Bringing Couple-Level Measures And Family Contradictions Into Research Through Dyadic Concordance Types*

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BRINGING COUPLE-LEVEL MEASURES AND FAMILY CONTRADICTIONS INTO RESEARCH THROUGH DYADIC CONCORDANCE TYPES

Abstract

This article describes a method of describing and analyzing family dyadic relationships including married, cohabiting, or dating couples, parent-child, and sibling dyads. The method is to cross-classify a characteristic of interest, such as the helpfulness of a member of a dyad by that behavior of other dyad member. This resulting four cells identify three Dyadic Concordance Types (DCTs) and a reference category of Neither. If the behavior of interest is “helpfulness”, the three DCTs are Male-Only helpful, Female-Only, and Both Helpful. It is physical violence the DCTs are Male-Only, Female-Only, and Both assaulted. This provides important descriptive information that can help plan the next steps in research and help treatment planning. DCTs can be used for statistical analyses to test theories about the causes or effects of helpfulness or physical violence, or whatever behavior is the focus of interest. Examples are presented of the distribution of DCTs for various behaviors, and research which found there are important and them unexpected, in the degree to which each DCT is related to individual and family problems, in the effect on partners and their children of being in one or another of the DCTs. These results indicate the importance of going beyond dealing the behavior of individual members of a family dyad to deal with the emergent dyad-level characteristics resulting from the relationship. A methodological section provides guidelines. Although DCTs identify only a limited aspect of the characteristics of a dyad, it is such an important aspect that identifying the DCTs of the cases is recommended as a default first step in research or interventions.

Key words: antisocial, dating, homogamy, marriage, parent-child, pro-social, relationships, sibling, violence

Awareness of the theoretical and practical importance of the degree of concordance or discordance in the behavior and characteristics of members of a dyad such as a married couple, or parent-child, or sibling, has been around for a long time. Concordance and discordance has been continuously addressed in family therapy and family systems theory since the start. But with important exceptions, such as the work of Patterson and colleagues on parent-child relationships (Patterson, Bank, & Reid, 1987) or Capaldi and colleagues on partner violence (Capaldi & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2012). Empirical research on concordance in the behavior of partners in a relationship has also largely been ignored. There is a large body of research showing similar rates of assault on partners (Murray A. Straus, 2008; Murray A Straus, 2010) and also research showing that the two are highly correlated (Moffitt et al., 1997; K. Daniel O’Leary & Williams, 2006). However, those data do not provide information on which couples fall in the classic category of couples in which the male partner assaults a non-violent woman, couple in which a women assaults non-violent man, and couples in which both assault. More generally, there needs to be way to go beyond the typical focus on the rejecting or abusing parent or men who denigrate and assault their partners to identify and compare couples and parent-child pairs characterized by low and high concordance in respect to a behavior of interest, including a way to identify whether it is the husband or the wife or both who denigrate and assault, and whether it is only the parent who is hits or both parent and child, or if just one, which one. These are theoretically and clinically important categories that must be identified to adequately investigate their causes and effects, and to help families achieve or cease a behavior of interest.

The Dyadic Concordance Types (DCTs) described in this article are intended to provide a practical means to help identify and analyze such cases. For marital, cohabiting, or dating
partners, the three DCTs are *Male-Only, Female-Only, and Both* engage in whatever behavior is the focus of research or intervention, plus the “reference” category of *Neither*. If the behavior of interest is helpfulness, the three DCTs are *Male-Only* helpful, *Female-Only*, and *Both* helpful. For physical violence the DCTs are *Male-Only*, *Female-Only*, and *Both* assaulted. This provides important descriptive information that can help for plan the next steps in research and help treatment planning. The three categories provide a couple-level measure of only one dimension of a couple’s relationship, but assuming the dimension was chosen on the basis of theoretical or clinical relevance, empirical research has shown that the DCTs are likely to identify differences in such things as marital satisfaction and duration (Tashiro, 2014).

DCTs differ from approaches which focus on the independent effect of the behavior of each partner such as the Actor-Partner Inter-Dependence Model or APIM (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). It is clearly important to examine the separate effects of the behavior of each partner, but that may not adequately depict the situation. For example, imagine a couple in which the man is helpful and his wife is not, and a man who is helpful and so is his wife. The characteristic of the male partner in both these couples is the same. However, DCTs distinguish between the two couples, whereas other approaches may miss it and focus on both men as helpful. The key point is that DCTs measure a characteristic of *couples* that is in addition to the characteristics of each partner. DCTS are an emergent characteristic of a relationship.

Because my own research has been primarily on abusive behavior within family dyads such as child abuse and partner violence, many of the empirical examples in this article use DCTs for such behaviors. However, a central characteristic of DCTs is that they are equally important for enhancing understanding pro-social dyadic behavior such as trust, helpfulness, or

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**Figure 1. Dyadic Concordance Types for Verbal Affection To Them By Their Parents As Recalled By 2,548 18-25 Year Old Individuals**

(Polcari, Bolger, & Teicher, 2014)
affection, and that DCTs probably apply to almost all family including siblings and parent-child, as illustrated by Figure 1.

Figure 1 illustrates the opportunities for analyses to further understand family dynamics that are opened if the DCTs for a behavior of interest are identified as first step in research and intervention. In this case we see that even though 87% of the sample experienced affection from one or both parents, it also makes clear that almost a fifth of the sample which received affection only from the mother. How did their social development differ from those who received affection only from the father, and how did children who grew up in each of the three DCTs differ from the 17% who had low verbal affection from both parents, and does it differ for boys and girls? These questions be addressed by many statistical methods, including analysis of covariance, as was done to produce the results shown later in Figure 3.

