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# Differences in Frequency and Severity of Violence For Intimate Terrorism Across Genders: A Test of Johnson's Theory

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Differences in Frequency and Severity of Violence For Intimate Terrorism Across  
Genders: A Test of Johnson's Theory

by

Shelly Wagers

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Department of Criminology  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of South Florida

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## Dedication

To my best friend and partner Frieda Widera whose time and energy was given to me freely in support of this work and whose life's passion is also reflected among these pages. This work is also dedicated to my family and friends who have always believed in me, no matter what I chose to pursue. I could not have completed this project without their unending love and support. I also want to especially acknowledge my grandmother, Rosemarie who always wanted to hear what I had to say. I wish you were here to share in the completion of this project.

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# Difference in Frequency and Severity of Intimate Terrorism Across Genders: A Test of Johnson's Theory

Shelly Wagers

## ABSTRACT

This study sought to further build on previous empirical findings regarding Johnson's theory that the gender symmetry debate can at least be partially resolved by acknowledging that two distinct subgroups of physical violence exist within intimate partner violence: Intimate Terrorism (IT) and Situational Couple Violence (SCV). According to Johnson's predictions these separate groups can be distinguished by the use of non-violent control tactics. This study focused on testing the ability of non-violent control tactics to predict the frequency and severity of violence within the sub-group intimate terrorism. It further explored Johnson's assertion that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetric with females experiencing a greater amount of victimization. Previous studies demonstrated moderate support that two subgroups do exist within intimate partner violence and that intimate terrorism may be asymmetrical. However, only one of the previous studies included a male sample that was not reflective of the general population. This study will test the gender asymmetry of intimate terrorism by using both a male and female sub-sample from the National Violence Against Women Survey. This study's sample consisted of males and females reporting at least one incident of physical violence by either their current spouse or cohabitating heterosexual partner. The statistical analysis showed moderate support that there are two subgroups within intimate partner violence that can be distinguished by the use of non-violent control



tactics. It also demonstrated that for the subgroup intimate terrorism there are some differences across gender when examining severity and frequency of violence. However, only a small amount of the variance in intimate terrorism can be explained by non-violent control tactics.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Over the past thirty years intimate partner violence has emerged as one of the world's most pressing problems. The United Nations has estimated that between 20% and 50% of all women worldwide have experienced some form of physical violence at the hands of their intimate partner or other family members (Kimmel, 2002). According to the U.S. Department of Justice, more than one million cases of intimate partner violence are reported to police each year (see Goldberg, 1999). The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services stated that understanding and preventing intimate partner violence has become a national public health issue and listed injury and violence as one of the ten major national health issues (Goldberg, 1999). For the past two decades, efforts to reduce the prevalence and incidence rates of intimate partner violence have followed the findings from various empirical studies. For example, new laws and police procedures were established, refuges (Domestic Violence Shelters) for victims were created, and therapy groups for perpetrators were started, all of which had the same goal or objective of reducing the incidence rates for intimate partner violence. However, the incidence rates along with the domestic homicide rates are still high, not only in this country but throughout the world. A person may wonder how this is possible when so much has been learned and accomplished over the past thirty years to prevent intimate partner violence. The answer may be in part because, in the process of working towards

understanding and reducing intimate partner violence, a great debate among groups has erupted regarding the nature of intimate partner violence, especially regarding the gender of its perpetrators and victims (Kimmel, 2002; Pleck, Pleck, Grossman, & Bart, 1978; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998).

Intimate partner violence as an issue was first brought to the attention of the public by feminist activists in the early 1970's. Although numerous studies report that the preponderance of intimate partner violence is perpetrated by men against women, a growing number of researchers and political activists claim that women and men are equally victimized (Archer, 2000). As a result, activists for "men's rights" have suggested that policy efforts regarding this issue have been misplaced because of their failure to include male victims (Kimmel, 2002). These groups argue that intimate partner violence is gender symmetric, which is a direct contradiction to the argument of the feminists, who state that women are disproportionately victimized (gender asymmetry). Feminist activists believe that although these "men's rights" groups help to draw attention to the often ignored problem of male victimization and female perpetration of violence, their efforts often undermine initiatives that assist female victims (Kimmel, 2002).

In multiple scholarly publications across many disciplines, the empirical findings consistently demonstrate high incidence rates of intimate partner violence and conclude that this is a major issue that needs to be studied and addressed (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Gelles, 2000; Straus 1993, 1999; Saltzman, 2004; Tjaden & Thonnes, 2000). However, there are also great discrepancies in the literature regarding how each gender is affected, and there are no clear agreements about its magnitude for either sex (Johnson, 1995;

Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Kimmel, 2002; Kurz, 1989). Empirical studies that are grounded in feminist theory consistently indicate that males are much more likely to be perpetrators and females are disproportionately victims of intimate partner violence compared to men (gender asymmetry). On the other hand, research grounded in family conflict theory has consistently shown an equal perpetration and victimization of intimate partner violence by males and females (Archer, 2000; Johnson, 1995). This discrepancy between gender symmetry and gender asymmetry has led to significant confusion among the general public and policy makers. It has also become an increasingly controversial issue among scholars and at times it even overshadows discussions about the prevention of intimate partner violence (Saltzman, 2004).

Over the past decade several reasonable explanations and possible solutions to the debate have been proposed. For example, a key to measuring any phenomenon is a standard definition. Empirical studies on intimate partner violence vary greatly in their definition, which causes differences in how it is being measured (Saltzman, 2004). To resolve this discrepancy, in 1994, the Centers for Disease Control created a uniform definition for intimate partner violence (Saltzman, et al. 1999). A second explanation for the differences in research findings is that various types of methodological approaches are used. For example, the feminist and family conflict theorists tend to sample from different types of populations, and the theoretical framework of their surveys vary. Feminist researchers repeatedly use small samples from places such as domestic violence shelters or hospital emergency rooms, and generally employ qualitative interviews to obtain detailed information on the context and motivation of the violent act. On the other hand, family conflict theorists typically use large random samples of the general

population and often employ large scale surveys which simply count the number of violent acts without accounting for context or motivation of the violent act (Johnson, 1995).

Yet, even with these plausible explanations, the debate still continues today. Due to current complexities, challenges, and continually high prevalence rates it is becoming increasingly imperative to stop arguing about gender symmetry or gender asymmetry and begin to propose possible solutions to the debate. The process of resolving this debate has been compared to solving a puzzle (Dobash & Dobash, 2004). Recently, Johnson took several of the “puzzle pieces,” such as varying definitions, sampling techniques, and the use of differing methodologies, and proposed a possible solution to the puzzle. He wove these “puzzle” pieces together as two different pictures or explanations rather than one. In other words, he proposed that within intimate partner violence there are actually two distinct types of violence occurring. He further theorized that these types of violence are clearly two different phenomena, and the discrepancies in the research are a result of measuring them as a single phenomenon.

According to Johnson, feminist researchers have been tapping into a phenomenon he refers to as “intimate terrorism,” and the family conflict theorists have been measuring the phenomenon he calls “situational couple violence.” The key to distinguishing these two types of intimate partner violence is the context and motivation behind the violent act. In intimate terrorism, the perpetrator uses physical violence as a motive to maintain a “control context” over the victim and the relationship in general. In this case the physical violence used is only one type of control method exerted by the perpetrator. In situational couple violence, the physically violent act is not motivated by a context of

control but is a reaction to a current conflict. Johnson states that the gender symmetry versus gender asymmetry debate can be answered by this theory. He proposes that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetric, with females experiencing disproportionate victimization compared to males, and situational couple violence displays gender symmetry. Based on this theoretical framework Johnson provided several hypotheses that could be tested empirically. For example, he proposed that the frequency and severity of physical violence would be greater with intimate terrorism when compared to situational couple violence.

The initial studies conducted regarding this theory were focused on first establishing the major tenet that intimate partner violence can be divided into two distinct groups based on the perpetrator's "control motive". To conceptualize and operationalize the "control motive" in intimate terrorism, Johnson referred to over 30 years of social and feminist research (Johnson, 1995). He specifically uses their definitions of "battering" or "batterer" to conceptualize his definition of intimate terrorism. Feminists define battering as a pattern of coercive behavior that serves to gain power and control over another individual. Johnson states that his conceptualization of an intimate terrorist is consistent with the feminist concept of a "batterer" (Johnson, in press). In order to operationalize a measurement for the "control motive," he references the work of Pence and Paymer (1993) and their development of the Power and Control Wheel. The Power and Control Wheel has become the most commonly accepted and widely used model for "batterer" treatment programs, and its concepts are consistently used by advocates to discuss the dynamics of intimate partner violence. This model identifies eight areas used by a "batterer" to control an intimate partner. Then it demonstrates the use of physical

violence as the circle that surrounds or holds all these areas together. Johnson was able to show that individuals who used physical violence on their intimate partner could be divided into two groups based on having either a high or low “non-violent control motive.” Once he divided the two groups by their high or low “control motive,” he compared the frequency and severity of violence between the groups. He found that those with high non-violent control had a higher mean frequency of physical violence against their intimate partner compared to those with low non-violent control (Johnson, 1999; Johnson & Leone, 2005).

Although the few studies conducted thus far show support for the major tenet of Johnson’s theory that there may be two distinct groups within intimate partner violence, much still needs to be done. Previous studies have compared the mean frequency and mean severity for the two groups of intimate partner violence differentiated by being either “high” or “low” non-violent control. However, this technique can only indicate *whether or not* the non-violent control variable can distinguish between intimate terrorism and situational couple violence in their frequency and severity of violence. Instead, by using a predictive statistical model rather than a simple comparison between groups, it is possible to build upon and strengthen the previous findings in two ways. First, a predictive model allows the researcher to control for other variables that may also affect the frequency and severity of intimate partner violence. Second, it can tell the researcher how much of the variance in frequency and severity of violence can be explained by non-violent control tactics. The present study proposes to utilize a predictive rather than a comparison model that will be able to demonstrate how much of the variance in frequency and severity of violence is explained by the non-violent control

variable. At the same time, it will control for the following variables: age, race, employment status, educational level, and length of time together. Controlling for these variables is an important addition to Johnson's previous studies because each one is identified in various empirical studies as having an effect on incidence rates of intimate partner violence.

One weakness in tests of Johnson's theory stems from Johnson's assertion that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetric, with females disproportionately experiencing victimization. Johnson's previous studies failed to truly test this hypothesis because he failed to include male participants in his sample. In fact, males were only included in one study conducted by Graham-Kevan & Archer (2003), and the male population used included traditional age college students and inmates, which is not truly reflective of the general population (Archer, 2000). In order to test Johnson's notion that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetric, both female and male samples reflective of the general population must be included in the study. Then it is possible to make an objective comparison of the male and female sample for each hypothesis tested and from there draw some conclusions regarding gender asymmetry or symmetry.

This study will focus on building upon Johnson's previous empirical findings regarding the non-violent control variable's ability to distinguish intimate terrorism and situational couple violence by accounting for how much of the variance in frequency and severity of violence can be explained by use of non-violent control tactics. Then, it will address Johnson's assertion that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetric by comparing the results of the analysis for female and male victims of intimate partner violence. The next chapter will provide review of the literature and a detailed description of Johnson's



complete theory. Chapter three will review the methods employed to test each hypothesis and how the sample was selected. Chapter four will provide the results from the analysis conducted. Chapter five will discuss the implications of the study for our understanding of the gendered nature of intimate partner violence, identify the study's limitations, and provide recommendations for future research.

