

Physical prevarication within the couple: an empirical analysis of a typology of violent men

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First draft

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to examine differences in batterers' patterns of violence within the couple between an Australian and an Italian National sample of women who have suffered physical or sexual violence. I attempt to identify abusers types using 4 descriptive dimensions (i.e., severity of physical or sexual violence, severity of psychological violence, alcohol use, generality of violence). Latent class analyses is used to identify subgroups of violent men; the violence patterns and prevalence of subgroups are then compared across countries' samples. Australian data is drawn from the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS, 2003). The sample consists of 6,677 women and 1,709 violent men were found; Italian data is drawn from the Indagine sulla Sicurezza delle Donne, Istat (ISD, 2006). The sample consists of 25,065 women and 2,536 abusers were investigated. The main result is the identification of three types of batterers (family only, FO; borderline, BD; and generally violent-antisocial, GVA) in each sample. This typology is consistent with previous results from batterers' non-representative samples researches. FO men show a low severity level of violence; BD men reveal higher level of violence severity and point out a higher level of alcohol use; GVA men achieve a high level of violence combined with alcohol abuse, and criminal behaviour. Despite uniformity in typology found across countries, there are notable sample differences in class prevalence. FO batterers, for example, are widespread in the ISD, on the contrary BD are rampant in the IVAWS. On the one hand these findings highlight the utility of latent class techniques for understanding men's use of violence within the couple. On the other these results show that a consistent abusers typology is likely to be identified also using the victims' point of view

Keywords: intimate partner violence, violent men, batterers' typology.

Introduction

The following paper is aimed at testing the possibility to build a typology of violent men inside the couple and to compare results we will obtain from analysis of Istat survey on violence against women [2006] with those derived from the examination of the Violence Against Women Australian Survey (IVAWS) [2003]. Attempts to outline a typology of violent men are not new in literature: numerous researches have been conducted abroad on samples of men sentenced because guilty of domestic violence or who were following rehab support courses as they perceived themselves as violent [Allen et al. 1989; Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan 2004; Cavanaugh and Gelles 2005; Babcock et al. 2008; Boyle et al. 2008]. Nevertheless, conclusions drawn from these studies could be hardly generalized since samples from which they were derived were hardly statistically representative and, above all, were affected by a strong selection bias. From a methodological point of view, the following analysis has the merit to achieve, if only partially, greater accuracy as they are conducted on representative samples of women at risk of being violence victims. Furthermore, the comparison between the typology we will derive on this bases with those outlined in literature starting directly from violent men will allow to confront directly the aggressors' and victims' perceptions. Lack of differences that might result from this comparison can be an important point of entry for the activation of more targeted and effective social provisions and policies with preventive and repressive aims.

Through the estimation of latent class models, we will show that both in the Italian case and in the Australian one, the most consistent representation of violent men identifies three distinct types of authors [Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan 2004]. The first category gathers family only violent men: severity of violent episodes is typically modest and without risk for the victim's life. Sociopathic and antisocial men are the other two types who cannot be distinguished neither for the severity of forms of violence perpetrated –in both cases very harsh and highly dangerous for victim's safety- nor for an higher abuse of alcohol between each other. It is indeed the place in which violence is perpetrated that sets the difference: antisocial men are equally aggressive inside and outside their houses.

Although this typology is well applicable to the two different datasets, the analysis will show how significant differences emerge between Italy and Australia: first, the dimensions of the three groups are quite different (sociopathic are very numerous in

Australia while in Italy more than one half of violent men tend to fall within the first group); second, the predictive strength of some factors, such as alcohol abuse, also differs across countries.