Figure 2 is an example from my research on partner violence. It illustrates the pattern found by the 48 studies reviewed by (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Selwyn, & Rohling, 2012) – that among couples in which physical violence occurred, the majority of cases are in the Both assaulted DCT. Moreover, both the Langhinrichsen-Rohling review and the even more extensive review by Michel-Smith and Straus and (2014) found that this pattern applies to results obtained from data provided by women as well as men, and to studies conducted in many nations. A key feature Of DCTs is the equal attention to relationships in which there is only one perpetrator (or one victim), namely the Male-Only and Female-Only types. Thus Figure 2 shows that when there was only one victim, it was about out equally likely to be cases in the Female-Only and Male-Only perpetration. Those are important types of couples which are brought into focus by DCTs.
THEORETICAL BASIS AND DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF
DYADIC CONCORDANCE TYPES

Theoretical Basis

The theoretical basis for DCTs is the assumption that both the prosocial and the antisocial. Each is an interaction, is therefore an inherently dyadic phenomenon, even when one partner “does nothing.” The terms “interaction” and “relationship” embody the interactional principle. Ignoring this may produce an inaccurate or outright wrong picture. This means that what both marital partners do or do not do, or what both what the child as well as the parent does or does not do is crucial for understanding the relationship the effects of the behavior of each member of the dyad, and interventions to enhance or decrease these behaviors. These are old principles. Most social scientists and human service providers probably agree on them. However, as will be illustrated later, implementation of these principles in research and in services for victims seems to be rare.

The call for paper for this issue of Journal of Family Theory & Review sought papers that could help readers “move away from looking at the average response or outcome of various changes and transitions and spend more time studying the variations, the outliers, the contradictions.” Some ways in which the distinctive characteristics of DCT can help more move in those directions are given below.

Couple-Level Measure

The prevailing practice in family research, except when the research is at the macro-level using data on cities, counties or nations, is to conduct the analysis it at the individual-level, even when dyadic data is available and analyzed. That is true of almost all research on partner violence. The studies compare rates for men and women, and analyze the relation of assaults by male or female partners to variables such as depression and injury. In respect to injury, for example, these studies have consistently shown greater rates of injury when men assault as compared to women (Archer, 2000; Stets & Straus, 1990). However, more recent research found that the highest rate of injury was for the Both DCT (Whitaker, Haileyesus, Swahn, & Saltzman). This is one example of the need for family research to go beyond the effects of the behavior and characteristics of each member of a dyad to also attend to the characteristics and implications of the couple or parent-child dyad, or sibling dyads per se.

The rarity of using a couple-level measure, even when the dyadic data is available, is illustrated by hundreds of studies published using the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS) (Murray A. Straus & Douglas, 2004; Murray A. Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996; Murray A. Straus, Hamby, Finkelhor, Moore, & Runyan, 1998). Among them, the Whitaker study and a few others (Caetano, Vaeth, & Ramisety-Mikler; Fritz, Slep, & O’Leary, 2012; K. Daniel O’Leary & Cohen; Maria Testa, Hoffman, & Leonard, 2011) are exceptions that reported results for gender-specific DCTs. That neglect also applies to my work. With only three exceptions, my use of this dyadic data was for individual level analyses DCTs.

Role-Specific

The basic logical structure of DCTs is whether the behavior of characteristic of interest applies only to dyad member A, dyad member B. or to both. However, although logically complete, it is not sufficient. To be maximally useful, DCTs must also directly indicate the roles played by each member of a relationship. For example, in research on partner violence it is particularly important gender roles are considered to be especially important. Therefore gender-specific DCTs are needed. However, specific empirical comparison of men and women are the exception. However, there is increasing research showing that, among couples who experience
either physical or sexual aggression, the majority of cases are in the Both DCT (Krahé, Tomaszewska, Kuypers, & Vanwesenbeeck, 2014; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2012). Identification of DCTs as a first step in research can help address the problem by providing a more complete picture of the situation. It can enable the next step in research, and also treatment planning to take into account the characteristics of the couple in addition to the characteristics of each partner.

Using DCTs that identify the culturally or individually expected the role is equally important for other family dyads, including sibling and parent-child. For sibling relationships, the gender categories might apply or for some research, Older Sibling-Only, Younger-Only, and Both. For some research on same-sex relationships, appropriate DCT categories might be: Dominant Partner-Only, Submissive partner-Only, and Both. For Father-child relationships they can be Father-Only, Child-Only, or Both. In general, role-specific categories are a key advantage of DCTs because they identify key aspects that are necessary to understand a relationship and facilitate taking into account individual and cultural expectations and norms.

**Victimization And Perpetration**

The editors of this special-topic issue want to encourage family scholars to take into account the contradictions that are so frequent in the family system. One of these is that the concepts of victimization and perpetration of aggressive or antisocial behavior to a certain extent is a contradiction. A great deal of research in criminology and victimology has found a strong overlap and correlation between being a perpetrator and being a victim (Jennings, Park, Tomsich, Gover, & Akers, 2011). Little research on intra-family aggression has recognized that. DCTs make it inescapable because they identify both victimization and perpetration. No other typology does that.

**Theoretically Open**

DCTs are not linked to, nor do they assume any specific etiological theory of victimization. Except for the fundamental theoretical assumption that to understand a relationship it is necessary to take into account the behavior of both partners, DCTs are simply categories intended to identify cases in order to be able to proceed with testing hypotheses based on whatever theory or treatment modality is appropriate for a study or orientation of an agency. At the same time, theoretically infused DCTs can be developed, as illustrated by Winstok and Straus’ (2014) explication of the processes involved in the relation of partner violence to depression.

**Mutually exclusive and exhaustive**

Finally DCTs have the desirable logical property of providing exhaustive categories in the sense that they apply to all couples in which either party has the characteristic or behavior of interest. Other typologies may not cover all the possibilities. For example, the Johnson typology has no category for female Intimate Terrorist. The Holtzworth-Munroe (2000) typology of Generally Violent/Antisocial, Dysphoric/Borderline, and Family Only was developed to classify male offenders and validated on the basis of data on men. However although it was not designed for that purpose, Monson and Langhinrichsen (2002) used it to classify female offenders.

