

Intimate Terrorism and Situational Couple Violence in General Surveys: Ex-Spouses Required

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Abstract

In this article, we argue that past efforts to distinguish among types of intimate partner violence in general survey data have committed a critical error—using data on current spouses to develop operationalizations of intimate terrorism and situational couple violence. We use ex-spouse data from the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS) to develop new operationalizations. We then demonstrate that NVAWS *current* spouse data contain little intimate terrorism; we argue that this is likely to be the case for all general surveys. In addition, the ex-spouse data confirm past findings regarding a variety of differences between intimate terrorism and situational couple violence, including those predicted by feminist theories.

Keywords

intimate partner violence, intimate terrorism, situational couple violence

For over three decades, and continuing today, data from general surveys documenting the alleged gender symmetry of “domestic violence” have been presented as evidence that feminist theories of intimate partner violence are wrong (Archer, 2000; D. G. Dutton, Hamel, & Aaronson, 2010; D. G. Dutton & Nicholls, 2005; Fergusson, Horwood, & Ridder, 2005; Steinmetz, 1977-1978). However, since 1993 Johnson and his colleagues have argued that the use of survey data as a rebuttal to feminist theories of intimate partner violence is inappropriate because survey data do not include the

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coercive controlling violence to which the feminist theories refer and which the public associates with the term domestic violence (M. P. Johnson, 1993, 1995; M. P. Johnson & Leone, 2005). This feminist argument against the relevance of survey data hinges upon two assertions. First, intimate partner violence is not a unitary phenomenon. There are three major types of such violence and their relationship to gender differs dramatically (M. P. Johnson, 2007). Second, the type of intimate partner violence that feminists argue is rooted in patriarchal attitudes and institutions is rare in survey data, showing up primarily in data from agencies such as hospitals, courts, law enforcement, and shelters (M. P. Johnson, 1995).

Types of Intimate Partner Violence

Johnson's typology of intimate partner violence is based in the nature of the control context of the relationship in which the violence takes place (M. P. Johnson, 2007). In his terms, *intimate terrorism* is violence embedded in a relationship context of general coercive control. Intimate terrorism is the violence to which feminist theories refer, in which one partner uses violence and other coercive control tactics to attempt to take general control over his or her partner. Johnson draws upon gender theory to argue that although such coercive controlling violence can be perpetrated by either men or women in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, it will be most common in heterosexual relationships, where it is primarily male-perpetrated (M. P. Johnson, 2007). The second type of intimate partner violence, *violent resistance*, arises when the target of intimate terrorism uses violence in response to the coercive controlling violence of her partner. In heterosexual relationships, violent resistance is used primarily by women. The third major type is *situational couple violence*, which arises in the context of specific conflicts that turn into arguments that escalate to verbal aggression and, ultimately, to physical violence. Johnson argues that the perpetration of situational couple violence is roughly gender symmetric and that it is probably as likely to occur in same-sex as in heterosexual relationships (M. P. Johnson, 2006b).¹

The Methodological Conundrum

The heart of the argument against the relevance of survey data for tests of feminist theories of intimate partner violence is that intimate terrorism and violent resistance (the focus of feminist theories) are rare relative to situational couple violence in general survey data. They are rare not only because situational couple violence is by far the most common form of intimate partner violence but also because the perpetrators and the victims of intimate terrorism are likely to refuse to participate in such surveys—the former because they do not wish to implicate themselves, and the latter because they fear retribution from their partner (M. P. Johnson, 1995). Thus, when survey data are used without differentiating among types of partner violence, the data are dominated by a type of violence (situational couple violence) that the feminist theories predict will be largely gender symmetric. Although Archer's (2000)

meta-analysis is much cited for his general conclusion that men and women are about equally likely to be violent in the studies that he surveyed, it is less often noted that he found a strong interaction of this gender effect with type of sample. Although the general survey samples included in his meta-analysis found men and women to be equally likely to be violent, the few agency samples that he included in his review found men to be the primary perpetrators by far (Archer, 2000). We would argue that this is because survey data include little or no intimate terrorism and that such data therefore have no bearing on the feminist argument that intimate terrorism is rooted in patriarchal attitudes and institutions and is therefore primarily male-perpetrated.

The most compelling evidence supporting these arguments comes from studies using mixed sampling strategies that produce samples that include reasonable numbers of intimate terrorism/violent resistance and situational couple violence. For example, Johnson, using data from Frieze's 1970s Pittsburgh study (Frieze & Browne, 1989), demonstrated that (a) the violence in agency samples (courts and shelters) is dominated by intimate terrorism/violent resistance, whereas data from a general sample is dominated by situational couple violence, and (b) intimate terrorism is largely male-perpetrated, violent resistance is used primarily by women, and situational couple violence is roughly gender symmetric (M. P. Johnson, 2001, 2006a). In England, Graham-Kevan and Archer (2003a, 2003b), using similarly constructed mixed samples but different operationalizations, found essentially the same patterns.