Why a typology of violent men

The feminist approach has certainly the merit of having arisen consciousness on violence inside couples and thus conceiving male aggressiveness against their partners as the result of a social system characterized by power asymmetry. According to this approach, unbalances in power distribution not only foster the realization of violent acts but also tend to leave these acts stainless, avoiding any social sanction against perpetrators [Dobash and Dobash 1998]. Nevertheless, feminists scholars always looked sceptically to all attempts to sketch classifications of aggressors. Batterers tend to deny their faults, to take any responsibility or to minimize the case possibly blaming on others –first of all their partners. Violent men adopt the most diverse strategies to dissimulate violence they have committed and sometimes also call upon temporary incapacity imputed, most of the time, to stress, alcohol or substances abuse [Cavanaugh et al. 2001]. Many researchers do not think that violence can be stopped on this bases [Walker 1979; Hirigoyen 2000] and therefore prefer to concentrate efforts on victims rather than on perpetrators. Also, programs realized to rehab violent men charged for their crimes are considered totally useless and ineffective. In general, these programs can be structured around individual or group therapy but are usually put in practice in many different ways although the most successful so far have been proven to be only two. First, the Duluth model, among the most popular in the U.S.A., is based on feminist approach. Its main aim is deepening the understanding of causes that push men to adopt control strategies based on violence. Furthermore, this model is aimed at transmitting to batterers better relational capacities in order to lower assertiveness while increasing communication level with their partners [Crowell and Burgess 1998; Jackson et al. 2003]. The second model identifies causes of violence in cognitive errors and helps men to train their rage management. It should be said that researches aimed at testing the validity and the effectiveness of these programs have provided contradictory results: when outcomes are not negative, effects might be found only in the case of voluntary adhesion to the programs [Babcock et al. 2004]. In any

case, high abandonment rates do not allow to provide a unique evaluation. Nonetheless, admitting the existence of different types of violent men and, consequently, trying to define a typology could be of some help in choosing appropriate rehab paths modelled on the characteristics of violence perpetrated.

Another rather popular myth in the research about couple violence is the famous "cycle of violence" [Walker 1979]. The first phase of the cycle entails psychological domination achieved through partner's isolation and humiliation. Once partners are in total subjection and unable to leave the violent relation they are in, men feel free to act more and more violently both sexually and physically. Nevertheless, researches on aggressors have shown that this cyclic trend is not always followed: many abusers do not perpetrate violence passing tidily from lower to greater intensity [Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart 1994].

Psychiatric approach to violence against women, instead, fostered the diffusion of the stereotype according to which violent men suffer from particular psychopathologies and are always out of control. Researches with control groups reported by Schumacher [1999] (violent men were compared to non-violent happy men as well as to non violent men in a relationship crisis) show that it is impossible to distinguish, through the evaluation of personality disorders symptoms, the group of violent men from the group of non violent ones who are experiencing a difficult moment in their relationships. Obviously, psychiatric indicators do not provide neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for the description of violence or violent men.

Starting from empirical evidence that had demonstrated the partiality of unique approaches to violence explanation, such as feminist or psychological ones we have just outlined above, many researchers have concentrated their attention to the study of violent men. The most diffused typology in literature has finally led to a division of abusers in into three macro-groups [Holtzworth-Munroe et al. 1997; Peterman and Dixon 2001]. The descriptive variables on which distinctions among types were made are basically three: severity of violence acts and of any related abuses such as psychological and sexual ones; places where violence is perpetrated (if the abuser is violent outside the couple and problems with law that may derived from these behaviors); and finally, psychopathologies or personality disorder possibly diagnosed. Through the analysis of these three variables, as well as of other secondary factors such as the attitude shown by the batterers towards violence in general and towards the other sex, scholars have proposed to split violent men

into three main categories: violent man only inside their family environment [Holtzworth-Munroe et al. 1997], also known as classic violent men [Gondolf 1992]; the borderline violent subject, also known as sociopathic; and generally violent or anti-social¹ men.

The first category gathers men without any specific diagnosed psychopathology, who rarely make abuse of drugs or alcohol, who have no previous criminal record and who, usually, are violent only inside their families. Violence they perpetrate is less severe: its strength ranges from low to moderate and is always directed towards a family member. Among batterers these are those who are able to establish more solid relations, who have a negative view of violence and, because of this, they show more regret for abuses they commit. Furthermore, they are less conservative in their vision of the roles of the two sexes. Their violence does not grow dangerously and this category groups more than 50% of violent men recruited because guilty of domestic violence [Holtzworth-Munroe et al. 1997].

