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Role Change Can Trigger Domestic Violence

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Reviewed by John M. Grohol, Psy.D. on April 9, 2010

A new study suggests a change in roles may cause some men to feel threatened and trigger violence.

Researchers from the University of Granada found that as sexist men feel their power threatened in their sentimental relationships, they may use violence as a way to restore their lost power.

Thus, violence becomes an instrument to control their threatened power or a way to restore it.

Currently, many men "feel threatened by the change that their relationship with women has undergone. They are unable to understand their relationship with women in terms of equality despite the prevailing social rules."

Such conclusions were drawn from a study conducted by Prof. M. Carmen Herrera of the University of Granada to address the research question: "Why do certain men batter certain women?"

Researchers employed a psychosocial perspective based on two factors: sexism and power imbalance in marriage.

Concretely, the author's purpose was to get a more thorough perspective and so she tried to investigate to what extent men's perception of losing power may be a cause of gender violence.

As Herrera states: "it is not only the person's behavior what causes violence, but also the social context and its influence on men's behavior."

Women forgo their ambitions

According to the University of Granada, our society has a problem: women who accept benevolent sexism –which is defined by the author as "sexism with positive connotations, care to and paternalism towards women" – may forgo their ambitions to avoid conflicts with their partners.

In other words: Women who are afraid that their husbands will react violently against them if they do not stick to their traditional role opt for forgoing equality in exchange for security.

Benevolent sexism "can be deemed as a lens that distorts reality due to its positive tone that weakens women's will in situations of inequality, discrimination or violence against them. This behavior makes individuals accept this type of situation. This research confirms the relevance of ideological factors in gender-based violence. It emphasizes the importance of power in sentimental relationships and its influence on men's reactions in an effort to maintain or restore their lost or threatened power. The results obtained from this study may be essential in the prevention of and action against gender violence."

Source: [University of Granada](#)

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