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Predicting Victims' Contact with Former Abusive Partners

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Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a complex phenomenon. From beginning to “end,” people receiving IPV must deal with violent encounters and coercive control in the relationship (Katerndahl et al. 2010), cognitions and feelings about that abuse and its management in their own minds (Lilly and Graham-Bermann 2010), reactions from individuals outside the relationship (Sullivan et al. 2010) and society at large (Pennington-Zoellner 2009; Schreiber, Renneberg, and Maercker 2009), decisions as to whether they will stay in or leave the relationship (Pape and Arias 2000), implementation of stay/leave decisions (Khaw and Hardesty 2009), and coping with past IPV once they have left the relationship (Smith, Murray, and Coker 2010). All processes, particularly the latter decision-making processes, involve management of a variety of factors. And whereas IPV experiences (e.g., precipitators and risk factors, Walker, 2000; abusive incidents, Straus and Gelles 1990; and stay-leave decision making, Baly 2010; Chang et al. 2010) have received scholarly attention, fewer studies, apart from research on postrelationship stalking or intrusion (e.g., Greenfeld et al. 1998; Southworth et al. 2007; Wuest et al. 2003), have focused on IPV victims' contact with former abusive partners after they have left the relationship (major exceptions include Hardesty and Ganong 2006; Wuest and Merritt-Gray 1999, to name a couple).

In this chapter, I examine IPV victims' contact with former, abusive partners by looking at variables associated with the frequency and likelihood of that contact. I begin with a discussion of existing research on factors influencing victims' contact with their perpetrators. This review is followed by a presentation of study methodology, derived from a larger study on victim-perpetrator contact. I end by discussing findings and implications for IPV researchers, practitioners, and victims.

CONTACT WITH FORMER PARTNERS

It is clear that most IPV victims do ultimately leave their abusive relationships (Campbell et al. 2005; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2005). With this fact in mind, the negotiation of former IPV relationships is especially interesting. Knowing how interactions occur between abusers and victims out of the previous relationships can inform our understanding of ongoing safety concerns for previous victims and their likelihood of forming relationships with other abusers and/or successfully moving on or coping (Lilly and Graham-Bermann 2010; McFarlane, Soeken, and Wiist 2000; Schreiber et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2010).

I define post-IPV relationship contact as any communication—verbal or nonverbal, intentional or unintentional—that IPV victims have with abusive former partners. Because people who leave abusive partners may reenter their relationship multiple times before finally cutting it off (Merritt-Gray and Wuest 1995), many cases of contact with former partners “after ending” the relationship may be considered instances of reconciliation, rather than true post-IPV relationship contact. Without tracking each individual person's reentries into former IPV relationships, there is no way of knowing if communication with former partners is true post-IPV relationship contact or an instance of reconciliation. For purposes of this study, to privilege victims' interpretations of events and allow their voices to emerge (e.g., Campbell 2000), post-IPV relationship contact will be considered any communication with a “former partner” that the IPV victim-participant indicated as such (i.e., former and after ending the relationship).

A number of factors may influence people's likelihood and manner of communicating with former partners. Previous research has suggested that (1) the presence of new romantic relationships and (2) the length of time a victim has been out of an IPV relationship, as well as (3) the type of abuse experienced, may all influence victims' coping abilities and the extent to which they have “moved on” in their lives away from partners. Each of these aspects will be examined in this chapter.

A fourth factor, the presence of children with a former partner, is obviously a major determinant of contact with former partners. Because excellent research on parenting-contact with former partners has been conducted (e.g., Hardesty and Ganong 2006; Hardesty et al. 2008; Hardesty et al. 2009),

I do not devote specific attention to this factor in this chapter. Readers interested in the specific dynamics of this process of parental negotiation with former abusers are encouraged to read Hardesty and colleagues' work on the subject. Instead, based on Hardesty's work, I proceed on the understanding that victims' negotiation of parenting responsibilities may be voluntary, court mandated, or abuser instigated and much of their contact is therefore out of their control. When parenting-communication is a factor, it may override or moderate other predictors of contact with an abusive partner and so is considered as a communication component, but not specifically tested as such in this chapter.