## Chapter Two

### Understanding the Gendered Nature of Intimate Partner Violence

#### *History of The Intimate Partner Violence Movement and Research*

One of the most emotionally and politically charged topics in the social sciences today is the issue of physical and sexual abuse of women by their intimate partner (Yllo, 1988). Historically, this phenomenon was called "domestic violence" and it was not considered a social issue until about thirty years ago. However, today the term "domestic violence" is often interchanged with the phrase "intimate partner violence" (IPV), and it has become common to read newspaper articles and see television programs discussing it.

The issue of intimate partner violence was first brought to the public's awareness in the early 1970's as a result of the women's movement. Initially, the problem was not studied by researchers (Dutton & Gondolf, 2000). Instead, this phenomenon was first identified by feminist activists at the grass-roots level, who were speaking out about the violence women were experiencing at the hands of their husbands. Their initial focus was on how to keep victims of intimate partner violence safe. Their work started by establishing underground refuges that evolved into 24-hour "domestic violence" centers (Dobash & Dobash, 1988). It was not until the mid-1970's that scholars began conducting empirical research to scientifically study intimate partner violence. Then in the late 1970's into the 1980's, an explosion of research articles began to appear in

scientific journals. These articles not only studied the prevalence of intimate partner violence, but also tried to explain the causes (Bograd, 1988). As the intimate partner violence research has grown, so have divisions between the scholars who study this phenomenon. The current conceptions of intimate partner violence have developed as a result of the convergence of two traditions: the advocacy movement and the social and behavioral research on intimate partner violence (Gordon, 2000). In order to better understand intimate partner violence one must first appreciate the history of the "domestic violence" movement, and then examine the empirical studies related to it.

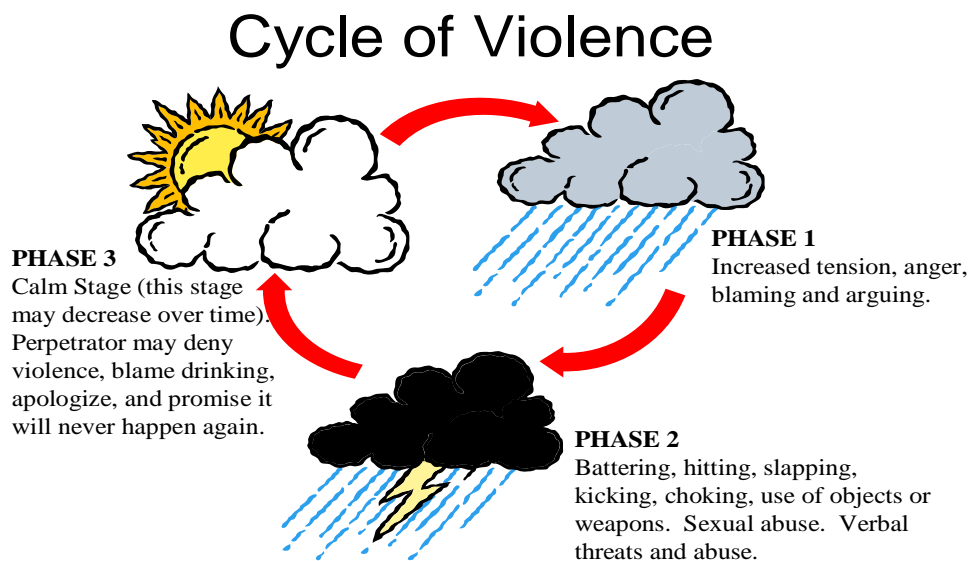
The domestic violence movement began in 1971 when a small group of women in England were working to put into practice the principles of the women's movement (Dobash & Dobash, 1988). They decided to set up community meetings and an advice center for women. As these women began to talk, they discovered many were experiencing brutal and habitual attacks by their husband or co-habitants. Soon, the locations for these meetings became 24-hour safe refuges for the women and the concept of a "domestic violence shelter" began (Dobash & Dobash, 1988). Shortly after this quiet beginning, the social problem of intimate partner violence came to the attention of the British public and European scholars. In Europe, Dobash and Dobash began scientifically studying intimate partner violence from the feminist perspective (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Then in the mid to late 1970's, advocates and scholars in the United States also began to investigate intimate partner violence. Lenore Walker began conducting interviews with "battered women" across America and, based on her findings, published a book titled The Battered Woman (Walker, 1979). Walker's book became a significant source of knowledge for advocates in the intimate partner violence field and

established the theory of the cycle of violence (Walker, 1979). The cycle of violence (see Figure 1) consists of three distinct phases that continually move in an unbroken circle. The amount of time between phases or to complete the cycle is not exact and varies among individuals. Phase one is characterized by tension building and can include arguing, blaming, and anger. It can last for a short or long period of time before phase two begins. Phase two is often called the explosion phase and it is when the physical violence or verbal threats of violence occur. This phase is usually over quickly and is episodic. Then phase three begins, which is sometimes referred to as either the honeymoon phase or the calm stage because it is characterized by the offender showing remorse and apologizing for the violence. The concepts Walker developed and the cycle of violence are still used today by trained clinicians, social workers, and counselors as a basis for understanding the “dynamics” of intimate partner violence.

At the same time feminist advocates were promoting societal recognition and criminalization of intimate partner violence, researchers began extending intimate partner violence into the criminological and family studies literature (Dobash & Dobash, 1988; McNeely & Jones, 1980; Yllo, 1988). Although both researchers and advocates were working towards accomplishing the same goal of ending violence against women, they did not all approach this phenomenon from a feminist perspective (Yllo, 1988). In fact, within the intimate partner violence literature one can find great divisions of thought, a variety of theories, and countless numbers of empirical studies. For example, some social scientists (Kaufman & Zeigler, 1993; Dutton, 1980; 1988; 1995) have applied the concepts of social learning theory to explain intimate partner violence. In the beginning, social learning seemed to offer some promise for the explanation of intimate partner

violence. It was able to make predictions regarding the likelihood that a child who witnessed parental violence would later become an abusive spouse. Later, however, these predictions were only partially confirmed and yielded mixed results (Dutton, 1980, 1988, 1995; O’Leary, 1988; Kalmuss, 1984). For example, Kaufman and Zigler’s (1993) study showed that only 18% of children who witnessed parental violence exhibited spousal aggression as adults. Despite mixed results, Ganley (1981) was able to develop a treatment model based on social learning theory for court-mandated perpetrators that is still used today. Due to these various findings, many researchers still believe that even though social learning cannot explain all violence, it is still an important factor in understanding intimate partner violence (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Straus, 1991).

**Figure 1: The Cycle of Violence**



From “Dynamics of Domestic Violence” by F. A. Widera, 2002, Instructors Manuel p.43 Copyright 2002 by the Florida Regional Community Policing Institute. Adapted with permission from the author.

Another prominent area of research in intimate partner violence is to study the personality characteristics and psychopathology of perpetrators. This explanation of intimate partner violence suggests that violent individuals may have a personality disorder, violence is not a normal occurrence, and the perpetrators are "sick" (Pagelow, 1984). Researchers who focus in this area have found evidence to support the theory that perpetrators of intimate partner violence may have distinct types of personality disorders such as narcissistic/antisocial, avoidant/dependent, and severe pathology (Gondolf, 1997; Hamberger & Hasting, 1986; Saunders, 1992). These empirical studies also suggest that violent men have a higher level of depression, lower self-esteem, and a greater need for power compared to men who do not engage in intimate partner violence (Dutton & Strachan, 1987; Julian & Mcknery, 1993; Vivian & Malone, 1997). Based on these findings Dutton and other researchers theorize that these characteristics, such as borderline personality organization, may interact with learned behavior, resulting in anger and violence (Dutton & Starzomski, 1993; Gondolf, 1990).

Although the social learning and psychopathology research findings have contributed greatly to our understanding of intimate partner violence, the majority of empirical studies and their results can be classified into one of two larger perspectives: the feminist or the family conflict model. Approximately thirty years ago, a major disagreement among scholars from these two perspectives regarding the nature of intimate partner violence began. This dispute is referred to as the gender symmetry versus gender asymmetry debate (Johnson, 1995; Kimmel, 2002) and can be traced back to the late 1970s.

### *Understanding the Causes of the Gender Symmetry Debate*

The debate began when Suzanne Steinmetz published a paper titled “The Battered Husband Syndrome”. Based on data collected from the National Family Violence Survey (NFVS), Steinmetz (1977-1978) reported that women were as violent as men. She went on to propose that there was a problem of "husband battering" equivalent to the prevalence and seriousness of wife battering (Steinmetz, 1977-1978). At the same time, Straus and Gelles (1979) published their findings from the NFVS which supported Steinmetz’s claim that intimate partner violence was gender symmetrical. This conclusion directly contradicted what the feminists had found in their scholarly work, which was that females were disproportionately victims of intimate partner violence compared to males (gender asymmetry) (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). Feminists feared that Steinmetz’s study could adversely impact the "domestic violence" advocacy movement and could put women's lives in danger (McNeely & Jones, 1980). They accused Steinmetz of using bad data and claimed that her study did not accurately measure intimate partner violence (Pleck, Pleck, Grossman, & Bart, 1977-1978). This debate regarding gender symmetry versus gender asymmetry continued through the 1990’s. It also prompted an explosion of empirical studies in the intimate partner violence literature that continues today. Unfortunately, throughout most of the 1980’s and the 1990’s the studies focused more on each side trying to support their perspective rather than objectively understanding and measuring intimate partner violence. For example, McNeely & Jones (1987) asserted that men were just as victimized as women; Saunders (1988) retorted in response that most women’s use of violence was in self-defense.

This scholarly debate is an issue because it involves the two major groups of sociologists/criminologists who study intimate partner violence, and whose empirical findings have serious implications for policy and intervention (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). For example, feminist advocates of intimate partner violence have used their findings to change the legal system by criminalizing intimate partner violence and instituting mandatory arrest policies (Dasgupta, 2002). On the other hand, men's rights groups, such as the Men's Defense Association, use the findings from family conflict studies to defend their belief that "widespread bias exists against men" and based on this discrimination request funding for women's domestic violence centers to be stopped (Saunders, 2002). The most interesting and perhaps most perplexing part of this debate is that both sides have marshaled large amounts of data from empirical studies consisting of large-scale surveys to support their differing perspectives (Archer, 2000; Kimmel, 2002).

