

THE MEN'S EXPERIENCES WITH PARTNER AGGRESSION PROJECT

Intimate Terrorism by Women Towards Men: Does it Exist?

This fact sheet and the others in this series summarize the results of a study that Drs. Denise A. Hines and Emily M. Douglas conducted in 2008 about men who sustained intimate partner violence (IPV) from their female partners and sought help. In this study, which was funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, 302 men participated in an online survey; we recruited them through advertising on websites that dealt primarily with men's issues and through the Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men and Women. Men reported about the level of IPV (psychological, sexual, and physical) that they both sustained from and perpetrated against their female partners, their mental health status (post traumatic stress, alcohol and substance use), and their experiences with seeking help. The experiences of these helpseekers were compared to a community sample of 520 men who were recruited to participate either through a random digit dial telephone or Internet survey. For more information, results, and media mentions about this study, please visit our study [website](#).

WHAT IS INTIMATE TERRORISM?

Intimate terrorism (IT) is a severe form of intimate partner violence (IPV) in which the physical violence is one tactic in a general pattern of control of one partner over another partner. The violence is frequent and severe, occurring at least on a monthly basis, is unlikely to be mutual and is likely to involve serious injury and emotional abuse. ^{i ii}

WHAT DID WE INVESTIGATE?

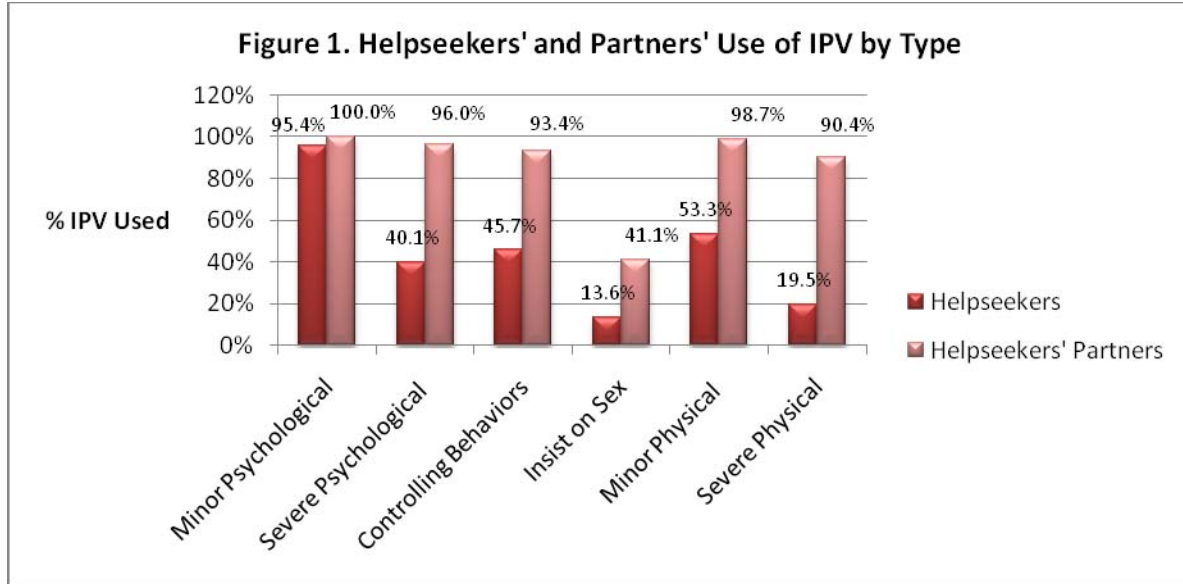
We hypothesized that the community sample would not present with IPV that is characteristic of IT, yet the helpseekers would. Based on the definition of IT, we predicted:

- The female partners of men in the helpseeking sample would use more IPV than both their male partners and the female partners of the men in the community sample.
- The helpseeking men would be injured more frequently than their female partners and men in the community sample.
- The female partners of the helpseeking sample would be the initiators of the assaults in the majority of cases, but in about half of the cases in the community sample.
- Any violence used by the helpseekers would be consistent with that found in shelter samples of battered women and would be a reaction to their partner's violence; in other words, the helpseekers would be engaging in "violent resistance." ^{iii iv}

