

**INTIMATE PARTNER HOMICIDE-SUICIDE: THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN DEPICTING
LIFE-ENDING EVENTS,
ALONG WITH AN ANALYSIS OF THE
PREVALENCE AND GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF THESE EVENTS**

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Abstract

Homicide followed by suicide is a relatively rare event in which one individual kills another and subsequently dies by suicide, usually shortly after the homicide (Barraclough & Harris, 2002). Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide (also IPH-S and Murder-Suicide) occurs when a person kills an intimate partner—a current or former romantic partner or family member—and then kills him or herself. The goals of this dissertation are to determine the quality and accuracy of the *media coverage* of intimate partner homicide-suicide, along with identifying the *geographic distribution* of dyads or linked cases of intimate partner homicide-suicide. Relying on data collected from the Internet through digitized media reports on intimate partner homicide-suicide, scientific analyses of paired cases or dyads were conducted to assess or examine the quality and quantity of coverage. These analyses explore how accurately and comprehensively the media portrayed the intimate, violent relationship. In addition, geographic site data were analyzed using ESRI, software that will establish geographic distribution across the United States.

Key words: Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide (IPH-S), Murder-Suicide, Media Coverage, Homicide, Suicide, Life-Ending Event, Geographic Distribution, Environmental Systems Research institute (ESRI).

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DEDICATION

... To my remarkable Irish parents, John Russell McCormick and Catherine Murphy McCormick, for all your love, support and eternal encouragement over the years.

... To the thousands of women touched by intimate partner violence every year, I dedicate my work to you.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Intimate partner violence against women is all too common and takes many forms, the most severe of which are homicide and homicide-suicide. The availability of guns can easily turn a case of domestic violence into a domestic homicide. Homicide-suicide, defined as a homicide followed by the suicide of the perpetrator, differs from both a homicide and a suicide, forming a distinct subgroup in which the perpetrator kills himself/herself after murdering his or her victims. These events have a devastating impact on the individuals, families, and affected communities.

Research has frequently demonstrated that intimate partner violence is a persistent public health problem for women, as well as for the communities in which we live (Belknap, 2007). In addition, intimate partner homicide, the killing of women by a male intimate partner (Dawson & Gartner, 1998; Richards, Gillespie, & Givens, 2014), was a leading cause of death for females, with certain cases ending in the perpetrator committing suicide (Marzuk, Tardiff, & Hirsch, 1992; Mann et al., 2005). In spite of such documentation, the media repeatedly described domestic violence as an individual, discrete event instead of a repeating pattern of violence within an intimate relationship and a devastating societal issue (Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Richards, Gillespie, & Smith, 2011; Guterman, Lee, Taylor, & Rathouz, 2009; Dawson & Straus, 2005). This can be a major problem as media are in a unique position to portray and represent this issue; in fact, Surette (2007) submits that the power of the mass media is both the problem and the resolution; media has the ability to disseminate news more rapidly than any other group in our society and the capability to significantly influence public opinion. Clearly, the news media have played a vital, strategic role in influencing society's perception and actual comprehension of intimate partner violence.

Every day we make decisions on a wide range of subjects and topics, based on the information we have available at that specific time. Some of this information comes from journalists; are they lying to us? Obviously not, at least not intentionally, but for journalists it might be necessary to re-define the truth or reality of a particular situation or behavior. For journalists, truth is known as “functional truth.” “This ‘functional or journalistic truth’ is a process that begins with the professional discipline of assembling and verifying facts; journalists then try to convey a fair and reliable account of their meaning” (American Press Institute, n.d.). Reliable, accurate facts must then be put into a meaningful context in order for people to produce good decision-making, all subject to further investigation. Or is it simply the truth, which the public can handle for just that specific day, and tomorrow it may no longer be true? For journalists, truth is a process; they report what they know to be the truth or the reality for that day. Then, if their schedule demands allow, they continue investigating, and that further exploration might reveal additional truth or it might reveal that what they initially thought to be the truth was in fact accurate or perhaps *not* accurate. Truth may continue to be vague and imprecise in its meaning to journalists. The typical journalist’s schedule is exacting, with unrelenting deadlines; for many reasons, this timetable may not be conducive to accurate, complicated, and exhaustive reporting.

Importantly, within the media is a concept known as *frame analysis*; when a frame turns out to be dominant in popular media, it becomes the leading explanation for intimate partner violence; in fact, in the 1990s the dominant portrayal of domestic violence in the popular media was focused on the victims, and on what they could or should do to stop their toleration or acceptance of domestic abuse. According to Berns (2004), “the voices that carry the most weight, and therefore constitute or construct the official reality of domestic violence for most

people, simultaneously personalize the problem and [ultimately] blame the victim” (Berns, 2004, p. 2). Berns further argues that these conversations effectively blocked any discussions of alternatives that could focus attention on the domestic abusers and their violent actions and on the cultural, structural, and institutional forces prevalent in our society. Ultimately, in spite of attempts to examine various options that would explain violent behavior, at the last, the victim often gets “framed” (Berns, 2004).

Thus, the unique role the media has played in choosing *how* it portrays intimate partner violence can be powerful and persuasive; for example, consider the influence that a mistaken version or interpretation of a problem like intimate partner violence can have in educating the public. The mere idea that a victim might tolerate or accept the abuse seems absurd; in reality, shouldn't the person demonstrating the abusive behavior be the one held responsible for that behavior?

According to Best (1989), the construction of a social issue begins when a private problem is identified and invested with broader meaning considering its effect on society. The interpretation of such social problems is critical at both the individual and societal levels. Kelly (1988) further affirmed that exploring a problem at a personal level, along with naming the problem, helps individuals understand their experiences in relation to the experiences of others, and then deciding on a course of action. At the public level, naming and identifying a problem is the very first step in the developing of shared resources or policy solutions. Most importantly, the ways in which the news media choose to frame domestic violence, especially at its deadliest, can have important consequences in persuading whether or how society identifies the dynamics of such violence, its victims and perpetrators and notably, the public's role, even responsibility in searching for plausible solutions (Gillespie, Richards, Givens, & Smith, 2013).

Femicide-suicide or intimate partner homicide-suicide (IPH-S) is often the violent finale of male-perpetrated domestic violence (Moracco, Runyan, & Butts, 1998). Recent and current research has focused on the media portrayal of domestic homicides alone (Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Gillespie, Richards, & Smith, 2011; Gillespie et al., 2013; Meyers, 1994; Richards et al., 2011). In fact, the “media representations of femicide-suicides have been largely ignored; this gap in the literature is problematic because it hides the dangers of domestic violence—batterers often devolve to the point where they take their own lives as well as the lives of their female intimate partners” (Richards et al., 2011, p. 25).

Although they are lethal for individuals and they have far-reaching, destructive effects on the public health, these events may likewise traumatize families, friends, neighborhoods, and entire communities. Men are most often the perpetrators and women are commonly the victims (Violence Policy Center, 2012). In some instances, secondary victims or collateral intimate partner homicides (Post, Smith, & Meyer, 2009) outside the intimate partnership are also injured or killed, possibly even including children, grandchildren, friends, siblings, or neighbors. The criminal justice system is often bypassed since both victim and perpetrator are deceased, thus presenting an obstacle to any possible closure among family survivors and significant others.

In this dissertation research, we uncovered specific factors in a content analysis of numerous digitized media reports on intimate partner homicide-suicide. These factors or elements may include participants, male perpetrator, female victim, firearm used, current or former spouse or intimate partner, age and race, collateral victims, including children, grandchildren, friends, siblings, or neighbors. We expected to confirm these factors, and related elements through this dissertation research.

There are numerous common factors in cases of homicide-suicide. According to data from the National Violence Death Reporting System (NVDRS), more than 90% of homicide-suicides involve a male perpetrator and 75% of victims are females. Incidents involving strangers are extremely rare, with 95% of victims having known their perpetrator. Slightly more than four out of five (85%) of homicide-suicides involve a single victim, and most incidents involve Whites. Most cases involve the use of firearms, typically handguns (NVDRS, 2002). The picture that emerges is that women face the greatest threat from someone they know, most often a current or former spouse or intimate partner, who has access to, or is armed with, a gun.

Previous research has focused on intimate partner violence, homicide and homicide-suicide, conducted in part by Koziol-McLain et al. in 2006. Most recently, Richards et al. (2011) have examined both intimate partner femicides, as well as the striking number of femicides that are followed by perpetrator suicide. Several homicide-suicide studies have used small samples from a limited geographic area while conducting analysis using content analysis (Salari, 2007; Rosenbaum, 1990; Malphurs, Eisdorfer, & Cohen, 2001; Campanelli & Gilson, 2002; Malphurs & Cohen, 2005). Others have focused on determining the national prevalence of IPH-S and have included relationships between perpetrator and victim that were not necessarily intimate partners, for example, coworkers, neighbors, or siblings (Malphurs & Cohen, 2002; Violence Policy Center, 2012).

The traditional system of criminal record management has not kept up with existing crime scenarios. Unfortunately, outdated manual processes do not provide detailed, dependable, and comprehensive data around the clock, nor do they effectively predict trends or monitor scheduling requirements; these manual processes likewise result in lower productivity and poor utilization of staffing needs (Johnson, 2000).

An obvious solution to this problem lies in the effective use of information technology, specifically Geographic Information System (GIS), which uses geography and computer-generated maps as an interface for integrating and retrieving large amounts of location-based information. Digital maps are the quickest means of visualizing the entire crime scenario; data information displayed graphically provides a powerful decision-making tool for investigators, supervisors, and administrators. In addition, policymakers in police departments could use more complex maps to observe trends in criminal activity, and schedule staff accordingly. Using GIS to identify hotspots, or dense clusters of events, provides a consistent method to measure concentrations of criminal events over time. The visual format shows relationships and patterns that could otherwise be buried in the data (Johnson, 2000).

ESRI Analysis

Determining the origin of a homicide or homicide-suicide cluster consists of several sub-concepts. The cluster must be separated in space and time from other clusters, thus excluding the chance that the current observation is not an offshoot of or combined with a nearby cluster. According to Dallas Drake at the Center for Homicide Research in Minneapolis, MN, the emergence of a (homicide) cluster occurs through the following process: After the homicide cluster first appears, it may appear to recede for lack of additional homicide incidents to fill out the pattern. Following a short reprieve, the homicide cluster may re-form again and even gain in strength and last longer. "It appears the creation of a [homicide] cluster may therefore be a tentative process in its incipient state" (Drake, 2013, p. 8). Most noteworthy, it is during this fragment of the process when an intervention might be most effective! It would seem that future investigations should focus on analyzing the form and duration of the intervention portion as this

might offer indicators of a promising strategy to prevent a homicide, suicide, or homicide-suicide.

The process of defining what is, or is not, a homicide-suicide cluster is problematic on two levels: (a) limited reporting exists, and (b) what is available is focused primarily on demographics, often located in a lesser paragraph on a late page in the newspaper. A likelihood ratio or STAC analysis can be utilized to locate a cluster, situated on a geographical radius over a geographic space. The STAC analysis tells *where* a cluster is located, but does not isolate *when* that cluster begins in time. Drake and colleagues note that temporality is often a neglected component of homicide research (Drake, Proskin, & Crain, 2011).

Clustering has also been assessed in the study of suicide. Jones and colleagues, in their assessment of the distribution of suicides, state, “A suicide cluster can be defined as an excessive number of suicides occurring in close temporal and geographical proximity” (Jones, Gunnell, Platt, Scourfield, & Lloyd, 2013, p. 1). On the other hand, the development of individual homicide *and* suicide clusters may differ from a homicide-suicide dyadic cluster.

Crime mapping can include current developments as well as a wide-ranging application of geographic information technology within law enforcement, and in the example of the current research, incidents of intimate partner homicide-suicide. Ratcliffe proposes specialized training for crime managers to help them better understand crime map analyses, along with the use of mapping to advance crime prevention and reduction efforts (Ratcliffe, 2004).

The current research builds on this past literature by exploring the media content used to describe intimate partner homicide-suicide dyads occurring in 2012 throughout the United States. Chapter Two discusses literature relevant to intimate partner violence generally, and specifically to intimate partner homicide-suicide. The research goals of this dissertation focused on the

following four components: (a) dynamics within, (b) theoretical frameworks, (c) role of media frames, and (d) the use of content analysis to capture the homicide-suicide incidents.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Femicide. Femicide is defined as the killing of a woman by her intimate male partner, including current or former spouses, common-law partners, or boyfriends (Dawson & Straus, 2005; Koziol-McLain et al., 2006). In an 11-city case-control study conducted specifically on femicide, Koziol-McLain and colleagues demonstrated risk factors for femicide-suicide in abusive relationships (2006). The study identified these risk factors in an 11-city case-control study of femicide in the United States. Two risk factors emerged that were unique to femicide-suicides cases compared to overall femicide risk analyses: (a) prior perpetrator suicide threats, and (b) victims having ever been married to the perpetrator (Koziol-McLain et al., 2006).

To determine a woman's level of risk of femicide, Campbell in 1986 developed the Danger Assessment instrument, with consultation and content validity support from battered women, shelter workers, law enforcement officials, and clinical experts on battering (Johns Hopkins, n.d.). Throughout the development of the Danger Assessment instrument and accompanying research, Campbell and colleagues found that almost half of the murdered women whose files were reviewed had failed to recognize the high level of their risk, a situation often seen by domestic violence advocates across the country. Therefore, a tool like the Danger Assessment—or other risk assessment instruments or procedures—may help women (and the advocacy specialists who work with them) to better understand the probability for danger and their level of risk. In 70 to 80% of intimate partner homicides, no matter which partner is killed, the man was known to have physically abused the woman before the murder. Consequently, one of the most effective ways to decrease intimate partner homicide is to identify and intervene promptly with abused women determined to be potentially at risk (McFarlane, Campbell, Wilt, Sachs, & Xiao, 1999).