New Relationships and Time Out

For female IPV victims, two main predictors of reduced stalking and/or harm from a previous, abusive partner may be involvement in a new romantic relationship, and correspondingly, the length of time or distance away from the ex-partner. For example, Fleury, Sullivan, and Bybee (2000) found that after IPV relationships ended, there was a positive relationship between ex-partners' continued violence and both victims' residential proximity and absence of victims' new romantic relationships. In both cases, abusive partners may no longer have access to victims. Former abusive partners also may perceive an inability or have a lack of desire to control and harm the former victim in a new relationship. Increased time out and a new relationship have predicted whether a woman will be stalked, physically harmed, and/or murdered by her former partner (Fleury et al. 2000). These findings suggest that the nature of pervasive, potentially harmful contact with a former IPV partner may be reduced by time out and new relationships:

H1: IPV victims currently in new, committed romantic relationships will have lower frequency of post-IPV relationship contact with former partners than IPV victims not in new relationships.

H2: Victims' time out of IPV relationships will be negatively associated with frequency of post-IPV relationship contact with former partners.

Characteristics of Former Abusive Relationship

Although it is clear that most IPV victims leave their abusive partners, the dynamics of doing so are complex. Further, the type of abuse received may be tied to the likelihood of experiencing revictimization, of which contact would be a predictor.

The type of abuse experienced may affect likelihood of future contact, desired or undesired, with an abusive partner. Whereas categories of abusive

behaviors are diverse and can include many individual behaviors, two overarching classifications include that of physical and psychological abuse tactics. *Physical abuse* includes any behavior perpetrated with the intent of harming another person and can include use of one's body or objects meant to cause injury (Straus and Gelles 1990). *Psychological abuse* includes verbal (i.e., identity attacks) and/or emotional (i.e., identity control) behaviors meant to hurt and control, respectively (Marshall 1994). Obviously, all types of abuse are detrimental—both directly (i.e., injury, hurt) and indirectly (e.g., depression, immune functioning)—to victims. However, because psychological abuse targets victims' identities and heightens ongoing emotional distress, it is no surprise that both male and female IPV victims who experienced diverse victimization types reported their psychological abuse victimization as worse than the physical tactics experienced (Eckstein 2009; Marshall 1994; Walker 2000). Additionally, abuse victims having experienced high physical and psychological abuse may be most likely to be revictimized by ex-partners after IPV relationships have "ended" (Campbell et al. 2003; Dutton et al. 2005). As a result, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H3: Victims experiencing higher rates of physical and psychological victimization will report less contact with former partners.

Certainly, the longer someone is with a partner, the more difficult it may be to succinctly end a relationship. Through violent trauma, emotional resolution, and eventual trepidation in expecting new violence, the cycle of violence (Walker 2000) inherent in some IPV relationships (i.e., *intimate terrorism*) involves a continual spiral in which the victim steadily becomes more committed and/or bound to the perpetrator. Thus two additional factors influencing likelihood of continued contact with former abusers may be the duration of abuse experienced in the former IPV relationship and, directly tied to overall relationship duration, the length of time the victim stayed after abuse first occurred. It may be, because these two variables are inseparable in simple time-count assessments of relationships, that they play an interacting role, or that one factor moderates the other. The following research questions addressed these possibilities:

RQ1: What role does duration of abuse victimization play in predicting post-IPV relationship contact with former partners?

RQ2: What role does time stayed after victimization began play in predicting post-IPV relationship contact with former partners?

A final factor that may play a role in post-IPV relationship contact is the amount of time it took for abuse to begin. On the one hand, having had a

longer period of time to establish a non-abusive bond, in a true honeymoon stage, may indicate to victims the possibility of their abuser's non-abusiveness and subsequently indicate to them that post-IPV relationship contact is possible and likely. On the other hand, people who did not experience abuse immediately may have excused or rationalized their partner's behavior when it ultimately did occur, and thus, when they finally came to the understanding that the abuse was unacceptable (and left the relationship), they may have been more likely to cut ties definitively with the partner they could no longer tolerate. Both possibilities lead to the following research question:

RQ3: What role does time before victimization began play in post-IPV relationship contact with former partners?