Violent borderline or sociopathic men may instead suffer from diagnosed personality disorders, are heavily dependent on their partners and extremely jealous of them, they consider violence as a common means for addressing problems. However, they have no bad records as they are aggressive mainly inside their families and only rarely outside their home. They can make use of drugs or alcohol and, often, after violence, they advance sexual requests to their partners. They might have been in their turn involved in past violent experiences both as victims and witnesses and might have been traumatized by them. These experiences might also have fostered feelings of distorted affection that, if not returned or disillusioned, might lead to violence. Their attitude towards violence and the other sex is conservative and violence they impose is more severe than in the case of classic violent men. Often they use weapons and threats of death. Sociopathic men are the 25% of clinical samples' men. Dutton [1995] has studied the borderline organisation personality for some violent men and defines it as "an inclination to intense and unstable relationships characterized by intermittent humiliation of the other, manipulation, disguised dependence, unstable sense of self with intolerance to loneliness and abandonment anxiety, intense anger, impulsiveness and mutability, usually associated with substance abuse and promiscuity".

¹ With different labels, this typology reproduces the one proposed by Hamberger [Hamberger et al. 1996].

Antisocial violent men perpetrate violence ranging from moderate to very severe, they have a high probability to use drugs and alcohol, they are also violent outside their family and have frequently criminal bad records. Often they are diagnosed with disorders or antisocial psychopathologies. Compared to other groups, they have experienced violence in their origin family to a greater extent and, during their youth, they could have also be involved in deviant activities together with their group of peers. They tend to build poor relations, they see violence as normal and have conservative attitudes towards the role of the sexes. Furthermore they express also very little remorse for their abuses. In such a context and considering also external criminal attitudes, violence is caused by its daily and repeated use. This group gathers 25% of clinical samples.

Other typologies were built, among others, by Gottman and his colleagues [1995] that identifies only two types, similar to antisocial and borderline ones, and by Johnson [1995] who recognizes four types. To precedent elements he adds the case of mutual violence, namely when violence is frequently used to solve conflict internal to the couple by both partners.

From a sociological point of view, it is rather important to analyze victims of violence taking into account the type of partners with which they have a relationship: their exposure to risk may be very different, indeed. A simple example can help understand this point: although it is not clear whether the abuse of alcohol and drugs by some victims is a consequence or a cause of violence suffered, the two circumstances create profoundly different situations. Purchasing hard drugs is illegal and expensive: therefore, some researchers [Testa et al. 2003] identify this activity as a mark of deviance characterizing drug abusers. When deviance is identified, it is easy to presume it will be accompanied also by a criminal attitude. A longitudinal study conducted by Testa and his colleagues shows that drug abusers women experiment a higher risk of multi-victimisation inside the couple, but this higher chance is not directly connected to the effects of chemical drugs [Bennett 1997]. It is more likely that drug abusers also attend more often deviant places in which they end up choosing their partners (who are very likely to belong to the second and the third group) rising chances to become victims of violence episodes.

In the following analysis, different risk factors associated to different types of perpetrators will be properly verified taking into account limitations posed by data which do not allow, for example, to assess the existence of personality psycho-pathological disturbs therefore leaving aside one of the principal dimensions used in previous studies.

Data

Analyses were conducted on two different datasets: the Australian IVAWS [2003] includes 6,677 interviews with women aged between 18 and 69 years; the Italian survey on the safety of women [Istat 2006] contains information on 25,065 women aged between 16 and 70 years. In both cases, women who declared to have been victims of violent episodes (physical or sexual) were selected on the bases of 10 appropriate *items*². Both surveys do include cases of multi-victimisation perpetrated by several authors. Personal data on current partners have been collected in all cases (violent or non violent partners) while, for past relationships, data were gathered only in the case of violent episodes and about one sole violent partner. This implies that, for every victim, we will have at maximum information on two violent partners³

Tab. 1 – *Women victims of intimate partner violence. Italy 2006, Australia 2003 (%)*