The finding in these studies that there is at least some intimate terrorism in general samples (14% of the male violence in the Pittsburgh general sample, 12% in the British general sample) has encouraged some researchers to attempt to study both intimate terrorism and situational couple violence in general survey data. We feel, however, that such analyses are extremely problematic. The predicament is that to date there has been no straightforward way to distinguish intimate terrorism (coercive controlling violence) from situational couple violence (low control violence) in survey data for two reasons. First, no one has developed a standard cut-off for any of the control measures used in large-scale surveys. Second, the cluster analysis approach that has been used in the mixed-sample studies is not likely to be effective in the general survey context for the following reason. If a general survey sample has no cases or very few cases of intimate terrorism, a cluster analysis on control items will still provide a two-cluster solution in which the two clusters look quite different from each other. However, the high control cluster is likely to contain mostly situational couple violence along with the few cases of true intimate terrorism. This leads to anomalous findings such as Johnson and Leone's (2005) finding that 35% of the male violence in the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS) is intimate terrorism, or Graham-Kevan and Archer's (2005) findings that their so-called "intimate terrorists" were much less controlling than they had been in their own previous studies, and that intimate terrorism was much more gender symmetric than expected.

A recent article by Felson and Outlaw (2007), using the NVAWS data, suggested to us a solution to this problem with general survey data. It follows from our arguments that there should be little or no intimate terrorism in the NVAWS data, and Felson and Outlaw's finding that there is no relationship between controlling behavior and

violence in the NVAWS sample of current relationships is consistent with that view. However, their analysis of the NVAWS data on *previous* relationships showed a strong association between control and violence—for men but not for women. This is exactly what a feminist analysis would predict if there were a significant number of cases of intimate terrorism in the sample of previous relationships, but not in the sample of current relationships. We infer from Felson and Outlaw's findings that (a) there are a significant number of cases of intimate terrorism reported for previous relationships in the NVAWS, and (b) these cases are to be found primarily among violent men, not women. If we are correct in this inference, the NVAWS data on *previous relationships* offers an opportunity to develop an operationalization of the major types of intimate partner violence that is based on survey items that are now used regularly in research on intimate partner violence.

The current article reports analyses in which we use NVAWS data on ex-husbands to develop a survey operationalization that distinguishes between intimate terrorism and situational couple violence—the core concepts of Johnson's typology. We then apply this operationalization to data on current and previous husbands and wives to identify major differences between the two types of partner violence, including the gender differences that are of most interest to feminist theorists. Those differences are best understood through gender theory.

Gender Theory and Intimate Terrorism

For over two decades now, feminist sociologists have argued that gender must be understood as an institution, not merely an individual characteristic. Current versions of gender theory incorporate gender at all levels, from the individual level of sex differences in identities and attitudes (and even physical differences) through the situational construction of gender in social interaction to the gender structure of organizational and societal contexts (Ferree, Lorber, & Hess, 2000; Risman, 2004).

Our application of gender theory to intimate terrorism in heterosexual relationships leads us to hypothesize that it is primarily a matter of men abusing women, for at least the following reasons. First, the use of violence as one tactic in an attempt to exercise general control over one's partner requires more than the willingness to do violence. It requires a credible threat of a damaging violent response to non-compliance (M. A. Dutton & Goodman, 2005). Such a threat is, of course, more credible coming from a man than a woman simply because of the size difference in most heterosexual couples. Second, experience with violence and individual attitudes toward violence make such threats more likely and more credible from a man than from a woman. Put simply, the exercise of violence is more likely to be a part of boys' and men's experience than girls' and women's—in sports, fantasy play, and real-life conflict.

Third, individual misogyny and gender traditionalism are clearly implicated in intimate terrorism. Although critics of feminist theory often claim that there is no relationship between attitudes toward women and domestic violence (Felson, 2002), the research that has addressed this question in fact clearly supports the position that individual men's attitudes toward women affect the likelihood that they will be involved

in intimate terrorism. One example is Holtzworth-Munroe's work, which shows that both of her groups of intimate terrorists are more hostile toward women than are either non-violent men or men involved in situational couple violence (e.g., Holtzworth-Munroe, Meehan, Herron, Rehman, & Stuart, 2000). More generally, Sugarman and Frankel (1996) demonstrate the relationship between gender attitudes and intimate partner violence in their meta-analysis of the research on this question. They found that traditional men were more likely to be involved in attacks on their partners than were non-traditional men ($d = .54, p < .001$). The details of the Sugarman and Frankel (1996) review provide further support for the important role of attitudes toward women in intimate terrorism. They found that men's attitudes toward women were very strongly related to violence in studies using samples likely to be dominated by intimate terrorism ($d = .80$), but not in studies that were likely to be dominated by situational couple violence ($d = -.14$). Of course, the patterns found by Holtzworth-Munroe and her colleagues and by Sugarman and Frankel are exactly what a feminist theory of domestic violence would predict. It is intimate terrorism, not situational couple violence, that involves the attempt to control one's partner, an undertaking supported by hostile or traditional attitudes toward women.

Fourth, at the level of social interaction rather than individual attitudes, our cultures of masculinity and femininity ensure that whatever the level of violence, its meaning will differ greatly depending on the gender of the perpetrator (Straus, 1999). When a woman slaps her husband in the heat of an argument, it is unlikely to be interpreted by him as a serious attempt to do him physical harm. Women's violence is less likely to injure, is taken less seriously, is less likely to produce fear, and is therefore less likely either to be intended as a control tactic or to be successful as one (Swan & Snow, 2002).²

Fifth, general social norms regarding intimate heterosexual partnerships, although certainly in the midst of considerable historical change, are heavily gendered and rooted in a patriarchal heterosexual model that validates men's power (R. E. Dobash & Dobash, 1979, 1992; Yllö & Bograd, 1988). These norms affect the internal functioning of all relationships, regardless of the partners' individual attitudes, because couples' social networks are often involved in shaping the internal workings of personal relationships (DeKeseredy, 1988; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; Klein & Milardo, 2000). When those networks support a male-dominant style of marriage or a view of marriage as a commitment "for better or worse," they can contribute to the entrapment of women in abusive relationships.