The feminists rely on the National Crime Victimization (NCV) studies, which are gathered from a variety of sources, as well as clinical studies to defend their argument of gender asymmetry (Kimmel, 2002). The NCV studies consist of the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAW) and the National Crime Victimization Survey (Archer, 2000). Both of these surveys are conducted by government agencies, consist of randomized samplings of households, and uniformly find dramatic gender asymmetry for incidents of intimate partner violence (for a summary see DeKeseredy, 2000; Gelles, 2000; Straus, 1999). These victim surveys provide important statistics that describe the prevalence of intimate partner violence in general, and specifically that women are disproportionately victimized compared to men. For example, we know that female



victims are more likely than male victims to be killed by an intimate partner, suffer more severe injuries, are victims of violence more often, seek more emergency room assistance, and seek injunctions for protection more often than males (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Nazroo, 1995; Osthoff, 2002). However, victim surveys do not measure or examine whether gender roles and patriarchy are responsible for the asymmetry. Instead, most of the insight that has been gained on gender roles and patriarchy come from in-depth studies that have been conducted on clinical samples (Kurz, 1989). For example, many of the clinical studies show that battering occurs when husbands are trying to get their wives to comply with their wishes; over the course of time, batterers increasingly use intimidation and isolation to control their wives. Batterers believe their use of violence is justified by their wives' behavior, and due to limited economic means women are more likely to either stay or return to an abusive partner (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Pagelow, 1981; Strube, 1988; Brush, 1990; Langen & Innes, 1986, Morse, 1995).

On the other side of the debate, the family violence perspective researchers have found gender symmetry within rates of intimate partner violence. The most prominent of these researchers are Straus and Gelles, and they support their argument with two landmark studies conducted in the 1970's and a follow up in 1985 (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980; Straus & Gelles, 1990), along with more than a hundred other empirical studies. A majority of these studies have found evidence to suggest that females perpetrate a "violent" act toward their male partner at the same rate or frequency that males perpetrate a "violent" act towards their female partner (Archer 2000; Fiebert & Gonzalez, 1997). Straus and Gelles' landmark studies employed a large scale survey design gathering data from over 8,000 families, and in both, they measured the rate of

IPV by using the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS). The results of these studies are in direct contradiction to the findings from the feminist perspective and raise troubling questions (Kimmel, 2002). The feminists argue that although the CTS is the most widely used and accepted scale for studying IPV when employing a large scale survey, it is also flawed (Archer, 1999; Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Osthoff, 2002; Worcester, 2002). When Straus developed the CTS (1979), it scored high for reliability and validity, but by design it does not measure the context or motivation for the violent act. According to feminist scholars, since the CTS simply “counts” acts of violence in absence of context and motivation, it cannot reliably measure intimate partner violence. For example, while evidence from feminist research often suggests that the majority of women’s violence is a result of self-defense, the CTS will show only that these women are violent. According to feminist research these women would inappropriately be considered violent by the CTS when in fact they are also a victim (Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, Daly, 1992; Osthoff, 2002; Saunders, 2002).

It is obvious that there is an abundant amount of contradictory information in the intimate partner violence literature which supports both sides of the gender symmetry versus gender asymmetry debate. So the question still remains: How is it possible that even with the rigorous scientific research methods employed by both sides, the gender symmetry versus gender asymmetry debate still persists (Saunders, 2002)? A recent article (Dobash & Dobash, 2004) stated that understanding the intimate partner violence literature and reconciling the disparities is like solving a puzzle. In order to find the solution to the puzzle, researchers must start by “focusing on concept formation, definitions, forms of measurement, context, consequences, and approaches to claims

making to better understand how researchers have arrived at such apparently contradictory findings and claims” (Dobash & Dobash, 2004, p.324). The first step in “solving this puzzle” is to understand how each perspective has approached, defined, and conceptualized intimate partner violence.

The feminist perspective, which grew out of the domestic violence advocacy movement, examines intimate partner violence on a broad social level. It focuses on the concept of patriarchy and the societal institutions that help to maintain patriarchy (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). The feminist scholars believe that intimate partner violence can be explained by answering the general question "Why do men beat their wives?" instead of asking, "Why did this individual beat his wife?" (Bograd, 1988). The feminists define intimate partner violence as a pattern that can only be understood by examining the social context, which includes the structure of relationships in a patriarchal society and the imbalance of power and control (Jasinski, 2001). The feminists also believe it is important to examine contributing factors to intimate partner violence, such as the socialization practices of teaching gender specific rules and the historically male dominated social structure (Smith, 1990; Yllo & Straus, 1990). According to some feminist researchers, these contributing factors and patriarchy are maintained through traditional marriage (Martin, 1976; Pagelow, 1984). As a result, women occupy a subordinate position in the societal structure, and violence has become the most overt and active method used to maintain social control or men's power over women (Bograd, 1988).

The family conflict perspective grew out of the family conflict scholar’s work and is generally traced back to the efforts of Straus (1971) and Gelles (1974). Their primary

interest was to study a variety of family conflict issues and how these conflicts are resolved (Johnson, 1995). In the early 1970's, Straus and Gelles began working together with the primary theoretical focus of examining commonalities among forms of family violence and the surprising frequency of violence (Yllo, 1988; Straus, 1979). This perspective is considered to be more general than the feminist perspective. It advocates that intimate partner violence is a common occurrence that happens within the family by both spouses, rather than an issue of violence against women (Jasinski, 2001). Family conflict theorists do not discount the feminist notion of patriarchy but they believe this focus is too narrow and that violence affects all family relationships (Gordon, 2000; Straus, 1999). Family conflict theorists believe that the origin of violence is the nature of the family structure rather than patriarchy (Straus & Gelles, 1990). Straus argues for example, that violence is legitimized within families by the use of corporal punishment, and it is an accepted resolution to family conflicts (Jasinski, 2001).

Since the feminist and family conflict theorists differ in their basic theoretical perspectives on intimate partner violence, their definitions for the purpose of measurement also differ. This is an important puzzle piece to understand because “the most basic issue in measuring any phenomenon is how we define it” (Desai & Saltzman, 2001). The feminist scholars define violence broadly as any act that is harmful to the victim; alternatively, the family conflict theorists define violence narrowly and focus on only physical acts that could cause harm (Gelles, 2000). For example, when feminist scholars define violence as any harmful act, they will consider not only physical harm, but also emotional consequences of physical violence, such as depression, and measure the severity of the harm. On the other hand, family conflict researchers like Straus

(1979) define violence as any act that had the intention of harming the other person.

However, family conflict theorists only include and simply count physical acts that could cause physical injury and they do not measure the severity of the injury or include measurements for emotional consequences.

As a result of their opposing definitions, the feminist perspective and family conflict perspective also differ on their conceptualization of intimate partner violence. Family conflict researchers conceptualize intimate partner violence as individual acts of physical violence that occur within a family when a conflict gets “out of hand” (Gordon, 2000; Johnson, 1995; Straus & Smith, 1990). Each incident of violence occurs in isolation, is a result of the immediate conflict, and is not connected to a need to control another person. This type of violence usually leads to “minor” forms of violence, rarely escalating into severe or life threatening forms of violence (Straus & Smith, 1990). On the other hand, most feminist scholars conceptualize intimate partner violence as an array of behaviors that include physical acts, psychological abuse, verbal attacks, and sexual violence that are not episodic, but actually part of a pattern of behavior (Gordon, 2000). The most common conceptualization of intimate partner violence used by the feminist researchers was explained by Pence and Paymer (1993) as "a pattern of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse; coercion, and violence with the intent to dominate and control" (Pence & Paymer, 1993). They further stated that "violence is used to control people's behavior.... the intention of the batterer is to gain control over their partner's actions, thoughts, and feelings" (Pence & Paymer, 1999, 3, pp.1-2). Their research was significant because it established the concept that intimate partner violence involved “battering”, which was an ongoing pattern of violence that incorporates the use of both

emotional and physical abuse motivated by the need to control another person. Pence and Paymer (1993) presented their definition in a visual picture which has become known as the “Duluth Model” or the “Power and Control Wheel.”

**Figure 2: Power and Control Wheel**



From “A Guide for Conducting Domestic Violence Assessments” by Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, 2002, appendix C-1. Copyright 2002 by Domestic Abuse Intervention Project. Reprinted with permission of the editors.

The Power and Control Wheel (see Figure 2) consists of eight nonviolent control tactics that are like spokes on a wheel, which are held together by physical violence. The eight areas of the Wheel are: economic abuse, emotional abuse, coercion and threats, intimidation, using male privilege (patriarchy), using children, minimizing, denying and blaming, and isolation (Pence & Paymer, 1993). A “batterer” (commonly used term for an offender of intimate partner violence) is motivated by his desire to have power over another, and uses a variety of techniques from each of the eight areas to maintain control. The wheel conceptualizes physical violence as the overriding control factor used to hold the other eight areas together. The Duluth model is important because it provides a clear understanding of the “dynamics” of intimate partner violence and it is the most commonly used model today when assisting victims, treating batterers, and educating the public.

#### *A Proposed Answer to Reconcile the Gender Symmetry Debate*

These different approaches, definitions, and conceptualizations are what drives how each perspective operationalizes and measures intimate partner violence, which then determines the type of research methods employed for a particular empirical study. The vastly different sampling methods used also helps to explain why the findings among these perspectives are so contradictory. In the intimate partner violence literature, one will find the following sources of data: clinical, official report data, and social surveys (Gelles, 2000). Since the feminists conceptualize intimate partner violence broadly and believe it is a result of a societal and cultural system of male dominance and patriarchy, they employ methodologies that encapsulate a broad range of psychological and physical harm that is used to control women (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996). To obtain this type of data,

the feminists tend to conduct empirical studies that use clinical or agency samples primarily obtained from “battered women’s shelters” and emergency room patients (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Giles-Sims, 1983; Pagelow, 1981). The clinical and agency samples allow for the researchers to conduct in-depth interviews and gather detailed data that include measuring the context and motivation of the violent incident. For example, several researchers have found that women who use physical force against their intimate partner are actually battered women striking out to stop attacks or escape attacks (Dasgupta, 1999; Dobash & Dobash, 1979, 1992; Hamberger, 1997; Saunders, 1988). Although these data are an important and necessary piece for understanding intimate partner violence and assessing the impact of intervention programs, it is generally qualitative in nature and cannot be generalized to the population (Kimmel, 2002). On the other hand, the family conflict theorists’ primary methodological concerns are with generating reliable measures of the incidents of violent acts; they are less concerned with the context or motivation in which these acts occur (Dobash & Dobash, 2004). As result, family conflict theorists overwhelmingly use large-scale social surveys of random samples.

Johnson has argued that these differences in sampling methods and the differences in how violence is being measured by each perspective can explain why feminist and family conflict research findings are so contradictory. Johnson proposed that the gender symmetry versus gender asymmetry debate is a result of measuring two distinct types of intimate partner violence as if they are the same phenomenon. When Johnson compared the feminist (Johnson calls “shelter”) and family conflict (Johnson calls “survey”) empirical studies he found several key issues that could explain the cause



of the symmetry debate (Johnson, 1995). The first issue is that both types of sampling methods employed by the two perspectives are biased in their own way, causing them to produce two distinct sets of evidence that only contain one of two types of intimate partner violence (Johnson, 1995). He proposed that “survey” samples and “shelter” samples reach different segments of the population, which deal with nearly non-overlapping phenomena (Johnson, 1995). In effect, neither methodology is misrepresenting the “true” nature of intimate partner violence but is actually measuring different types of intimate partner violence (Johnson, 1995). Next, Johnson supported his theory that two distinct types of violence are present among intimate partners by establishing the striking differences found between the feminist studies and the family conflict theorist studies. For example, the feminist research consistently showed a higher per couple frequency of physical violence and greater escalation of physical violence, as compared to the family conflict research (Johnson, 1995). Based on these observations in the literature Johnson went on to define and conceptualize two distinct categories of intimate partner violence: intimate terrorism and situational couple violence.

