

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - DEFINING AND MEASURING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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This next section of presentation focuses on defining and measuring domestic violence. This presentation material comes from Parmley's article entitled "Violence against women research post VAWA, where have we been, where are we going?"

So if we cannot come to an agreement on the definition of violence against women, then how are we going to respond to it? In general, violence against women is defined as aggressive behaviors that adversely and disproportionately affect women, including physical assault, emotional abuse, sexual violence, and stalking. These behaviors are engaged in by an intimate partner in an effort to oftentimes gain power and control over their intimate partner.

To accept a narrow definition of violence against women would deny the totality of the experiences of the vast majority of women, who are victimized by their intimate partners on a daily basis. In contrast, using a narrow definition minimizes the extent and nature of the problem.

However, adopting a broader definition that includes various types of abuse, control, and coercive behavior means incorporating some behavior that is not physical, such as nonphysical psychological abuse, or verbal abuse.

An analysis of how domestic violence is measured is critical to the overall study of the criminal justice system response to domestic violence. We are discussing this because various studies have shown extraordinarily different results as to the frequency of abuse, and even in terms of basic data regarding whether domestic violence rates are increasing or decreasing.

Definitional issues from a research perspective involve adequately depicting the scope of violence against women in the United States. We need to know how to interpret crime statistics in terms of violence against women and other forms of violence in order to have a complete understanding of the criminal justice system's response to violence against women.

Policy decisions, such as the allocation of resources for prevention efforts and services to female victims, require solid data about the incidence and prevalence of violence against women. As an expert on the crime of violence against women, you should have the tools to determine methodological rigor.

The National Research Council says that we need to be aware of the methodological differences between types of data sources because policymakers and the media need to know what statistics can be generalized and to whom.