Finally, the gendering of the broader social context within which the relationship is embedded affects the resources the partners can draw upon to shape the relationship and to cope with or escape from the violence. For example, the gender gap in wages can create an economic dependency that enhances men's control over women and contributes to women's entrapment in abusive relationships (Anderson, 2007). The societal assignment of caregiving responsibilities primarily to women further contributes to this economic dependency, placing women in a subordinate position within the family, and creating a context in which institutions that could be a source of support for abused women instead encourage them to stay in abusive relationships—for the

sake of the children or for the sake of the marriage. Then there is the criminal justice system, heavily dominated by men, and involving a culture of masculinity that has not always been responsive to the problems of women experiencing intimate terrorism, which is often treated as if it were situational couple violence (Buzawa, 2003; R. E. Dobash & Dobash, 1992).

Gender Theory and Situational Couple Violence

It is not surprising that the institution of gender, in which male domination is a central element, is implicated in the structure of intimate terrorism, which is about coercive control. In contrast, situational couple violence, which is the most common type of partner violence, does not involve an attempt on the part of one partner to gain general control over the other, and by at least one criterion it appears to be more gender symmetric.

In situational couple violence, the violence is situationally provoked, as the tensions or emotions of a particular encounter lead one or both of the partners to resort to violence. Intimate relationships inevitably involve conflicts, and in some relationships one or more of those conflicts turns into one or more arguments that escalate into violence. The violence may be minor and singular, with one encounter at some point in the relationship escalating to the level that someone physically assaults the other, is immediately remorseful, apologizes, and never does it again. Or the violence could be a chronic problem, with one or both partners frequently resorting to violence, minor or severe, even homicidal. In general, there is considerable variability in the nature of situational couple violence, a variability that has not yet been explored adequately enough to allow us to make confident statements about its causes (M. P. Johnson, 2008).

Nevertheless, some researchers *have* made confident statements about one aspect of situational couple violence—its alleged gender symmetry.³ The myth of gender symmetry in situational couple violence has been supported by the widespread focus on a particularly narrow measure of symmetry, prevalence. Respondents in a survey are presented with a list of violent behaviors ranging from a push or a slap to an attack with a weapon. They are then asked to report how often they have committed each violent act against their partner (or their partner against them) in the previous 12 months. “Prevalence of partner violence” is then defined as the percentage of a group (e.g., men or women) who have committed at least one of the acts (or of some subset of the acts) at least once in the previous 12 months. The gender symmetry of situational couple violence is gender symmetry only in this narrow sense. For example, in the 1975 National Survey of Family Violence that initiated the gender symmetry debate, 13% of women and 11% of men had committed at least one of the violent acts listed in the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS; Steinmetz, 1977-1978). However, by most other measures of the nature of the violence, such as the specific acts engaged in, the injuries produced, the frequency of the violence, or the production of fear in one’s partner, situational couple violence is not gender symmetric. Men’s situational couple violence involves more incidents and more injuries, and produces more fear than does

women's situational couple violence (Archer, 2000; Brush, 1990; Hamberger & Guse, 2002; M. P. Johnson, 1999; Morse, 1995; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000b).

Thus, although situational couple violence may not be as gendered as intimate terrorism and violent resistance, many of the gender factors discussed above are implicated in the patterning of situational couple violence. For example, in situational couple violence the likelihood of injury or fear is influenced by size differences. In addition, a slap from a woman is still perceived as an entirely different act than is one from a man. Furthermore, our cultures of masculinity and femininity contribute to communication problems within couples who are often associated with situational couple violence (M. P. Johnson, 2006b).

General Hypotheses

The discussion above leads to a number of general hypotheses that we can address once we have developed operationalizations of intimate terrorism and situational couple violence. First, there will be considerably more violence reported, and especially more intimate terrorism, for ex-spouses than for current spouses. Second, for ex-spouses intimate terrorism will be reported primarily for ex-husbands rather than ex-wives, and intimate terrorism will be more "severe" for ex-husbands than for ex-wives. Third, there will be little or no intimate terrorism reported for current spouses.

Method

Sample

The data come from the NVAWS (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1999), a cross-sectional national random sample telephone interview examining several types of violence against women, including rape, physical assault, emotional abuse, and stalking. Data were collected in 1995-1996 from a national, random-digit sample of telephone households in the United States; 8,005 men and 8,000 women, 18 years of age or older, were interviewed. Respondents disclosing physical violence by a current or former spouse or cohabiting partner were asked to specify which spouse/partner victimized them (e.g., first former husband, current male live-in partner) and were questioned about the characteristics and consequences of their victimization, including the frequency and duration of the violence; the extent and nature of sustained injuries; their use of medical, mental health, and criminal justice services; and their time lost from routine activities (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000a).