Johnson argues that intimate terrorism is the type of violence that feminist researchers are tapping into and situational couple violence is the type that family conflict theorists are measuring. The defining feature that separates intimate terrorism from situational couple violence is the perpetrator’s motivation behind the violence (Johnson, 2001). In intimate terrorism an individual’s use of violence is embedded in a general context or motivation to control their intimate partner, not only temporarily but throughout the entire relationship (Johnson, 2001). On the other hand, situational couple violence does not involve an attempt by either partner to gain general control over the

relationship. Instead it erupts situationally when tensions or emotions of a particular conflict lead to someone reacting with a physically violent act (Johnson, in press). The distinction is that although both typologies can involve control, situational couple violence is not embedded in an overall motive to control the relationship, but to win the current conflict (Johnson, 1999). Johnson advises that the key to distinguishing intimate terrorism from situational couple violence in empirical studies is to test if there is a general motive to control the victim embedded within the relationship. This is done by moving the focus from the nature of one violent encounter to search for patterns of non-violent controlling behaviors in the relationship as a whole. In doing so it is important to understand that the difference between intimate terrorism and situational couple violence is not in the nature of the violent act; the true distinction lies in the degree of control present (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000)

Since the key feature that distinguishes intimate terrorism from situational couple violence is the “control” motive of the perpetrator it is important to understand how Johnson conceptualizes and operationalizes the control context. Since intimate terrorism is the type of violence that feminists have been studying for thirty years, Johnson uses their findings to define, conceptualize, and operationalize the control motive. In order to develop a variable that can measure the non-violent control motive Johnson refers to the “Duluth Model” and the Power and Control Wheel. Johnson’s definition of intimate terrorism is reflective of how Pence and Paymer defined “battering,” and he conceptualizes the nonviolent control motive as a reflection of the eight areas that make up the spokes in the Power and Control Wheel (Johnson, in press). Johnson then operationalizes the nonviolent control motive by using a three-step process. He first

identifies questions contained in the survey tool that measure each of the eight non-violent control areas. Then he uses these questions to develop a scale ranging from a low to high control motive. From this scale Johnson identifies the place on the scale that is a cut point to distinguish a “high” from a “low” non-violent control motive. Those individuals with a “high” control motive are put into the intimate terrorism group and the “low” control motive individuals are put into the situational couple violence group.

Johnson argues that intimate terrorism is what most individuals think of when they hear the term “domestic violence,” it is gender asymmetrical, and causes the majority of negative outcomes identified in the feminist research, however it is not the most common type of intimate partner violence. In fact, the most common type of intimate partner violence does not involve any attempt on the part of either party to gain a general control over the relationship or victim. The most common type of violence is situationally-provoked when tensions and emotions rise during a conflict between intimate partners. This is what Johnson calls situational couple violence. He argues that this type of violence is more gender symmetrical, occurs less frequently, and generally does not escalate in severity of physical violence over time (Johnson, 1999). In situational couple violence the physical violence may be minor and singular, such as when an argument at some point escalates to the level of a push, grab, or slap. In these cases the motive for the violence varies from demonstrating extreme anger or frustration to intending to cause serious injury (Johnson, 1999). It is also possible that the violence occurred because the individual wanted to control that specific argument or situation but the control motive is not part of a general pattern of coercive control.

Johnson argues that the separate incidents of physical violence in situational couple violence may look exactly like intimate terrorism when the overall control motive is not examined or measured (Johnson, 2000). This is why it is important to begin to incorporate measures of non-violent control tactics in intimate partner research. He also stresses the importance of examining the entire contextual relationship instead of just counting or measuring an individual incident of violence. He believes this is the only way to begin to identify and separate the two types of violence that he has defined and conceptualized. Based on his literature review, Johnson developed the following testable predictions to test his proposed ideas (Johnson, 1999, p.9-10).

1. Intimate partner violence occurs in high and low control contexts.
2. In heterosexual relationships intimate terrorism is primarily committed by males and situational couple violence is sex symmetric.
3. Intimate terrorism will result in more frequent acts of physical violence compared to situational couple violence.
4. The severity of violence in intimate terrorism is more likely to escalate over time compared to situational couple violence, therefore resulting in more severe injuries.
5. Victims of intimate terrorism are less likely to return acts of violence as compared to victims of situational couple violence.
6. Intimate terrorism is found almost exclusively in “shelter” populations and situational couple violence is found almost exclusively in “survey” samples.
7. As a result of the predicted patterns intimate partner violence appears to be gender symmetric in “survey” samples and gender asymmetric in “shelter” samples.

### *Current Empirical Findings Regarding Johnson's Theory*

When Johnson first presented his argument in the mid 1990's, although it was reasonable, he did not present any direct evidence to support his prediction. In 1999, however, Johnson published a paper that outlined his predictions, specified the requirements needed in a data set to test his predictions, and presented the first empirical evidence from a research study to support his predictions. First, he stressed the need for the sample to have the potential to contain either perpetrators or victims of both intimate terrorism and situational couple violence (Johnson, 1999). Then he stated the importance of having measures of not only physical violence but also the non-violent control tactics needed to search for "patterns of general power and control" (Johnson, 1999). Johnson was able to identify an existing data set, collected in the early 1970's, that provided him measures of non-violent control tactics and contained a convenience sample from both the "shelter" and "survey" populations. Although this study's design was not perfect it did provide support for Johnson's theory that two distinct types of intimate partner violence may exist (for further detail see Johnson, 1999). More importantly this study showed that the two types of intimate partner violence can be distinguished based on a "high" or "low" control motive embedded in the relationship. However, the most interesting finding was that his prediction that intimate terrorism occurred only in "shelter" samples and situational couple violence occurred only in "survey" samples was not supported. He actually found that both typologies existed within both types of populations if a large enough sample was taken (Johnson, 1995).

The second empirical study conducted to test Johnson's predictions was done by Graham-Kevan and Archer (2003). In an effort to include both a "survey" and a "shelter"

sample they used male and female college students (survey), females from shelters, and males from a prison population. This study did find evidence to support a relationship between aggression and control, which could be explained by the existence of sub-groups within violent intimate partner relationships (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003). For example, individuals identified as “high” controllers were far more likely to use physical violence compared to “low” controllers. They also found a greater frequency and severity of violence with intimate terrorism compared to situational couple violence (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003). This supports both the feminist philosophies and Johnson’s current theory that conceptualize aggression in intimate terrorism as a coercion tactic, which takes place in a general pattern of power and control. However, it found only weak evidence to support the prediction that intimate terrorism is primarily male (gender asymmetric) which could have been a result of the sampling strategy employed (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003).

Both of these studies found evidence that contradicted the original prediction, which stated that the populations where intimate terrorism could be found are non-overlapping with the populations where situational couple violence may be found. In fact both studies had some evidence to suggest that these two types of intimate partner violence actually overlapped to some degree. This meant that both types of intimate partner violence could be found among both the “survey” and “shelter” populations if a large enough sample were collected. Based on these findings Johnson conducted a third study with a sub-sample (female data only) from the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS). This is a national random sample that collected data from 8,000 males and 8,000 females across the United States (Johnson, 2005). The NVAWS

provided a stronger sampling technique to argue generalization, and helped to improve upon a weakness in the two previous empirical studies.

However, the study using NVAWS data differed in its methodological approach to testing Johnson's theory. Previously the focus was on obtaining evidence to support the notion that two types of intimate partner violence existed and could be separated from each other based on a non-violent control motive. Now Johnson began to build upon the previous findings by first assuming that two distinct types of intimate partner violence exist and can be separated by a "high" or "low" control motive. Then he creates a non-violent control motive measurement tool to separate "high" controllers from "low" controllers. From this point, Johnson develops several hypotheses to test the other predictions regarding intimate terrorism. He found the following: victims of intimate terrorism experience more frequent and more severe acts of violence compared to victims of situational couple violence, intimate terrorism is less likely to stop, victims of intimate terrorism experience more damage to their physical and psychological health, intimate terrorism is more likely to interfere with a victim's daily activities, and victims of intimate terrorism are more likely to leave and seek help (Johnson & Leone, 2005). These findings were important because Johnson showed that the consequences for victims of intimate terrorism are different (more frequent and severe) from those consequences for victims of situational couple violence. He also continued to assert that these findings supported the notion that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetric (Johnson & Leone, 2005).

### *The Purpose of the Current Study*

Although each of the three empirical studies reviewed above supports the major tenet of Johnson's theory that two distinct types of intimate partner violence exist, the question still remains: Has Johnson found enough evidence to demonstrate that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetric? A major point of controversy in the literature is that family conflict theorists find gender symmetry when measuring only the number of violent acts, but even Straus has argued that the injurious consequences of intimate partner violence are asymmetrical (Straus, 1999). Johnson argues that the non-violent control motive can distinguish two distinct types of intimate partner violence, which can be identified by certain traits other than injurious outcomes. He specifically refers to the frequency and severity of physical violence as being measurably different among intimate terrorism and situation couple violence. According to Johnson intimate terrorism is characterized by a "high" control motive, which results in frequent and severe physical violence, and situational couple violence is characterized by a "low" control motive and does not experience frequent or severe physical violence. He has successfully differentiated two distinct groups of intimate partner violence by using the non-violent control motive variable, and demonstrated that the intimate terrorism group experienced a greater frequency and more severe violence. However, the analytic strategy he employed was a mean comparison of the frequency and severity of physical violence between the intimate terrorism group and situational couple violence group. Although his results established the non-violent control variable's ability to distinguish intimate terrorism from situational couple violence, they did not demonstrate how much of the variance in frequency and severity of violence the non-violent control variable can



explain. In order to continue building on Johnson's work it is important to use a predictive rather than comparative statistical model that can establish how much of the variance in frequency and severity of violence can be explained by the non-violent control variable, while controlling for other variables.

One weakness in Johnson's work involves his assertion that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetric, despite the fact that he failed to include a male sample in his previous work. In order to support the hypothesis that intimate terrorism is asymmetrical (with females being disproportionately victimized) while situational couple violence is symmetrical, both a male and female sample must be included in the study. The samples collected need to be reflective of the general population, and the survey instrument, collection methods, hypotheses tested, and statistical analyses employed must be consistent for both the male and female samples. The purpose of this study is to build upon the previous empirical studies of Johnson's theory by using a different statistical technique to assess how much of the variance in frequency and severity of violence is explained by the non-violent control variable. It will then address the weakness in Johnson's assertion that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetric by comparing the results from the female sample to the male sample. This study will test the following hypotheses:

H1: Female victims of intimate partner violence are more likely than male victims of intimate partner violence to report high non-violent control tactics in their relationships.

H2: Among female victims, high non-violent control accounts for at least a moderate proportion of the variance in frequency, and severity of violence, controlling for other variables.