DCTs are also mutually exclusive because a dyad can be in only one of the three DCTs or the reference category.

**BROAD APPLICABILITY OF DYADIC CONCORDANCE TYPES**

I first used DCTs to study violence between the married and cohabiting couples in the 1975 National Family Violence Survey (Murray A. Straus, 1980; Straus, 2006 #5564). However,
DCTs for many other behaviors are applicable and likely to be helpful for understanding almost all aspects of family relationships and family roles. Some examples are in this section.

**Parenting and Parent-Child**

**Father-Mother DCTs.** Collaboration with Angele Fauchier, the co-author of the *Dimensions of Discipline Inventory* (Murray A. Straus & Fauchier, 2008; Van Leeweun, Fauchier, & Straus, 2012) and Director of *International Parenting Study* made clear that DCTs were valuable, indeed necessary, to adequately understand parenting and other parent-child relationships. For example, the effects of parental use of corporal punishment are different when the DCT is *Father-Only, the Mother-Only,* or *Both* spank (Murray A. Straus, 2013).

**Parent-Child DCTs.** The above example is of DCTs in which the members of the dyad are the parents. DCTs identifying *Parent-Only, Child-Only,* and *Both* are also important. For example, a number of studies have examined child-to-parent violence (Gámez-Guadix, Jaureguizar, Almendros, & Carrobles, 2012; Jaureguizar & Gamez-Guadix, 2010; Nock & Kazdin, 2002; Ulman & Straus, 2003). All of these studies might have gained an increased understanding of these violent parent-child relationships if they had used DCTs to establish violent parent-child relationship types such as *Child-Only, Father-Only,* and *Both.* The results reported by Ulman, although they do not include all three DCT categories, suggest that, there is violence by a child, the DCT with the largest percent of cases is the *Both* violent.

**Siblings**

The opportunities for enhancing understanding of sibling relationships through use of DCTs was suggested by an article on sibling sexual abuse. Morrill (2014) used a modification of the sexual coercion scale of the Conflict Tactics Scales or CTS (Murray A. Straus & Douglas; Murray A. Straus et al., 1996) to measure sexual abuse victimization and perpetration by a sample of male and female university students. The questions were asked in pairs with separate response categories, such as “A sibling sexually touched me. I sexually touched a sibling” Morrill reported only the percent who experienced sibling sexual abuse. But the questions could have been cross-classified to identify three sibling sexual abuse types: *Male-Only, Female-Only,* and *Both* sexually abused. Morrill found that sibling sexual abuse was associated with low self-esteem. If she had gone the next step and compared the self-esteem of those in the *Male-Only,* *Female-Only,* and *Both* the results might be very informative.

**Clinical Use of DCTs**

When clinicians have information about the behavior of both partners, they may almost automatically take into considerations whether, for a behavior of interest, only one partner is doing it, both are doing it or of only one, which one. A problem is that they may not have sufficient information on both partners to make that judgment. A few instruments, such as *RELATE* (Busby, Holman, & Taniguchi, 2001), provide scores for both partners. Authors of such instruments can facilitate identification and use of DCTs in clinical practice by providing suggested cut-points and giving examples of DCTs that are *Male-Only, Female-Only,* or *Both* high in negative behavior that needs to be reduced, or a low in a positive behavior that might benefit the relationship.

**WHAT DIFFERENCE DO DYADIC CONCORDANCE TYPES MAKE?**

The value of the broad applicability of DCTs depends on the extent which DCTs make a difference in enhancing understanding of the family and helping families. This section presents examples of research finding such differences.

**Effects For Partners**
The importance of concordance and discordance in the characteristics of members of a couple has been recognized for thousands of years. In the cyber era, it can be seen in on-line dating services such as Eharmony. Their algorithm emphasizes pairing similar people. Their extensive research has found that concordance in behavior and values predicts relationship success. A large body of other empirical research has also found that concordance is related to marital success (Tashiro, 2014). In general, concordance is beneficial, but with the tremendously important, and unfortunately frequent case, when it is concordance in antisocial or debilitating characteristics.

DCTs enable family researchers to examine go beyond measuring the degree of concordance because they also identify gender or other role-specific case of discordance. For example, a study of the relation of partner violence to depression (Muray A. Straus & Winstok, 2013), not surprisingly, found the concordant type Both assaulted was associated with the highest level of depression for both male and female partners. However, when each of the discordant types are considered, the mean depression scores (shown in Figure 3) reveal information that helps understand why women in violent relationships have higher rates of depression. The prevailing interpretation is that this is a result of their victimization. The findings for women in the Male-Only are consistent with that. At the same time, the findings for the female partners of men in the Female-Only victim type, i.e. women who are sole perpetrators in the relationship, show that women perpetrators have higher levels depression than women in non-violent relationships. Thus, for women as well as men, depression is associated with an increased probability of assault.
Perhaps even more interesting is that, for the men in this study, the level of depressive symptoms was higher when they were the sole perpetrators rather than when they are the sole victims. On the other hand, for the women in this study, depressive symptoms were higher when they were the sole victims rather than when they are the sole perpetrator. A similar gender difference in the relative effect of being a perpetrator or a victim of PV was also found for couples in a Canadian national survey (Graham, Bernards, Flynn, Tremblay, & Wells, 2012). A plausible explanation, and one that we suggested is likely to apply to other aspects of gender differences in the adverse psychological effects of partner victimization, is suggested in a theoretical paper on this issue Winstok (2013).