The sample for the current study includes female and male respondents who, at the time of data collection, reported that they were either currently married ($n = 10,259$) or were divorced and not remarried ($n = 1,536$). Note that the proportion of currently divorced (and not remarried) respondents (13%) is slightly higher yet relatively consistent with 2001 Census Bureau data, indicating an approximate 10% proportion in the U.S. population (Kreider & Fields, 2001). We also limited our analyses to respondents who had complete data concerning physical violence committed by their current

spouse or first (most recent) ex-spouse and who had complete data for the 12-item Coercive Control Scale (see “Measures” section). These criteria yield a total sample of 4,498 respondents reporting on their first ex-spouse (2,436 women reporting on ex-husbands and 2,062 men reporting on ex-wives), and 9,972 respondents reporting on their current spouse (4,846 women reporting on current husbands and 5,126 men reporting on current wives). Note that the proportion of currently married respondents who had ever been divorced was about 14%, which is consistent with 2001 Census Bureau data indicating an approximate 15% proportion (Kreider & Fields, 2001).

Respondents in the current study ranged in age from 18 to 97 ($M = 46.91$, $SD = 15.67$). At the time of the survey, 60% of the respondents reported working full-time, 8% were employed part-time, 9% were homemakers, and 16% were retired. The other 7% were either in the military, students, or doing something else. Furthermore, 84% of the respondents reported themselves as White, 7% as African American, 2% as Asian, 4% as mixed race, and 1% as American Indian or Alaska Native. Ten percent of the respondents had not graduated from high school, 33% had earned a high school degree, 27% had some college education, 19% had earned a college degree, and 11% had completed postgraduate work. Because the current sample focuses on respondents who were either currently married or had been married, the overrepresentation of Whites and under-representation of African Americans is likely due to the higher rates of marriage among Whites in the United States.

Measures

Physical violence was assessed by responses to a 12-item version of the CTS (Straus, 1990a, 1990b). Respondents were asked whether their partner had ever done any of the following: (1) throw something at you that could hurt you; (2) push, grab, or shove you; (3) pull your hair; (4) slap or hit you; (5) kick or bite you; (6) choke or attempt to drown you; (7) hit you with an object; (8) beat you up; (9) threaten you with a gun; (10) threaten you with a knife or other weapon besides a gun; (11) use a gun on you; (12) use a knife or other weapon on you besides a gun. Cronbach's alpha for ex-spouses is .89, and the overall mean of the scale for the reported behavior of all ex-spouses is 2.16 ($SD = 2.95$), with scores ranging from 0 to 12. Cronbach's alpha for current spouses is .88, and the overall mean of the scale for the reported behavior of all current spouses is 1.18 ($SD = 2.28$), with scores ranging from 0 to 12. A dichotomous violence variable was created such that respondents who reported “No” on all of the items were coded “Non-Violent,” and those who reported “Yes” on any of the items were coded “Violent.”

We also created a Severe Violence Scale based on the items conventionally identified as severe violence. These items were choke or attempt to drown, hit you with an object, beat you up, threaten you with a gun, threaten you with a knife or other weapon besides a gun, use a gun on you, and use a knife or other weapon. The Severe Violence Scale score is the number of those seven items for which the respondent replied yes regarding the partner's behavior. Cronbach's alpha for ex-spouses is .80, with an overall mean of the scale for the reported behavior of all ex-spouses of .93 ($SD = 1.59$),

with scores ranging from 0 to 7. Cronbach's alpha for current spouses is .80, and the overall mean of the scale for the reported behavior of all current spouses is .50 ($SD = 1.22$), with scores ranging from 0 to 7.

A Coercive Control Scale was constructed from a subset of the 12 survey items that dealt with non-violent control tactics used by the respondent's partner. Many of these items had been adopted from the Canadian Violence Against Women Survey (H. Johnson, 1996), and they closely resemble items included in the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Survey (Tolman, 1989). The 12 items, from which we ultimately chose nine, asked if the respondent's partner (1) has a hard time seeing things from your point of view, (2) is jealous or possessive, (3) tries to provoke arguments, (4) tries to limit your contact with family and friends, (5) insists on knowing who you are with at all times, (6) calls you names or puts you down in front of others, (7) makes you feel inadequate, (8) shouts or swears at you, (9) frightens you, (10) prevents you from knowing about or having access to the family income even when you ask, (11) prevents you from working outside the home, (12) insists on changing residences even when you don't need or want to? A reliability analysis of the 12 coercive control items using data regarding the behavior of ex-husbands indicated that items 1, 11, and 12 could be dropped from the scale with no loss of internal consistency. We then checked the internal consistency of the nine-item scale for ex-husbands, ex-wives, current husbands, and current wives, finding alphas of .91, .83, .75, and .70, respectively.

Injuries sustained from violence. Unfortunately, the only injury data collected in the NVAWS concerns injuries sustained in the most recent incident of partner violence: Were you physically injured during this [most recent] incident? Response options were Yes/No.

Depression. An eight-item Depression Symptoms Scale, based on questions used in the Short Form-36 Health Survey, U.S. Acute Version, 1.0, was used to assess level of depression of all respondents, regardless of whether they experienced partner violence. The time referent for all items was the past week, and the items were as follows: How often in the past week (a) did you feel full of pep? (b) did you have a lot of energy? (c) have you been a happy person? (d) did you feel tired? (e) have you been very nervous? (f) have you felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer you up? (g) did you feel downhearted and blue? (h) did you feel worn out? Three of the eight questions were reverse-coded for scoring purposes. Response options were never (1), rarely (2), some of the time (3), and most of the time (4). The mean was calculated for each respondent who answered all of the items. The mean score was 1.91 ($SD = .55$), and the scores ranged from 1.00 to 4.00. Cronbach's alpha was .78.