	Italy		Australia	
	%	N	%	N
Partner violence	5.7	20,831	9.7	5,344
Ex partner violence	13.5	11,570	33.1	4,787

Table 1 shows differences in violence and abuse rates between the two countries: Australian women who declared to have suffered violence episodes during past or current relationships are respectively twice as much and about three times as much than Italian women. As the difference between partner and ex partners is concerned it should be noted that in the Italian case violent ex-partners are more than the double than current violent partners and more than three times as much in the Australian case. It seems pretty evident that is less painful and easier to declare past violence rather than to admit current abuses. Nevertheless, differences between Italy and Australia are so significant that they might lead to think that this phenomena are less diffused in our country rather than in Australia.

² An ex/partner or an ex/boyfriend: 1) thrown or hit you with something that really hurt or frightened you; 2) he pushed, grabbed or twisted your arm or pulled your hair in a way that really hurt or frightened you; 3) he slapped, kicked, bit or hit you with a fist; 4) he tried to strangle or suffocate you, burn or scald you on purpose; 5) he used or threatened to use a gun or a knife on you; 6) any other physical violence; 7) he forced you into sexual intercourse by threatening, holding you down or hurting in some way; 8) he attempted to force you into sexual intercourse by threatening, holding you down or hurting in some way; 9) he forced you or attempted to force you into sexual activity with someone else, including being forced to have sex for money or in exchange for goods; 10) any other sexual violence .

³ In Italy multi-victimization rates (current and ex partners) are 1,7% (130) of women who had at least 2 relations; in Australia this percentage goes up to 2,7% (96).

Still, one woman out of ten in Italy has been a victim of her partner and this proportion actually raises some concerns⁴.

Violent partners were selected and their data analyzed in order to build four indicators that could be comparable to those outlined in literature: a) the severity of perpetrated physical or sexual violence; b) presence / absence of serious psychological violence acts; c) the frequency with which the abuser gets drunk; d) the extent to which the man had problems with the police for violent behaviors outside the relationship.

The classification given by the Conflict Tactics Scales revisited by Straus and colleagues [Straus et al. 1996] was used as a reference point. Hence, acts of physical violence selected as serious are: being hit with objects, attempted suffocation or burns, the threat or use of weapons⁵. The only act of sexual violence categorized as minor is: other types of sexual violence broadly conceived, a sit is not better specified by both surveys.

Classification of psychological violence implied a very strict selection. A first limit indeed was imposed by the low number of items comparable in the two surveys. Furthermore, among comparable elements the number of acts imputable to minor psychological violence according to the Conflict Tactics Scales was too low. Therefore, minor violent acts and absence of psychological violence were aggregated in one category: threats of being physically hit and the damage of objects belonging to women were considered part of serious psychological violence⁶.

The third indicator (frequency with which men get drunk) is articulated in three categories: never or less than once a year; sometimes over one year period or once or twice a month; every day or several times a week. The last indicator identifies men who had problems with police as a consequence of violent behaviors also outside the couple.

⁴ Data reported on the Italian case will imply some discrepancies with those published by Istat. In order to compare these data with Australian ones, women who have declared to have been subjected to sexual acts considered humiliating and degrading were not considered, as it was the case of women who had sex against their will because partners scared them with their possible reaction to a deny. The sole physical threat was in both surveys considered as serious psychological violence (not as a physical one) in order to follow other international researches on violent men.

⁵ Conflict Tactic Scale tags as severe acts also having received kicks or punches. Unfortunately, in the questionnaire, the item refers also to slaps that are considered acts of minor violence.

⁶ “Partner or former partner follows you or keeps you track of your whereabouts in a way that you found controlling or frightening”; “partner or former partner calls you names, insults you or behaves in a way to put you down or to make you feel bad” were the only two comparable acts considered less serious psychological violence.

