive. Our findings lend support to a continuum of violence experience (Roberts, 2007), more than a distinct typology. Bender and Roberts (2007) compared batterer typologies with battered women’s experiences and highlighted the issue that although typologies may be helpful for matching effective treatment methods to sub-types of batterers, they should not be used as a stand-alone measure of risk. Neither should it be considered that there will not be variation within sub-types and that a typology will predict behaviour with a high degree of accuracy (Bender & Roberts, 2007).

Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan have also cautioned against using typologies as distinct cut-points with certainty around the type of IPV that will be experienced. Although a very small percent of the total (<1%), 12 women in Class 1 had experienced severe abusive acts at the hands of her partner. While acknowledging this variability, however, understanding that differences exist in the context and experiences of IPV will allow social service agencies and counselling services to provide more effective support for those who have experienced violence (Bender & Roberts, 2007).

Further internal and external validation is required to determine the degree to which these groups can be consistently identified within New Zealand, or elsewhere, and to determine the degree to which understanding of these categories can inform intervention and prevention strategies. Despite
these caveats, however, some insights can be derived from our findings, and those of other researchers.

One point is that 14% of our study sample as women who were, or had been, involved in a highly violent relationship. The relationship was characterised by severe, frequent and multiple forms of violence. This is a large proportion of a representative sample of New Zealand women who had experienced severe physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner, larger than predicted by Johnson. These results have implications for the level of service provision that might be required, both in terms of helping women extricate themselves and their children from such situations, and helping them deal with the long-term health and social consequences of such exposure. Additionally, it raises the need to hold men accountable for the perpetration of such behaviours through the justice system, and the need for rehabilitation and response to ensure that they do not persist in such behaviours with current or subsequent partners.

A second point is the need to acknowledge previous experiences of violence, the seriousness of the violence they may currently be experiencing, and the woman’s own safety. Previous investigations of women in violent relationships who use violence show that the use of violence is strongly associated with witnessing violence as a child (father hitting their mother), alcohol abuse [21], the experience of severe IPV, or with children being present when the woman was being physically abused [22]. These factors need to be addressed when attempting to intervene with women who have been implicated in the use of violence in a relationship.

Over a third of women in Class 3 reported that their father hit or beat their mother and almost 40% indicating they had directly experienced abuse as a child. Swift has reported that young women who use violence have “been raised in family environments where violence is used and deemed as an acceptable expression of emotion, they have been socialised to consider violence as normal and an expected outcome or response to challenge or confrontation” (page 9 [23]).
The findings presented also highlight that women who experience violence when growing up can go on to be part of Class 1. There were 15% of Class 1 who had directly experienced abuse as a child and 14% whose father had hit or beaten their mother. Despite this, only 2% experienced alcohol problems and 3% had ever experienced physical violence from an intimate partner. However, it is of concern that 24% of this group reported experiencing one or more forms of emotional violence and 12% reported that their partner was violent to others outside of the home. This finding reinforces calls for population-based primary prevention strategies to ensure that men and women can exist in safe relationships, and suggests the need for on-going investigation of what personal skills and societal supports are necessary to support healthy relationships.