Drug use. Drug use in the month prior to the interview was assessed for all respondents, regardless of whether they experienced partner violence. We examined the relationship between type of violence and three specific drug categories: (a) tranquilizers, sleeping pills, or sedatives; (b) antidepressants; and (c) painkillers. Respondents answered yes or no to using each type.

Table 1. Ward's Method Two-Cluster Solution by Coercive Control Scale Score Violent Ex-Husbands (%).

Cluster membership	Coercive control score										n
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
High control	0.0	0.0	.4	1.3	3.7	6.9	16.2	20.1	26.6	24.8	537
Low control	15.5	13.2	23.6	17.8	16.1	10.3	3.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	174

Results and Discussion

Developing Operationalizations of Intimate Terrorism and Situational Couple Violence

Consistent with our argument that intimate terrorism would be found primarily among violent ex-husbands, we conducted a Ward's method cluster analysis of the nine items of the Coercive Control Scale using data regarding the behavior of violent ex-husbands. They are the ex-husbands whose ex-wives reported the ex-husband's use of at least one of the violent behaviors in the CTS. Of 732 violent ex-husbands, 711 had complete data on the nine control items used in the Coercive Control Scale.

Distance scores from the Ward's method cluster analysis indicated that a two-cluster solution was appropriate, with a dramatic reduction in average distance within clusters for the two-cluster solution and changes in the distance scores leveling off dramatically from there on (final distance coefficients = 1306, 954, 857, 783, 732, 692, 651, 620, etc.). The two-cluster solution identified a high coercive control cluster comprising 76% of the violent ex-husbands ($n = 537$), and a low coercive control cluster comprising 24% ($n = 174$).

We also conducted a k-means cluster analysis, specifying two clusters, yielding a high coercive control cluster comprising 70% of the violent ex-husbands ($n = 497$), and a low coercive control cluster comprising 30% of the violent ex-husbands ($n = 214$). A cross-tabulation (not shown) of the Ward's and k-means two-cluster solutions indicated agreement regarding the placement of 93% of the violent ex-husbands.

We chose the cut-off for dichotomization of the Coercive Control Scale by comparing the results of the Ward's method cluster analysis with scores on the Coercive Control Scale (Table 1). This cross-tabulation of the two-cluster solution with scores on the Coercive Control Scale indicated that defining high coercive control with a cut-off at five or more control tactics would minimize "misclassification." Using this cut-off, we misclassify only 7% of the violent ex-husbands, comprising 5.4% ($n = 29$) of the high cluster membership and 13.7% ($n = 24$) of the low cluster membership. The cut-off of five or more also minimized misclassification for the k-means cluster results, misclassifying none of the high cluster cases and 35 of the low cluster cases (analysis not shown).

Applying the chosen cut-off, we then classified the behavior of all of the violent current husbands, current wives, ex-husbands, and ex-wives as either situational

Table 2. Ex-Spouse Violence by Gender.

Gender	Violence type			n
	Intimate terrorism (%)	Situational couple violence (%)	Non-violent (%)	
Ex-husband	22.0	7.4	70.5	2,436
Ex-wife	5.4	3.9	90.7	2,062

$\chi^2 = 291.17$ $df = 2$; $p < .001$.

couple violence or intimate terrorism. Low coercive control couples were classified as situational couple violence and high coercive control couples were classified as intimate terrorism. It should be noted, however, that without dyadic data on violence and control we cannot definitively convert these two types of violence into the types of Johnson's typology. If we were to assume that the respondents who report on their partner's violence and control were not themselves involved in coercive controlling violence, then the conversion would be straightforward—all of the non-controlling violence would be situational couple violence, and all of the coercive controlling violence would be intimate terrorism. As you will see, this would be a reasonable assumption for current marriages, in which there is almost no coercive controlling violence. For past marriages, however, it is likely that although most of the non-controlling violence is situational couple violence, some unknown portion of it is violent resistance. Thus, although we will continue to use the language of intimate terrorism and situational couple violence, it should be kept in mind that without dyadic data we cannot precisely operationalize these two types of intimate partner violence.

Violence Type and Gender in Ex-Spouse Data

We expect the data on ex-spouses to include considerable violence because the divorce courts are one of the social institutions to which spouses experiencing violence turn for help (Levinger, 1966). Gender theory leads us to expect that male violence will be particularly prevalent in descriptions of ex-spouses' behavior for two reasons. First, marriages characterized by intimate terrorism, which is primarily male-perpetrated, are highly likely to end in divorce. Second, situational couple violence, although roughly gender balanced in terms of prevalence, is not gender balanced in terms of injury and fear, consequences of violence that are also likely to lead to divorce (Stets & Straus, 1990).

What we find in the data is that there is, indeed, considerable violence reported among the ex-spouses, especially ex-husbands (Table 2). Approximately 9% of ex-wives are reported by their ex-husbands to have been violent, with 4% of the ex-wives involved in situational couple violence and 5% in intimate terrorism. In contrast, approximately 30% of ex-husbands were reported by their ex-wives to have been violent, 7% involved in situational couple violence and 22% in intimate terrorism. Looked

at another way, there is a frightening amount of intimate terrorism in this sample of former marriages, and 83% of that intimate terrorism is male-perpetrated. The situational couple violence is somewhat more gender symmetric, but ex-husbands were almost twice as likely as ex-wives to have perpetrated such violence (7% vs. 4%).