H3: Among male victims, high non-violent control accounts for little to no proportion of the variance in frequency and severity of violence, controlling for other variables.

H4: High non-violent control is more likely to lead to greater frequency and severity of violence in female victims than in male victims of intimate partner violence.

## Chapter Three

### Methods

#### *Sample*

The data used for the present study are drawn from a sub-sample of respondents in the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS), a cross-sectional national random-digit dialed sample of telephone households in the United States. The purpose of the NVAWS was to further the understanding of violence against women by providing a context in which to place women's experiences regarding victimizations of violence. Telephone interviews were conducted from November 1995 to May 1996 by highly trained and experienced interviewers (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). The original female sample consisted of 8,000 participants, with an average age of 44 years old; 82% identified themselves as white. At the time of the survey, 69% reported being employed at least part-time and 20% stated they were either a homemaker or unemployed. The original male sample consisted of 8,000 participants, with an average age of 45 years old; 84% identified themselves as white. At the time of the survey, 83% reported being employed at least part-time and 3% stated they were either a homemaker or unemployed. Approximately 61% of the male sample and 59% of the female sample reported either being a college graduate or they took some college. The completion rate (once the interview began) was 97% for females and 98% for males.

Since most of the published work on intimate partner violence deals primarily with married or heterosexual couples, the decision was made to focus on these populations for the present study. However, it is important to note that some studies survey couples and divide them into separate male and female samples, but this was not the case for the NVAWS. This survey was administered to individuals, so their partners were not represented in the opposite sex sample. Instead a separate and independent survey was conducted for the male and female sample. The final sample for this study included only those respondents who were heterosexual and married or cohabitating and who reported experiencing at least one incident of physical violence (physical violence will be defined below) by their current spouse. The final female sample used for this study consisted of 325 participants, 33% reported being currently married, with an average age of 38 years old; and 80% identified themselves as white. At the time of the survey, 67% reported being employed at least part-time and 25% stated they were either a full-time homemaker or unemployed. The final male sample used for this study consisted of 167 participants, 63% reported being currently married, with an average age of 39 years old; and 82% identified themselves as being white. At the time of the survey, 86% reported being employed part-time and 5% stated they were either unemployed or a homemaker. Approximately 63% of the male sample and 57% of the female sample reported either being a college graduate or that they took some college. The average length of time that the respondents reported being with their current spouse or cohabitating heterosexual partner was 12 years for the males and 15 years for the females.

## *Procedures*

The NVAWS collected data independently from the male and female participants and separate data sets were created (Tjadon & Thonnes, 2000). For purposes of this study the two data sets continued to be maintained separately. The procedure used to create the male and female sub-samples for this study and all of the statistical processes were conducted independently on both the male and female data sets. This allowed for each hypothesis to be tested individually on the male and female samples, providing an objective comparison of the results. The NVAWS used the same questionnaire for both male and female participants, collecting information regarding the following six areas: 1) their general fear of violence and the ways in which they managed their fears, 2) emotional abuse they had experienced by marital and cohabitating partners, 3) physical assault they had experienced as children by adult caretakers, 4) physical assault they had experienced as adults by any type of perpetrator, 5) forcible rape or stalking they had experienced by any type of perpetrator, and 6) incidents of threatened violence they had experienced by any type of perpetrator. The NVAWS data were then further categorized into fifteen different sections, the following of which were used for this study: physical victimization; power, control, and emotional abuse; and characteristics of current spouse or partner.

The female and male sub-samples used for this study were created by using a two-step process. First, an initial sub-sample was created for each data set by using an item from the questionnaire that asked respondents to identify their current marital status. A filter was then used to delete all cases that did not respond as either currently married or currently living as a couple at least part-time with a member of the opposite sex. The

second step used the physical victimization section to identify those participants who reported at least one act of physical violence committed against them as an adult. This section contained responses to a twelve-item yes or no version of the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979). The original Conflict Tactics Scale is the most widely used and commonly accepted scale used in the intimate partner violence literature, although the instrument has been subjected to criticism (Archer, 2000; Johnson, 1995; Straus 1990). The twelve-item physical victimization section asked participants the following: after you became an adult did any other adult, male or female ever... throw something at you that could hurt you... push, grab, or shove you... pull your hair... slap or hit you... kick or bite you... choke or attempt to drown you... hit you with some 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... use a knife or other weapon besides a gun? Any participant who responded “yes” to at least one of these items was then asked to identify their relationship to the perpetrator who committed the violent act against them. A filter was then used to retain only those individuals who responded that the perpetrator was either their current spouse or cohabitating heterosexual partner. This two-step process created a male and female data set which contained only those individuals who reported at least on one incident of violence by either a current spouse or cohabitating heterosexual partner.

### *Measures*

*Frequency of Violence.* Frequency of violence was measured by using an item that asked participants how many different times their partner had done at least one of the twelve Conflict Tactic Scales items to them. The responses ranged from 1-97 for both the females (M=5.85) and the males (M=4.42). Unfortunately, the NVAWS did not

measure the frequency for each of the individual twelve items used to measure physical violence. Therefore, this variable cannot be used to calculate a frequency for each type of physical violence measured. It simply gets a count of the number of times any or all of these physically violent acts occurred and presents them as one final number.

*Severity of Violence.* Severity of violence was measured by using the following seven physical violence items: did any adult male or female ever...choke or attempt to drown you... hit you with some 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... use a knife or other weapon on you besides a gun? The respondent's answers to each of these items were measured as "yes" or "no". These seven questions were selected based on the original Conflict Tactics Scale's division of severe violence versus non-severe violence (Straus, 1979). In order to create a severe violence scale the items were recoded into 1 = yes and 0= no. A principal components analysis was performed on the seven items for both the male and female data sets. The female eigenvalue was 3.11, with 44.9% of the variance explained by one component and the male eigenvalue was 3.056 with 43.66% of the variance explained by one factor. The Cronbach's alpha for the female sample was .783 and the male sample was .779.

This scale was then dichotomized as follows: 0-1 severe types of violence reported were categorized as non-severe violence and 2-7 types of severe violence reported were categorized as severe violence. A dichotomized variable was used instead of the scale because the questionnaire item asks only about the number of different types of severe violence, rather than the number of times severe violence occurred. It is possible that someone choked twelve times may have been subjected to greater "severity"

than someone who was choked once and threatened with a knife once. If the variable remained undichotomized, then the latter would be classified as higher severity than the former. A cut point of two or more types of severe violence reported was chosen because Johnson argues that although intimate terrorism will usually involve more severe violence, it is possible for an incident of severe violence to occur in situational couple violence. However, multiple incidents of severe violence are more likely to occur in intimate terrorism. Since it was not possible to measure the frequency of each type of severe violence the cut point of two or more types was used to represent the repetitive nature of intimate terrorism as opposed to an isolated incident in situational couple violence.

*Non-violent Control Tactics.* As stated previously, the non-violent control variable, according to Johnson, is the key to distinguishing intimate terrorism from situational couple violence. The NVAWS included a total of thirteen items that represent operationalizations of the categories contained in Pence and Paymer's (1993) Power and Control Wheel. From these thirteen items, a total of seven were selected to be included in the present study because they were also used in the Canadian Violence Against Women Survey (Johnson, 1996), closely resembled items in the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Survey (Tolman, 1989), and they were previously used to measure Johnson's theory of intimate terrorism (Johnson & Leone, 2005). The seven items used included the following: thinking about your current husband (wife)/partner would you say s/he... is jealous or possessive?...tries to limit your contact with family or friends?...insists on knowing who you are with at all times?... calls you names or put downs in front of others?... makes you feel inadequate?... shouts or swears at you?...



prevents you from knowing or having access to the family income even when you ask?  
The response options to each item were “no” or “yes”.

A principal components analysis was conducted separately on both the original NVAWS female and male samples and the sub-samples used for this survey to determine if the items represented more than one construct. The results of the principal components analysis did not indicate a significantly different result for this study’s smaller sub-sample as compared to the larger NVAWS sample. The results for this study’s female sample had an eigenvalue 2.58 with 36.8% of the variance explained by one factor and this study’s male sample had an eigenvalue of 2.35 with 33.56% of the variance explained by one factor. This suggested that a reasonable scale could be constructed from these seven items for both males and females. The score for the non-violent control tactics variable included the number of control tactics that the respondent reported his/her current spouse or cohabitating heterosexual partner used against them, with a potential range of 0-7. The Cronbach’s alpha for male participants was .65 and for female participants it was .70. The reliability test was also conducted on the larger original NVAWS sample and compared to this sub-sample. The Cronbach’s alpha for the larger sample did not differ at a level of statistical significance from this study’s sub-sample.

In order to operationalize a distinction between intimate terrorism and situational couple violence based on Johnson’s previous work, it is necessary to transform the non-violent control tactic scale into a dichotomized variable (Johnson & Leone, 2005). Since the principal components analysis and reliability test for this study’s male and female samples yielded results almost identical to Johnson’s previous study, the decision was made to follow his cut point for dichotomization of 0-2=low non-violent control and 3-7=

high non-violent control. Johnson had used a cluster-K analysis to determine an appropriate cut point for this variable (for further discussion, see Johnson & Leone, 2005). Using this dichotomization of the non-violent control tactics scale, those spouses or partners who used three or more of the seven control tactics (high non-violent control) were categorized as intimate terrorism. Those spouses or partners using two or fewer of the control tactics (low non-violent control) were categorized as situational couple violence.

*Control Variables.* Since the male and female data sets were not merged it was not necessary to control for gender. However, the following variables were used as controls for all hypotheses tested: relationship type, age, level of education, race, employment status, and length of time together. These variables were chosen as controls because research has shown that they can impact the incidence rates for intimate partner violence. For example, individuals who are of traditional college age, have less formal education, or members of a minority group tend to report a higher incidence of intimate partner violence compared to older adults, individuals with more education, or those reporting to be white (Archer, 2000). Also, studies show conflicting findings regarding the effect of length of time together. Some studies find that in the beginning of a relationship the violence may be frequent, but at a certain point in time the rates of physical violence may decrease (Archer, 2000). Researchers theorize that physical violence may not be necessary after a certain point to maintain control or once the individuals are married (Worcester, 2002). For purposes of this study the following control variables were recoded from their original measure in the NVAWS: relationship type, employment, and level of education.

The variable relationship type was measured by a question in the NVAWS that asked participants to identify their current relationship status. Only those cases that reported being either currently married or cohabitating with a heterosexual partner were retained for this study. This variable was then coded as follows: married=1 and cohabitating=0.

In order to control for the effect of employment the original question was recoded into the following two dichotomized measures: “unemployed” or “other income”. The first measured unemployment against being employed and the second measured other types of income against being employed. The “unemployment” variable was coded and labeled as follows: all individuals who indicated being either unemployed or a homemaker were coded as unemployed=1 and all other responses=0. The variable “other income” was coded and labeled as follows: all individuals who indicated being retired, military, student, or other were coded as “other income”=1 and all other responses=0.