In 2008, researcher and activist Nancy Glass and colleagues at Johns Hopkins School of Nursing published research findings in the *American Journal of Public Health*, revising the Danger Assessment (DA-R) to predict re-assault, not lethality, in abusive female same-sex relationships (Glass et al., 2008). By means of focus groups and interviews designed to examine the danger assessment within this population, researchers identified new risk factors, developed, and then evaluated a danger assessment tool for same-sex relationships. The new tool comprises eight original DA items and 10 new items; a short four-item version called the Lethality Assessment has been developed for use by law enforcement as well as for advocates in hospital Emergency Departments (Messing, Amanor-Boadu, Cavanaugh, Glass, & Campbell, 2013).

Fundamental Topics

What is intimate partner violence? The terms *intimate partner violence* (IPV) or *domestic violence* describe physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples, and it can vary in frequency and severity, although the abuse tends to increase in frequency and severity over time. IPV occurs on a continuum, ranging from verbal criticism, to coercive control, to one punch that may or may not impact the victim, to chronic and severe battering, and ultimately ending in murder. This violence typically results from an abuse of power or the domination and victimization of a physically less powerful person by a physically more powerful person (Flitcraft, Hadley, Hendricks-Matthews, McLeer, & Warshaw, 1992).

The Iowa Domestic Abuse Death Review Team explained:

Domestic violence or intimate partner violence is a pattern of coercive tactics—including emotional, physical, sexual and/or economic abuse—that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners to gain or maintain power and control over them. Abusers

do not batter because they are out of control. It's important to fully comprehend most domestic violence is not an angry outburst, it is a learned behavior. This learned behavior is further reinforced when abusers are not arrested, prosecuted or otherwise held accountable for their actions. Abusers often receive the message from society at large that violence against their intimate partners is acceptable. (Iowa Domestic Abuse Death Review Team, 2009, p. 3)

Victims of domestic violence cross all socio-economic, ethnic, racial, sexual orientation, educational, age and religious lines; to date, research has shown no distinguishing relationship between personality type and being a victim (Stark, Flitcraft, & Frazier, 1979).

So often many people ask, "Why do victims stay in abusive relationships?" There are many reasons victims of domestic violence do not leave their abusers. Some include fear or terror (a majority of women murdered by their partners are either estranged, separated, or in the process of leaving the relationship), and a genuine lack of affordable housing, childcare, employment opportunities, and effective legal protection from the abuser. Religious and cultural beliefs, family or community pressures, immigration status, and the desire to keep a family together may also make leaving an abusive relationship difficult. Despite multiple barriers, many victims of domestic violence do leave their abusers, though they may have to leave many times, often from 7-12 times, before they ultimately escape successfully and permanently. Leaving can be viewed as a process for a victim of domestic abuse summarized through the theoretical process of behavior change, first developed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1984) and now utilized for various types of behavior change, including smoking cessation. Most importantly, behavior change of any kind simply takes time; it is not an event, it is a process. However, too often we seem to focus on what the victim does or does not do, and it really shouldn't matter.

The victims' choices around staying or leaving are not the major issue. What the major issue should be is to focus on the abuser and his behavior; what the abuser does or does not do and whether the abuser is ultimately held accountable for his behavior. The responsibility for domestic violence (as for other crimes) belongs solely to the perpetrator of that crime, in this case, the abuser (Short, Hadley, & Bates, 2002).

Journalists who write domestic violence stories rely on police officers as their most reliable source and don't take the time, or even have the time, to search for information from abuse experts or family members. In addition, likely due to time constraints, they rarely write a comprehensive account of the story, but instead simply include the following basic information: who, what, where, when, and how. In the early days of the domestic violence movement over the past 30 years, journalists would often write complete accounts. This was apparent in just one of a series of articles written on health care response to this issue (Starr & Brandt, 1996).

Like victims, domestic violence abusers come from all backgrounds. Conversely, abusers do share some characteristics with other abusers, in that they tend to rationalize their abusive actions, fail to take responsibility or accountability for the abuse, and use similar strategies to gain and maintain power and control over their partners. Abusers typically present a different personality outside of their relationship at home than they show to their intimate partner behind closed doors; all of this functions to complicate a victim's ability to describe and attempt to clarify her experience, to be believed, and to seek assistance (Iowa Domestic Abuse Death Review Team, 2009).

Often the abuser has a very different public image than private image (Bragg & Caliber Associates, 2003). Abusers may show a different face to the world than they do to the intimate partners in their homes. It is not unusual to hear in a media report that an abuser was a model

employee, and that neighbors thought the abuser was a sweet person, or that an abuser volunteered at a local school. One of the best ways to collect accurate information on intimate partner violence is to talk to domestic violence experts who can discuss the dynamics within the relationship, putting the crime into its social context; this should clarify the apparent inconsistency, which is not unusual, atypical, or shocking (de Benedictis, Jaffee, & Segal, 2012).

Note that it is also not uncommon for the media to lack an understanding of the dynamics taking place within a violent relationship (Bullock & Cubert, 2002). The research of Bullock and Cubert (2002) incorporated content analyses on domestic violence fatalities and how they are portrayed in newspapers. Media have the power to bring awareness of domestic violence to our society, but they often fail to do so. Often, media seem to conclude the victim (usually the woman) deserves what came to her because she did something to provoke the man, and she didn't leave him as expected. The limited research in this area has demonstrated that added effort may be necessary when producing and writing these stories (Bullock & Cubert, 2002).

The media tend to frame IPV as a private problem between intimates, rather than a public or community problem; seldom does the media articulate what is truly taking place within these relationships (Gillespie et al., 2013; Richards et al., 2011). What is more, abuse is often framed as a woman's problem caused by something the woman did or failed to do, while male abusers are seldom held accountable for their behavior (Berns, 2004; Gillespie et al., 2013; Nettleton, 2011; Richards et al., 2011; Thill & Dill, 2009).

In an investigation of almost 1,000 newspaper articles published over a 6-year period (2002 to 2007) focused on femicide, Richards and colleagues analyzed newspaper articles about domestic homicides taking place in North Carolina. Here, researchers found the same pattern of blaming the victim and exonerating the perpetrator (Richards et al., 2011). Attributions for

victim blame included her (the victim's) failure to alert authorities about the offender, disregarding family's pleas to leave the perpetrator, and failure to file charges. Attributions that tended to exonerate the perpetrator included making excuses such as reporting that he is not a bad person, that something must have triggered his behavior ("he snapped"), or taking into consideration his mental health, described as depression, as a justification for his behavior.

In another investigation, added frames in these articles described the event as an isolated incident, rather than as part of a larger pattern of intimate partner violence, and included blaming the criminal justice system. Additionally, a pattern of victim blaming was present, such as saying the victim failed to adequately protect herself against the perpetrator (Gillespie et al., 2013).

Improving media reporting. Several national groups have not only conducted research on media reporting of intimate partner violence, but they have later worked with journalists to improve the accuracy of the reporting on intimate partner violence, specifically intimate partner homicide-suicide (Rhode Island Media Study, 2012). These organizations include the Violence Policy Center, Rhode Island Domestic Violence Coalition, the Washington State Coalition against Domestic Violence, and the Iowa Domestic Abuse Fatality Review Team (Iowa Department of Public Health, n.d.).

Acknowledging that domestic violence is a very difficult issue to investigate and a complex one on which to report, and after more than 8 years of reviewing domestic abuse deaths, the Iowa Domestic Abuse Death Review Team members decided to create and publish a guide designed to help journalists to accurately write about domestic violence homicides and other related stories. As those who work in mass communication understand, language is crucial to shaping a story—and the group members strongly believed that media can play an essential and

valuable role in not only reporting these crimes, but also importantly, educating the public about domestic violence (Iowa Domestic Abuse Death Review Team, 2009).

Researchers have investigated various factors associated with homicide-suicide including (a) separation or estrangement (Dawson & Gartner, 1998; Bourget, Gagne, & Moamai, 2000); (b) previous and/or ongoing domestic abuse and violence (Campanelli & Gilson, 2002; Rosenbaum, 1990); and (c) the use of a firearm (Koziol-McLain et al., 2006). A relatively recent exploration of intimate partner homicide-suicide examined male proprietariness, an obsessive possessiveness that focuses on power and control (Rosenbaum, 1990; Campanelli & Gilson, 2002). Intimate partner homicide-suicides typically can take place following separation, and are deliberate actions, both of which reinforce this explanation. As the authors note, *“If I can’t have you, nobody can”* is a common refrain in cases of intimate partner homicide and homicide-suicide.

Violence policy center. A national non-profit educational organization located in Washington, DC, the Violence Policy Center (VPC) conducts research and public education on violence in America; VPC provides information and analyses to policymakers, journalists, and advocates and to the general public. Statistics indicate that, on average, more than three women a day are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in the United States. In 2005, 1,181 women were murdered by an intimate partner (Violence Policy Center, 2012). Women are overly affected by intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The Violence Policy Center investigations have found that 16 times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,571 victims out of 1,669) than were killed by male strangers (98 victims) in single victim / single offender incidents in 2010 (Puzzanchera & Kang, 2013). Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveal that nearly one in four women in the United States reports

experiencing violence by a current or former spouse or boyfriend at some point in her life (CDC, 2014). One in 4 women (24.3%) and 1 in 7 men (13.8%) aged 18 and older in the United States has been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Black et al., 2011). Nearly, 15% of women (14.8%) and 4% of men have been injured as a result of IPV that included rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Black et al., 2011). In 2010, 241 males and 1,095 females were murdered by an intimate partner (Puzzanchera & Kang, 2013). Approximately 29% of women and 10% of men in the US have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner and reported at least one measured impact related to these or other forms of violence in that relationship (Black et al., 2011). Of the almost 3.5 million violent crimes committed against family members, 49% of these were crimes against spouses; 84% of spouse abuse victims were females, and 86% of victims of dating partner abuse were females. In addition, Mathew Durose and colleagues found an ethnic division within domestic violence with American Indian and Alaska Native women reporting extremely high rates of intimate partner violence (Durose et al., 2005, pp. 5-6). Without a doubt, IPV is a serious and preventable public health problem that affects millions of Americans:

- Durose et al. (2005) examined 787 identifiable incidents of spousal murder. A single offender against a single victim was the most common characteristic of spouse murder and boyfriend/girlfriend murder. Males were substantially more likely to murder their spouses (83%) and dating partners (75%).
- One in 4 women have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner, while 1 in 7 men have experienced the same (<http://www.cdc.gov>).
- One in 6 women (16%) have been stalked during their lifetimes, compared to 1 in 19 men (5%; <http://www.cdc.gov>).

- For female homicide victims who knew their offenders, 65% (1,017) were wives or intimate acquaintances of their killers (Violence Policy Center, 2012).
- Sixteen times as many females were murdered by a male they knew (1,571) than were killed by male strangers (98 victims; Violence Policy Center, 2012).
- Estimates affirm that more than three women a day are killed by their intimate partners. In 2000, 1,247 women and 440 men were killed by an intimate partner. In recent years, an intimate partner killed approximately 33% of female murder victims and 4% of male murder victims (Rennison, 2003).
 - 90.6% involved husbands killing their wives and no one else.
 - 50% of offenders in state prison for spousal abuse had killed their wives.
 - Wives were more likely than husbands to be killed by their spouses.
 - 81% of all persons killed by a spouse are women.

(Durose et al., 2005, pp. 5, 9)

Dynamics within. A growing body of literature confirms “homicide-suicide is patterned; meaning a homicide is more likely to be followed by suicide when there is a close bond between the victim and perpetrator” (Koziol-McLain et al., 2006, p. 4). One proposed explanation for this pattern is that the abuser may become sorry and repentant after killing the person who is likely his primary source of support and love, and then commits suicide (Stack, 1997). This hypothetical account, however, is disputed by the premeditated nature of the majority of intimate partner homicide-suicides (Dawson & Straus, 2005; Marzuk et al., 1992; Krulewitch, 2009) and the proximity in time of the two acts. It is important to take into “consideration the gendered nature of intimate partner homicide-suicides and history of abuse within these relationships” (Koziol-McLain et al., 2006, p. 4).

Elder abuse. Elder abuse is a recognized social problem, which is thought to be increasing in scope with the aging of the general population (Bonnie & Wallace, 2002). In her research on the elderly, Salari (2007) commented that intimate partner homicide-suicide constitutes the most violent domestic abuse outcome and resolutely stated how vital it is that these actions be recognized as domestic abuse and violence. Salari's research in 2007 used content analysis to analyze 225 murder-suicide events (444 deaths) among dyads with at least one member, 60 or older. Data were collected from newspaper articles, TV news transcripts, police reports, and obituaries published between 1999 and 2005. Findings suggested the most hazardous setting was the home, and the majority of perpetrators were men. Firearms were most often used in committing the violence. Salari confirmed that while relationship conflict was present in some cases, it was only slightly greater than the divorce rate for that age group. Illness was cited in just over half of the cases, but not necessarily in the potential victim; in fact, 30% of the sick elderly couples had only a perpetrator who was ill (Salari, 2007).

Intimate partner homicide-suicide in later life. A number of researchers and authors have included mercy killings in their discussions of intimate partner homicide-suicide; these events may occur when failing health prevents caregiving, which is a possible homicide-suicide trigger among elderly adults (Koziol-McLain et al., 2006; Marzuk et al., 1992; Malphurs & Cohen, 2002). An article by Malphurs and Cohen (2005) found that caregiving efforts and associated tension, along with domestic violence, differentiated older adult homicide-suicide from older adult homicide.