What are we to make of these patterns? We certainly would not want to assume that they represent the relative prevalence of violence of various types in intact marriages. Not only will violence in general be more prevalent in a sample of failed marriages as compared with intact marriages (Lawrence & Bradbury, 2001; Rogge & Bradbury, 1999) but also we can reasonably expect the most "serious" violence to be particularly prevalent. In particular, we should see considerable intimate terrorism, a type of intimate partner violence that is highly likely to lead to relationship decline and dissolution (Campbell, Miller, Cardwell, & Belknap, 1994; M. P. Johnson & Ferraro, 2000), and that is primarily male-perpetrated (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003a; M. P. Johnson, 2006a). As for situational couple violence, which varies dramatically in its seriousness (M. P. Johnson, 2008), we would expect the more serious such violence to be most likely to lead to divorce. Because men's situational couple violence is more likely than women's to produce injuries, fear, and psychological damage (Kimmel, 2002; Stets & Straus, 1990), we would expect to find more male- than female-perpetrated situational couple violence, even if situational couple violence is gender symmetric in terms of prevalence in intact marriages. And of course, these are exactly the patterns we see in the ex-spouse data.

Coercive control in intimate terrorism (ex-spouse data). By definition, what distinguishes intimate terrorism from situational couple violence is a general pattern of coercive control. Nevertheless, it might be useful to look at the individual control items to get a sense of the nature of that control in intimate terrorism (Table 3). In this discussion, we include the three NVAWS items that were not part of our Coercive Control Scale. Regardless of gender, the most common coercive control tactic reported was shouting or swearing at the partner. Moreover, about 90% of intimate terrorists were reported to be non-empathic and about 85% provoked arguments. The least common form of coercive control was preventing the partner from working outside of the home (about 25%). However, some significant and dramatic differences exist between male and female intimate terrorists. Male intimate terrorists were more likely than female intimate terrorists to make their partner feel inadequate (88% vs. 70%), to frighten their partner (90.4% vs. 49.1%), and to prevent their partner from working outside of the home (31.3% vs. 10.9%). In other words, male intimate terrorists more actively diminished their wives' self-esteem, were more frightening to their wives, and were more likely to economically entrap their wives in the relationship. Female intimate terrorists were not significantly more likely than male intimate terrorists to use any of the control tactics. In fact, although by definition all of these intimate terrorists had used at least five of the non-violent control tactics, on average ex-husbands used significantly more coercive control tactics compared with ex-wives. On the nine-item Coercive Control Scale, the mean number of control tactics used by intimate terrorist ex-husbands was 7.39 versus 6.72 used by ex-wives ($F = 23.18$, $df = 1, 640$; $p < .001$).

Table 3. Ex-Spouse Intimate Terrorist Use of Control Tactics by Gender (% Yes).

Control tactics	Ex-husbands (%)	Ex-wives (%)
Jealous or possessive	87.0	82.7
Provokes arguments	88.5	86.4
Limits contact with family or friends	75.9	79.1
Insists on knowing who you are with	80.5	76.4
Calls respondent names in public	82.1	82.7
Makes respondent feel inadequate ^a	88.0	70.0
Shouts or swears	96.1	95.5
Frightens respondent ^a	90.4	49.1
Prevents knowledge of or access to income	50.2	50.0
Non-empathic	91.2	90.9
Prevents work outside the home ^a	31.3	10.9
Insisted on changing residence	29.2	38.2
	<i>n</i> = 532 ^b	<i>n</i> = 110 ^b

Note. The last three items were not included in the Coercive Control Scale.

^aGender difference significant at $p < .05$.

^b*n* varies slightly across tactics due to missing data.

The violence in intimate terrorism and situational couple violence (ex-spouse data). Although by definition all of the violent ex-spouses had committed at least one of the 12 acts of violence included in the CTS, the number of different acts of violence used in intimate terrorism is significantly greater than that involved in situational couple violence ($M = 5.10$ vs. 3.22 ; $F = 66.70$, $df = 1, 898$; $p < .001$). The difference is also significant when we look only at the seven “severe violence” items in the CTS ($M = 2.07$ vs. 0.97 ; $F = 57.98$; $df = 1, 829$; $p < .001$).

The average number of incidents involved in cases of intimate terrorism is almost double that in situational couple violence ($M = 7.66$ vs. 3.38 ; $F = 30.95$, $df = 1, 517$; $p < .001$). Another way of looking at frequency is to ask how often, even for these divorced couples, did the violence involve only one incident? The answer is 46% of the cases of situational couple violence and 20% for intimate terrorism. There were no effects of gender or interactions of gender and violence type for any of these variables, indicating that, within type, the amount of violence and the acts of violence in which men and women were involved were similar. Remember, however, that there were almost 5 times as many intimate terrorist ex-husbands as ex-wives.

The consequences of violence (ex-spouse data). As would be expected given the differences in frequency and severity of violence, intimate terrorism is also more likely than situational couple violence to result in injury (49% vs. 25% injured in the most recent incident; $\chi^2 = 30.07$; $df = 1$; $p < .001$). Also as predicted, regardless of violence type, women were significantly more likely than men to be injured in the most recent incident of violence (47% vs. 24%, $\chi^2 = 20.54$; $df = 1$; $p < .001$).

Similarly, intimate terrorism was associated with significantly more symptoms of depression for victims ($M = 2.08$) compared with both situational couple violence

Table 4. Consequences of Ex-Spouses' Violence for Respondent.