In order to control for the effect of educational level the original question was again recoded into several dichotomized variables. On the NVAWS, responses to the question regarding level of education achieved were originally coded into the following categories: up to eighth grade completed, above eighth grade but less than a high school diploma, received a high school diploma, completed some college, 4yr college graduate, beyond four year degree. For purposes of this study level of education was recoded into the following three dichotomized variables: high school graduate=1, some college=1, and college graduate=1, with each having all other responses=0. Each of these variables were compared against individuals who did not graduate from high school.

The NVAWS asked individuals to identify their racial background as one of the following: white, black or African-American, Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native, or Mixed Race. For this study race was labeled and coded as follows: white=1 and all the other categories were combined and labeled as others=0. It is important to note that individuals who identify as Hispanic were measured using a separate question that was not included in this study. Therefore, the Hispanic population was not included in this study.

The variable length of time together was measured based on the number of years the respondent reported living with their spouse or heterosexual partner. Those stating the length of time together was less than one year were coded as zero.

#### *Analytic Strategy.*

In order to build on the previous studies testing Johnson's theory, it was important to use predictive statistical models to test if the amount of non-violent control tactics used (high controller) could predict intimate terrorism. Johnson identified severity and frequency of violence as key factors that occur in intimate terrorism versus situational couple violence (Johnson, 1995; Johnson, 1999; Johnson & Leone, 2005). Therefore, two different types of regression models were used to test if the use of high non-violent control tactics could predict both frequency and severity of violence for both males and females. For the frequency variable, negative binomial regression was used instead of Poisson regression or OLS regression for two reasons. First, frequency of violence was measured as a natural count of a rare incident, which can cause a variable to be skewed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results for both the female and male data set determined that this dependent variable had a statistically significant departure from normality and

was severely skewed to the right (Long, 1997). As a result, the standard errors in an OLS regression model could be biased, causing a false positive on a significance test (Gardner et al., 1995). The second reason was that the alpha test on the Poisson model determined that over dispersion was present in the frequency of violence variable. This made the negative binomial regression model a better fit than the Poisson model (Long 1997). Alternatively, since the severity of violence variable was dichotomized, logistic regression was used instead of OLS (Gardner et al., 1995). In order to address Johnson's assertion that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetric, significance tests of the difference between the males and females for the regression coefficients for frequency and severity of violence were used (Brame et al., 1998; Paternoster et al., 1998).

## Chapter 4

### Results

The two purposes of this study were to build upon previous empirical findings regarding Johnson's theory and to test his assertion that intimate terrorism is primarily experienced by females. Previous research used a comparative model to establish a correlation between intimate terrorism (non-violent control) and frequency and severity of violence. In order to build upon previous findings, this study used two predictive models to test the non-violent control variable's ability to distinguish intimate terrorism from situational couple violence by accounting for the amount of the variance in frequency and severity of violence that can be explained by the use of non-violent control tactics. The question addressed by these models are as follows: are female victims of intimate terrorism (those reporting high non-violent control) more likely to experience frequent and severe acts of physical violence compared to male victims of intimate terrorism? Negative binomial regression was utilized to examine the frequency of physical violence and logistic regression was used to examine the severity of physically violent acts. The question of gender symmetry was tested by using significance tests of the difference between males and females for the regression coefficients for frequency and severity of violence.

Preliminary analyses produced descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for each of the items used in the regression models. The descriptive statistics in Table 1

revealed that males and females differed from each other on only a few variables. For example, women were significantly more likely than men to report relationships of greater duration and being unemployed; further, women were significantly less likely than men to be married and to be college graduates. Of greater importance to the present study was that males were significantly more likely than females to report severe violence; moreover, there was no significant gender difference in the reported mean frequency of violence and no significant gender difference in reports of partner's use of non-violent control tactics. Therefore, among married and cohabitating heterosexual male and female victims of intimate partner violence, intimate terrorism, as measured by non-violent control tactics, and the frequency of violence both appear to be gender symmetrical. Additionally, violence against men appears to be more severe than violence against women in these data. However, univariate statistics can reveal only a small part of the entire picture of the gendered nature of intimate partner violence.

The bivariate correlation analysis, presented in Table 2, revealed interesting differences and similarities between the female and male samples. Among males, for example, only age was significantly correlated with high non-violent control, with younger male victims reporting partners using intimate terrorism tactics. By contrast, among females, high non-violent control tactics were significantly correlated with greater frequency of violence, being a high school graduate, and cohabitating rather than being married. It would appear, then, that while males and females did not differ in the proportions reporting relationships characterized by high non-violent control, their risk factors for involvement in such relationships were quite different. Men and women were more similar, however, on their correlates of severe violence. For both the male and

female samples severe violence was associated with greater frequency of violence and a shorter duration of the relationship. However, age had an inverse relationship to severe violence only among men, and lack of a college degree was associated with severe violence only among women. Interestingly, cohabitating males were more likely to experience severe violence, while married females were more likely to experience severe violence.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Male and Female Sample**

Variable Item	Males (n=167)	Female (n=325)	Z Score
Partners use of Non-Violent Control Tactics	31%	27%	.909
Mean Frequency of Violence	4.2	5.8	-1.57
Severity of Violence	38%	20%	4.09*
Number of Years Together	12	15	-2.84*
Married	63%	33%	4.54*
Age	39	38	.640
High School Graduate	30%	34%	-.888
Some College Completed	32%	34%	-.444
College Graduate	31%	23%	1.91*
Unemployed / Homemaker	5%	25%	-6.66*
Non-employed Income from Other Source	9%	8%	.385
White	82%	80%	-.541

*Positive z scores indicate that scores for males were higher than scores for females.*

\* $p < .05$



**Table 2 Correlation Matrix for the Male and Female Sample**

<b>Females</b>												
	High NV Control	Severe Vio	Freq Vio	Yrs. Together	Age	Un-employ	Other Income	HS Grad	Some College	College Grad	Married Cohab.	Race
High NV Control	1	.098	.137*	.036	-.032	.056	.085	.113*	-.048	-.096	-.183*	-.073
Severe Vio	.079	1	.246*	-.114*	-.085	.066	.026	.031	.041	-.167*	.121*	.018
Freq Vio	-.017	.217*	1	-.063	-.050	.084	.017	.137*	-.076	-.089	.086	.084
Yrs. Together	-.079	-.232*	-.078	1	.824*	.100	.134*	.001	-.060	-.031	-.469*	.083
Age	-.236*	-.210*	-.029	.788*	1	.044	.188*	-.055	-.052	.076	-.336*	.098
Un-Employ	.122	-.118	-.049	-.117	-.105	1	-.165*	.213*	-.138*	-.192*	-.108	.005
Other Income	-.028	.057	-.088	.164*	.250*	-.070	1	-.035	.013	-.075	-.053	.023
HS Grad	.066	.001	-.083	-.152*	-.152	.037	-.022	1	-.510*	-.387	-.051	.021
Some College	-.056	.034	-.013	.095	.041	-.032	.056	-.446*	1	-.390*	.056	-.066
College Grad	-.076	-.100	.060	.059	.130	-.090	-.076	-.440*	-.458*	1	.044	.021
Married Cohab	.149	-.394*	-.142	.421*	.240*	-.121	-.066	-.074	-.017	.080	1	-.010
Race	-.006	-.152	.024	.107	.124	.033	-.015	-.099	-.052	.111	.068	1

**Males**

(\* significant at the .05 level)

### *Frequency and Severity of Violence Among Female Victims*

In the univariate analysis, the high non-violent control variable did not distinguish female victims from male victims of intimate terrorism, thus providing no support for the first hypothesis. However, the bivariate analysis did reveal gender differences in the correlations between risk factors and high non-violent control relationships. In particular, high non-violent control was correlated with greater frequency of violence among female victims, but not among male victims. Multivariate analysis can further elucidate these relationships among the variables by controlling for other variables known to affect the frequency and severity of intimate partner violence.

Johnson theorizes that high use of non-violent control tactics is a key factor in distinguishing intimate terrorism from situational couple violence (Johnson, 2005). He also proposed that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetric with females disproportionately being victimized. Johnson also argues that another important difference between intimate terrorism and situational couple violence is the amount of frequency and severity of violence experienced by the victims (Johnson, 2005). Based on Johnson's conceptualization of intimate terrorism physical violence is repetitive and over time increases in severity. Therefore, in intimate terrorism there should be a significant correlation between high non-violent control tactics and the frequency and severity of violence for females.

The second hypothesis predicts that the use of non-violent control tactics accounts for at least a moderate amount of variation in the frequency of violence against female victims. In order to examine how much of the variation in frequency of violence the non-violent control variable can explain, both bivariate and multivariate negative binomial

regression models were used. The results for the female sample are displayed in Table 3. The bivariate model demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between high non-violent control and greater frequency of violence for the female sample; however, only 1% of the variance was explained. The multivariate model, controlling for other known correlates of intimate partner violence, showed that high non-violent control remained a statistically significant predictor in the female sample, but the full model explained only 5% of the variance in frequency of violence. In the multivariate model, frequency of violence was also associated with being married versus cohabitating with a partner, shorter duration of the relationship, being non-white, completing some college, and being a college graduate.

**Table 3: Female Negative Binomial Regression Models: Intimate Terrorism Predicting Frequency of Violence**

	Bivariate			Multivariate		
	b	SE	% Change	b	SE	% Change
<b>High Non-violent Control Relationship (Married=1)</b>	.671	.154	95.6	.824*	.160	128
<b>Yrs. Together</b>				-.023*	.010	-2.3
<b>Un-employ (=1)</b>				.114	.177	
<b>Other Income (=1)</b>				-.002	.302	
<b>HS Graduate (=1)</b>				-.118	.283	
<b>Some College (=1)</b>				-.592*	.286	-44.7
<b>College Graduate (=1)</b>				-.838*	.305	-56.8
<b>Age</b>				.015	.011	
<b>Race</b>				.584*	.180	79.4
<b>Constant</b>	1.529	.082		.889	.082	
Chi Square				19.99*		80.26*
-2 Log-Likelihood				869.954		823.731
Pseudo R Square				.01		.05

\*p<.05

The second hypothesis also predicted that the use of non-violent control tactics accounts for at least a moderate amount of the variation in severity of violence against female victims. In order to examine how much of the variation in severity of violence the non-violent control variable can explain, again both bivariate and multivariate logistic regression models were used. These results are displayed in Table 4. The bivariate model did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship between high non-violent control variable and severe violence for the female sample, and again explained only 1% of the variance in severe violence. The multivariate model, controlling for other known variables of intimate partner violence, showed that high non-violent control was a statistically significant predictor of severe violence and the full model explained 18% of the variance. Moreover, adding the control variables revealed a suppressor effect. Specifically, being married had a negative association with non-violent control and a positive association with severe violence at the bivariate level, which rendered the bivariate relationship between high non-violent control and severe violence to be non-significant. When being married was controlled in the multivariate model, the true significant positive relationship between high non-violent control and severe violence appeared. In the multivariate model, severe violence was also associated with being unemployed/homemaker versus being employed in either a full or part-time job. In summary, the second hypothesis received only weak partial support; high non-violent control tactics in combination of other known correlates of intimate partner violence, predict almost none of the variance in frequency of violence and only a modest amount of the variance in severity of violence among female victims of intimate partner violence.