THE STUDY

To assess *post*-IPV relationship contact (and to maximize participant safety), individuals currently involved in abusive relationships were not eligible to participate in this study. As a result, current findings are derived from online survey responses from 845 people (579 females, 266 males) who reported receiving physically and/or psychologically abusive behaviors from former romantic partners. Accessing the survey via an Internet link, former victims agreed to participate by acknowledging informed consent and proceeding with the approximately twenty-five-minute survey.

The questionnaire, part of a larger study than reported here, included measures of general demographic information, frequency of communication with a former partner, characteristics of the IPV relationship (e.g., time together, duration of abuse, time apart) and current relationships (e.g., level of commitment, time together), if applicable. Psychological abuse was measured by twenty-five items from the Index of Psychological Abuse (Sullivan and Bybee 1999), a scale measuring ridicule, harassment, criticism, and emotional withdrawal experienced from a partner (1 = Never to 7 = Always) across the course of a relationship ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.25$, $\alpha = .93$). Physical abuse was assessed for frequency of victimization across the entire relationship (0 = Never to 6 = Always) by 19 items ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 1.11$, $\alpha = .94$) derived from the Conflict Tactics Scales 2 (Straus, Hamby, and Warren 2003) and non-overlapping items from the Partner Abuse Scale-Physical (Hudson 1997).

PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

Participants ranged from eighteen to seventy-four years of age ($M = 38.93$, $SD = 13.10$) and were primarily white (86.4%), Christian (60.7%), and had completed at least some college or higher (79.2%). Participants' careers were varied and most included service, health, education, or technology jobs (71.6%).

Based on basic relational demographic items (e.g., How long was your relationship?, How long were you in your relationship before the abuse began?), the length of time participants were in abusive relationships ranged from less than one week to fifty-five years ($Mdn = 5$ years, $M = 7.54$ years, $SD = 7.50$). Participants reported being out of their abusive relationship, on average, 6.50 years ($Mdn = 4$ years, $SD = 7.14$, range = less than 1 week to 40 years). The initial onset of abuse in these relationships averaged 1.49 years ($SD = 2.85$, $Mdn = 0.50$ year) after the relationship began; initial onset ranged from immediately on beginning the relationship to as far as 30 years into the relationship. After abuse was first experienced, participants stayed with their partner, on average, 5.83 additional years ($SD = 6.56$); some people left immediately after the abuse began and some stayed as long as 51 years (or until their partner was deceased) with their abuser ($Mdn = 3$ years). The majority of participants (64.7%) were currently not in a committed, long-term romantic relationship. However, 11.5% ($n = 96$) of participants were engaged to be married or living with a new partner and 23.7% ($n = 198$) were married to someone new.

FINDINGS

Data were analyzed in three phases. First, I calculated bivariate correlations to determine simple relationships between predictor and outcome variables. Next, I employed tests of mean differences to distinguish between male and female victims' experiences. Finally, two-tailed significance tests and regression tests were conducted ($\alpha = .05$) on data from 845 participants.¹ To maximize coherence and minimize space limitations, this section includes both presentation and discussion of results.

Relationships among Variables

To assess the nature of victimization experienced by this sample, correlations were tested among relationship variables and abuse experiences (see table 8.1).

Abuse characteristics. Physical and psychological abuse were positively correlated with one another, so that the more victims experienced one type of abuse, the more they reported also experiencing the other type. Further, both physical and psychological abuse were negatively related to time before abuse initially began; this finding means that perpetrators who used high levels of psychological and/or physical abuse were likely to initiate that abuse earlier in the relationship than abusers who used lower levels of psychological or physical tactics.

Physical abuse was positively related to time spent out of the abusive relationship and level of commitment in a new relationship. People who

experienced high levels of physical abuse were more likely to have been out of the abusive relationship longer when participating in this study and more likely to be committed to new relationships than participants who experienced lower levels of physical abuse. In preliminary response to H3, physical abuse was negatively correlated with victims' frequency of post-IPV relationship. In other words, people who experienced high levels of physical victimization from former partners communicated less with those abusers than people who had not experienced levels of physical violence at similarly high levels.