Suicide pacts. Dawson and Gartner (1998) examined homicide-suicide events in Canada and reported, "In 12 of 14 cases attributed to mercy killing, there was no indication that the victim had been involved in the decision that ended her life. In other words, permission to end a

life was not given” (Dawson & Gartner, 1998, p. 27). You might ask, *why do suicidal perpetrators include their partners in these violent events?* Salari (2007) states that those who have a predominantly suicidal motive may actually feel that their partner would suffer without them; they then make the unilateral decision to end life for both parties. Salari confirmed the above findings, validating that evidence of suicide pacts and mercy killings was very rare. A CDC definition of mercy killing requires an act to bring about instantaneous death ostensibly in a painless way and based on a clear indication that the dying person truly wanted to die because of a terminal or hopeless condition (Karch, Logan, McDaniel, Parks, & Patel, 2012). Salari (2007) communicates an earnest, serious warning to researchers who are coding violent deaths *not* to assume that a murder-suicide by a sick, elderly couple qualifies as a suicide pact, unless specific evidence exists. In addition, media reports of intimate partner homicide-suicide in later life often describe the motive as a “mercy killing” without proper investigation into the specifics of the case, especially with regard to consent of the victim. In fact, mercy killing motives are very rare (Malphurs & Cohen, 2005; Salari, 2007).

For all these reasons, practitioners must be committed to and specifically trained to properly screen for and fully explore these events. In particular, suicidal men in this age range must be recognized as a potential threat to others, primarily to their partner, the potential victim. Unquestionably, clinicians should be educated about the specific patterns of fatal intimate partner violence in later life dyads, and if appropriate, provided with strategies for support and prevention. Salari (2007) confirmed homicide was occasionally the primary motive, and the perpetrators in these cases resembled the “intimate terrorist” as seen in Johnson’s classification scheme; victims in those cases were often terrorized before the actual murder (Johnson, 2008). According to Johnson and Ferraro (2000) the most dangerous domestic violence perpetrator is an

intimate terrorist who uses threats, violence, and other power and control methods to strictly isolate the victim. Intimate terrorist perpetrators are normally male, patriarchal, blame others, do not take any responsibility for their actions or behaviors, and are potentially homicidal (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). Be aware that there may be some resistance among family members of the couple to recognize the intimate terrorist in older persons; nevertheless, clinicians need to be aware of the varying primary motivations for intimate partner homicide-suicide violence, in order to detect this type of violence and, if possible, shelter the victim before a fatality results.

Recordkeeping - No national database. While several noted national organizations maintain data on homicides and suicides, no group keeps official homicide-suicide or murder-suicide statistics, as of this writing. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), part of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, issues the FBI Supplementary Homicide Reports: 1980-2011 (Puzzanchera & Kang, 2013).

- The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR) compiles basic information on serious crimes from participating police archives relating to the circumstances of homicides in its unpublished Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR). Submitted monthly, this supplementary data consists of the age, gender, race, and ethnicity of both victims and offenders; types of weapons used; the relationship of victims to offenders; and circumstances of the murders. SHR data are updated throughout the year as homicide reports are forwarded by state UCR programs (Violence Policy Center, 2012). However, according to the UCR, supplementary data are provided on just a subset of homicide cases.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention administers the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), which collects data on the national prevalence of

intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking among women and men in the United States. Published in 2011, the 2010 survey is the first year of the survey and provides baseline data that will be used to track IPV, SV, and stalking trends

(<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/index.html>).

- Created in 2002 by the CDC, the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) is a surveillance system that assembles data on violent deaths in 18 of the 50 United States. Linking information about the “who, when, where and how” in violent deaths should provide insight about “why” they occurred. NVDRS collects data from four major sources regarding the same incident, and pools information into a usable anonymous database. An incident can include one victim or multiple victims. The four major data sources are
 - Death certificates,
 - Coroner/medical examiner reports,
 - Law enforcement reports, and
 - Crime laboratories.

Additional facts collected include

- The circumstances related to suicide, such as depression and major life stresses, like relationship or financial problems,
- The relationship between perpetrator and victim, and
- Whether there were multiple homicides or homicide followed by suicide

(<http://cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nvdrs/>).

The National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), housed at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, GA, has only recently been re-funded to

expand its efforts from 18 states to all 50 states. The national system will allow the CDC to provide data and information for every state in order to advise on prevention and intervention efforts. Up-to-date and current information available on the national scope of violent deaths should allow enhanced monitoring and tracking of trends, while informing national efforts.

- The Violence Policy Center, a national tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization based in Washington, DC works to stop the annual toll of death and injury through examining homicides, suicides, and related crimes that take place across the United States. This research relies on information collected from news stories posted on the Internet throughout a 6-month period; the collected data are published every 4 years and it remains the largest survey of murder-suicide in the United States ever conducted (Violence Policy Center, 2012).

Early research. Marzuk and colleagues (1992) collected information across all demographics and proposed a set of typologies to portray the relationship between perpetrator and victim. These typologies include important factors and categories recognizable in murder-suicides; examples of the former include amorous jealousy and declining health, and examples of the latter include filicide-suicide, familicide, and extra-familial IPV (Marzuk et al., 1992).

Newspaper surveillance studies have been useful in examining the relationship between perpetrators and victims to determine the estimated incidence of homicide-suicides in the United States (Malphurs & Cohen, 2002). Fatality reports in several individual states have also provided useful indicators of fatal family violence, but right now there is not any national system or classification in place to accurately link homicide and suicide deaths across the United States. In addition, there are no standardized operational definitions, authenticated taxonomic systems, or

national surveillance networks for these events, all of which are needed to develop viable prevention strategies.

Costs of IPV. “Each year, more than 30,000 Americans die in gun suicides, homicides and unintentional shootings as a result of the ready availability, and accessibility, of specific classes of firearms. Gun violence is more than just a crime issue; VPC states it is a broad-based public health crisis of which crime is merely the most recognized aspect”

(<http://www.vpc.org/aboutvpc.htm>).

Costs of IPV – Financial. The economic costs of domestic violence include, among other elements, *estimated annual costs of intervention services*—first responders, medical care, and mental health care—as well as for *lost productivity*. Lost productivity means that those affected by domestic violence are at risk of underperforming on the job, they may miss work, and perhaps even lose their jobs. At the same time, the employer may be experiencing the effects of this lost productivity. Domestic violence therefore has costs for individual employees, for the employers of these victims, and for businesses that respond to the needs of victims of domestic violence. Indirect costs capture the effects of domestic violence that have monetary value, but for which no direct monetary interchange is made (Day, McKenna, & Bowlus, 2005, pp. 8-9). These costs are often associated with the direct impact domestic violence has on the labor force, concerning both participation and productivity (Day et al., 2005). Reduced earnings, increased absenteeism, and lower productivity are among the most obvious indirect costs of domestic violence. However, and even more importantly, researchers and scholars have determined the labor and productivity costs of domestic violence are magnified far beyond the abused women’s household finances and the employers’ profits, to affect entire national economies. This ripple effect is at times referred to as the “economic multiplier effect” (Duvvury, Grown, & Redner,

2004, p. 44). Since each dollar lost is a dollar not spent or invested in the nation's economy, abused women's diminished earnings capacity may result in decreased savings and reduced investment rates, all of which contribute to shrinking the state's tax base (Day et al., 2005).

A 2004 study examined data from the National Violence Against Women Survey and Medical Expenditure Panel Survey in order to estimate costs for the year 1995. This survey provided estimates of the economic cost of IPV perpetrated against women in the US, including expenditures for medical care and mental health services as well as lost productivity from injury and premature death. "Intimate partner violence against women cost \$5.8 billion dollars (95% confidence interval) in 1995, including \$320 million for rapes, \$4.2 billion for physical assault, \$342 million for stalking and \$893 million for murders" (Max, Rice, Finkelstein, Bardwell, & Leadbetter, 2004, p. 259). Updated to 2003 dollars and beyond, the costs would total more than \$8.3 billion, demonstrating that intimate partner violence is very costly in the United States; therefore, any concerted efforts to reduce this violence would offer substantial savings.

Costs of IPV - Health care. The cost of health care services consumed as a result of domestic violence, often including emergency room and clinic visits, hospital stays, mental health services, medication, and physical therapy, is one of the most sizeable components of health care cost (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003) monitored by the NCIPC of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While there is increasing evidence that unmistakably demonstrates the health consequences of intimate partner violence against women, *the precise economic costs* of this violence remain largely unknown, especially at the local level (Flitcraft et al., 1992).

An early study by Wisner, Gilmer, Saltzman, and Zink (1999) offered an analysis of the total cost of health care services at a Minnesota HMO. A group of 126 victims of intimate

partner violence was compared to 1,007 general female enrollees in the health plan for 1994 in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. Researchers used regression analysis to show an annual difference of \$1,775 more for victims, which represents a 92% higher cost to the plan compared to non-victimized women.

Another study using an HMO population was conducted in 2006, comparing long-term costs associated with IPV overall in a sample of female HMO enrollees. Researchers compared 185 women ages 21-55, who had been physically and/or sexually abused between 1989 and 1997 and enrolled in a multisite metropolitan HMO, to 198 never-abused women enrolled in the same plan who had been matched using propensity score stratification. Results indicated that average healthcare costs for women who reported physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse and violence exceeded those of never-abused women by \$1,700 over the 3-year study period. Costs associated with neurologic symptoms, injuries, mental health care, and unclassified symptoms accounted for most of these differences (Jones et al., 2006). These researchers confirmed the most fundamental outcome of this study: Intimate partner violence elevates health care costs, not only among women currently suffering from abuse, but also among women for whom the abuse has stopped. It would seem that efforts to control healthcare costs should, as a result, focus on early detection and prevention of IPV.

Costs of IPV - Human, societal, and workplace. Those who have worked in the field of family and intimate partner violence know the true costs of domestic violence are to its victims, the children, families, and communities, and cannot be expressed merely in words or dollars. It's essential to address the costs of domestic violence on the individual level as well as on community businesses in terms of decreased worker productivity, time away from work, and other economic costs (Miller, Cohen, & Wiersema, 1996). "Being battered doesn't necessarily

affect a woman's chance of getting a job, but it definitely appears to reduce her chance of keeping a job – this translates into increased costs for businesses in terms of recruitment, hiring, training, and retention. Consequently business leaders have a vested interest in reducing domestic violence” (Sorenson & Wiebe, 2004, p. 22).

For example, a male perpetrator of intimate partner violence may be so intent on monitoring and controlling his partner that he misses work or uses company time or equipment to harass her; this cannot only harm her ability to get or hold a job, but can also sabotage his own employment standing. In 2013, Mankowski, Galvez, Perrin, Hanson, and Glass (2013) assessed various types of work-related intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetration and relationship to perpetrators' work performance and employment. In this research, five discrete clusters of work-related abusive behaviors were identified: (a) low-level tactics, (b) job interference, (c) job interference with threatened or actual violence, (d) extreme abuse without jealousy, and (e) extreme abuse. Analyses exposed significant differences between the clusters on ethnicity, parental status, partner's employment status, income, and education. Notably, the probability of men's abusive and controlling behaviors toward their partners markedly impacting their own job performance was almost 4 times greater among those in the *extreme abuse cluster* than those in the *low-level tactics cluster*. Employers can use this research to bring their policies and training programs up-to-date with the ultimate goal of reducing IPV that clearly can have a negative effect on the workplace (Mankowski et al., 2013).

And finally, it's critical to understand that the costs and effects of domestic violence do not automatically end when the violence stops, if the domestic violence can truly be ended. Many victims of domestic violence (including children who witness such violence, whether or

not they experience it directly) require medical, mental health, and/or related social services for years after the violence ends.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Most significant for the public health of our nation are the results of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study. Nothing in recent years has so disturbed and, at the same time, so confirmed the association between childhood abuse and subsequent adult health as the ACE study. Primary clinicians and researchers Felitti et al. (1998) first identified the ACEs in the late 1990s, connecting the relationship of health risk behavior and disease in adulthood to the degree of exposure to emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, and household dysfunction during childhood. The research documenting this relationship included a questionnaire on potential adverse childhood experiences that was mailed to 13,494 adults who had completed a standardized medical evaluation at a large HMO; 9,508 (70.5%) responded.

In total, seven categories of adverse childhood experiences were studied: psychological abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, violence against mother, living with household members who were substance abusers, or mentally ill or suicidal, or ever imprisoned. More than half of respondents reported at least one ACE, and one-fourth reported more than two. In fact, researchers found a graded relationship between the number of categories of childhood exposure experienced and each of the adult health risk behaviors and diseases that were studied ($p < .001$), including short- and long-term physical, emotional, and mental health consequences, including ischemic heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, skeletal fractures, and liver disease. Persons who had experienced multiple categories of childhood exposure were likely to have multiple health risk factors later in life. Notably, these health consequences could persist long after the abuse ended and the violence had ceased, and may last a lifetime. Felitti et al., originally studying obesity in adult women, began to concentrate on ACEs and domestic violence after

learning of the extraordinary associations between childhood maltreatment and future adult health consequences (1998).

The recurring pattern of IPV. To gain a complete, comprehensive understanding of this issue, it is critical to understand that domestic violence is not an isolated, individual event as thought by many; rather, it is a continuing pattern of repeated behaviors. Unlike stranger-to-stranger violence, domestic violence assaults are repeated against the same victim by the same perpetrator. A Rhode Island study of media coverage of domestic violence homicide found that journalists often portrayed the murder as an isolated “unpredictable private tragedy” rather than a repeating pattern of abuse, therefore missing a timely opportunity to enlighten the public about the broad nature of these intimate and violent relationships. Early researchers in this field, Marzuk, Tardiff and Hirsch (1992), maintained that treating these as separate events served to function as a barrier to understanding and preventing homicide-suicide. Many women from shelter surveys report their partners engage in a campaign of terror and do not just commit isolated acts of violence. Johnson (1995) refers to this type of abuse as *intimate terrorism*, while Stark terms it *coercive control*, though both terms sum up just how patriarchy allows or even encourages abusive males to maintain power and control in relationships (B. E. Hayes, 2013).