The findings of this study are drawn from a high income country, with rates of IPV similar to that of the United States (lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual IPV in New Zealand 35.4% (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004); 35.6% of women in the United States have experienced rape, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Black, et al., 2011)), and as such have implications for practitioners in New Zealand and the United States. Our findings and those of other researchers (Bender & Roberts, 2007) suggest caution when using typologies for guiding judicial or custodial decisions. Violent relationships are neither static nor homogeneous and are fuelled by issues of control and interdependence – neither of which have yet been adequately understood or measured. Until this field is further developed, there needs to be adequate training for those working with women who live with violence and coercive control (Mandel, 2010). To ensure effective and safe intervention in families where IPV is being perpetrated, this training needs to include a focus on recognising patterns of behaviour rather than focusing on incident-based physical violence. It is important that custody evaluators understand how power and control can work in relationships, at present typologies are too under-developed to be used to guide clinical decision making.
In an effort to acknowledge the unique set of skills required to effectively recognise behavioural patterns, Mandel (2010) highlighted the position of Connecticut’s Department of Children and Families, which has invested resources in placing IPV consultants in all field offices (Mandel, 2010). Mandel acknowledges that the primary statutory focus of child welfare agencies is on the protection of the child, however, he also highlights the need for welfare agencies to work alongside survivors of IPV to develop safety plans for children. He reported that focussing on controlling behaviour patterns rather than incidents of physical trauma lead to agencies being better at: identifying batterers; understanding the context for survivor’s decision making; and strengthening child welfare’s assessment of the batterer’s adverse impact on the child (Mandel, 2010).

Strengths and limitations

A strength of the current investigation is its use of a population based sample rather than one based on samples of service users, and the incorporation of more complete measures of different types of violence, control, mutuality of violence, and situational triggers than have been utilised by previous studies.

The main limitation of the current investigation is that the measures of emotional, physical and sexual IPV, whether the respondent fought back whether she used violence against her partner while he was not being violent to her are ‘lifetime’ measures (current or any other partner). In contrast, measures of quarrelling, controlling behaviours and each of the descriptive variables refer to the current or most recent partner. As such, we cannot determine if the respondent was referring to the same partner when describing their violence experiences, and (for example) whether the respondent’s partner had experienced violence as a child. Even with this limitation, however, there is a high degree of concordance between the variables associated with categorisation into Class 2 and Class 3 and what is reported in the academic literature.
A second limitation of this investigation is the cross-sectional nature of the study. This exploration of the typologies is based on a snap-shot in time. From this data we are unable to determine if those in Class 2 will progress to being in Class 3. There is a substantial body of literature that points towards an escalation of intimate partner violence over time (e.g. (Short, et al., 2000)). However, as shown in Table 4, the women who make up the classes described are not homogeneous. Further work is required to understand the development trajectories of violent relationships or to determine if our results describe patterns of relationships such as those described by Bender and Roberts (2007).

As with all face-to-face interviews, there is the potential for interviewer bias or differential responses to different interviewers to impact on the responses obtained. We sought to minimise the impact of this by providing substantial training to all interviewers involved and employing a well-tested and internationally applied methodology. This, however, is no guarantee that bias does not exist. Our use of cluster sampling also has the potential to reduce the precision of the results obtained as outcomes for the observations would be expected to be positively correlated within clusters (Vittinghoff, Glidden, Shiboski, & McCulloch, 2005). However, the use of cluster sampling ensured an efficient use of study resources, allowing more in-depth research to be carried out and enable better support for the study team.

Finally, latent class analysis will only detect an unobserved structure if each of the classes are large enough to be discernible. If the prevalence of a class is so low to be indiscernible, it will not be identified through latent class analysis (Thompson, 2007). It is possible that this limitation is the reason for our inability to reproduce all of the Johnson typological groups. Conclusion

We have presented an empirical exploration of the Johnson typologies of intimate partner violence. In this population based study we were not able to identify all of the types of IPV described by Johnson and we suggest that mutually exclusive types of violent relationships do not exist. The results from our study lead us to suggest that there needs to be further exploration of the validity of
this categorisation scheme, including an exploration of the utility of categorisation for suggesting appropriate responses to violence or further understanding of a continuum of violent relationships.

There was 14% of our study sample who were, or had been, involved in a highly violent relationship. The relationship was characterised by severe, frequent and multiple forms of violence. An additional 23% of women experienced more moderate, but equally unacceptable levels of IPV. For those exposed to IPV, there also needs to be systems that place that can help respond to immediate violent situations and consequences, and work to prevent escalation to higher risk. Overall, the frequency of IPV across the population suggests that there needs be greater investment in primary prevention.
References