Somewhat different in its associations, psychological abuse positively related to the length of the abusive relationship, the time victims stayed after abuse began, and commitment levels in new relationships. Therefore, people who were highly psychologically abused by former partners were more likely to report: staying longer in those relationships overall, remaining longer after the abuse began, and commitment to new relationships than were people who reported experiencing lower levels of psychological victimization (H3).

Relationship characteristics. Length of abusive relationship, time before abuse began, time victims stayed after abuse commenced, and victims' levels of current interaction with former partners were all positively inter-correlated. People who stayed longer with their abusive partners overall also reported having been victimized later in the relationship and to have stayed longer after the abuse commenced than people who had shorter relationships and left sooner (RQ1, RQ2). For these victims, longer relationships (with victims staying longer both overall and after abuse began) also meant increased levels of current interaction with former partners. The longer victims remained in IPV relationships, the more likely it was that they would report continued contact with former abusers after ending the relationship (RQ1, RQ2).

However, IPV relationship length was negatively associated with commitment to new partners. In other words, the longer victims were with their abusers, the less likely they were to report being involved in or committed at higher levels in new romantic relationships. People whose IPV relationships were shorter in duration were more likely to report being with new romantic partners at the time they took the survey.

Providing initial support for H1 and H2, the amount of time participants had been out of their IPV relationship was positively correlated with their level of commitment in new relationships and negatively related to their frequency of involvement with the abusers. This means that the longer someone had been away from their abuser, it was *more* likely they would report being in new relationships and *less* likely that they would still communicate with their abuser. A further negative relationship existed between new relational commitment and contact with a former abuser (H1), such that the more

Table 8.1
Bivariate correlations among relationship characteristics and abuse experiences

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8
V1: Physical IPV	—							
V2: Psychological IPV	0.58 ***	—						
V3: Length of IPV relationship	-0.02	0.07 *	—					
V4: Time before IPV began	-0.08 *	-0.08 *	0.43 ***	—				
V5: Time stayed after IPV began	-0.01	0.11 **	0.91 ***	0.07 *	—			
V6: Time out of IPV relationship	0.14 ***	0.04	0.06	0.02	0.05	—		
V7: Current relationship status ^a	0.07 *	0.07 *	-0.08 *	-0.04	-0.07	0.42 ***	—	
V8: Interaction with IPV partner ^a	-0.10 *	-0.03	0.22 ***	0.15 ***	0.18 ***	-0.30 ***	-0.22 ***	—

Note: N = 845 people (n = 579 females, n = 266 males).

^aThese variables were measured on scales progressing through: levels of relational commitment for relationship status (i.e., 1 = Single, not dating to 4 = Married to a new partner) and levels of involvement for interaction with former partner (i.e., 1 = Never to 6 = Daily).

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

committed someone was to a new partner, the less they communicated with former abusive partners.

Sex Differences/Similarities among Victims

Independent sample t-tests demonstrated that men and women differed in some of their abusive relationship characteristics (see table 8.2). Women were more likely to experience higher levels of both physical and psychological abuse than were the men in this sample. Men, on the other hand, were significantly more likely than women to report longer IPV relationships, to be in the relationship longer before abuse first began, and to currently communicate more with their abusive partners. Each of these factors—more established, long-term relationships and a willingness to put up with abuse rather than finding a new partner or staying alone—could play a role in predicting how often one communicates with a former partner.

Overall, there were many similarities between male and female victims. Men and women did not differ in how long they stayed with abusers after their victimization began. They also did not differ in the amount of time they reported being out of IPV relationships at the time of this study (although this latter difference did approach significance, $p = .07$, for men staying longer with their abusive partners after abuse commenced). Finally, men and women reported similar levels of commitment to new relational partners.