Theoretical Frameworks

In general, there are four fundamental theoretical frameworks that describe abuse and violence in intimate relationships (Brewster, 2002; Johnson, 2006a, 2006b).

Psychological theory. Battering is understood as a possible outcome of childhood abuse, or of a psychological characteristic of the person: a personality trait (such as the need to control), a personality disturbance (such as borderline personality), psychopathology (such as antisocial personality), a psychological disorder (such as post-traumatic stress, poor impulse control, low

self-esteem, or substance abuse; Brewster, 2002). Psychological theories often propose that a woman doesn't leave the abuser because she has just too much time, energy, and emotion invested in the relationship; in addition, she would feel significant shame if her terrible secret were ever to be found out (Buchbinder & Eisikovits, 2003). For some women, the shame of their abuse and failed relationship (for which society has helped her feel responsible) is so great that they will do nearly anything to keep all of this from public view. Somewhat akin to being held hostage in circumstances not dissimilar to those with the Stockholm syndrome, a woman is completely isolated and subjugated by her abuser, and similarly isolated from other support systems. Her survival is literally entirely dependent on the whims, desires, and purposes of the abuser; making this dynamic seem even more bizarre, she may even be shown occasional kindness by the abuser and, therefore, may develop an emotional bond with him (James & Gilliland, 2012).

Sociological theory. Sociological theories usually contain some suggestion that intimate violence is the result of a learned behavior. One such theory suggests that violence is learned within a family, and a partner or victim often stays caught in a cycle of violence learned as a child. If the victim does not leave, the batterer may view his violence as an action that was successful in producing positive results, or at minimum, in fact, the exact result the abuser desired. Thus, violence could be seen as effective in controlling the partner and that is likely the abuser's goal. Children in these families may learn behaviors from their parents; boys may develop into batterers and girls may become battering victims. This cycle can be viewed as "*that's all they know*" (Hadley, 2013).

Another theory suggests that lower income subcultures may show higher rates of intimate partner abuse, as significant research shows that violence is more common in lower income

populations. According to researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, almost two million women in American are battered by their partners annually; they determined that higher rates of abuse occurred in impoverished communities. Patricia O'Campo, an Associate Professor of Populations and Family Health Sciences at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, confirmed that women living in low-income areas faced hardships created by social and economic constraints, in addition to the psychological ailments suffered by all abused women (O'Campo, McDonnell, Gielen, Burke, & Chen, 2002). Dr. O'Campo and colleagues recruited 611 women, all who were living in low-income, urban neighborhoods in Baltimore. Because HIV/AIDS was a particular problem for this population, they enrolled an equal number of HIV-negative and HIV-positive women. Of the sample, 390 women had experienced physical or sexual abuse from an intimate partner some time after age 18, and were included in the study. Of these 390 women, the majority was African American and almost half were infected with HIV (O'Campo et al., 2002). Additionally, in my experience, violence is also more *visible* in these populations, noting there is a greater degree of familiarity and awareness of the violence that is literally all around. For example, during the hot summer months, higher-income homes are more likely to rely on air conditioners, and windows are kept closed. In lower-income homes, on the other hand, windows may be wide open and the sounds of violence, including arguments and subsequent assaults, can easily be heard throughout a neighborhood (Ryan, Anastario, & DaCunha, 2006).

A variant on this theory is the belief that violence is innate or inherent in all social systems. One way to determine if aggression is an innate human trait is to examine other cultures; if just one culture can be found that values cooperation and nurturing over violence, then we can conclude that aggression is a learned cultural response, not a human instinct.

“Innate Aggression” is the title of a short essay that challenges the conventional wisdom that humans are naturally aggressive, violent, and warlike people with resources (financial, social contacts, prestige) and may use these resources to escape abuse (hotel versus shelter), and to control family members, while those without resources may resort to physical violence and threats to accomplish this control. In spite of almost 30 years working in this field, I am reluctant to believe that anyone is intrinsically prone to violence, but may become violent by simply repeating what took place in the family of origin. Nevertheless, coercive control and any potential associated violence should not be treated as inevitable or acceptable in our culture; instead, consider that the violence may become conspicuous or visible under certain circumstances or situations.

Feminist or societal-structural theory. According to this theory, males often use violence to control and limit the freedom and independence of their partners. A variety of customs of male dominance in our society support and maintain these inequities in relationships. This feminist theory fits the narrative told to me by countless women victims throughout the years.

Violent individuals theory. For many years it was assumed that domestic batterers were a special group—that while they assaulted their current or former intimates, they were not violent in the outside world. There is cause to question how fully this actually describes batterers. Although the full extent of the violence that batterers perpetrate is unknown, there is evidence that many batterers are violent beyond the domestic setting, and many have prior criminal records for both violent and nonviolent behavior (Johnson & Leone, 2005). This may suggest that batterers are less unique, and may be more accurately viewed as violent criminals.

However, there are many abusers who are only violent against their partners, and not

violent otherwise; this pattern accurately describes many of the cases seen in my clinical practice throughout the years. As discussed previously, batterers often have a very different public image than private image, which accounts for and serves to reinforce the hidden nature of domestic abuse and violence. Friends, family, and community often simply do not see the person who is controlling, beating, and battering the partner behind the front door at home. “Usually people outside of the immediate family are not aware of, and do not witness, the perpetrator’s abusive and violent behaviors. Abusers who maintain an amiable public image accomplish the important task of deceiving others into thinking they are loving, normal” and thus incapable of domestic violence (Bragg & Caliber Associates, 2003).

Gender theory. Although not one of the central theories, most researchers now confirm that you can’t talk about theories involving intimate partner violence without looking at *gender theory*. According to Risman, the central point of modern or contemporary gender theory is that gender is a characteristic not only of individuals, but also of social interaction and social structure (Risman, 2004). Research in this area has provided the opportunity to explore theories, hypotheses, and models.

Michael Johnson. One consistent theme moving through the work of Michael Johnson (Johnson, 1995; Johnson, Conklin, & Menon, 2002; Johnson, 2006a, 2006b) is the central role of *gender theory* in intimate partner violence. Many community members, as well as the general public, do not seem to understand the intricacies and dynamics involved in domestic violence and may feel that all intimate partner violence is the same. Johnson offers a significant body of research to contradict this understanding. In a series of published articles from 1993 to 2006, he discussed four types or categories of intimate partner violence at length:

1. Intimate terrorism refers to the use of violence or a threat of violence as the primary tactic used by the abuser in an attempt to take or maintain general control over one's intimate partner. It is this population that is likely implicated in intimate partner homicide-suicide.
2. Situational couple violence involves the escalation of partner conflict into arguments that accelerate to violence. However, there is a paucity of qualitative researchers studying this type of violence, and a great diversity of patterns of violence within this category (Johnson, 2006b). Unlike intimate terrorism, there is no one major behavior or action here, which contributes to the many challenges in conducting research on this category of couple violence.
3. Violent resistance is a non-controlling type of violence enacted in the face of intimate terrorism. It frequently occurs in extremely controlling, abusive relationships (Johnson, 2006a; Johnson & Hotton, 2003). One could consider violent resistance as a type of self-preservation in the face of extreme violence and abuse.
4. Mutual violence control has been identified in very small numbers; it appears to “involve mutual patterns of coercive control—in effect, a violent battle for control of the relationship” (Johnson, 2006b, p. 224). In addition, Johnson points out that many experts think this model is not “real,” that it is, in fact, a result of both measurement ambiguity and a lack of precision (Johnson, 2006a).

Johnson pointed out that there is considerable evidence in the qualitative work of several feminist scholars who have studied intimate terrorism that traditional gender attitudes serve to legitimize men's control over “their” women. Early researchers Dobash and Dobash (1979) called this the “*I married you, so I own you*” attitude. In fact, Johnson further subdivided the

intimate terrorist group into two segments, with the first being applicable to intimate partner homicide-suicide, called *emotionally dependent intimate terrorists*. This group scored highest on a measure of borderline personality organization, dependency, and jealousy. Men of this group believe they must control their partners in order not to lose them; a common refrain “*if I can't have you, no one can*” is a persistent theme in cases of homicide-suicide. These men are not often violent toward anyone else other than their partners and have no recorded history of criminal behavior. This is the type we will see in the majority of intimate partner homicide-suicides in this research.

Johnson further comments on a series of cluster analyses of male batterers by colleague Amy Holtzworth-Munroe which identified three types of perpetrators: Two fit the intimate terrorism description, the other fits situational couple violence. The intimate terrorist groups are characterized by higher scores on misogynistic positions compared to both nonviolent husbands or those involved in situational couple violence (Johnson, 2006a; Holtzworth-Munroe, 2000).

The dynamics within - Coercive control. The fundamental role of coercive control in intimate partner violence was first articulated in the 1970s by activists in the battered women’s movement (Schechter, 1982) and by feminist theorists (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996; Yllo & Bograd, 1988). These theorists and activists contended that intimate partner violence was embedded in the profoundly gendered issues of power and control. It was not until the 1990s that more than one type of intimate partner violence was recognized and acknowledged; these other types were not equally represented in the scope of research designs (Johnson, 1995).

Although Michael Johnson (1995, 2006a, 2006b) and Evan Stark (2007) use different terms, *intimate terrorism* and *coercive control* are actually about men’s power and control over their intimate partners. Domestic violence often includes physical assaults, and is the emphasis

on many intimate partner surveys (e.g., Conflict Tactics Scale), but the actual physical violence may only be used occasionally by the abuser, or even not be used at all; this is especially common as the relationship evolves over time. The abuser does not have to use physical strength to make the victim do what he wants; she will behave, as he demands, out of terror or fear of consequences if she does not. A victim remembers what the abuser has done in the past, and knows and fears what he is capable of doing to her again.

Evan Stark. Early activist, colleague, researcher, and long-term faculty in the Rutgers School of Public Affairs and Administration, Evan Stark has focused his work and research on domestic violence and shelter services for victims. In recent times, Stark's groundbreaking research has focused specifically on the concept of coercive control within violent relationships (Stark, 2007). This theory may well offer a basic framework for this dissertation on intimate partner homicide-suicide.

Coercive control underlies much of what takes place within a violent, intimate relationship, particularly the type most likely to end in homicide or homicide-suicide. This is the type of IPH-S (intimate partner homicide-suicide) that is also confirmed in Johnson's intimate terrorism classification (Johnson, 2006a, 2006b). Coercive control goes far beyond an argument between two individuals that escalates into a physical altercation. This powerful influence encompasses the immediate moment as well as the comprehensive aspect of abusive behavior. Coercion focuses on the current time and includes physical violence, along with threats and intimidation by the abuser. This coercion is used precisely so the abused partner gives in and goes along with the abuser's demands (B. E. Hayes, 2013). The abused partner or victim will likely do as the abuser demands as a way of "keeping peace," avoiding an assault, and staying safe. The control is not limited to just a single moment in time; it involves the sustained

deprivation and exploitation of the woman for the abuser's advantage. Taken together, Evan Stark argues that coercion and control work together to entrap the woman in the abusive relationship.

Stark's book is the first to show that most abused women who seek help do so mainly because their rights and liberties have been jeopardized, not because they have been physically injured, though that may be a less significant factor. The coercive control model developed by Stark answers three of the most mystifying challenges posed by domestic abuse and violence: (a) why these relationships endure, (b) why abused women develop a profile of medical and mental health problems seen among no other group of assault victims, and (c) why the legal system has failed, until now, to produce consistent justice for them.

Stark persuasively maintains this work should "reopen inquiry into the very nature of women's oppression in personal life by broadening the current focus on violence to encompass a class of harms that bear directly on individual liberty, the chance for equal personhood, and bonds that join free and equal persons in a democratic community" (Stark, 2007, p. 171). He concludes that looking at these basic fundamental human rights through a different lens literally changes everything about how we respond to and understand the abuse of women by male partners, at both the personal and the societal levels.

Most notably, Stark believes that male domination is no more inevitable than racial superiority or any other dominant-subordinate relationship based on biological or social inheritance. His argument is direct and simple: Men have consciously shaped the concept of coercive control in such a way as to offset the erosion of sex-based privilege; the need for, and role of, coercive control grew as the institutional support for male domination was largely disassembled. Stark expands Johnson's concept of intimate terrorism (Johnson, 2006a, 2006b) by

addressing ways in which the patriarchal character of society may allow abusive men to participate in these controlling behaviors. Society gives men “permission” along with the ability to monitor, supervise, and control their partners’ behaviors, because men are the advantaged gender compared with women in the culture (Anderson & Hill Collins, 2007; Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Stark, 2007). Stark goes on to argue that coercive control is the reaction some men have to women’s increasing autonomy; coercive control gives the abuser power and helps to subordinate the woman and squash her autonomy. This reflects the insecurity and self-doubt these men may often feel in their intimate relationship.

Coercive control typically accompanies frequent, but often minor, assaults with tactics designed to intimidate, isolate, humiliate, exploit, regulate, and micromanage a woman’s everyday life. In fact, Stark believes coercive control was born inside the micro-dynamics of everyday life. Consequently, there is no sure way to document precisely exactly when men started to enhance their use of physical force and violence with a range of direct controls, or just when the use of coercive control became the oppressive strategy of choice (Stark, 2007). Included and fully intermingled within coercive control is a coordinated system of isolation, intimidation, male privilege, threats, coercion, and manipulation—all designed to impart insecurity along with anxiety, adding to his partner’s fear and terror.