Continuous variables	B	SE B	β
Depression symptoms			
Intimate terrorism vs. non-violent	.05	.03	.03 [†]
Intimate terrorism vs. situational couple violence	-.01	.05	-.10
Situational couple violence vs. non-violent	.04	.04	.02
Dichotomous variables	B	SE B	Exp (B)
Injury			
Intimate terrorism vs. situational couple violence	.44	.22	1.55*
Painkiller use			
Intimate terrorism vs. non-violent	.59	.12	1.81**
Intimate terrorism vs. situational couple violence	.51	.24	1.66*
Situational couple violence vs. non-violent	-.12	.21	0.89

Note. All analyses were statistically controlled for scores on the Physical Violence Scale, respondent gender, age, education level, household income, and race. Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis used for continuous variables; Logistic regression used for dichotomous variables.

[†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

($M = 1.97$) and non-violent relationships ($M = 1.87$; $F = 33.27$, $df = 2$; $p < .001$). Post hoc analyses revealed that situational couple violence did not significantly differ from non-violent relationships with regard to respondent depressive symptoms. Female respondents, regardless of violence type, reported more symptoms of depression compared with male respondents (2.00 vs. 1.84; $F = 66.42$, $df = 1$, 517; $p < .001$). Finally, 21% of intimate terrorism victims reported using painkillers in the previous month compared with 12% of situational couple violence victims and 12% of respondents in non-violent relationships ($\chi^2 = 28.09$; $df = 2$; $p < .001$). Again, differences existed only between the intimate terrorism victim group and the other two groups. Female respondents reported significantly higher rates compared with male respondents (16% vs. 12%, $\chi^2 = 11.49$; $df = 1$; $p < .001$).

We used multivariate Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression and Logistic regression analyses (Table 4), to explore the relationship between type of violence and the above consequences while controlling for demographic factors including gender, and scores on the Physical Violence Scale. As shown, intimate terrorism victims had more than 1.5 the odds of being injured compared with situational couple violence victims, reported significantly more symptoms of depression compared with respondents in non-violent relationships, and had nearly twice the odds of using painkillers compared with both situational couple violence victims and respondents in non-violent relationships. Results indicate no main effects of gender after considering other factors, and no interactions between gender and violence type or the Physical Violence Scale and violence type in the above multivariate analyses. These findings emphasize the more severe consequences of intimate terrorism for victims' physical and psychological health, and their drug use (possibly attempts to cope).

Table 5. Current Spouse Violence Type by Gender.

Gender	Violence type			n
	Intimate terrorism (%)	Situational couple violence (%)	Non-violent (%)	
Husband	0.7	3.9	95.3	4,846
Wife	0.5	1.7	97.9	5,126

$\chi^2 = 50.82$; $df = 2$; $p < .001$.

Violence Type and Gender in Current Spouse Data

As predicted, there is little or no intimate terrorism reported for current marriages: only 0.7% ($n = 35$) of husbands are described as intimate terrorists by their wives, and 0.5% ($n = 25$) of current wives are described as intimate terrorists by their husbands (Table 5). In fact, almost all husbands and wives reported that their spouses were non-violent (97.9% and 95.3%, respectively). Moreover, very few husbands or wives report spouses who were involved in situational couple violence (1.7% and 3.9%, respectively), figures much lower than those typically found in general surveys (Archer, 2000). The gender differences in patterns of violence and non-violence are statistically significant and that is primarily due to the large sample size. In fact, as is common in general survey data, there is not much of a gender difference in the prevalence of intimate partner violence—2.1% of wives and 4.7% of husbands were reported by their spouses to be violent.

It is important to note that there are some oddities in these prevalence data. First, there is very little violence reported at all. General surveys fairly consistently find 12% to 18% violence prevalence *in the previous 12 months*; the NVAWS data are for the entire history of the relationship, yet they indicate a much lower prevalence. We believe that Straus's (1999) explanation for this anomaly makes sense: the general context of the NVAWS interview places the respondents into a "safety and crime" frame of mind, leading them to report only the most serious violence in their personal relationships. Thus, we would expect under-reporting of less serious violence and that may account for the low prevalence rates.

The second anomaly involves the relative gender balance of the intimate terrorism. The ex-spouse data in the NVAWS presented above, as well as data from various social agencies such as hospitals, family and criminal courts, police agencies, and shelters are consistent in showing that intimate terrorism is largely male-perpetrated (Archer, 2000; R. P. Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992; Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003a; M. P. Johnson, 2006a).

Of course, the anomaly of rare and gender-balanced intimate terrorism in these data is one of the central points of this article—that we have to stop thinking of general survey data on family violence as unbiased. Our core argument is that general survey data greatly under-represent intimate terrorism because perpetrators fear exposure and victims fear retribution from their abuser. Thus, we expect the prevalence of intimate

terrorism in general survey data on current relationships to be extremely small, and that the intimate terrorism that remains would be the least threatening intimate terrorism. It follows that we would expect male-perpetrated intimate terrorism to be the most under-represented. One very rough way to get a handle on the relative under-representation of men's and women's intimate terrorism is to compare prevalence rates for current and previous relationships in the NVAWS data. The ratio of previous relationship prevalence to current relationship prevalence is roughly 31:1 for male perpetrators as reported by their wives (22.0% divided by .7%), and only 11:1 for female perpetrators as reported by their husbands (5.4% divided by .5%). This is consistent with our argument that female victims of intimate terrorism in a current relationship would be especially unlikely to agree to participate in survey research on violence.