Table 8.2
Differences between men and women in characteristics of former (abusive) and current relationships

	Men		Women		t (df)
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
Physical IPV	1.85	(0.87)	2.26	(1.19)	5.64 (680.96) ***
Psychological IPV	3.88	(1.24)	4.17	(1.25)	3.19 (840) **
Relationship length	8.85	(7.44)	6.94	(7.46)	3.46 (843) **
Time in relationship before IPV started	2.17	(3.71)	1.18	(2.30)	3.99 (358.33) ***
Time stayed after IPV started	6.45	(6.10)	5.55	(6.75)	1.85 (839)
Time out of relationship	6.62	(6.52)	6.44	(7.42)	0.35 (840)
Level of interaction with former partner	2.60	(1.72)	2.25	(1.65)	2.82 (841) **
Level of commitment in new relationship	2.13	(1.24)	2.16	(1.21)	0.34 (832)

Note: N = 845 participants (n = 579 women, n = 266 men).
* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Predictors of Post-IPV Relationship Contact

H1 predicted that victims highly committed to new romantic partners would be less likely than people not in romantic relationships to maintain contact with former, abusive partners. A linear regression analysis of variance indicated that current relationship commitment (independent variable) predicted level of interaction with a former partner (dependent variable).² Being committed to a new partner may reduce the likelihood of communicating with a past abuser, but in preliminary analyses, relationship characteristics varied in significance according to their interaction with each other *and* according to a victim's sex. Taken together, along with previous IPV research on leaving IPV, these findings suggest that IPV relationship characteristics may have an *additive*, rather than an individual, influence on future communication outcomes for victims. Therefore, sequential regression analyses were run to clarify the nature of these interrelationships and to determine the role of each variable in predicting contact with former abusers.

The first analysis determined the ways in which (1) length of abusive relationship, then (2) time before abuse began, then (3) time stayed after abuse began, and then (4) time out of relationship predicted levels of involvement/commitment with new partners.³ The two variables that predicted commitment to new partners were duration of the IPV relationship (RQ1, RQ2) and time out of that relationship (H2).

After establishing the role of relationship characteristics (i.e., duration of IPV relationship and length of time since the IPV relationship ended) in predicting involvement with new partners, a second analysis determined if (1) length of abusive relationship, then (2) time before abuse began, then (3) time stayed after abuse began, and then (4) time out of relationship explained additional variance in contact with former partners *above and beyond* that predicted by current relationship commitment. In this model,⁴ level of new relationship commitment, duration of the former IPV relationship, and length of time since ending the IPV relationship each predicted post-IPV relationship contact.

As a final consideration, because men and women differed in their contact-frequency with former partners, victims' sex was entered into the model to test its ability to predict further variance in explaining post-IPV contact. On its own, sex was a predictor of the dependent variable⁵ (i.e., being male made participants more likely to contact former partners). However, the inclusion of sex in the overall model only approached significance,⁶ and so did not succeed in explaining additional variance. Practically speaking, then, victims' sex did not predict their likelihood of contacting former partners, when other variables (such as new relationship commitment) were considered as well.

Obviously, a number of factors determined (additively) victims' contact with former abusers. Nevertheless, the most influential determinants were

new relational commitments and most importantly, length of time out of the IPV relationship.

Ultimately, findings from all the statistical tests show that the second strongest predictor of post-IPV relationship contact was involvement in new romantic relationships. People who were involved with new romantic partners at the time of this study had less contact with former partners than people not in new romantic relationships (H1). Intuitively, we may expect current partners, who know the history of their spouse's (i.e., the victim's) former relationship, to act in a protective or gate-keeping role. New partners may be abusive and dominate or control the victim, or new partners may be non-abusive and desire to protect the victim from past abuses. In either case, having a third-party to stand between themselves and the former abuser and to act as a potential source of support for former abuser contacts that do occur may explain the role of new relationships in predicting fewer contacts with former abusers.

The strongest predictor of post-IPV relationship contact with former partners was how long victims had been out of the relationships with abusers. The amount of time out of the IPV relationship played a role in not only predicting post-IPV relationship contact, but also corresponded to the likelihood of being with a new partner. Thus, these two variables—new relationship and time out—appear overlapping in their contribution to communication with a former abusive partner.