Power and Control Wheel

At one time or another, many of us, really *any* of us, might have engaged in one or more of the behaviors displayed on the Power and Control Wheel (see Figure 1). When you look at these behaviors alone and separately, some may well be unpleasant, abusive, or illegal, but when taken separately, they are not battering. These behaviors become battering when one person uses two or more of them as a means of frightening another person, destroying another’s self-concept,

or controlling another person. The behaviors become battering when they characterize the relationship and give one person almost all the power.

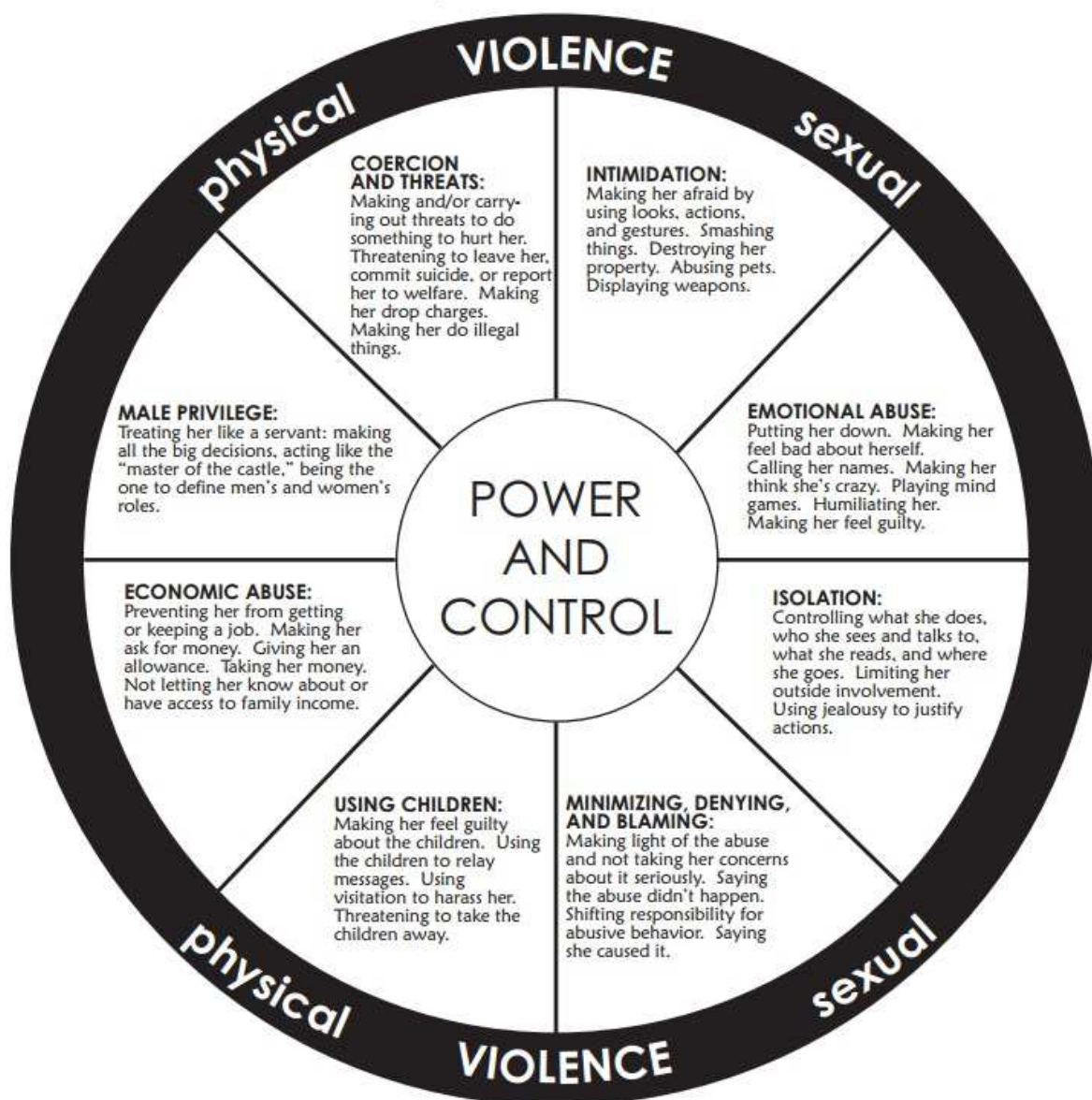


Figure 1. Power and control wheel for domestic abuse intervention program. Adapted from "Power and Control Wheel," by Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, n.d., *National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence*, Austin, TX. Retrieved from <http://www.ncdsv.org/images/PowerControlwheelNOSHADING.pdf>

And finally, these behaviors become battering when one person, usually the woman, becomes so uncertain and tentative in herself that she cannot trust her own personal judgment. In fact, she may actually feel that she doesn't have the right to make judgments or decisions that affect her personally (Pence & Paymar, 1990, p. 142; Pence & Paymar, 1993).

Battering, beating, or assaulting reflects a dynamic pattern, an intentional act with the objective of producing a consequence that jeopardizes the well-being and safety of another person, if not the very existence of the person or relationship. From this perspective, stopping battering requires far more than simply stopping the physical acts of violence; *all* behaviors intended and designed to control a partner must stop. Since the use of these behaviors is likely a choice, the full responsibility for exploring that choice rests solely and exclusively with the perpetrator of those behaviors: the batterer. More simply, the person committing the behavior (or the abusive/violent act) is the person *responsible* for that behavior; it does not require the involvement of the partner (other than as receiver of the abuse). No one can make another person do something that he or she does not choose to do. Of course, one person can make another person very angry, but no person can make another person strike, hit, or assault another person. That is the individual choice of the perpetrator, which is exactly why the perpetrator should be held responsible for his behavior.

Controlling behaviors. Abusive people, here, men, have a broad collection of abusive and controlling behaviors to rely on, without ever using any single act of physical violence to maintain control over their partners, as well as denying their partners actual freedoms (Stark, 2007, p. 158). These controlling behaviors may include intimidation, isolation, unrelenting supervision, and manipulation. Women who are abused regularly report that their partners' controlling behaviors are far worse than physical assault; likewise, they report the emotional and

psychological abuse is far more cruel and difficult to cope with than the physical abuse. Women say, “*At least the physical bruises heal*” (Bancroft, 2002; Stark, 2007; Hadley, 2013).

Psychological and verbal abuse attacks the very soul of the victim, who she is, and how she views herself. Often the victim understands not to challenge or confront, or even to disagree with the abuser when the abuser gives her “*that look*,” which broadcasts to the victim exactly what he will do or what is coming next if she doesn’t do exactly what the abuser wants (Ferraro, 2006). Controlling behaviors can have this effect on a woman because they focus on what her partner *deprives* her of, as opposed to what he actually *does* to her when he engages in physical violence (Stark, 2007).

The specific types of controlling behavior employed may be influenced by race, socioeconomic status, immigration status, and/or nationality (Bograd, 1999). For example, an abuser whose partner is an immigrant can use her lack of knowledge of the United States legal system as a fear and control tactic. He can threaten her that she will be arrested if she calls the police, or he may indicate the police will not believe anything she says. If the police do come, he can tell her that she may be in danger of losing her children. And in fact, because of disparities between genders in our society that benefit men, in many cases, it may actually be the abusive men who are believed by the authorities.

Mind control and brainwashing. Steven Hassan (1988) affirms that while it is important to have a basic understanding of mind control, it is just as important to understand what mind control is *not*. Unfortunately, the term brainwashing is often used synonymously and interchangeably with mind control. In actuality, though, the two processes are different and should not be confused.

Brainwashing. This term was created in 1951 by journalist Edward Hunter, who used it to describe how American servicemen captured in the Korean War suddenly changed their values and loyalties, and believed they had committed fantasy war crimes (Hunter, 1951). Brainwashing is typically coercive, in that the victim knows at the outset that he or she is in the hands of an enemy. Hassan reminds us of what might be the most famous recent case of brainwashing and mind control in the United States, involving newspaper heiress Patty Hearst, who was kidnapped in 1974 by the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA), a small political terrorist cult. After weeks of living in darkness, being starved and raped, she became an active member of the group. She passed up chances to escape, and participated in a bank robbery for which she was convicted and served a jail term. Hassan strongly affirms, “unfortunately, Hearst was the victim of an ignorant judge and jury” (Hassan, 1988, p. 56). Brainwashing can be effective in generating compliance to demands; people are coerced into specific acts for self-preservation, and once they have performed as commanded, their beliefs are adjusted to rationalize what they have done. After escaping the environment of influence and fear, a victim is usually able to cast those beliefs away (Hassan, 1988).

Mind control also called thought reform. Mind control involves a far more subtle and sophisticated mechanism. Because its perpetrators are generally regarded as partners, friends, or peers, the victim is much more trusting. The new belief system held by the victim may actually be internalized into a new individualism, thus adopted into a victim’s sense of self. This individualism emphasizes a view that highlights the importance and worth of each person.

While Hassan stated that mind control could include little or no physical abuse, the victim may be deceived and manipulated—and sometimes threatened—into going along with the perpetrator’s demands. Most importantly for the current research, when mind control is

incorporated into intimate partner abuse, it almost always includes abuse and violence in varying degrees.

Indisputably, one cannot begin to understand mind control without appreciating the power of behavior modification techniques, as well as the nearly instinctive, innate pressures of conforming and obedience to authority. These concepts from social psychology make it relatively straightforward to recognize the basic components operating in mind control.

Destructive mind control can be understood in terms of four basic components, which form the acronym: **BITE** (Hassan, 2012, pp. 25-28):

1. **B**ehavior Control
2. **I**nformation Control
3. **T**hought Control
4. **E**motional Control

These four components are guidelines, meaning not all groups do every aspect or do them to the extreme. What matters most is as follows: *What is the overall impact on a person's free will and ability to make real choices?* A person's uniqueness, talents, skills, creativity, and free will should be encouraged, not suppressed. Destructive mind control seeks to "make people over" in the image of the abuser or cult leader. This "cult identity" is the result of a systematic process to dissociate a person from his or her previous identity including important beliefs and values as well as significant relationships. Individuals can tolerate only a certain amount of divergence between their thoughts, feelings, and actions, which after all make up the distinctive components of a personal identity, before they find some way to bring them all back into harmony. Hassan reiterates that "it is important to understand that destructive mind control can, in fact, be confirmed when the overall effect promotes dependence and obedience in some

leaders, cause or intimate partner. It is not necessary for every single item on the list to be present to meet the criteria for mind control” (Hassan, 2000, p. 67).

The BITE model. The components of the BITE model serve as reference points into the complexities and obstacles involved in mind control:

Behavior control. Behavior control refers to the regulation of an individual’s physical being designed to control where, how, and with whom he or she lives and associates, the clothes that can be worn, and the food the person eats. There are rigid rules in place and a need for obedience, compliance, and submission.

Information control. Information control refers to deliberately holding back information, distorting information to make it acceptable, outright lying, and limiting access to outside information. Yet again, this category overlaps with the “using isolation” section of the Power and Control Wheel (see Figure 1). Once more, the victim has no chance of bringing about a reality check that might help her make sense of her situation, give meaning to her circumstances, or determine the degree to which she is being misled.

Thought control. Thought control includes thought-stopping, a widely used and very effective way of using isolation to control a person's thinking, opinions, or ideas. Thought-stopping is the most direct way to short-circuit a person’s ability to test reality; interestingly this goes hand-in-hand with a segment on the Power and Control Wheel (see Figure 1) known as “using isolation,” where a partner might control what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, or where she goes. The abuser may limit her outside involvement and use jealousy to justify his actions. The reality check the victim desperately needs to make sense of her world is deliberately taken away.

Emotional control. Emotional control occurs when one partner manipulates and narrows the range of another's feelings, and makes the victim feel that all of his or her (joint) problems are the victim's fault, never the perpetrator's fault. Likewise, there is an excessive use of guilt and fear; guilt is likely the single most important emotional lever for producing conformity and compliance. The abuser will threaten frightening consequences if the victim leaves because he believes there is no legitimate reason for her to leave. This type of control is analogous to a number of sections of the Power and Control Wheel: using emotional abuse, minimizing denying and blaming, and using coercion and threats (see Figure 1; <http://www.freedomofmind.com/Info/BITE.php>). Finally, and descriptively, Hassan (1988, 2012) characterized an intimate relationship in which there is violence and abuse, along with coercive control and mind control, as a "*one-to-one cult*." This is particularly significant as it describes a realistic portrayal of the inner dynamics of an abusive and violent relationship. A former cult member and now a counselor helping those influenced by destructive cults, Hassan portrayed troubling and disconcerting facts about recruitment by cults, their use of psychological treatment and manipulation, and their subtle influence on the government, the legal system, and society as a whole. This perspective lays the groundwork that could bring about a better understanding of *internal dynamics* within intimate partner violence.

Cognitive dissonance. Hassan further explained another component of mind control that was initially described by Leon Festinger, a social psychologist known for what is now called cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1964). Cognitive dissonance is actually not as forbidding as the term sounds; Festinger summarized the basic principle in this way: "If you change a person's behavior, his thoughts and feelings will change to minimize the dissonance" (Festinger, 1964, p. 59).

Media Frames and Intimate Partner Homicide

So the question here might be, *why?* Why doesn't the public, the community, and our society understand and appreciate what is taking place within these violent, controlling intimate relationships? People ask, "Why does she stay?" when the more appropriate questions should be, "Why does he do it?" or "Why does he hit?" or "Why does he need to control her?" And "Why does our society tolerate or overlook his abuse at home?" We are speculating here that perhaps part of the answer could be found in the way the media portray this issue, primarily by the use of frame analysis. It seems that most people, specifically journalists, do not understand, simply cannot grasp, just how these verbally abusive attacks and violent behaviors can take place within an outwardly, seemingly loving relationship. Gillespie et al. (2013) "found that about 25% of a sample of DV-defined femicides were framed in the context of domestic violence as a greater social problem; the fact remains that many femicides continue to be explained away as commonplace or their magnitude is obscured by placing blame on the victim, failing to hold the perpetrator fully responsible or by diverting attention to more easily championed issues, i.e. caretaker stress" (Gillespie et al., 2013, p. 240). In many instances, the media miss the opportunity to use their powerful role and influence to portray femicide and femicide-suicide issues deserving of public outrage, criminal sanctions, and strengthened policy development.