Tab. 2 – *Violent ex/partner: physical violence severity, psychological violence, alcohol use, and trouble with the police for violent behaviours. Italy 2006, Australia 2003*

	Italy			Australia		
	Ex partner	Partner	Tot.	Ex partner	Partner	Tot.
<i>Physical violence severity</i>						
Minor	51.3	64.5	33.4	28.5	45.4	57.5
Severe	48.7	35.5	66.6	71.5	54.6	42.5
<i>Psychological violence</i>						
Absent or minor	50.6	62.9	56.4	28.5	62.6	38.4
Severe	49.4	37.1	43.6	71.5	37.4	61.6
<i>Alcohol use</i>						
Almost absent	63.6	81.3	72.0	23.5	47.4	30.5
Gets drunk less than twice a month	20.9	14.4	17.8	26.0	36.4	29.0
Gets drunk at least twice a week	15.5	4.3	10.2	50.5	16.2	40.5
<i>Trouble with the police</i>						
No	88.3	97.2	92.5	77.1	93.4	81.9
Yes	11.7	2.8	7.5	22.9	6.6	18.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	1,339	1,197	2,536	1,211	498	1,709

Table 2 shows distributions of frequencies⁷. The most evident element is the under-representation -in both countries and for all variables considered- of current partners also in the categories of harder alcohol dependence and of problems with law. The only exception is provided in the Australian case by sexual and physical violence seriousness: more than half of current partners act very violently on their partners. The brief overview on the phenomenon provided by Table 2 is coherent with observations derived from table 1: differences between Italy and Australia suggest more accentuated diffusion and more gravity of couple violence in the Australian case. With the sole exception of current partners psychological violence for which the two countries surprisingly equal each others, Australian abusers tend to rage more heavily on their partners. Furthermore, in Australia alcohol abuse is more diffused among batterers (more than three times than the Italian case), as well as number of men who had problems with law because of generalized violent behaviors (twice the Italian case).

⁷ The total number of subjects who acted violence are 2811 in Italy and 2137 in Australia. Because of missing values in the last two indicators, models of latent classes were estimated with 2536 cases in Italy and 1709 cases in Australia.

Looking more in details at the last two indicators it is possible to notice that ex-partners with alcohol problems are three times more numerous than current partners. In the Italian case, among those who had problems with law, ex partners are four times more numerous than current partners. This data can be interpreted in two different ways: either violent men belonging to the second and the third group are less numerous among current partners or women were biased in their answers by some kind of repercussions. As we will see, this second hypothesis appears to be more plausible according to results derived from models estimations. Some specific attention should be nevertheless paid in the interpretation of indicators of alcohol abuse and we will provide some careful insights in the conclusion section.

Results

Simultaneous latent class models were estimated starting from variables described in the previous paragraph. Latent class analysis can be considered as a kind of cluster analysis. It assumes that the co-variation within a set of observable variables is due to each manifest variable's relationship to the latent variable. In other words, k manifest variables are locally independent conditionally to the existence of a latent, unobservable, variable X as expressed in (a)

$$(a) \pi_{ijklt}^{ABCDX} = \sum_{t=1}^T \pi_t^X \pi_{it}^{A|X} \pi_{jt}^{B|X} \pi_{kt}^{C|X} \pi_{lt}^{D|X}$$

for which the observed response pattern (π_{ijklt}) on four items (A B C D) is the product of the probability of belonging to class t of the latent variable X (π_t^X with $t=1, 2, \dots, T$ categories of X), of the conditional probability of A ($\pi_{it}^{A|X}$), of the conditional probability of B ($\pi_{jt}^{B|X}$) and so on for item C and D [McCutcheon 1987].

This technique allow us to identify the existence of a typology of batterers on the basis of our four indicators.

Tab. 3 – *L2 and decisions for simultaneous Latent class models. Italy 2006, Australia 2003*

Models	Italy					Australia			
	df	L ²	p	Δ	BIC	L ²	p	Δ	BIC
Model 1	27	51.9	0.00	3.0	-159.7	49.2	0.01	5.9	-151.8
Model 2	24	33.3	0.10	2.4	-154.9	37.1	0.04	4.6	-141.5
Model 3	22	45.8	0.00	2.9	-126.6	34.7	0.04	4.2	-129.0

Analysis are meant to achieve three main tasks: a) to contribute meaningfully to the controversy on the number of categories in abusers' classification; b) to further investigate differences between partners and former partners; c) to compare Australian and Italian results.