The longer a person was “out” of his or her former IPV relationship, the lower his or her frequency of contact with the former partner. This may be because the longer one is out of a former relationship, the more likely he or she will be to find a new partner. In non-abusive contexts, men may be slightly more likely than women to find new partners (e.g., remarriage or cohabitation) after death and/or divorce, but the differences depend on a variety of moderating and mediating factors (de Graaf and Kalmijn 2003; Wu and Schimmele 2005). Similarly, in abusive contexts, a variety of factors *other than* and *in addition to* sex determine likelihood of finding new mates and contacting old ones.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate multiple factors that may play a role in victims' frequency of post-IPV relationship contact with former abusive partners. Variables that reduced likelihood of contact included: high commitment to new romantic partners, increased time out of the IPV relationship, and reduced time stayed in the IPV relationship. In this study, when considering all variables, victims' sex did not play a role in predicting post-IPV relationship contact. What is apparent is the fact that some predictors of post-IPV relationship contact were features of the IPV relationship itself—factors that occurred while *with* the partner—and other predictors were features of life outside of the IPV relationship—factors that occurred once *out* or *away* from the partner.

Limitations and Future Research

A main limitation to consider when interpreting findings from this study is that the survey did not determine who initiated the post-IPV relationship contact. The question was worded, “On average, how often do you still interact with your former partner?” It is clear from the open-ended data that many respondents interpreted the question as an inquiry into the abuser's contact initiation (e.g., harassment, stalking, or court mandated). However, the question could obviously be interpreted to mean the opposite—as victim-initiated contact. Thus, current findings are limited to the extent that we do not know who was doing the contacting. Results from this study only indicate contact occurrence and accompanying frequency. An area for future research is then to parse out the extent to which contacts were victim or partner initiated. Additionally, how were those contacts perceived (e.g., positively/negatively, helpful/unhelpful, supportive/threatening) by the victims themselves? And finally, how are different methods of contact used and perceived by victims and former abusers?

The manner of communication that occurred is of particular interest. In addition to reducing frequency of communication with former partners, being involved in new romantic relationships may also affect the medium of post-IPV relationship contact. The presence of new media technologies has resulted in additional methods of communicating with people overall. On the one hand, this means that former partners have more options for communicating indirectly or less invasively with previous victims, if they wish to avoid contact with the new partner who serves a protective function. Choosing to speak to someone only via email is an opportunity to carefully gauge what is said. Further, the fact that there is a record of the communication may result in cautionary communication on the part of the former abuser.

On the other hand, more methods of communicating result in more ways to harass victims in seemingly less pervasive yet still invasive ways (Southworth et al. 2007). For example, instead of calling via telephone or speaking in person, a former partner may choose to email or text their victim and can then reach them at all times and in a variety of environments. On the surface, it seems reasonable that victims could merely “block” the abusive sender's email or immediately delete these messages without reading them. However, this ignores the psychologically coercive component of many IPV victims' abuse. Merely seeing the abuser's name repeatedly shown on his or her telephone or email inbox may be enough to bring back intense emotional memories of the controlling, monitoring presence of that partner in their lives. Future research is necessary to investigate the extent to which being involved with a new partner affects not only the nature of communication from former partners, but also the frequency and manner (i.e., method or medium) of that communication. It remains unclear what role having a new partner in one's life may play in former partner's *methods* of communication.

Implications and Applications

Findings from this research have implications for practitioners in the field of violence studies. Apparent from this study are the roles of (1) individual, psychological characteristics (e.g., sex), (2) IPV relational occurrences (e.g., types of abuse), and (3) IPV decisions, both during the relationship (e.g., length of IPV relationship and time stayed after abuse began) and subsequent to its ending (e.g., time out of relationship and new romantic commitments), on the part of the victim in predicting post-IPV relationship contact with former abusive partners. Each of these factors corresponds to the methodological practices of (1) psychodynamic, (2) family violence, and (3) feminist perspectives, respectively.

Psychodynamic approaches, emphasizing factors that make victims susceptible to experiencing and managing IPV (e.g., Golding 1999; Litman 2003; Romito and Grassi 2007; Swan and Snow 2003), may find it particularly useful to know the role of sex differences, or lack thereof, found in this research. This research and other studies connected to it (Eckstein 2010a, 2010b) demonstrate that characteristics such as type of violence experienced and patterns of control are inseparable from and often more indicative of victim differences than mere biological traits.