The role of frames. *Data support that media needs to change its reporting.* Founded by former members of the Rockridge Institute, Cognitive Policy Works owes much of its expertise to the revolutionary cognitive linguistics research pioneered by George Lakoff, and continues to serve its core mission of bringing powerful insights from the cognitive and behavioral sciences to practitioners working to deliver progressive social change all over the world. Lakoff, a linguist renowned for insights into frames as they apply to politics, describes them as follows: "Frames

are the mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality – and sometimes to create what we take to be reality. They provide structure for our ideas and concepts, they shape how we reason, and they even impact how we perceive and how we act. For the most part, our use of frames is unconscious and automatic – we use them without realizing it” (Lakoff, 2010). The news media play a substantial role in shaping society’s perception of social issues, including domestic violence, and within the media is a concept known as *frame analysis*. According to the activists and scholars at Cognitive Policy Works, the communications landscape appears to be saturated with misleading practices that may slant the perspective of an unwary public; frame analysis reveals the spin and manipulation. By revealing the hidden frames used to manipulate how people understand an issue or initiative, it is possible to align thought processes with reality.

Harvard’s Lori Post discussed the considerable influence of media frames in the incomplete, deficient reporting of intimate partner homicide, saying, “Notably, there is a disconnect between the reality of IPV – ongoing, cumulative in effects, comprised of multiple strategies, and oriented toward power and control – and the IPV reporting approach journalists select” (Post et al., 2009, p. 60). She further articulated just why this is so critical in IPV media reporting, reasoning that:

When media reports and news outlets convey information on a topic, they form opinions and provide perspective for events that occur in a person’s world. It is precisely the way journalists pose explanations and portray accounts of intimate partner homicide and homicide-suicide that can influence not only peoples’ opinions and thoughts about the specific events reported, but more broadly about intimate partner violence itself. Using subsequent prioritization of these cases by the selection and organization of such components of news stories as facts, sources and headlines, journalists can shape the

public's view of what intimate partner homicide is and who is involved. (Post et al., 2009, p. 61)

This *selective reporting* may influence whether we take IPV seriously, how we address its causes and motivations, whom we hold accountable, and how and whether we consider victims of intimate partner violence worthy to receive our support—and by extension, our public protections—or unworthy, possibly because they are seen as guilty for their own abuse or demise (Post et al., 2009).

In the field of media studies, Stephen Reece gives this working definition of frames: “Frames are the organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (Reece, 2011, p. 45). Reece maintains that frames are everywhere around us. They are the conceptual models that allow us to make sense of the world. He believes it is not possible to have a coherent thought without them. There is no such thing as “choosing” to use a frame; it is only a matter of consciously or unconsciously selecting frames, or blindly using them without knowing it (Reece, 2011). Clearly the news media play a major role in shaping society's perceptions of social issues, including domestic violence and domestic homicide. Minimal research exists examining whether the news media frames stories of femicide within the context of domestic violence; these killings target women and girls specifically due to their gender.

The politics of woman killing. According to an UNFPA article on eliminating violence against women, femicide is an extreme form of gender-based violence that culminates in the murder of women and may include torture, mutilation, cruelty, and sexual violence. The causes and risk factors of this extreme violence are connected to gender inequality, discrimination, and economic disempowerment; they are the result of a systematic disregard for women's human

rights. The violence occurs inside an atmosphere where everyday acts of violence are accepted and impunity is helped by the society's refusal to deal with the problems. At its most elemental, femicide is a violation of women's human rights. Women, as all people, have the right to be free from violence under international, federal, and state law. Within the United States of America, states are obligated to take effective steps to protect women from violence, hold offenders accountable, and to guarantee to women equal protection of the law.

Employing frame analysis, Gillespie and colleagues compared newspaper articles representing 113 cases of femicide that defined the murder as domestic violence, compared to a random sample of 113 cases in which media coverage did not define the femicide as domestic violence. Their findings showed that victims in both groups were represented by multiple frames, including a previously unidentified frame that placed femicide in the context of domestic violence as a social problem (Gillespie et al., 2013).

In *Framing the Victim*, Nancy Berns (2004) identified three media frames or filters on the social problem commonly called domestic violence in popular media:

1. Victim empowerment frame, in which women are equally or even more violent;
2. Anti-feminist frame, in which feminism is often undermined in commentaries that characterize woman abuse as gender-free; rather than contributing to a solution for violence, these articles focus on discrediting abused women, advocates, and scholars who seek to contextualize violence in order to prevent it.
3. Social justice frame, which directs attention to cultural, structural and institutional-level practices upholding the use of violence against women. (Berns, 2004, p. 62)

Bern's central argument is that the customary and traditional portrayal of domestic violence in popular media is of the victim, as well as what the victim can or should have done to

end her or his apparent acceptance or understanding of the abuse suffered. For most people, this portrayal personalizes the problem to the situation being reported and ultimately blames the victim, holding her responsible for stopping the violence—this is relatively simple to do because there is usually no content that holds the abuser accountable for his own violent behavior. This can be seen in publications designed for women and in the broadcast media (Dill, 2013).

Inadvertently, it also exists in the name of victim empowerment; in magazines designed for men it exists intentionally, in the name of equality, truth, and fairness for men.

Berns further comments on two possible meanings of the word: *frame*. Notably, victims are framed because the dominant frame focused on them. They are also framed because they are blamed for a crime committed by someone else. Frame is a word used to talk about the public, media, activists, politicians, and anyone else in portraying social problems. Frames provide a method for people to make sense of what they are seeing or experiencing. E. Gregory, PhD, former faculty in Media Psychology at Fielding Graduate University in California, has often said, “We are meaning-making people” and we are just trying to make sense or congruence of our world.

Nancy Berns stated that it is nearly impossible to take politics out of media, whether mainstream or alternative. When a frame achieves dominance or supremacy in popular media, it is vital to address the ways in which popular media are shaped by political interests and journalists’ sources. It is imperative to address precisely which particular interests drive the process. Each publication likely solicits and selects authors and articles that fit with, and essentially advance, its own aim and mission, and those that work to enhance their readership. Berns illustrated this clearly:

In the case of women's magazines such as Good Housekeeping, Glamour, and Teen, prospective authors are urged to formulaically empower, personally involve and uplift the reader. In the case of men's entertainment and political magazines such as Penthouse, Playboy, and New Republic, the formula is to debunk constructions of domestic violence that target men as perpetrators through "in our face" and "on the edge" re-framings of the problem as human violence that feminists have falsely framed and blamed men. In contrast, progressive or alternative magazines such as The Nation and Progressive solicit articles that critique mainstream media portrayals that either tolerate violence against women and children, or focus unduly on women's responsibility for ending abuse. (Berns, 2004, p. 45)

Nancy Berns captured yet another frame into which victims of intimate partner violence fall when she described the dominant portrayal of domestic violence in the media: Domestic violence has become a social problem about the victim, and almost solely about the victim. Most media stories focus on the victim, who may be celebrated for having the courage to leave the abusive relationship or conversely she is blamed for staying and letting the abuse continue. Berns goes on to emphasize that this focus may increase financial support for programs and services for victims of domestic or intimate partner violence, however it does little to develop or increase public understanding of the social context of violence nor the dynamics taking place within a violent relationship. In fact, it may actually hinder the social change that could prevent violence (Berns, 2004).

Most mysteriously, along the way, the act of intimate partner violence, and the domestic abuser, have become lost. In fact, Berns articulates that intimate partner violence is rarely depicted as a social problem about abusers, nor is it depicted within a social and cultural

environment that tolerates and fosters this problem. Conversely, there are activists, advocates, professionals, and community members who do focus on the abuser and do focus on the social context of violence. Nevertheless, the information from people working directly with victims in the community has not really influenced the understanding of the public and community about domestic or intimate partner violence; furthermore, it has not increased society's knowledge base or public policy response to this destructive, multilayered problem.

The research on media frames suggests that a small number of frames, or maybe even just one frame, is often dominant, while other potential frames are totally ignored. This is much like the photographer who, when composing a photograph, aspires to focus on the mountain range, but must leave out much of the landscape to accomplish this goal. Perhaps the media choose to frame a social problem in ways that complement their own understanding or their needs for seeking a larger audience or their interest in pleasing a particular niche market or, very likely, considering time constraints, what will result in a quick turnaround in order to submit the article by deadline. Social problems, specifically how a problem is framed, can often suggest a solution to the problem. By identifying what the problem is and what its causes are, a frame often implies what should be done to solve it. Unfortunately, the framing of a social problem that becomes most popular is not necessarily the one that leads to the best solutions. For many, many reasons, the victim is not the player with the power in that relationship; the victim simply cannot change another's behavior, and certainly not the behavior of the abuser.

So many questions come to mind concerning the nearly total focus on the victim. Why have we focused on the victim for so long? Why does the general public continue to ask, "*why does she stay*"? Instead of asking, "*why is he doing it*"? The public continues to highlight the victim as the primary character in the scenario.

How do we inspire society, our friends, families, and neighbors, to see beyond the victim in order to recognize and acknowledge the social and cultural factors involved; for example, why do these public attitudes tolerate the violence in the family? Most people would object to learning of a puppy being abused or neglected, and certainly, to a child being harmed; but for some reason, there is very little visible objection or outcry concerning the abuse and violence perpetrated toward women in this culture. Plus, it would make sense to examine media images that glorify violence against women in film, movies, video games, and pornographic materials. Furthermore, how can we rationalize what takes place in our criminal justice system that continues to treat domestic violence and intimate partner violence as a private matter, when it is a very public crime? In addition, this crime is often portrayed as an “incident,” as a specific act, rather than as part of a continuing sequence of domestic violence and abuse that recurs, reappears, and reemerges time and again, often with the most extreme consequences.

Content Analysis

In this research, media reports, primarily newspapers reports, were collected for all of 2012 across the United States through the Internet. This follows the protocol used by the Violence Policy Center (2012), Malphurs and Cohen (2002), Campanelli and Gilson (2002), and Richards et al. (2011), which analyzed potentially lethal acts of homicide-suicide taking place within one week of one another.

Conceptual analysis or thematic analysis. Conceptual analysis is the most common form of content analysis. Conceptual analysis involves the detection and quantification of the presence of predefined concepts within the text. Concepts can either be explicit (i.e., particular words or phrases) or implicit (i.e., implied, but not explicitly stated in a set of predefined terms).

Concepts in Leximancer are collections of words that typically associate together throughout the text; this conceptual analysis is aimed at quantifying the presence of concepts in a given text.

Relational analysis or semantic analysis. Relational analysis goes one step beyond conceptual analysis, since they measure relationships between the identified concepts. Approaches to relational analysis generally fall within three categories: affect extraction, proximity analysis, and cognitive mapping. It is the third form of relational analysis, cognitive mapping, that is particularly useful in this research; cognitive mapping is an extension of the first two, representing the information visually for comparison purposes. As the output of relational analysis is often a large matrix of values, the cognitive mapping approach attempts to compress this information into two dimensions, displaying the main relationships between concepts.

Leximancer software. A relatively new product developed at the University of Queensland, Brisbane in 2001, Leximancer software is used in this research to accomplish all that described above. We used this automatic software for conducting the content analysis of media reports. Given a collection of digitized media articles gathered from Internet searches in our research, Leximancer produced a concept list illustrating the elements drawn from those published newspaper reports (See Figure 3, Leximancer ranked concept list, from 100% to 27% of 2012 intimate partner homicide-suicide dyads with user-defined concepts). This software is useful when conducting research of a large text-based data set where manual analysis would be onerous due to labor and time constraints. This process is called *unsupervised semantic mapping of natural language*; it can be thought of as a form of text mining. Leximancer has become the gold standard for conducting content analysis, specifically as a research tool. A brief definition of the term “content analysis” demonstrates that content analysis is made up of a set of procedures for collecting and organizing information in a standardized format that allows

analysts to make inferences about the characteristics and meaning of written and other recorded material (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Simple formats can then be developed for summarizing information or counting the frequency of statements.

What is so unique about the Leximancer program is that we have instant access to all of the quotes and comments that contributed to the creation of the concept map(s); these passages give an indication of the meanings behind the concept as well as how “semantically clean” is the concept. Not all possible quotes in which the concept was mentioned in the text were included in the list, only those that passed the relevance threshold were actually listed (Dodgson, Gann, & Salter, 2006; see Figure 3, Leximancer Ranked Concept List).

At the point of writing, no uniform definitions had been constructed for the homicide-suicide dyadic discrete event or the homicide-suicide incident. The identification of the presence or absence of an intimate partner homicide-suicide cluster revolves around the following three dimensions: (a) incidents of the crime, (b) geographical location, and (c) temporal location (Canter, 1998). It is at the intersection of these three concepts that a cluster appears; while Canter describes a cluster as two or more crimes of similar type, he does not define the required temporal or geographical constraints of such a cluster, without spatial statistics, because clusters are always in reference to a comparison area (Drake, 2013).

ESRI and crime mapping. The current, traditional system of criminal record management has not kept up with existing crime scenarios. In addition, outdated manual processes do not provide detailed, dependable, and comprehensive data around the clock, nor do they effectively predict trends or monitor scheduling requirements; these manual processes likewise result in lower productivity and poor utilization of staffing needs (Johnson, 2000).