The number of intimate terrorists is quite small ($n = 35$ current husbands, $n = 25$ current wives). In addition, the extreme selection discussed above would make these cases quite unrepresentative, involving individuals who have not only stayed in this type of marriage but also have agreed to participate in a survey on violence. Thus, although we have looked at the differences between the two types of current intimate partner violence (data not shown) and found patterns somewhat similar to those found with the ex-spouse data, the extremely small sample of intimate terrorism among current relationships makes it impossible to conduct rigorous statistical comparisons of intimate terrorism and situational couple violence in these data.

Conclusions

There are two sets of important conclusions to be drawn from the analyses presented above. The first is substantive and amounts to confirmation of a number of findings from a variety of other studies that have distinguished between situational couple violence and intimate terrorism. Confirming the findings of Johnson (2006a, 2008) and Graham-Kevan and Archer (2003a), the data regarding ex-spouses show that intimate terrorism is primarily but not exclusively male-perpetrated (22% of ex-husbands perpetrating intimate terrorism, 5.4% of ex-wives). Situational couple violence is perpetrated more equally by men and women (7.4% of ex-husbands, 3.9% of ex-wives). The data also show that intimate terrorism involves a wider variety of acts of violence, more frequent violence, and more injuries and psychological distress than does situational couple violence.

The second set of conclusions is methodological and has implications for every piece of survey research done on intimate partner violence. Using the NVAWS data, we have demonstrated that the violence in current marriages uncovered in general surveys is *almost never* intimate terrorism, the coercive controlling violence that most people mean when they use the term "domestic violence." In contrast, general survey data on *ex-husbands* can include reports of considerable intimate terrorism (in the case of the NVAWS, reported by 22% of female respondents), as well as some intimate terrorism perpetrated by ex-wives (for the NVAWS, 5.4%).

Three important methodological implications follow from these findings. First, operationalizations of intimate terrorism using the distribution of control measures

in general survey data on current relationships alone will not effectively identify intimate terrorism because there is too little of it in the sample. A number of studies have appeared in the last 10 years that rely on cluster analyses with such data, and although they show patterns somewhat similar to studies with samples that include significant amounts of intimate terrorism, each evidences anomalies that are probably due to the inclusion of a large number of cases of situational couple violence in the so-called intimate terrorism cluster (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2005; M. P. Johnson & Leone, 2005; Laroche, 2005). Each of these three studies could be corrected with appropriate re-analyses: (a) we have corrected the Johnson and Leone study with this article; (b) because Laroche (2005) uses Canadian Violence against Women data that include the items that we use from the NVAWS, the data could easily be re-analyzed using our newly established cutting point for coercive control; and (c) because Graham-Kevan and Archer use the same scales in their general survey that they administered to a mixed sample in another study (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003a), their analyses could be redone with appropriate cutting points derived from the mixed-sample data.

Second, research in this area needs to address a problem that is specific to data analysis techniques such as cluster analysis and latent class analysis, the results of which are heavily dependent on the nature of the sample. Results from these analyses are not comparable across samples, even if the samples include reasonable amounts of intimate terrorism. A high control cluster in one sample may look entirely different from a high control cluster in another, and there is no way to use the results from such an analysis in another sample. To compare intimate terrorism across samples, we need to develop operationalizations that are independent of the nature of the sample. One approach (the one used here) is to conduct a cluster analysis on a sample that includes considerable intimate terrorism (in our case, the sample of ex-husbands), and then to use those results to establish a cutting point for a control scale that can then be used in other samples to identify intimate terrorism, as we did with the sample of current spouses. The same approach could be used for any instrument that has been administered to a sample that includes reasonable numbers of both situational couple violence and intimate terrorism.

Third, survey research on intimate partner violence should routinely inquire about *past* relationships. Asking only about current relationships will yield data that provide access almost exclusively to situational couple violence. If we want to learn more from survey research about the intimate terrorism that dominates the caseloads in the courts, shelters, and emergency rooms, we need to be asking about previous relationships. Yes, we can access intimate terrorism with agency samples, but we then miss the cases of intimate terrorism that do not come to the attention of those agencies. Those cases are critically important for understanding the processes that determine the conditions under which victims receive the help they need (Kaukinen, 2004; Leone, Johnson, & Cohan, 2007; Leone, Xu, & Lape, 2008).

In sum, the substantive findings of this study confirm some of the differences between intimate terrorism and situational couple violence that have been found in other research. Intimate terrorism is much more likely to be perpetrated by men, it involves more

frequent and more injurious violence, and it has debilitating psychological consequences for victims. We have developed an operationalization of Johnson's typology of intimate partner violence using items that are now commonly used in survey research. This standard, internally reliable operationalization will allow researchers to assess the mix of violence types across various samples, thereby allowing us to answer questions about the characteristics of violence in different populations.

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Notes

1. Although Johnson has identified a fourth type of intimate partner violence (mutual violent control), he has argued that it occurs only in very small numbers in some samples, and that it may well be an artifact of the somewhat arbitrary dichotomization that is involved in operationalizing the types. Therefore, much of his work discusses only the three major types of intimate partner violence presented here.
2. There is a large and growing literature specifically focused on women's use of violence in intimate relationships. For reviews, see Swan, Gambone, Caldwell, Sullivan, and Snow (2008); Carney, Buttell, and Dutton (2007); R. P. Dobash and Dobash (2004); McHugh, Livingston, and Ford (2005); and Swan and Snow (2002).
3. We should note that in most cases these authors do not confine their assertions to situational couple violence, citing survey research data as if they provided evidence regarding all types of intimate partner violence.

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