Testa (2011) identified the DCTs for physical assault at Time 1 of a longitudinal study of a large sample of female university students. She compared couples who were Male-Only assaulted, Female-Only, and Both assaulted at Time 1 on 15 background and current behavior measures. The analysis found that the DCTs had different antecedents or behavioral correlates for eleven of the 15 variables. For example, at Time 1, men in Male-Only group perpetrated acts of psychological aggression and average of 10 times in the previous year, women in Female-Only violent relationships perpetrated a mean of 14 acts of psychological Aggression, and women in the Both assaulted DCT engaged in psychologically aggressive behavior an average of 22 times that year.

These results suggest that each DCT has a distinctive pattern of antecedents and consequences and that differentiating couples on the basis of their DCT is important for research and efforts to help families.

**Effects For Children**

Eron et al (1961) published a pioneer study of DCTs for child-rearing practices of parents. They measured the parenting of 158 children in the third grade and the correlation between the score of the fathers and the mothers. Rejection of the child was one of the ten DCTs for parent behaviors they reported. Figure 4 plots the differences the level of aggression in school interactions for children from homes in each DCT for rejection by parents. It shows, not surprisingly, that child in the Both DCT had the highest level of aggressive behavior. What was surprising is that there was not much difference between children who were not rejected by either parent and by those who only the father rejected. Both were low in aggression. The children in the Mother-Only rejected DCT were much higher in aggression, but not nearly as high as children rejected by both parents.
Straus (1992) investigated the extent to which being exposed to *Father-Only*, *Mother-Only*, or *Both* parents violent adversely effected participants in a study of a nationally representative sample of US married and cohabiting adults. Nineteen adverse effects were investigated. Again, growing up in a family in which both parents assaulted was associated with the highest level of the adverse effect. However, comparing the *Father-Only* and the *Mother-Only* DCTs, the relationship to later in life problem of the child was greater for those from *Mother-Only* than of *Father-Only* violent families in 12 of the 19 or about two thirds of the analyses. This is very different than what now seems to be assumed by the theoretical and clinical focus on children of female victims.

A study of university students in 15 nations found that spanking at age 10 was experienced by about two thirds of students in 15 nations (Murray A. Straus, 2013). Corporal punishment was associated with an increased probability of criminal beliefs and crime, regardless of which parent hit the child. However, *Mother-Only* corporal punishment was related to more of the child criminality measures than *Father-Only*. The greater criminogenic effect of growing up in a family where there was violence between the parents was when the DCT was *Mother-Only*.

**HOW DYADIC CONCORDANCE TYPES DIFFER FROM OTHER MEASURES**

To understand what DCTs are and how they differ from other measures, it is helpful to clarify the differences and similarities between the following related concepts:

*Dyadic data* identifies a study which has information on the behavior of both partners in a relationship, such as a measure of the behavior of the husband and also that of the wife, or the child as well as the parent, or of both siblings.

*Dyadic analysis* refers to methods of analyzing dyadic data, of which the most widely used is the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model or APIM (Kenny et al., 2006).

*Couple-level or other dyad-level measures* identifies a characteristic of a relationship that is an emergent aspect of the interaction of the members of the dyad. It hinges on the interaction of the behavior of the partners. The level of conflict characterizing a couple or parent child
dyadic inherently reflects what both are doing and not doing. Note that “dyadic analysis” does not necessarily involve a couple-level variable and vice versa.

Although research on dyadic characteristics of relationships is rapidly increasing, in respect to DCTs, most of the research can be identified as “near misses” in the sense that they do not provide information even the percent in each DCT, much less differences in the effects of being in one of the three DCTs compared to the others. For example, McCarroll (2009) and others provide rich information on couples with mutual and non-mutual violence, but when it is non-mutual, there is no information on which partner engaged in the behavior. There is a similar lack of information on all three categories in a number of other studies such as (Marcus, 2012; Swan & Snow, 2002). Other near-misses include studies which provide information on sole-perpetrator, sole-victim and both perpetrator and victims. However, those categories do not indicate if the sole-perpetrator or sole victim was the male or female partner, or the parent or the child. Consequently, unlike DCTs they fail to identify the role in the relationship that DCTs assume is crucial to specify in order to understand what is happening, what to investigate further, and what to do to help a relationship.

Related Measures That Do Not Provide What DCTs Provide

“Mutuality” or bi-directionality is perpetration of assault by Both partners within a relationship. Many studies report the percent mutual, but for the sole-perpetrator couples, do not report (as do DCTs) the percent which are male or female. In short, mutuality identifies only one of the DCTs.

“Symmetry” is approximately equal rates of perpetration by males & females. Symmetry in perpetration can exist simultaneously with zero mutuality. For example, if a study found 12% of men and 12% of women assaulted their partner, but in each case their partner was not violent. This would be complete symmetry but zero mutuality. That will rarely be the case, but DCTs need to be identified to determine the percent of cases in which it is or is not.

“Perpetrator-Only” “Victim-Only”, and “Perpetrator-Victim” This is an inadequately specified dyadic typology. It is not adequate because the categories do not identify which partner was the sole-perpetrator, sole-victim, or the victim-perpetrator, as in the study by Melander (2010). Melander found that having been neglected as a child is associated with an increase in the probability of being the sole perpetrator of violence against a partner, but because the categories are not gender-specific, the results do not indicate if the sole-perpetrator was the male or female partner.

“Actor-Partner Interdependence Model” or APIM (Kenny et al., 2006) is a mode of analysis. It does not provide DCTs and they cannot be deduced from results reported in a typical articles giving results of an APIM. As indicated elsewhere, a data base search of articles using IPIM failed to locate any which reported the percent in each DCT or reported results of research on what difference it made to be in or another DCT.

Sum Or Mean of the scores of the members of a dyad. A limitation of this measure is that the mean or sum of the scores of a couple in which one member has a low score for the behavior of interest will have the same mid-range score as a dyad with both in the mid-range. Moreover, the mean hides which partner is high and which is low.