Before moving to comment results, it should be said that in both countries the typology that better fits data contains three categories⁸.

As far as the investigation on differences between partners and ex partners is concerned, I developed three different models with a group variable [Vermunt 1997] in order to distinguish partners from former partners (Table 3). The first model hypothesizes that the group variable influences the probability distribution of the latent variable but it does not affect directly the four indicators. In other words, indicators exhibit the same pattern, conditional to the latent variable. On the contrary, the second model assumes that the group variable does not affect directly the latent variable distribution but it does instead influence manifest variables. According to this model, there is no reason why, within the latent variable's classes, former partners should be different from actual ones., Possible discrepancies are to be imputed to women who are more likely to underestimate violent behaviours of present partners. Finally, the last model supposes that both indicators and the latent variable are affected directly by the group variable.

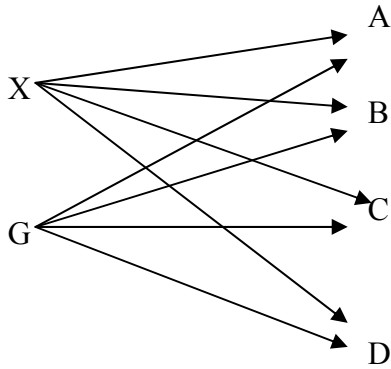
As table 3 highlights, for both countries the second model works better than the other two. Therefore, the assumption that partners and ex partners do not differ in the latent class probabilities but that this distinction affects the conditional probabilities structure of indicators is acceptable.

Figure 1 shows a graphical scheme of the preferred model⁹.

⁸ Both in Italy and in Australia two class models achieved poorer fits than the three class model. Four class model was excluded for reasons of interpretability and parsimony (higher BIC). Results (not published) are available on request to the author.

⁹ Formally:

Fig. 1 – Simultaneous latent classes model



Tab. 4 – Estimated Parameters of the three class latent class model. Italy 2006.

Italy	Ex-partner			Partner		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Marginal latent class probabilities	0.297	0.217	0.014	0.266	0.194	0.013
Conditional latent class probabilities	0.563	0.411	0.027	0.563	0.411	0.027
<i>Physical or sexual violence severity</i>						
Minor	0.742	0.219	0.207	0.859	0.371	0.354
Severe	0.258	0.781	0.793	0.141	0.629	0.646
<i>Psychological violence</i>						
Absent or minor	0.697	0.273	0.056	0.812	0.414	0.100
Severe	0.303	0.727	0.944	0.188	0.586	0.900
<i>Alcohol use</i>						
Almost absent	0.769	0.486	0.147	0.883	0.749	0.355
Gets drunk less than twice a month	0.189	0.226	0.358	0.108	0.173	0.433
Gets drunk at least twice a week	0.043	0.288	0.495	0.009	0.078	0.211
<i>Trouble with the police</i>						
No	0.975	0.815	0.000	1.000	1.000	0.000
Yes	0.025	0.186	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.000

Starting from results derived in model two, Table 4 and 5 show dimensions of latent classes and conditional probabilities within the two groups for both countries¹⁰

$$\pi_{ijkltu}^{ABCDXG} = \sum_{t,u} \pi_u^G \pi_{tu}^{X|G} \pi_{itu}^{A|XG} \pi_{jtu}^{B|XG} \pi_{ktu}^{C|XG} \pi_{lktu}^{D|XG} \quad \text{where } \pi_{tu}^{X|G} = \pi_t^X \text{ for the hypothesis of independence}$$

between X (latent variable) and G (group variable which identify former or actual partners). A is the seriousness of physical violence, B psychological violence, C alcohol use and finally D points external violent behaviours [Magidson and Vermunt 2004].

¹⁰ Note that each conditional probabilities' indicators sums to one.