An obvious solution to this problem lies in the effective use of information technology,

specifically Geographic Information System (GIS), which uses geography and computer-generated maps as an interface for integrating and retrieving large amounts of location-based information. Digital maps are the quickest means of visualizing the entire crime scenario; data information displayed graphically provides a powerful decision-making tool for investigators, supervisors, and administrators. In addition, policymakers in police departments could use more complex maps to observe trends in criminal activity, and schedule staff accordingly. Using GIS to identify hotspots, or dense clusters of events, provides a consistent method to measure concentrations of criminal events over time. The visual format shows relationships and patterns that would otherwise be buried in the data (Johnson, 2000). Crime mapping can also include current developments as well as a wide-ranging application of geographic information technology within law enforcement, and in the example of the current research, incidents of intimate partner homicide-suicide. Ratcliffe proposes specialized training for crime managers to help them better understand crime map analyses, along with the use of mapping to advance crime prevention and reduction efforts (Ratcliffe, 2004).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the current study:

1. How do media describe or report on intimate partner homicide-suicide regarding the use of specific elements and content?
2. Where did the homicide-suicide incidents take place, within the calendar year 2012, across the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii?

Hypotheses

My first hypothesis was that the media does not accurately or completely describe what is taking place within these intimate relationships that end in homicide-suicide; this may make

sense when one realizes that much of their information comes from police officers on the scene. The hypothesis addressed the media reporting in cases of intimate partner homicide-suicide.

My second hypothesis was that the geographic distribution of intimate partner homicide-suicide incidents largely corresponds to urban population areas throughout the United States.

The Current Investigation

This dissertation represented an innovative approach in the analysis of intimate partner homicide-suicide data. Grounded in IPV theory, I employed smart media tools to analyze these data. To analyze the newspaper articles, an innovative software package, Leximancer, was used. The characteristics that differentiate Leximancer from other software was that it is an *automatic text analysis generator* that differentiates semantic context in the text and minimizes researcher bias. The researcher can also create or modify a dictionary based on both theory and prior data. In addition, Leximancer can process large amounts of data quickly and efficiently, making it easier to do follow-up studies to test for trends in reporting (see Figure 3, Leximancer Ranked Concept List). For geographic data, the software program, ESRI, a Geographical Information Systems package, locates and maps each homicide-suicide dyadic incident across the US (see Figure 2, Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide Incidents). These data allow us to see patterns in these cases and to track incidence over time (Shackleford, personal communication, 2013).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

In this research, we expected to uncover specific factors through content analyses of digitized media reports on intimate partner homicide-suicide throughout 2012. We expected to confirm these factors, and related elements through this dissertation research. Next, using the geomapping software, ESRI, we demonstrated the distribution of these intimate partner homicide-suicide incidents across the United States in 2012.

Data Sources

Websites. Data were collected primarily from two websites:

- *Domestic Violence Crime Watch (DVCW;*
<http://www.domesticviolencecrimewatch.com>).
- *Murder-Suicide blog* (<http://murder-suicide.blogspot.com>).
- *Google Searches* - Google searches were conducted using keywords “murder-suicide,” “homicide-suicide,” “domestic violence,” “coercive control,” “psychological abuse,” and “media coverage, intimate partner homicide-suicide.”

The last protocol, Google searches, helped ensure that as many homicide-suicide cases as possible were collected.

Digitized media (newspaper) reports were collected primarily from these two websites along with Google searches over the course of a year. Data were acquired from Internet searches of digitized newspaper reports using the following keywords: “intimate partner homicide-suicide,” “homicide-suicide,” “murder-suicide,” and “IP murder-suicide.” Data were collected from newspaper articles published across the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii, during the calendar year 2012. Following the protocol criteria for homicide-suicide outlined by Kurtz (2012), qualification for inclusion in the current study required the following:

- Victim must be deceased.
- Death must occur at hands of another person: either current or former intimate partner, current or former boyfriend/girlfriend, current or former spouse, or family member.
- Offender must commit suicide.
- Offender suicide must occur within 72 hours of the homicide(s).

It was necessary to address the following questions, and more:

- Who was quoted?
- How was responsibility or blame addressed?
- How were police notified, and by whom?
- Were there any indicators of criminal or civil activity?
- Were any firearms involved?
- Did anyone try to intervene (according to news reports)?
- What was the reaction of friends or neighbors?
- Are family members quoted; what were their reactions?
- Were sensational words or phrases used, such as “must have snapped”?

Coding

Each original published newspaper article was coded for the following characteristics: victim(s) and perpetrator age, gender, and race/ethnicity; date of incident; street address, city, county, state; weapon used; number dead, number injured; relationship of victim and perpetrator; physical appearance or any identifying characteristic; and any reason or motivation given for the incident.

Exploration of themes and concepts. Data were entered into the Leximancer software, which created visualizations, graphics, and ranked concept lists with the most relevant concepts identified within the largest circle; other concepts and related “nodes” were examined by rotating and examining the concept map(s). The relevance of nodes was reflected by size: *point, color-coded, temporal, clustered, and heat maps*. Some of the concepts that surrounded the nodes were merged in an effort to make the concept maps more readable and to reveal potential themes and thematic connections.

The next step was to visually examine the Leximancer Ranked Concept List (see Figure 3, Leximancer Ranked Concept List, from 100% to 27%, of 2012 intimate partner homicide-suicide dyads with user-defined concepts). The Ranked Concept List provided a numerical ranking of concept relevance. Direct quotes or instances that formed the concepts were then evaluated.

Next was to examine themes, defined as a collection of concept clusters, which represented the most semantically connected groups of concepts. If more than one theme emerged at 100% resolution, a search was made for concepts located in the intersected area(s) for some insight, regarding what topics belonged to both themes. When the theme size scroll bar percentage was reduced on the scroll bar, more themes emerged on the map. These smaller themes were examined to understand the dynamics of transformation, meaning how smaller themes merged into larger ones, and to identify which themes disappeared and which remained. All themes generated by the automatic analysis were saved because configuration changes could affect the thematic picture (Smith & Humphreys, 2006).

Interpreting the Leximancer concept map. Cretchley, Gallois, Chenery, and Smith (2010) took a grounded approach to exploring dynamics in conversations using Leximancer

software specifically for analyzing intergroup dynamics in communication. “The concept’s maps display labels giving the names of the concept that have been discovered from the text. The darker a concept’s label, the more frequently that concept appears in the text. The size of the point (or shape) underlying the concept label suggests how related that concept was to others; the more the concept was coded together in the same text segment with other concepts, the larger its concept point” (Cretchley et al., 2010, p. 1615). This type of analysis confirmed the capability of Leximancer for use in further intimate partner homicide-suicide research, taking advantage of the meticulous coding and careful analysis of the dynamics within these violent relationships.

Identification of risk factors or specific elements. Initially, a list of keywords or risk factors for intimate partner homicide-suicide incidents was generated, containing terminology we thought would be used by journalists in their reporting of these incidents of intimate partner homicide-suicide. Because this list was too long to be useful, a more concise list was next generated, limited to the following keywords:

- *Married, separated, or cohabitating;*
- *History of domestic violence;*
- *Race, gender, age of perpetrator and victim;*
- *Children or stepchildren;*
- *Weapon;*
- *Restraining order, order for protection, civil or criminal charges;*
- *Triggers (jealousy, the woman leaving, or woman or man in a new relationship).*

Location Analytics

Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) software (Schmidts, 2013) was used to generate maps of intimate partner homicide-suicide incidents across the United States. These

maps revealed patterns that help understand the scope of the issue under investigation. ArcGIS software was used to geocode address map locations to build a state-based incident map of homicide-suicide events across the United States (Bernstein et al., 2004, pp. 51-58). GIS data were used to map where these crimes occurred each month and in 2012 as a whole. The specific capabilities used in the current study included:

- Mapped visualizations of each step using ESRI program software.
- Concepts and related nodes examined by rotating the theme size scroll bar percentages and examining resulting concept map(s).
- The relevance of nodes was reflected by size: point, color-coded, temporal, clustered, and heat maps. Spatial analytics: bidirectional interaction, map filtering, proximity, custom area.
- Geographic information enrichment, specifically base maps, imagery, demographics, consumer and lifestyle data, environment and weather, and social media.

All incidents of homicide-suicide from the 2012 calendar year were mapped using ESRI ArcMap 10.0 software; incident addresses were taken from coded media reports, primarily newspaper accounts. Except for errors in reporting, it was unlikely that any address existed in variation of more than one city block. Individual monthly maps were generated to define the extent and clarification of incidents.

Data used for this research included the (a) *geographic location of each dyadic incident* (address, street, ZIP code, county, or district). This provided a fixed starting point for each dyad, against which the (b) *size and number of related incidents* were assessed across the United States, to determine scope of intimate partner homicide-suicide incidents. The resulting map

provided (c) *visual representation of clusters, or “hot spots”* across the United States (see Figure 2, 2012 Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide Incidents, United States).

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

n=500

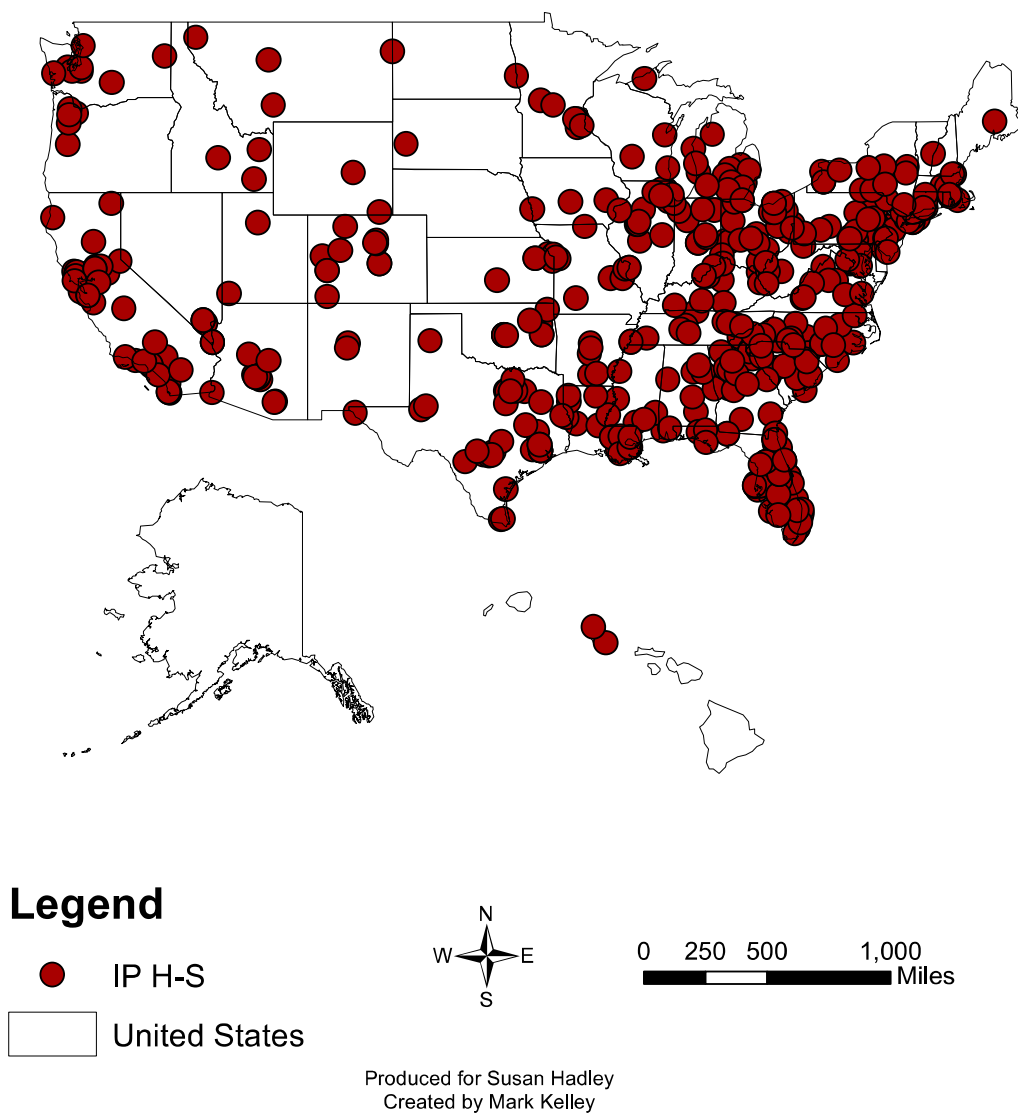


Figure 2. 2012 Intimate partner homicide-suicide incidents, United States. Each dot represents one dyad.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Incidence

Overall, there were 500 intimate partner homicide-suicide dyads collected in 2012 (see Figure 2, 2012 Intimate Partner Homicide Suicide Incidents, United States). Results demonstrated that the media discussed abundant crime details, with limited or no explanation of *why* the homicide-suicide had taken place. Some exploration and discussion of existing life inside the violent relationship that ended in intimate partner homicide-suicide would describe the victim's reality and better inform the public reading the media report. We did not see terms such as *coercive control*, *power*, *control*, which might have addressed some internal dynamics of these events. On the other hand, there didn't seem to be reporting that *blamed the victim* or *exonerated the perpetrator* as often seen in the popular literature. The media journalists did not write about any possible *triggers* that could have precipitated the ultimate incident, such as "*what did she do to make him hit her?*" or asking, "*why she would stay in that relationship?*" These are questions and coding additions to consider for future research.