Correlation of Dyad Member Scores with Each other. The correlation of the husband and wife scores is the couple-level measure provided by most Actor Partner Interdependence Models (Kenny et al., 2006). Except in the rare instance when the correlation approaches one or zero this does not provide data equivalent to DCTs. Even when the correlation is in the high
range of about .50, a correlation or regression coefficient does not identify which of the couples are in the Male-Only, Female-Only, or Both DCT.

The size of the correlation does not indicate this in part because the percent in each DCT is based on the part of the sample that is not in the reference category of Neither. This was illustrated in the study by Eron and colleagues (1961). They measured the parenting of 158 children in the third grade and provided the correlation between the score of the fathers and the mothers. For example, the correlation for rejection of the child was extremely high (.64), even approaching the point for concern about collinearity. Yet the DCTs they provided show that even with this high correlation, there were clearly identifiable DCTs: Father-only 24%, Mother-Only 26%, and Both 50% high rejection of child. On the other hand the correlation of reports by fathers and mothers in reporting that the child tended to confess misbehavior was less than half the size (.25), yet the percent reported this Father-Only 22%, Mother-only 36%, and Both 42% was similar, and for both aspect of parenting indicated that there was a substantial percent in each DCT that needed to examined to understand the experiences of the children. These examples illustrate the difference between correlation of the behavior of members of a dyad and what DCTs provide beyond that.

HISTORY OF DYADIC CONCORDANCE TYPES

As stated in the introduction, the ideas underlying DCTs have been with us for a long time, but has largely been ignored in empirical research. The 1961 study by Eron and colleagues for example identified DCTs for ten parent characteristics and behaviors and found differences in the aggression of children for each DCT. Yet, despite Eron’s long and highly productive career, I know of subsequent study using DCTs. Similarly, I published a paper and a book reporting DCTs in 1980, but no other for 12 years, and then ten years before another (Murray A. Straus, 2008). The first publications using label Dyadic Type was not until 2011 (Murray A Straus, 2011). An understanding of this paradoxical situation might help understand our discipline. Therefore the following sections will present some thoughts on what is old and what is new about DCTs and why their importance tends to have been overlooked.

What’s Old and New?

As stated previously, it is hardly a new idea that, to understand a family relationship, either a couple, parent-child, or sibling relationship, it is important to know what both partners are doing and thinking and feeling, or how each how perceives, experiences and responds to the situation. The paragraph on clinical use of DCTs suggested that, family therapists may do this almost automatically. The studies of “homogamy” and “assortative mating” reviewed by Tashiro (2014) found homogamy” and “assortative mating” are related to better and more lasting relationships. However, if the concordance is in aggressive, antisocial, and other maladaptive behaviors, it tends to magnifies their harmful effect (Becker & Lois, 2010; Boutwell, Beaver, & Barnes, 2012; Luo & Klohnen, 2005).

As for what’s new, the following can be listed: DCTs provide a new couple-level variable which, as pointed out in a previous section provide information that other dyadic and couple measures do not. DCTs identify gender-specific or other role-specific categories, which is often essential to understand what is happening. DCTs provide a conceptualization and name that it is hopped will facilitate communication and development of a coherent related body of knowledge and practice

Early Uses Of DCTs

The earliest use of DCTs I found is a study by Eron and colleagues (1961) on the relation of the behavior and characteristics of parents to aggression in their children. They actually
measured rather than just discussed the degree of concordance and discordance between parents. My first published data on DCTs was on violence among the couples in the 1975 National Family Violence Survey. I reported, but did not realize the importance of finding that, among the couples where violence had occurred in the past year, in 49% of the cases both partners had assaulted, and among the half where there was a sole perpetrator, it was about equally distributed between the Male-Only (25%) and Female-Only (26%) types. In the entire book on that survey (Murray A. Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 2006), only one paragraph discussed these results, and the concept of Dyadic Concordance Types was not available to direct attention to it.

This failure to attend to DCTs continued a decade later. The percent in each DCT among couples in the 1985 National Family Violence Survey results was almost identical, but there is nothing at all on DCTs in the book on that survey (Gelles & Straus, 1988). However, a major step forward actually took place: a paper presenting results on whether it made a difference for children if they were in a Father-Only, Mother-Only, or Both parents violent family (Murray A. Straus, 1992). The results, which were interesting and surprising, will be summarized in the section on whether DCTs make a difference. Nevertheless, they were largely ignored.

In the last decade, more and more attention has been paid to dyadic analysis, largely through use of the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM). A search using Google Scholar to locate studies using APIM for analysis of some aspect of the family located more than a hundred. These were checked to locate those which distinguished between or provided results on relationships identified as Male-Only, Female-Only, or Both for the behavior of interest. None were found.

Although researchers using APIM may not analyze DCTs, in the past decade and especially the past five years an increasing number have. A systemic analysis by Michel-Smith (2014) located and tabulated the percentages found for each DCT by more than 80 studies.

**Why Ignored?**

The recent growth in research using DCTs indicates that this fundamental aspect of family relationships is now receiving the attention needed. But why has it taken so long despite broad agreement on the importance of the issue and of theories such as family process in which it an important element? Some possibilities are given below.

Perhaps a starting point is that there has not been a recognized name or conceptualization to facilitate thinking about and communicating with other scholars. Another possibility may be a belief that it is difficult to measure characteristics of couples, compared to individuals. The practicality of classifying couples into DCTs may not have been realized. A related perceived obstacle may be a belief that couple-level requires interviewing both members of a couple, parent-child, or sibling dyad. Fortunately, as will be indicated in the section on Sources of Data, because both members participated in the interactions of interest, both can provide data on what each did. There is no clear evidence that one is more valid than the other.