Tab. 5 – Estimated Parameters of the three class latent class model. Australia 2003

Australia	Ex-partner			Partner		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Marginal latent class probabilities	0.189	0.429	0.090	0.078	0.177	0.037
Conditional latent class probabilities	0.267	0.606	0.127	0.267	0.606	0.127
<i>Physical or sexual violence severity</i>						
Minor	0.561	0.193	0.141	0.751	0.361	0.281
Severe	0.440	0.807	0.859	0.249	0.639	0.719
<i>Psychological violence</i>						
Absent or minor	0.724	0.142	0.040	0.954	0.565	0.247
Severe	0.276	0.858	0.960	0.046	0.435	0.753
<i>Alcohol use</i>						
Almost absent	0.299	0.247	0.043	0.521	0.519	0.166
Gets drunk less than twice a month	0.343	0.243	0.168	0.395	0.337	0.426
Gets drunk at least twice a week	0.358	0.510	0.788	0.084	0.145	0.408
<i>Trouble with the police</i>						
No	0.983	0.822	0.081	0.999	0.983	0.557
Yes	0.017	0.178	0.920	0.001	0.017	0.443

Model results are completely coherent with the typology suggested by Holtzworth-Munroe e Stuart [1994]. Both in Italy and in Australia, as well as within present partners and former partners, the first latent class singles out classical violent men: physical violence they perpetrate tends to be of minor intensity; they do not act psychological violence or, when they do, it tends to be of minor intensity as well. They are not characterized by alcohol abuse nor by external violent behaviours.

The second latent class describes borderline batterers: they act severe physical and psychological violence and they are also more likely than classical violent men to associate alcohol abuse to violence against their partners. Thus, borderlines do not have any records due to violent behaviours outside the family.

The third and last latent class identifies antisocial violent men. There are no significant differences from borderline violent men except in the case of troubles with the police. Men who perpetrate mostly severe violence, who suffer from alcoholism problems and who also exhibit external violent behaviours have higher probabilities to be assigned to the third latent class category.

Nevertheless, some differences emerge between the two countries when discrepancies in probabilities between present and ex-partners are considered. Indeed, in Italy the probability structure between present partners and ex-partners is more similar, with the sole exception of alcohol abuse characterizing borderlines, while in Australia some major differences are present both as far as alcohol abuse as well as negative legal records are

concerned. Indeed, within present partners, men characterized by negative legal records are more likely to be assigned to the third class than to the other two, but the indicator does not discriminate univocally. For the same reason, current partners who get drunk almost daily are less present in the second class comparing with former partners.

Nonetheless, major differences between countries emerge in relation to the size of the latent classes. Not surprisingly, in a non clinical sample there is a dramatic reduction of the anti-social category: only 3% in Italy and 13% in Australia, when it was 25% in clinical samples. What is more surprising is that, both in Italy and in Australia, borderlines are very numerous: 41% and 61% respectively in the two countries. Furthermore, in both samples sociopathic are much more diffused than in clinical samples (where this category grouped the 25% of subjects). Thus, the comparison between rates of classical violent men raises some concerns: in Italy they are 56% , on the contrary in Australia this category does not pass 27%.

Conclusions

This paper has shown that it is possible to draw a typology of violence perpetrators from answers provided by victims and that categories defined overcome methodological limits characterizing past researches. Statistical representativeness of women sample allowed to resize the importance of the antisocial type. Indeed, studies that have been conducted on clinical samples, on men charged for violent behaviours or on partners of women who asked help to anti-violence centres, were all affected by a strong selection bias. The technique we have adopted here allows instead to discover the “unsuspected” perpetrators: men who do not show any particular symptoms of social exclusion such as bad records or alcohol abuse but that are nevertheless violent with their partners. Moreover, the typology we have built allows a comparison between violent and non violent partners that can help identifying social and personal characteristics that might be connected with a higher tendency towards violent behaviours [Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan 2004]. However, this research suffers from two main limits. On the one hand, since interviews have been realized only once in time, it is not possible neither to outline nor to exclude the possibility of a pattern of violence. Do classical violent men risk to become over time borderline or antisocial? Analyses results seem to suggest a negative answer as typology’s

