Practical Ways to Conduct International Partner-Violence Research Using Dyadic Analysis

In a 1968 article in JMF, I reported social class differences in the way families in Minneapolis, San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Mumbai, India interacted with each other. It took two years of preparation and a grant from the National Science Foundation before I could even start gathering the data. Today, thanks to archived data, almost everyone reading this can start analyzing data from a multi-nation study today or tomorrow. It is not quite that easy, but almost.

The first purpose of this article is to let NCFR members know that they are welcome to use the data for two multi-nation studies of partner violence (PV) that I organized: the 32-nation International Dating Violence Study (IDVS) and the 15-nation International Parenting Study (IPS). Each has over a thousand variables in addition to measuring several aspects of PV. These include the Personal and Relationships Profile which measures 26 risk factors for PV such as dominance and drinking problems; Rohner’s Parental Acceptance-Rejection scale; and Straus and Fauchier’s Dimensions of Discipline Inventory. These measures let you study an extremely large range of ideas about the causes and consequences of PV. The data files can be downloaded from my website or the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social and Political Research.

My second purpose is to introduce a simple but powerful method of dyadic analysis: What I call Dyadic Concordance Types or DCTs. These two purposes overlap because the two multi-nation studies just mentioned were designed to permit dyadic analysis.

**Dyadic Concordance Types (DCTS)**

Dyadic analysis of PV refers to using the behavior of both partners to explain why PV occurs, or to study the effects of PV. DCTs are an easily applied method of dyadic analysis. The crucial benefit of dyadic analysis using DCT’s is that it reveals vital information on a couple that is usually ignored by the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) developed by Kenny and colleagues (2006). The vital information is whether the violence being studied is by just the male partner, just the female partner, or by both. Those three categories are the three DCTs. I suggest that knowing which of these DCTs applies to each of the couples being studied or treated is a crucial starting point for work on PV. Yet it seems that over 90% of work on PV is not informed by this crucial information. In addition, DCTs are a practical mode of dyadic analysis. It does not require structural equation modeling and a week-long workshop. If you can run a cross-tab and analysis of variance, you can do a dyadic analysis using DCTs. Further information on DCT can be downloaded from my website.

**You May Already Have Data for Dyadic Analysis and Not Realize it**

Given the few instances of dyadic analysis in research on PV, it is ironic that the data needed is easy to obtain. Actually, hundreds of researchers already have it because they used the Conflict Tactics Scales. If
you are one of them, you only need to cross-classify the dichotomized Physical Assault scale of the male and female partners to know which cases are in the Male-Only, Female-Only, and Both assaulted DCT. Similar cross-classifications can be used to identify the three Dyadic Concordance Types for other abusive behaviors measured by the CTS such as psychological aggression, intransigence injuring a partner, and sexual coercion.

I suggest that knowing the DCT of each couple in a study or treatment group is a crucial starting point for describing and understanding couples in which violence occurred, and for planning data analysis or treatment. DCTs not only provide important descriptive information about your couples, they also provide a way to analyze the causes and effects of couples being in one or another of the three DCT’s.

A Single Question Can be Used to Identify Dyadic Concordance Types

For a new study, or for clinical screening, DCTs can be identified with just one question, for example: In the past year, were there any times when you or your partner shoved, threw something, or hit the other: (1) Yes, we both did it; (2) I did it but my partner did not; (3) My partner did it, but I did not; (4) Neither of us did it in the past year. Of course it is better to use a multi-indicator measure such as the three-minute short-form of the revised Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus & Douglas, 2004). It provides two measures of assault: one for any assault and one for severe assault by each partner. As noted previously, it also provides scales to identify the dyadic concordance or discordance types for four important aspects of the “context” of those assaults: injury, sexual coercion, psychological aggression, and intransigence in dealing with a partner.

Examples of Results Using DCTs

*Children Exposed To Violence Between Parents.* Michel-Smith and I (2013) found that 14% of the parents of students in 15 nations reported physical violence between their parents, almost half of which were parents who severely assaulted another parent. Important as that is, for the issue of this article, the key result is in the three sets of bars in the chart. The right side pair of bars shows that, among students exposed to violence between their parents, the predominant Dyadic Concordance Type was “Both-Violent.” The left side and middle pairs of bars show that, if PV is measured as any assault, Father-Only assault was only slightly more frequent than Mother-Only assault. However, if the criterion is a severe assault, the Father-Only was a larger percent of the violent parents than Mother-Only. The predominance of Both-assault and the
substantial percent of students who grew up in homes where both parents assaulted, and the similar percent of Mother-Only and Father-Only, may be surprising to some. However those results are similar to what was found by six of the seven other studies that used DCTs for research on exposure of children to PV.

Does Which DCT Make A Difference? As might be expected (even though that has been ignored in research and treatment), children of parents in the Both-assaulted DCT had the highest probability of later in life also assaulting a partner. What might be surprising, is that in almost all the 15 nations, the Mother-Only DCT was as strongly associated with the child perpetrating PV as the Father-Only type, and that this applied to girls as well as boys.

Another example showing that each DCT has different effects is a study of the relation of violence to depression in the dating relationships of the students in the 15 nations. It found, again as expected, that the Both-assaulted DCT was associated with the highest risk of depression. The Male-Only and Female-Only DCTs were also associated with depression, but not as strongly as when both assaulted. Moreover, for women, but not for men, victimization was most closely related to depression, whereas for men perpetration was more closely associated with depression (Straus & Winstok, 2013).

Implications for Research, Theory, and Practice

Student samples have the great advantage of putting research within greater reach. For the two archived studies described in this article student samples put international research on PV within reach of almost everyone. But can such samples be used to compare nations? Student samples differ in important ways from the rest of the population; for example, they are much younger. Nevertheless, there is strong evidence that the behavior and beliefs of student couples reflects the behavior and beliefs of others in their respective nations. The correlation of 18 variables measured by student data for the 32 nations in the International Dating Violence Study with those variables measured by published national data averaged .51. A correlation of .68 was found between the rate of PV by parents of students in the International Parenting Study with nation-to-nation differences in the percent of women victims of PV in the recent European Union survey of violence against women. It seems that when PV is high in the general population, it also tends to be high in student samples and visa-versa.

International studies and taking into account the inherently dyadic nature of PV have the potential for greatly enhancing understanding of PV. If, in addition, the international research uses dyadic analysis, the combination can provide a more realistic basis for understanding the causes and effects of PV. It is more realistic because it takes account both the socio-cultural and the inter-personal interaction context into account. Two people are involved in PV, either as perpetrator or victim or both. With rare exception prevention and treatment efforts now focuses on either the offender or the victim and ignore the results of almost a hundred studies which found that when there is violence in a relationship, in half to two-thirds of the cases, both partners assaulted (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012). Ignoring or denying this fundamental fact may be part of the explanation for the conclusion in the National Institute of Justice website that “batterer intervention programs…do not change batterers’ attitudes toward women or domestic violence, and they have little to no impact on reoffending.” http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/topics/crime/intimate-partnerviolence/.

There has been a tremendous growth in research on all aspects of PV, but most of it is based on North American samples and very little used dyadic analysis to understand PV or guide prevention and treatment.
The two international studies described in this article permit both. I hope they will contribute to filling this gap and reducing PV worldwide.

**Selected References**

(Papers by Straus can be downloaded from my website [http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mas2](http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mas2).