A belief that complex statistical methods are needed to analyze dyadic data may also have been an impediment because it is not obvious that DCTs can be analyzed using the most basic statistical techniques, such as cross-tab, correlation, analysis of variance as well as the most complex such as multi-level modeling.

There is also the possibility that, in relation to research on partner violence, a focus on the couple-level has been restrained by social movement, professional and organizational interests. National and international awareness of domestic violence emerged in response to feminist efforts to end violence against women. That major contribution has also had the effect of making
domestic violence synonymous with violence by men and a cultural and moral reluctance to address violence by female partner (Murray A Straus, 2010).

There may also be underling cultural elements that divert attention from the dyad level. One is the widely noted individualistic emphasis of American society (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1991; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). The normal tendency to attribute problems to the defects of individuals and benefits to the assets of individual persons is exacerbated by this element of American culture. It may have reduced interest in examining dyadic relationships per se as a social causes of family problems and well-being.

**IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF DYADIC CONCORDANCE TYPES**

Use of DCTs is not only theoretically important, it also a practical approach because DCTs are easily identified. This applies to both research cases and clinical cases. If necessary, DCTs can be identified with a single question, provided that question is asked twice. For example, to identify the DCTs for physical violence in a relationship, either partner can be asked if they had hit their partner in the past year, and then asked if their partner had hit them in that period. In clinical work this can instantly identify the DCT of the relationship, i.e., whether the pattern of assault victimization is Female-Only, Male-Only, or Both assaulted. In research, DCTs are obtained by a simple cross-classification of the behavior of the partners. The resulting four cells identify the three DCTs and the reference category of Neither.

Although use of a single question is sometimes necessary because of time other situational requirements, when possible it is best to obtain more in-depth data by use of a standardized measure. For example, in research or interventions on partner abuse, the short form of the Conflict Tactics Scales or CTS (Murray A. Straus & Douglas, 2004) takes only 3 to 5 minutes. It enables couples to be classified into DCTs for physical assaults, and also four other aspects of partner abuse: injury, psychological aggression, sexual coercion, and intransigence by the partner.

The statement that DCTs can be identified by a simple cross-classification is true but not the whole truth. The more complete picture is that, there are a number of complications and contingencies that that needed to be taken into account.

**Source of Data**

Data to create DCTs is often available from only one member of a dyad, such as only the parent, or only one member of a couple, as in many surveys and in clinical samples such as men in a batterer intervention program or women receiving services. DCTs can still be identified in those situations because the information can usually be obtained from just member of the dyad. Both participated in the events being studied and therefore know what they did and what the partner did. Therefore either can provide data on what both have done or not done. Each poses the possibility of bias, but there does not seem to be a clear theoretical or empirical basis empirical or for believing that one is less biased than the other.

DCTs for beliefs and emotions, not just behavior of partners, are important. It makes a difference if one partner is satisfied with the relationship and the other is not, or if both are high in marital satisfaction. It is usually best to obtain data on beliefs and emotions directly from the participant whose beliefs and emotions are being measured. However, a measure of emotional states or beliefs provided by a partner can identify an important aspect of the couple relationship if the data is analyzed from a phenomenological perspective such as the principle formulated William and Dorothy Thomas “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences (Thomas & Thomas, 1938, p. 571).
If an instrument such as the CTS asks participants about both their own behavior and that of the partner, and it is completed by both partners, the behavior reported by the participant may differ from the report of the partner’s behavior as reported by the partner. In the case of partner violence, when the measures is whether one or more violent acts occurred, there is usually high agreement (Moffitt et al., 1997; K. Daniel O'Leary & Williams, 2006). However, if the measure is the how often or how severe the behavior was, there is low agreement. O’Leary and colleagues (K. Daniel O'Leary & Williams, 2006) and others have dealt with this by using the higher of the two scores, apparently based on the assumption that under-reporting is more likely than over-reporting. Testa and Derrick (2013) used a daily diary method to study psychological aggression and found that self reports were the best predictor of short-term consequences of partner violence. This suggests using the self-report of each partner to create DCTs, as has been done in the studies by Straus cited in this article.

**Three-Category and Four-Category DCTs**

For purposes of statistical analysis, the DCT’s must identify not only the Male-Only, Female-Only, and Both types, but also a reference category of Neither. However, the percentage distribution of the cases in each of the four categories provides the percent of the total sample, whereas the percentages of theoretical interest when analyzing DCT are the percent of the sub-sample in which the behavior occurred. This is obtained by computing the percentages after excluding the Neither category. Creating a three-category version of the DCT provides a convenient method of calculating those percentages.

**DCTs Using Continuous Variables**

Theoretically and clinically meaningful DCTs can be identified for many behaviors by first dichotomizing the variable at an appropriate cut point. For example, almost all partners commit occasional acts of psychological aggression, and almost all couples would therefore be in the Both category. More meaningful DCTs for psychological aggression in couple or parent-child dyads can be created by use of a cutting point to identify a high level of the behavior. Straus and Michel-Smith (2014), for example, identified DCTs for psychological aggression using the 60th percentile as the cut point.

If the behavior or characteristic that is the focus of a DCT is considered to be dichotomous, such as assaulted or did not assault a partner in the reporting period, DCTs are obtained by cross-classifying that variable by that variable for the partner. Although a single act of violence is important theoretically, legally, and clinically, if it is chronic, it may have a different etiology or effect. DCTs can take chronicity into account by dichotomizing the behavior of each partner at a level deemed to indicate a chronic or problematic level. This would result in DCTs labeled as Male-Only chronically assaulted, Female-Only chronically assaulted, and Both chronically assaulted.

If there is a culturally or scientifically based cut-point that should probably be used. For example, if DCTs for depression are being identified, and the instrument used to measure depression has a clinical cut-point that could be used. Culturally established conventions such as the age for voting or age for, sexual consent might be appropriate. When the decision is based on a statistical distribution, using the 60th or 80th percentile because both indicate a high score. One or more standard deviation above the mean would also be statistically appropriate, but has the disadvantage of not being understood, except by other researchers.