distribution is the same for ex and current partners and, therefore, an escalation of violence seems very unlikely to be at play. Nevertheless, this result can be determined by women's behaviors rather than by men's. In other words, the interruption of violent relationships by exasperate women does not allow to test the presence of an escalation of violence from one type to another. Using longitudinal data would allow to overcome this difficulty and actually analyze evolution over time of violence episodes. Some attempts have been made in this direction [Holtzworth-Munroe et al. 2003] but, even though they tend to confirm stability over time of perpetrators types, they suffer from non-representativeness of samples and from instability of violent relationships that do not allow to consider results obtained as definitive. Secondly, we were forced to exclude one of the three variables literature identifies for a correct construction of perpetrators typology: scales measuring men's potential personality disorders were not available in surveys on women's safety and, even if they were, they would not have been reliable because of a bias provided by victims' perspectives filtering answers.

Despite these limitations, our analysis showed some very interesting results. If the fact that violence on female partners is more diffused in Australia than in Italy is not a new discover, higher severity in abuses characterizing the Australian context is an element not properly pointed out yet. Only the 27% of Australian perpetrators are classic violent men while 61% are borderline. Even though the Italian case suffers from a certain reticence in denouncing current violent episodes, 56% of Italian batterers are classic violent men and reticence in answers does not provide a satisfying explanation to such a huge difference with the Australian case. It should be recalled that both categories are drawn on the bases of violence acts severity and do not include alcohol abuse that, as we mentioned, is an element of controversial interpretation.

Many researchers consider the association between alcohol abuse and violence tricky to be studied. Indeed, alcohol dependence is often used as an excuse both by perpetrators as well as by victims [Pagelow 1981; Cavanaugh et al. 2001]. Victims prefer to impute partners' violence to external causes: once the dependence will be interrupted, violence will be as well. Furthermore, the fact that domestic violence is often associated to social marginalization or to the idea that "normal" families or couples are less interested in this phenomena [Eurobarometer 51.0 1999; Carlson and Worden 2005] is a widely used stereotype. For these reasons, speaking of alcoholism in connection to violence against

women could be counterproductive. Nevertheless, data just analyzed suggest that in Australia a relevant number of violent men also have problems of alcohol abuse.

It is certainly true that not all violent men are also alcoholics and that not all alcoholics are violent with their partners. Some researchers believe that drugs and alcohol act chemically on a part of the brain controlling inhibitory brakes. The so-called disinhibition model, however, predicts the cessation of violence in correspondence to the cessation of chemical substances effect [Bennett 1997]. This is often not the case: Lang and colleague [Lang et al. 1975] demonstrated through an experiment in which violent men who were told they were assuming an alcoholic drink developed aggressive behaviors even though the drink did not contain any alcohol at all. In the same direction, Field and colleagues [2004] through multivariate analyses conducted on a representative sample of couples showed that, among those who drink, risk of violence act increases considerably when respondents expect alcohol to produce aggressiveness. In short, depressive or exciting effects of alcohol depend directly on beliefs of those who are assuming it in a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy [Murphy et al. 2001; Creazzo 2003], This said, it is necessary to understand why alcohol abuse generates such different effects in the two countries.

An interesting research, although conducted only on a sample of university students, showed that men alcohol abuse increases the possibility of perpetrating violence against strangers or against strangers and partners but that there is no difference between those who drink and those who do not as far as the chance of perpetrating violence only against the partner is concerned [Cogan and Ballinger 2006]. In our models we highlighted a positive relation between external violence and alcohol abuse in both countries. But it would be fruitful to investigate deeper why there are more violent men who also abuse of alcohol abroad rather than in Italy¹¹ and to analyze domestic violence in relation to alcohol abuse but including also effects provided by social rules and traditions derived from alcohol integration in everyday life. Furthermore it remains unclear if alcohol use influences aggressiveness or, on the contrary, people who score high in aggressiveness is also more likely to develop alcohol abuse [Norstrom 1995].

¹¹ The same results was obtained also by comparative analyses conducted on women asking for help to US and Rome anti-violence centres [McCloskey et al. 2002].

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