Family violence researchers, who focus on relational and external environmental factors common to IPV victims (e.g., Caetano, Ramisetty-Mikler, and Harris 2010; Fiebert 2010; Straus et al. 2003), may find utility in knowing the role of psychological and physical abuse incidents in predicting post-IPV interactions between perpetrators and victims. Knowing that what occurs *in* the relationship, which is often outside of a victim's control, is predictive of post-IPV contact once *out* of the relationship can aid counselors working with victims to assess risks associated with victims leaving their abusers (Campbell et al. 2005). In essence, practitioners helping someone leave an IPV situation can maximize their effectiveness when they not only know the severity and patterns of abusive behavior that occurred (e.g., as in a family violence approach), but also what those patterns may predict (e.g., as in feminist-focused risk assessments) in terms of the victim being contacted by the former partner in post-IPV situations.

Finally, feminist researchers, who study IPV contexts in terms of societal, gender, class, ethnic, religious, and sexual orientation differences on IPV outcomes (e.g., Baly 2010; Dutton et al. 2006; Walker 2000), may be able to apply this study's findings of new romantic partnerships and distance (psychological and/or physical?) from former partners as limiting post-IPV contact. As to the latter, it may be helpful to recommend victims relocate, when financially, legally, and practically possible, to locations outside of the abuser's contact. As to the former, even though a new relationship may reduce the likelihood of the abuser's contact with them, it is unreasonable and perhaps unhealthy

to recommend that victims should eagerly begin new romantic relationships. Such suggestions may limit victims' abilities to cope and grow as independent individuals before they find new partners with whom to become interdependent once again. Further, suggesting victims become involved with new partners should not be the role of a practitioner driven by feminist motives of enabling and teaching women to self-protect without necessarily involving a partner in a "protective" role.

Any study can have implications for all three research approaches and, I argue, should be cross-disciplinary in application as well. In reality, psychodynamic, family violence, and feminist perspectives tend to be adopted individually and in exclusionary fashion by separate IPV researchers. Accordingly, an important direction for theoretical and applied expansion is to combine these approaches to address IPV victimization research. Incorporating all perspectives and privileging relational status, communication behavior, and environmental factors will provide a more complete understanding of IPV for all victims.

NOTES

1. Statistical power for t-tests was greater than .99 for medium ($d = .50$) and large ($d = .80$) effects. Power to detect regression effects was .97 for small ($f^2 = .02$) and exceeded .99 for both medium ($f^2 = .15$) and large ($f^2 = .35$) effect sizes.

2. $F(1, 831) = 43.48, p < .001$.

3. In step 1, with length of relationship in the equation, $R^2 = .01, F_{inc}(1, 821) = 4.87, p < .05$. Step 2, in which time before abuse began was entered, $R^2 = .01, F_{inc}(1, 821) = 0.00, ns$. Step 3, in which time stayed after abuse onset was entered, $R^2 = .01, F_{inc}(1, 821) = 0.42, ns$. In step 4, with time out of the relationship entered, $R^2 = .19, F_{inc}(1, 821) = 183.98, p < .001$. After these steps, with all independent variables in the equation, results for this model were $R = .43, F(4, 821) = 47.61, p < .001$.

4. In step 1, with current relationship commitment in the equation, $R^2 = .05, F_{inc}(1, 819) = 43.97, p < .001$. After step 2, with IPV relationship length in the equation, $R^2 = .09, F_{inc}(1, 819) = 36.78, p < .001$. Step 3, in which time before abuse began was entered into the equation, $R^2 = .10, F_{inc}(1, 819) = 2.92, ns$. In step 4, length of stay after abuse began was entered, resulting in $R^2 = .10, F_{inc}(1, 819) = 2.92, ns$. Finally, in step 5, time out of the IPV relationship was entered, demonstrating $R^2 = .16, F_{inc}(1, 819) = 55.88, p < .001$. After these steps, with all independent variables in the equation, results for this model were $R = .39, F(5, 819) = 30.14, p < .001$.

5. $F(1, 841) = 7.97, p < .01$.

6. $R = .40, F_{inc}(1, 818) = 3.71, p = .054$.

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