Information on what might be an appropriate cut point can also be obtained empirically by plotting the variable used to create the DCT with an important dependent variable to see if there is an inflection point to use as the cut point. For example, Salis (2014) found that physical
assault increased greatly at the 80th percentile, suggesting that to create DCTs for psychological aggression, the 80th percentile might be an appropriate cut point.

**Differences Within DCT Categories.** Although in the Both DCT, both engage in the behavior, if the DCT is based on dichotomizing a continuous variable rather than a categorical variable, there may be large differences in the frequency or intensity. In research on spanking by parents, for example, both may spank, but there could be a large difference in how often. In research on partner violence, if DCTs are based on classifying each partner as having assaulted or not, there could also be a large differences in how often the male and female partners assaulted. To determine if there is such a difference, compute the mean or median of each partner in the Both category. Those statistics should be presented in publications on the study.

Similarly, the Male-Only and the Female-Only DCTs have in common that they identify sole-perpetrator couples, but they could differ in how often each assaulted. Some studies have examined this and found that the frequency of assault by women in the Female-Only DCT was greater than by men in the Male-Only category (Michel-Smith & Straus, 2014).

One way to control for differences in the extent of the behavior within the Both DCT to create the DCTs on the basis of a threshold that is high enough to indicate that both frequently engaged the behavior, such as at or above the 25th or 50th percentile. This may conflict with the legal and humanitarian perspective which holds that even one assault should be the basis for intervention and research. However, from a theoretical and clinical perspective it may be critical to take into account the magnitude of the behavior. The issue can be investigated by comparing the results of as the basis for forming DCTs with results from DCTs based on exceeding a certain threshold.

Still another approach is to use a measure which defines DCTs on the basis of the relative level of the behavior of one partner compared to the other, as in the study by Leonard and colleagues (2014). The Both group can be divided into cases in which both engage in the behavior but the male partner at a level 20% or more greater than the female partner, the female partner 20% or more greater than the male partner, and a group with cases in which the partner scores differ by less than 20%. For the Male-Only and Female-Only categories, the criteria could be a score that is 75% above that of the partner. A problem with this approach is that it implies that a low level of the behavior is not something of crucial importance.

**Gender vs Partner DCT**

In many studies, an important issue is whether there is a gender difference in the effect of being in one DCT compared to the other two. For example, if the dependent variable is depression, is being part of a relationship in which only the male partner assaults equally depressing men and women? Is answering that question possible when, as in so many surveys, only one partner was interviewed? It is possible if, as is also often true, the sample includes both male and female participants. Figure 3 in the section on What Difference Do Dyadic Concordance Types Make? provides an example.

**Needed Sample Size**

For purposes of describing the percent of cases in each DCT, even a small sample will usually be adequate. However, if the behavior of interest applies to only a small percent of the population studied, and a purpose of the study is to analyze the effect of being in each DCT, a large sample is required because the analysis has to focus on the sub-set of cases in which the behavior occurred. In a study of partner violence, if the assault rate is 20%, a sample of 300 cases would produce a sub-sample 60 for which assault DCTs could be identified. Sixty may be adequate to provide an estimate the percent of cases in each DCT, but when hypotheses about the
effects of being in each DCT are tested, a larger sample is needed to have enough cases in each DCT to produce statistically dependable results.

**DCTs And APIM**

DCTs the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model or APIM (Kenny et al., 2006) are complimentary procedures. APIM has great flexibility and allows testing of many models and analyses using growth curve modeling. Couple-level measures such as DCTs can be included in APIM provided those measures created and included as variables in the model. Multi-category variables such as DCTs are not suitable for SEM. But DCTs can be presented using dummy variables and in multi-group analysis, and by testing ininteractions using multi-level models (Smith et al., 2014).

**LIMITATIONS OF DYADIC CONCORDANCE TYPES**

**Concordance And Discordance Is Only One Aspect Of Dyadic Relationships**

Although that is certainly correct that a DCT provides information on only one aspect of a relationship, it is typically about behavior or characteristic of theoretical or clinical importance. Nevertheless, Information on just the DCT for that one behavior, however important, will rarely be sufficient to understand the relationship or provide an effective Intervention.

**DCTs Imply Greater Similarity Between Partners Than May Be Correct**

For example, although both the male and female partner in a relationship may have psychological attacked a partner, putting them in the *Both* DCT for psychological aggression, the male partner may have done it 20 times and the female partner ten times in the past year. One method to address that issue is to set the cut point for identifying DCTs at a high enough level that, it constitutes serious problematic behavior regardless of who did it more often. This is part of the reasoning behind the strategy using the 60th percentile to create DCTs for psychological aggression (Murray A Straus & Michel-Smith, 2014). Similarly, three or more physical attacks can be used as the cut point classify cases into the *Both* category for physical assault. Regardless of the cut points used, research using DCTs should report the frequency and severity of the behavior of the male and female partners in each of the three categories, as was done by Michel-Smith (2014).

**Identification Of DCTs Often Ignores Discrepant Reports By Each Partner**

As mentioned in the section on Sources of Data, research has found high agreement when measure is whether an event such as an assault occurred during the specified reporting time. But low agreement when the measure is frequency of assault. Agreement tents to be low for frequency of occurring for other frequently occurring behaviors as psychological aggression. Derrick used a daily diary method to study psychological aggression and found that self reports of verbal aggression perpetration were the best predictor of short-term consequences. The procedure used by Straus takes that into account. It basses the DCTs on cross classifying the self-report of each partner.