**Table 4: Female Logistic Regression Models: Intimate Terrorism Predicting Severity of Violence**

	Bivariate			Multivariate		
	b	Wald	Exp(b)	b	Wald	Exp(b)
<b>High Non-violent Control</b>	.521 (.304)	2.939	1.683	.742* (.298)	6.211	2.099
<b>Relationship (Married=1)</b>				.995* (.319)	8.961	2.60
<b>Yrs. Together</b>				-.041 (.023)	3.012	.960
<b>Un-employ (employed=1)</b>				.619* (.319)	3.764	1.86
<b>Other Income (employed=1)</b>				.354 (.477)	.550	1.42
<b>HS Graduate (=1)</b>				-.654 (.431)	2.30	.520
<b>Some College (=1)</b>				-.502 (.442)	1.29	.605
<b>College Graduate (=1)</b>				-1.80 (.583)	9.50	.166
<b>Age</b>				.020 (.022)	.854	.020
<b>Race</b>				.414 (.350)	1.40	1.513
<b>Constant</b>	-1.573 (.176)	79.91	.207	-1.79 (.799)	4.99	.168
Chi Square		2.853			45.641*	
-2 Log-Likelihood		305.477			350.818	
Nagelkerke R Square		.014			.18	

\*p<.05 Standard errors in parentheses

The Wald and Exp. (b) were not calculated for un-employ males because the sample size for this variable was too small.

### *Frequency and Severity of Violence Among Males*

Since Johnson theorized that situational couple violence is gender symmetric and intimate terrorism was gender asymmetric, with females disproportionately experiencing victimization, he proposed that although males, report being victims of intimate partner violence they primarily are experiencing situational couple violence. Therefore, for males the effect of high non-violent control tactics should not be significantly correlated with either the frequency or severity of violence. The third hypothesis predicts that the use of non-violent control tactics accounts for little to none of the variation in the frequency of violence and severity of violence against male victims. In order to examine how much of the frequency of violence the non-violent control variable can explain for males both bivariate and multivariate negative binomial regression models were used. The results for the male sample are displayed in Table 5. The bivariate model as expected, did not demonstrate a statistically significant association between the high non-violent control and frequency of violence for the male sample, and it was not able to explain any of the variance in that variable. The multivariate model, controlling for other known correlates of intimate partner violence, demonstrated statistical significance for the model, but there was no statistically significant relationship between high non-violent control and frequency of violence and only 4% of the variance in frequency of violence was explained. However, in the multivariate model, frequency of violence was associated with cohabitating with a partner and being employed instead of being either unemployed or obtaining income from another source other than employment.

**Table 5: Male Negative Binomial Regression Models: Intimate Terrorism Predicting Frequency of Violence.**

	Bivariate			Multivariate		
	b	SE	% Change	b	SE	% Change
<b>High Non-violent Control</b>	-.072	.176		.209	.191	
<b>Relationship (Married=1)</b>				-.597*	.185	-44.9
<b>Yrs. Together</b>				-.008	.014	
<b>Un-employ (=1)</b>				-.851*	.414	-57.3
<b>Other Income (=1)</b>				-.942*	.314	-61.0
<b>HS Graduate (=1)</b>				-.611	.324	
<b>Some College (=1)</b>				-.190	.326	
<b>College Graduate (=1)</b>				-.201	.335	
<b>Age</b>				.008	.013	
<b>Race</b>				.125	.206	
<b>Constant</b>	1.469	.097		1.78	.513	
Chi Square	.17			30.19*		
-2 Log-Likelihood	415.626			396.696		
Pseudo R Square	.00			.04		

\*p<.05

**Table 6: Males Logistic Regression Models: Intimate Terrorism Predicting Severity of Violence**

	Bivariate			Multivariate		
	b	Wald	Exp(b)	b	Wald	Exp(b)
<b>High Non-violent Control</b>	.347 (.346)	1.001	1.414	.736 (.449)	2.680	2.087
<b>Relationship (Married=1)</b>	.			-1.88* (.457)	16.99	.152
<b>Yrs. Together</b>				-.004 (.032)	.019	.996
<b>Un-employ (=1)</b>				-21.77	000	000
<b>Other Income (=1)</b>				.151 (.662)	.052	1.163
<b>HS Graduate (=1)</b>				-1.48 (.823)	3.25	.227
<b>Some College (=1)</b>				-1.08 (.816)	1.75	.340
<b>College Graduate (=1)</b>				-1.45 (.831)	3.06	.234
<b>Age</b>				-.017 (.030)	.330	.983
<b>Race</b>				-.546 (.472)	1.34	.579
<b>Constant</b>	-.588 (.197)		.556	2.91 (1.27)	5.30	18.4
Chi Squared	.996				43.88*	
-2 Log-Likelihood	214.586				168.816	
Nagelkerke R Squared	.01				.33	

\*p<.05 Standard error in parentheses

(The Wald and Exp. (b) could not be calculated because the number of unemployed males was too small to produce a valid result.)



The prediction that among male victims the high non-violent control variable would account for little to none of the variation for severe violence was also examined by using both a bivariate and multivariate logistic regression model. The results for males regarding severity of violence are displayed in Table 6. The bivariate model did not demonstrate statistical significance for the relationship between non-violent control and severe violence, and only 1% of the variance in severe violence was explained. When other known correlates of intimate partner violence were controlled in the multivariate model, however, the model became statistically significant and explained 33% of the variance. Nevertheless, high non-violent control still failed to predict severe violence for male victims. However, severe violence was associated with cohabitating with a partner. These results demonstrate support for the third hypothesis, that the use of non-violent control tactics is not a useful predictor of the frequency and severity of violence among male victims of intimate partner violence.

#### *Comparison Between Male and Female Samples*

The preceding analyses have demonstrated that while female and male victims of intimate partner violence in heterosexual, married or cohabitating relationships do not differ in levels of non-violent control tactics, frequency of violence, or severity of violence, as Johnson's theory would predict, the influence of high non-violent control on frequency and severity of violence does appear to vary by gender. These findings suggest the possibility that intimate partner violence is not gender symmetrical even within a large random sample of survey respondents using measures from the Conflict Tactics Scale. However, in order to determine if these results support Johnson's assertion that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetric it is important to explore if the

difference between the male and female samples are statistically significant for both frequency and severity of violence.

The fourth hypothesis predicts that high non-violent control is more likely to lead to greater frequency and severity of violence in female victims than in male victims of intimate partner violence. This empirical question is explored by using a significance test for the difference between the male and female samples on the regression coefficients that were significant in either the male or female multivariate models for frequency and severity of violence (Brame et al, 1998; Paternoster et al, 1998). The results in Table 7 show a statistically significant difference between males and females for the effect of non-violent control on the frequency of violence. This demonstrates that the non-violent control variable is statistically more likely to produce higher frequency of violence for female victims of intimate partner violence than it is for male victims. Conversely, there was no significant gender difference in the effect of non-violent control on the severity of violence. However, relationship type also demonstrated differential effects by gender. Being married was significantly more likely to produce both higher frequency and severity of violence for female victims than for male victims. Additionally, being unemployed and earning other income were significantly more likely to increase the frequency of violence among females. There were no significant gender differences, however, in the effects of higher education on frequency and severity of violence.

Based on the results of these analyses the fourth hypothesis in this study, which predicted that high non-violent control is more likely to lead to greater frequency and severity of violence for female victims than male victims receives at least partial support. Although high non-violent control tactics may be present about equally the relationships

of both male and female victims of intimate partner violence, the effect of those control tactics on the nature of the violence does vary by gender. High non-violent control plays a significantly greater role in the victimization of women than in the victimization of men in intimate relationships, enhancing the frequency if not the severity of violence among women but not among men.

**Table 7: Significance Test for Gender Differences in Regression Coefficients for Frequency and Severity of Violence.**

	Frequency of Violence (Z)	Severity of Violence (Z)
<b>High Non-violent Control</b>	-2.49*	-.011
<b>Relationship (married vs. cohabitating)</b>	-4.64*	-5.16*
<b>Years Together</b>	1.06	.956
<b>Unemployed</b>	-2.15*	**Not calculated
<b>Other Income</b>	-2.16*	-.249
<b>Some College</b>	.928	-.623
<b>College Graduate</b>	1.42	1.02

*(Positive z scores indicate that coefficients for males were higher than coefficients for females.)*

\*p<.05

\*\* Could not be calculated because the number of unemployed males in the sample was too small to produce a valid standard error.

### Summary

To summarize the results of the study, the initial analysis revealed that female and male victims of intimate partner violence in heterosexual and married or cohabitating relationships do not differ in the extent to which their partners make use of non-violent control tactics. In other words, victims of intimate terrorism are not more likely to be females than males, when no other variables are accounted for. However, non-violent control tactics vary by gender in their influence on frequency of violence. Specifically, high non-violent control tactics are significantly likely to lead to higher frequency and severity of violence for female victims but not for male victims. Nevertheless, while high

non-violent control accounts for none of the variance in frequency and severity of violence for male victims, its influence on frequency and severity of violence for female victims is also negligible.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

Although most researchers agree that intimate partner violence is a national public health issue with far reaching consequences, there is still little to no agreement on the gendered nature of intimate partner violence. This gender symmetry versus gender asymmetry debate is important to examine and resolve because it has led to a significant amount of confusion among the general public and policy makers and it has become an increasingly controversial issue among scholars that at times overshadows discussions regarding the prevention of intimate partner violence. Currently, there is a push in the literature to gain further understanding into the issues that brought about the gender symmetry debate and to better understand the gendered nature of intimate partner violence. In the late 1990's Johnson proposed and moderately tested a theory that within intimate partner violence there are actually two different and distinct phenomena, which he called intimate terrorism and situational couple violence. He proposes that the key to distinguishing intimate terrorism and situational couple violence is to examine the context and motivation behind the physically violence acts that occur in intimate partner violence. According to Johnson (2001), in intimate terrorism the motivation is to maintain a control context over the victim and the relationship in general. He argues that physical violence is only one type of control, and intimate terrorists will also have a high use of non-violent control tactics. He further asserts that within intimate partner

violence, females disproportionately experience intimate terrorism while situational couple violence is gender symmetric.

The purpose of this study was to further explore Johnson's two main premises that there are two different types of intimate partner violence, which can be distinguished by the motivation behind the physical violence, the frequency and the severity of the violence, and that within intimate partner violence females disproportionately experience intimate terrorism. The motivation behind the violence was explained by examining the gendered nature of the use of non-violent control tactics by the victim's partner. This study found that when none of the other known correlates of intimate partner violence are controlled, the difference in a partner's use of high non-violent control tactics among male and female victims of intimate partner violence is not statistically significant. According to this study's preliminary results, the heterosexual partners of female victims are not using a greater number of non-violent control tactics than the heterosexual partners of the male victims. Therefore, the prediction that female victims of intimate partner violence are more likely than male victims to experience high non-violent control is not supported. This result could lead to an artificial conclusion that the motivation behind the physical violence does not vary across gender. However, these preliminary results did not allow for other known correlates of intimate partner violence to be controlled, nor could they elucidate what type of effect non-violent control tactics have on frequency and severity of violence for male and female victims of intimate partner violence.