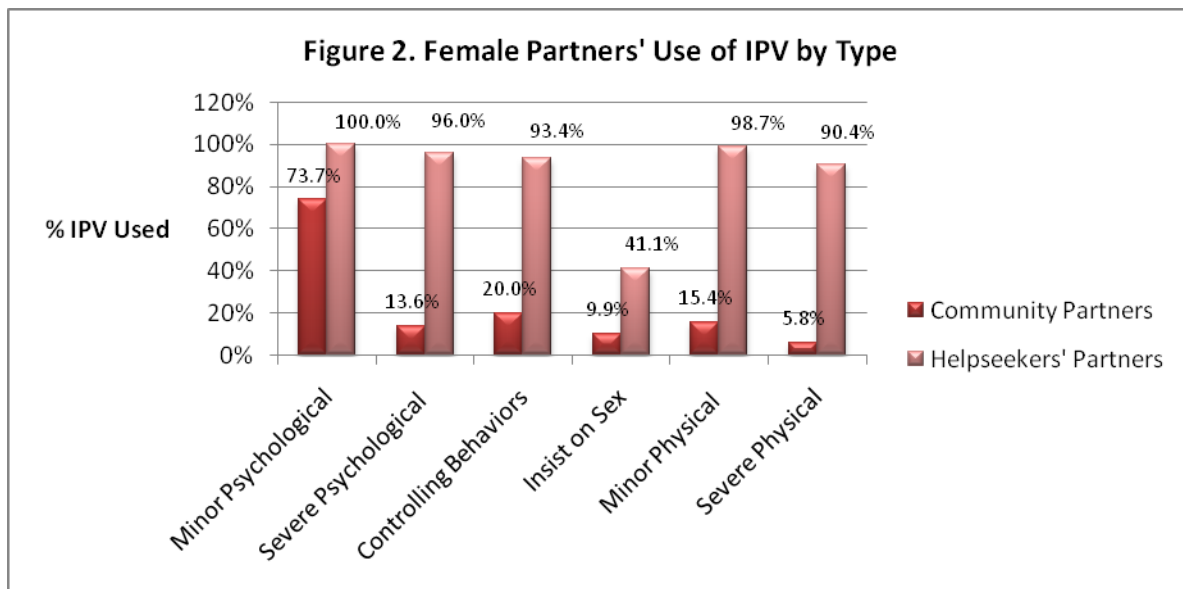


FEMALE PARTNERS' USE OF IPV

Our research indicates that unlike community couples who use IPV at equal rates, female partners of men who seek help for IPV are significantly more likely than their partners to use all types of IPV. Figure 1 compares male helpseekers and their partners' use of IPV by type:



Additionally, the female partners of male helpseekers were reportedly more likely than their community counterparts to use all types of IPV, and to have hit first during the last physical argument (93% vs. 56.9%) and ever (91.7% vs. 53.0%). Figure 2 compares these two groups in their use of IPV by type



HOW OFTEN ARE THEY INJURED?

While men from the community were no more likely than their female partners to sustain minor injuries (3.5% v. 4.2% respectively) or severe injuries (1.5% v. 1.0% respectively), the helpseekers were:

- Significantly more likely than their female partners to sustain minor injuries (77.5% v. 25.2% respectively) and severe injuries (35.1% v. 7.3% respectively)^v
- More likely than the men from the community sample to sustain both minor injuries (77.5% v. 3.5% respectively) and severe injuries (35.1% v. 1.5% respectively)^{vi}

MALE HELPSEEKERS USE OF IPV

Our research indicates that men who seek help for IPV are significantly more likely than the men from the community to use IPV. Table 1 compares these two groups in their use of IPV by type:

Table 1. Types and Prevalence of IPV by Male Participants

Type of IPV	Percent of Helpseeking Men who Perpetrated	Percent of Community Men who Perpetrated
Minor Psychological	95.4%	73.1%
Severe Psychological	40.1%	10.4%
Controlling Behaviors	45.7%	11.5%
Insisting on Sex	13.6%	12.7%
Minor Physical	53.3%	13.1%
Severe Physical	19.5%	2.3%

Male helpseekers were not any more likely, and in some cases less likely, than the men from the community to use aggressive behaviors consistent with IT. For instance, in regard to frequency of aggressive behaviors over the course of the past year among men from both samples who reported using these behaviors: ^{vii}

- Male helpseekers used no more severe psychologically aggressive behaviors than the community men (5.74 v. 6.07, respectively)
- Male helpseekers used significantly fewer controlling behaviors than the community men (7.20 v. 12.29, respectively)
- Male helpseekers did not insist on sex any more frequently than the community men (5.59 v. 7.41, respectively)
- Male helpseekers used no more minor physically aggressive behaviors than the community men (6.17 v. 7.01, respectively)
- Male helpseekers used significantly fewer severe physically aggressive behaviors than the community men (4.86 v. 12.35, respectively)



Therefore, our research indicates that the aggressive behaviors that male helpseekers did display may be in response/resistance to their partner's initiation of violence. A similar pattern has been found among battered women in domestic violence shelters, and has been labeled "violent resistance."^{iii iv v}

CONCLUSION - IT BY WOMEN TOWARDS MEN: DOES IT EXIST?

Our findings supported the description of IT in the literature and we have concluded that female-to-male IT does exist.

- The female partners of men in the helpseeking sample used more physical IPV, controlling behaviors, and severe psychological aggression than both their male partners and the female partners of the men in the community sample.
- The helpseeking men were injured more frequently than their partners and men in the community sample.
- The female partners of male helpseekers almost always initiated violence during the last reported physical argument (93% versus 56.9%) and ever (91.7% versus 53.0 respectively).

Not only does female-to-male IT exist, but it is consistent with prior research depicting the patterns of violence reported by clinical samples of women seeking help and living in domestic violence shelters.^{iii iv v}

ⁱJohnson, M.P. (1995). Patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence: Two forms of violence against women. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57, 283-294.

ⁱⁱ Johnson, M.P. (2006). Conflict and control: Gender symmetry and asymmetry in domestic violence. *Violence Against Women*, 12(11), 1003-1018.

ⁱⁱⁱ McDonald, R., Jouriles, E. N., Tart, C. D., & Minze, L. C. (2009). Children's adjustment problems in families characterized by men's severe violence toward women: Does other family violence matter? *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 33, 94-101.

^{iv} Saunders, D. G. (1988). Wife abuse, husband abuse, or mutual combat? A feminist perspective on the empirical findings. In K. Yllo & M. Bograd (Eds.), *Feminist perspectives on wife abuse* (pp. 90-113). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

^v This difference is statistically significant.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Frequency is the average number of aggressive acts used by those participants who reported any of the corresponding aggressive act.