**DCTs Categories Lack Measurement Precision**

DCTs are an example of the trade-off between measurement precision and practical utility that occurs when “clinical cut-points” are used. For statistical analysis, continuous variables are generally advantageous. However, for clinical and policy decisions, cut-points above and below which different actions are taken are generally necessary. Fortunately, the cut-points can often be chosen to reflect clinically or theoretically important criteria. For example, as previously mentioned, to create DCT for depression, the clinical cut point of an established depression measure can be used. Of if there is data on the relation to an important outcome such
as the relation of psychological aggression to assault such as that reported by Salis, Salwen, & O'Leary, (2014), it can be plotted to identify an inflection point to use to form the categories.

**DCTs For Parent-Child Relationships Do Not Take Into Account Gender Of The Parent**

Gender of the parent is probably just as important in understanding parent-child relationships as it is to understand couple relationships. However, the examples up to this point were for Father-Child or Mother-Child. That was to keep the primary focus on the three basic CTS and avoid complications.

The basic DCTs can be created DCTs for the father-child and also for the mother child dyad. This results in two four-category DCTs. Take the example of trusting the other. There could be a DCT for Father-only Trusts, Child-Only, and Both trust the other, and the same for trust between mother and child. Each would be interesting and important to analyze by themselves. They can also be statistically compared by a cross-tabulation of the two DCTs. The different effects of each combination of a Father and a Mother DCT can be investigated by conduct a 4 by 4 analysis of covariance, specifying the interaction of the two DCTs. The results will be complicated to understand, but families are complicated, and DCTs need to go as far as practical to take those complications into account.

**Many Instruments Do Not Provide Dyadic Data.** When this is the case for an measure of needed for dyadic research, the instrument can often be modified to present the items in pairs, first asking for what the study participant did and then for which the partner or the child did. However, if the instrument is long, that may result in an impractical length testing time. For example, the Personal And Relationships Profile (Murray A. Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 2010; Murray A. Straus & Mouradian, 1999), has 8 questions to measures each of 26 risk factors for partner violence. It takes 35 minutes to complete. If the questions are repeated for each partner, it would result in 70 minutes, which may be possible in some clinical situations but is too long for most research. A dyadic short form with 3 questions per risk factor would result in a 26 minute test that would be more usable if it is sufficiently correlated with the longer form. Research to determine that is in progress.

**WHAT EXPLAINS THE PREDOMINANCE BOTH?**

Regardless of whether the behavior that is the focus of a DCT is prosocial or antisocial, study after study in many nations, and using data reported by both men and women, has shown that the largest percent of couples are in the Both DCT. This even applies to behavior applies to behaviors that statistically and culturally much more characteristic of men than women such as physical assault. This was shown in Figure 1 for physical violence in the marriages of participants in the World Mental Health Study. Predominance of Both has been found to found by sexual coercion studies in several nations (Costa et al., 2014; Hou, Yu, Ting, Sze, & Fang, 2011; Michel-Smith & Straus, 2014 ; Murray A. Straus & Douglas, 2004). Because these results contradict prevailing beliefs, and because they seem to be inconsistent with some key statistical data such as police statistics from many nations and the US National Crime Victimization Survey, explanations need to be considered. Below are some of many possible explanations.

**Self-Defense.** No doubt some of the assaults by the women in this and the over 200 other studies which found that about the same percent of Male-Only as Female-Only victims (Archer, 2000; Fiebert, 2004; Hines & Douglas, 2010; Murray A. Straus, 1999; Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989) were acts of self-defense. However, that is unlikely to apply to sexual coercion or the many couples in the Female-Only DCT, and is also not supported by a review of 17 studies (Murray A. Straus, 2012).
Assortative Pairing. The tendency to select martial partners with similar characteristics such as education, religion, and race, is well documented. There is also considerable evidence of assortative mating based on socially undesirable characteristics such aggressiveness and criminal propensity (Boutwell et al., 2012; Kim & Capaldi, 2004; Krueger, Moffitt, Caspi, Bleske, & Silva, 1998). These almost inherent characteristics of dyads often override cultural norms specifying gender roles.

Fundamental Aspects of Dyadic Behavior. Partner violence is a dyadic relationship and is subject to aspects of behavior that tend to characterize all dyadic relationships. Five that will be mentioned here are: Reciprocity. Behavior in relationship tends to be characterized by reciprocity: generosity begets generosity and aggression begets aggression. Escalation. Reciprocity is one basis for escalation, i.e., even more generosity and even more aggression in response. Modeling. Each member of a dyad enacts behavior that provide a script for the behavior of the other member. Exposure to similar risk and protective factors. This is especially likely in the case of marital dyads who live in the same neighborhood including violent neighborhoods (Winstok & Straus, 2011) and share many life experiences including stressors such as unemployment.

CONCLUSION

The call for papers in this special topic issue of Journal of Family Theory & Review sought articles that move away from looking at the average response or outcome of various changes and transitions and spend more time studying the variations, the outliers, the contradictions.” Dyadic Concordance Types enable a focuses on variations, outliers, and contradictions. Moreover, they offer a practical way of doing so. DCTs, are now new, but they are also innovative because until recently they have largely been ignored.

DCTs provide information on an aspect of family relationships (concordance and discordance) that is both important and applicable to almost any behavior or characteristic of the family members, including both pro-social and anti-social behavior. They are created by using theoretically neutral observation units and therefore applicable to research with many different theoretical frameworks. DCTs are easily identified, usually by a simple cross-classification.

Dyadic Concordance Types can make an important contribution to many aspects of family scholarship and practice. It may not be too much to suggest that identifying the DCTs of the cases in a study or intervention should be a default first step in almost all family research and intervention. It has the potential for improving research designs to take into account the dyadic nature of family behavior, stimulating development or improving theories to explain the causes or effects of different family patterns, and enhancing services to help families because DCTs direct attention to a fundamental but often overlooked characteristic of families.
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