This study found that when other known correlates of intimate partner violence are controlled, high non-violent control does have a different effect on frequency and

severity of violence among male and female victims of intimate partner violence. More specifically, for female victims but not for male victims high non-violent control is a statistically significant predictor for both frequency and severity of violence. In other words, although for both male and female victims of intimate partner violence there does not appear to be a gender difference in use of high non-violent control tactics there is a gender difference on the effect of non-violent control tactics for frequency and severity of violence experienced. Based on this study's results, female victims of intimate partner violence with partners who use many non-violent control tactics are more likely to experience frequent and severe acts of physical violence.

These results give the appearance that there is support for one of Johnson's main premises that female victims of intimate partner violence experience more intimate terrorism than male victims of intimate partner violence as measured by frequent and severe acts of violence, but when the gender differences are tested only the effect of non-violent control on frequency of violence is significant. Therefore, although high non-violent control has a significant effect on severity of violence for female victims but not male victims, the difference between the genders is not strong enough to conclude that non-violent control has a stronger effect on severity of violence for females than for males. However, this same conclusion is not true for frequency of violence. The effects of non-violent control tactics do vary by gender in their influence on frequency of violence. Therefore, there is some support for Johnson's prediction that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetrical, with females subjected to intimate terrorism experiencing physical violence more frequently than males subjected to intimate terrorism.

Since the effect of non-violent control tactics demonstrated a difference between male and female victims of intimate partner violence, with regard to the frequency but not the severity of violence, it is not possible to conclude definitively that intimate terrorism is gender asymmetrical. It is important to explore further why the results for frequency and severity were not the same. In other words why is there a gendered difference for frequency of violence and not severity of violence? One explanation may lie in the way severity of violence was measured for this study. Frequency of violence was measured by using a count variable that demonstrated the number of times a victims experienced a violent act. The severity of violence variable was put into a scale based on how many types of severe violence a person reported experiencing. The manner in which severe violence was measured is a weakness in this study and it is important to understand how the way it was measured may affect the results. A person who reported experiencing only one type of severe violence was not given the opportunity to state the number of times they experienced the violence. Therefore, they would not be classified as experiencing severe violence. However, a person who reported two types of severe violence was counted as experiencing severe violence in this study. This means, for example, that a person who has been choked five times but did not report any other type of severe violence would not have been captured as severe but a person who was choked once and beaten up once would have been counted. Based on this operationalization of the variable, many individuals may have been omitted who actually experienced two incidents or more of severe violence. Since the measure for severe violence was weak and all of this study's findings regarding severe violence are weak, it is important not to draw any definitive conclusions regarding the gendered nature of severe violence or the



effect of the non-violent control variable on severe violence. It is important that future studies more fully measure severity and try account for not only the different types of severe violence but also how many times each type occurs

In addition to the findings on the relationship among gender, intimate terrorism, frequency, and severity, several other findings from the analysis are noteworthy. Based on this study it appears that relationship type is a significant variable when examining frequency and severity of violence among both female and male victims of intimate partner violence. Perhaps the most interesting finding is that being married has an opposite effects for male and female victims. Among females, being married predicts greater frequency and severity of violence. In fact, for females being married increases the likelihood of experiencing frequent violence by 76.6%. Married females are also more likely to experience severe violence compared to those who cohabit with their partner. It has been argued in the feminist research that perhaps the marriage license is considered a hitting license (Yllo, 1988). This study would show support for this notion for female victims but not for male victims. In fact, for males the results were the opposite. Male victims who reported cohabitating with their heterosexual partners rather than being married were more likely to experience both frequent and severe violence. These findings suggest that it is important to explore further why the type of relationship has an opposite effect on frequency and severity of violence for male and female victims of intimate partner violence.

Other significant findings were the effects of education level and employment status on frequency and severity of violence among the male and female samples. For females, obtaining a higher education, especially being a college graduate, leads to lower

frequency of violence but among males educational level obtained had little to no impact on frequency of violence. However, educational level did not significantly affect severity of violence for either males or females. Similarly, although among females being employed versus unemployed had little to no impact on frequency of violence, among males being employed significantly reduced the frequency of violence. Yet when severity of violence is examined the results show that unemployed females are significantly more likely to experience severe violence and among males employment status is not significantly correlated with severe violence.

The findings are interesting because both employment and educational level have been discussed in intimate partner literature in different capacities. It has been argued, that in general, intimate partner violence is a crime that reaches across all socioeconomic and educational levels, but at the same time the majority of victims in shelters tend to be less educated and make less money (Archer, 2000; Walker, 1979; Yllo & Straus, 1990). It could also be argued that achieving education and being employed are also forms of attaining independence, giving people a sense of power and control over their lives, and for females to achieve a college degree and maintain employment would be a direct contradiction to the ideas of patriarchy. The amount of job opportunities available and the types of salaries obtainable could be directly related to educational level and it is much more challenging to isolate an individual who goes to college or is employed (Pence & Paymer, 1993). However, it is particularly interesting that for males only employment status and not educational level are significantly correlated to frequency of violence. This could be an indication that the type of intimate partner violence men experience is different from what females experience. In other words, our knowledge of

the dynamics of intimate partner violence are primarily derived from studies examining female victimization and characteristics of male perpetrators. It is possible that the effect of educational level on intimate partner violence for male victims, or as Johnson proposes intimate terrorism, are different than its effect for females. It is possible that this variation among males and females for educational level is an indication that the measures used to determine the use of power and control or non-violent control tactics in the “Duluth Model” are actually gender biased. Meaning, it is possible to theorize that previous research has provided a solid understanding of female victimization in intimate partner relationships but not for male victimization and it cannot be assumed that there is not a gendered difference.

One of the main goals of this study was to begin to examine some of the gendered differences of intimate partner violence by testing Johnson’s theory regarding intimate terrorism and situational couple violence. This study found support for Johnson’s theory that two types of intimate partner violence may exist and they can be differentiated at least in part by the use of non-violent control tactics. It also supports Johnson’s assertion that females experience intimate terrorism differently than do males. Finally, it also demonstrates the importance of examining Johnson’s theory more closely and continuing to test his propositions. The issues within the intimate partner literature can certainly be addressed by the basic tenets of Johnson’s theory, but there are still many unanswered questions. Perhaps one of the most important is the notion of female violence. Johnson’s definition of non-violent control is grounded in feminist theory that has studied male’s use of violence for thirty years. Most researchers would agree that this is a good starting point to measure intimate terrorism, but the following question still remains: Do females

use the same types of control tactics? In other words, do these findings suggest that men are not victims of intimate terrorism or are the measures used actually gender-biased and not tapping into the tactics used by female partners?

A key area that needs to be continually addressed in future research regarding not only Johnson's theory but any studies of intimate partner violence is the examination of the gender differences, not only in prevalence rates or consequences, but in how male and female victims and offenders differ in their contextual experience regarding intimate partner violence. Although, this study was able to make some comparisons between male and female samples to begin to address the gender symmetry debate, a key limitation to this study is that the male and female data sets were never merged. Maintaining separate male and female data sets allowed for a comparison between males and females regarding key variables such as, non-violent control tactics, frequency of violence and severity of violence but it prevented the ability to truly control for genders' effect on the variables of interest. It is possible that just like relationship type presented a suppressor effect on the non-violent control variable, gender may have a unique effect on the ability of the non-violent control variable to explain the frequency and/or the severity of violence. It cannot be concluded that males are not suffering from this phenomenon or determined to what degree they experience it until we better understand women's use of violence or power and control (Ostoff, 2002; Worchster, 2002).

In order to better measure intimate partner violence, determine how similar or different the prevalence rates are among males and females, or to explore gendered differences it is becoming increasingly important to examine the context in which the physically violent act occurs. A weakness to this study and many other studies of

intimate partner violence is the way in which violence is being measured fails to account for the context of the violence. Most often in large scale victimization survey's individuals are simply asked to count or report whether or not a specific act of physical violence occurred. This was how the NVAWS measured both physical and severe violence; therefore, just like most other empirical studies which use large scale surveys, this study also failed to account for the context in which the physical violence occurred. With this type of measurement it is not possible to know if the respondent is reporting that their partner engaged in a physically violent act due to being the aggressor or if the partner was actually acting in self-defense. In order to fully understand and capture correctly if the person reporting victimization is in fact the victim and not the aggressor, it is necessary to also examine why physical violence was used. For example, a respondent may have answered "yes" that their partner threatened them with a knife. However, the question did not account for the context in which that knife was used. It could have been used aggressively to threaten the person reporting victimization or in self defense because the person reporting victimization was actually choking their partner, causing their partner to grab a kitchen knife and use it to prevent from continuing to be choked. Without accounting for the context, it is not possible to asses or control for the possibility that some respondents reporting being victimized by a physically violent act were actually the aggressors. Johnson states that a possible third category of intimate partner violence may be what he calls a violent resister, which is a person who is being victimized by an intimate terrorist but uses physical violence in self defense (Johnson, 2000). With out the context of the violent act being accounted for it is not possible to test for this group or identify how it may affect the results.

In conclusion, although this study sought to test Johnson's theory, and begin to resolve pieces of the intimate partner violence puzzle, much work still needs to be done. Johnson's theory provides a basic framework that begins to not only resolve the gender symmetry debate but perhaps offers a better explanation for this complex phenomenon called intimate partner violence and the conflicting findings which surround it. It is important to first recognize that the findings from the three previous empirical studies which tested Johnson's theory, along with this study demonstrate enough evidence to support further exploration and testing of Johnson's propositions. In order to continue moving forward in our knowledge of intimate partner violence it is necessary to use the basis of Johnson's theory to assess the gender differences within intimate partner violence and begin to acknowledge that perhaps males and females are not experiencing the same phenomenon. Moreover researchers and advocates need to reach an understanding that although both intimate terrorism and situational couple violence are important issues to resolve, they possess their own dynamics, which require different techniques for prevention and intervention.

Reaching these goals and objectives means future research are faced with two primary challenges. First, large scale surveys used to measure intimate partner violence need to include some type of measure for non-violent control tactics. At this time, although it is not certain if the measures used by Johnson for non-violent control tactics are gender biased thirty years of empirical studies have established that they are reliable for at least females. Until further research can be done to explore female perpetrators of intimate partner violence or the male victim's experience, this measure at least allows further exploration into Johnson's theory regarding female victimization. The second

challenge is to recognize that although much has been learned about intimate partner violence over the last thirty years, a great deal is still unknown. It is necessary to recognize that this phenomenon is very complex and requires much more sophisticated research tools and methods than have been used thus far. In order to address the issues of context and motivation behind physical violence, the gender differences, and the complexities of intimate partner violence, it is important to not continually rely on only large scale survey's but begin to also use qualitative studies. Although, qualitative methods are difficult and time consuming, it is necessary to include them with quantitative studies to help improve our understanding of the context in which the violence occurs. Such mixed methods approach will also allow for further exploration into the gender differences in how intimate partner violence is experienced, how the genders differ in their use and motivation for use of non-violent control, or to even discover if the genders use different types of non-violent control tactics. This greater understanding will help to resolve the gender symmetry debate and hopefully bring together all those individuals who are working towards ending intimate partner violence.

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