Initially we felt that limiting the list to certain key words (listed under Specific Elements or Risk Factors) would allow for a more precise examination of whether the media focused on crime facts or on any defined or implied realities, such as *psychological abuse*, *physical aggression*, or *coercive control*, *victim blaming or exoneration of perpetrator* (see Figure 3, Leximancer Ranked Concept List). This original plan turned out to be flawed. While these original terms offered a precise examination, the terms detailed in the original analysis did not present an in-depth description or portrayal of what could be taking place within these violent relationships. Therefore, additional key words were proposed for the following analysis using Leximancer: *firearms*, *threats*, *tumultuous*, *crazy*, *controlling behavior*, "*threatened to kill her*,"

“afraid for safety,” “whispering on phone,” scared, argue, domestic abuse, beating, isolation, intimidation, subordination, trauma, property, and estranged.

These factors or elements were subsequently established through our results:

- *Participants,*
- *Male perpetrator,*
- *Female victim,*
- *Firearm used,*
- *Current or former spouse or intimate partner,*
- *Age and race,*
- *Collateral victims* (children, grandchildren, friends, siblings, or neighbors).

Themes and Concepts



Leximancer analyses revealed a number of themes drawn from the media reports of intimate partner homicide-suicide (see themes from Leximancer Analyses, 2012, Figure 4, Figure 6). Emerging themes were *home, couple, person, and block*. These are the first four themes that emerged from analysis. While the first three seem logical, certainly reasonable, the presence of the last term, *block* appears to refer to location, such as city block. More themes arising from the data were *family, neighbors, son, home, people, scene, died, home, children, family, and incident*. A variety of concepts: *home, husband, gun, shot, wife, year-old, killed, and daughter* were displayed. Changing the theme size scroll bar in order to view the concepts with the highest level of connectivity revealed meaningful themes and concepts; rotation altered percentages and revealed another set of concepts: *died, gunshot, scene, head*. The prevalent family theme involved the following concepts: *couple, friends, home, house, morning, time, told,*

family members, bodies, neighbor and seemed to illustrate the intimate partner homicide suicide incidents.

Risk Factors and Specific Elements

A number of risk factors or specific elements were observed. The elements seen initially were socio-demographic in nature: *location, race, relationship, age, gender* of perpetrator and victim, *children or stepchildren*, and *weapon used*. The media did not openly address other realities of intimate partner violence, but did disclose terms that described the incident, note *murder-suicide, frequency 254, 35%* (see Figure 3, Leximancer ranked concept list). Many of the terms seen on the ranked concept list in Figure 3 described words depicting actions and behaviors that could occur in a home where intimate partner violence was taking place, including their counts and frequencies.

Ranked Concept List

Name-Like	Count	Relevance	
Police	760	43%	
Saturday	250	14%	


































Word-Like	Count	Relevance	
home	1783	100%	
police	1556	87%	
shot	1351	76%	
family	981	55%	
investigation	960	54%	
dead	938	53%	
couple	923	52%	
family	891	50%	
killed	876	49%	
couple	795	45%	
wife	780	44%	
body	765	43%	
shooting	762	43%	
man	760	43%	
year-old	746	42%	
report	717	40%	
gunshot	707	40%	
death	702	39%	
called	683	38%	
murder-suicide	674	38%	
office	644	36%	
time	644	36%	
house	620	35%	
lived	606	34%	
died	576	32%	
gun	572	32%	
called	569	32%	
told	567	32%	
scene	543	30%	
turned	540	30%	
woman	532	30%	
inside	520	29%	
morning	485	27%	

Figure 3. Leximancer ranked concept list from 100% to 27% of 2012 intimate partner homicide-suicide dyads with user-defined concepts.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The current research was carried out to determine how the media reported on intimate partner homicide-suicide regarding the use of specific elements and content, with the use of computer-aided software. Leximancer is a powerful computer-based tool for content analysis and it can be used to analyze any form of verbal communication from written to spoken forms. In the circumstances of this research, the technique was used to extract valuable, meaningful text from media reports, mostly journalists' writing describing incidents, collected from across the United States in 2012. The information was displayed by means of a conceptual map that provided a birds-eye view of the material, representing the main concepts contained within the text and how they are related.

Below is text taken from the original media reports in order to answer the following questions; specific answers to each question are **bolded** and underlined in each scenario.

Who is Quoted?

- *Neighbors describe hearing yelling and screaming before the shots rang out ... Police say 9-year-old daughter witnessed murder-suicide ... Deputies were called to a home ... Investigators tell WSAZ.com they found a husband and wife shot dead ... Emergency workers say there were kids inside the home at the time of the shootings ... Police say two children are now in the care of Child Protection Service ...*
- *Officials say the two victims are a husband and his wife ... After the shootings, the young daughter ran to get help, and a second person nearby then called police ... Neighbors say Mary Ismail had moved in with another man; living together in a different area ... The couple's 9-year-old daughter witnessed the shootings ... The*

Union County Sheriff's Office is now describing the case as a "death investigation" pending further investigation ...

- *A couple with a turbulent past were found dead; the deaths were witnessed by their 9-year-old daughter, authorities said ... but authorities said the girl fled the scene after the gunshots were fired ... Someone who spotted her called 911 and told dispatchers a woman was shot in a truck ... A gun was recovered at the scene, but authorities did not say what kind.*
- *The County's Department of Social Services was trying to find family members with whom the girl might stay ... Responding deputies confirmed 35-year-old Melissa Kaehler had been shot inside a dark color, four-door sedan.*
- *At the same time, Coral Springs Police officers responded to a call of a body found floating in a canal. When officers arrived at the canal at 9904 Twin Lakes Drive, they found the body of a man and a suicide note detailing what he had done. BSO detectives have confirmed the suspect and the victim were involved in a relationship that had recently ended.*
- *Broward Sheriff's Office homicide detectives are releasing the identities of the man and woman involved in a murder/suicide this past weekend. BSO dispatch received a call alerting deputies that a woman had been found dead inside a car in the parking lot of the Walmart. Investigators believe Bradley killed Kaehler at the Pompano Beach location and later killed himself in Coral Springs ... Saturday morning, Kaehler was found dead in a car parked outside Walmart, 2300 W. Atlantic Blvd., the Sheriff's Office said ... A suicide note was found near his body, "detailing what he had done," the Sheriff's Office said ...*

- *Authorities said, three people were found dead in an apparent murder-suicide in Kingwood today ... Hunterdon County Prosecutor Anthony P. Kearns III said an unidentified person reported the discovery of a body at the home on Barbertown-Point Breeze Road. Shortly afterward, state troopers from the Kingwood barracks made the grim discovery of the three bodies ... an unidentified person reported the discovery of a body at the home on Barbertown-Point Breeze Road ...*
- *Gabriel Wierzbicki, a 26-year-old man from Kingwood, N.J., apparently killed his parents before killing himself, officials said Monday. “It appears on the surface that a husband and his wife died at the hands of their son, who then killed himself,” Hunterdon County Prosecutor Anthony P. Kearns, III told the New Jersey Star-Ledger on Tuesday ... Authorities say a man whose wife was shot to death (<http://www.komonews.com/news/local/176261161.html>) in a Mill Creek apartment then shot himself in the head Monday before he crashed into a parked truck. The Snohomish County medical examiner's office ruled the death of 29-year-old Sean C. McIntyre a suicide ...*
- *That's when the husband attacked his wife, according to Mill Creek police spokesman Ian Durkee. A motive for the killing has not been determined. His wife, identified as 26-year-old Sandra K. McIntyre, was found dead at about the same time officers found her husband's body in the wrecked car.*

How is Responsibility or Blame Addressed?

None identified.

How Are Police Notified, and By Whom?

“Police were called to a home on 12th Pole Creek Road ... Police say the Ismails were married but had recently separated and were not living together ...”

Did Anyone Try to Intervene (according to news reports)?

** Melissa Kaehler repeatedly phoned her mother in Maine and told her of the abuse she was suffering, her mother said. Her mother urged her to move from South Florida to Maine, but the plan never materialized. Kaehler, 35, was murdered by her ex-boyfriend, Stephen K. Bradley, 27, of Margate, before he killed himself, according to the Broward Sheriff's Office; her mother is still in mourning ...*

** Less than a week before she was gunned down by an estranged former boyfriend, 23-year-old K. Turczyn told Utica police she feared for her safety ... Turczyn was told early last week to contact the proper police agency ... McNamara plans to look at when Turczyn previously pressed charges in Anderson in early 2011 after she said he threatened her following an argument ... what's clear at this point is that Turczyn met with Utica police domestic violence investigator at the city police station early last week ... Turczyn was familiar with Shanley from past incidents ... and reached out to Shanley regarding concerns about her safety ... Later that same night, Shanley did something police officers don't often do on their own time, but Shanley contacted Turczyn's family and told them to encourage Turczyn to seek help ... the investigator (Shanley) was obviously concerned and she encouraged the victim to take all the steps that were needed, Hauck said.*

Were Any Firearms Involved?

A neighbor sued the family in 2000 after a teenaged Gabriel allegedly shot their dog, WMFZ reported. Neighbor Ken Hayes said he often heard gunshots from the Wierzbicki house, according to MyCentralJersey.com ... Gabriel Wierzbicki was found guilty of possession of a rifle for an unlawful purpose and animal cruelty, according to a Star-Ledger report at the time ... Gabriel Wierzbicki, 26, killed his parents before turning the gun on himself ... he and his dad would shoot together behind their home, set back on about three acres of property ... "I think his father raised him with a lot of guns in the house," said Stella Alosi, who lives nearby. "They did a lot of target shooting in the back of the house." ... Authorities found several firearms inside the house, but wouldn't say whether Gabriel left a suicide note. Kearns said they are still investigating the motive and possible incidents that could have triggered the killings ...

Were There Any Indicators of a Criminal or Civil Record?

- *Couple was married in 1995 in Mecklenburg County, records show. They got divorced in 1997 then remarried a year later. Sandwiched between was a guilty verdict for domestic criminal trespass against Bobby Ismail in which the court forbade him from going near Mary and said he could only contact her through his probation officer ... more court action recently.*
- *On Sept. 24, Mary Ismail (victim) took out a temporary restraining order against Bobby Ismail. It was unclear Thursday if it was in effect when the shootings occurred ... WMFZ reported that he had several run-ins with the law over the years, including past arrests for assaulting a man with a crowbar, shoplifting, and drunk driving. A*

- neighbor sued the family in 2000 after a teenaged Gabriel allegedly shot their dog, WMFZ reported ...*
- *Kaehler (victim) then got into trouble with the law, records show. She was sentenced to prison after pleading guilty to conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute cocaine, according to a 2005 article from the Bangor (Maine) Daily News. The case stemmed from her selling a half-ounce of cocaine to a confidential informant ...*
 - *In 2000, Alosi sued the Wierzbickis when Gabriel Wierzbicki shot and killed the Alosi family dog. "My daughter turned down Gabe to go to the eighth grade dance and he decided to shoot our dog," she said. Alosi said her children were devastated and she sued the Wierzbickis over the incident. "Gabe was supposed to get community service and I think some time in juvenile and some restitution." ...*
 - *Anderson then turned the gun on himself, ending a rollercoaster of domestic incidents and custodial disputes involving their 4-year-old daughter, Gabriella ... previous charges were dropped ...*

What is the Reaction of Friends and/or Neighbors?

- *Neighbor Kevin Ohler, 40, lives about 500 feet from the Wierzbickis and said he heard what he thought were several gunshots late Wednesday night. Ohler said around midnight he was asleep on his couch when he was jarred awake by three or four shots. He said there was a pause for a few minutes, then another three to four shots. As he took out his recycling this morning, he said, he noticed an ambulance at his neighbor's house and thought back to the noise that woke him and prompted him to lock all the doors. "It's really odd that someone would be shooting a gun at*

midnight," Ohler said as he and his wife, Christina, talked about telling officers on the scene about gunshots ...

- *The proud parents promised to always be there for their only child, and they were — even as Gabriel Wierzbicki struggled with school, with the law, with growing up. "I think his father raised him with a lot of guns in the house," said Stella Alosi, who lives nearby. "They did a lot of target shooting in the back of the house." In 2000, Alosi sued the Wierzbickis when Gabriel Wierzbicki shot and killed the Alosi family dog. "My daughter turned down Gabe to go to the eighth grade dance and he decided to shoot our dog," she said. Alosi said her children were devastated and she sued the Wierzbickis over the incident. "Gabe was supposed to get community service and I think some time in juvenile and some restitution." ... Neighbors described the Wierzbickis as a "troubled family" and said it was common to hear shouting from their modest, two-story home ... "Gabe was a fantastic mechanic," said Andrew Wierzbicki's cousin, Stephani Stephens of Pittstown. She knew of Gabriel Wierzbicki's adolescent troubles, but the boy's father had told her it was "nothing serious" and he said little else on the subject ... Friends of the couple told investigators they had gone to the couple's apartment Sunday night after Sandra called and said her husband started acting strangely and was armed with a loaded shotgun. The friends believed they had defused the situation and left. ...*

Are Friends or Family Members Quoted; What are Their Reactions?

The couple had a "love-hate relationship that was marred by violence, including him beating her and knocking her out," King (mother of victim) said. Kaehler broke up with Bradley last month ... King described her daughter, a college graduate, as an outgoing

and giving person from Maine who had had drug problems. Seeking a fresh start, Kaehler moved to South Florida, where she met Bradley about three years ago, she said ... King (mother of victim) said a sheriff's detective told her that Bradley was seen on surveillance video buying a dress at Walmart. King questioned whether Bradley used the dress to stage Kaehler's body inside the car ... The letter stated something to the effect of, "If I can't have her, nobody else can," King (mother of victim) said ...

Are Sensational Words or Phrases Used, Such as "Must Have Snapped"?

None identified.

Is There a Byline Present in the Newspaper?

While articles didn't necessarily indicate a specific byline, many articles specified "contributions by" indicating authorship, as follows:

- ... Staff researcher Maria David; staff photographer David Hinshaw contributed
- ... Report by Det. Berrena & Sgt. Feeley. This report by: Keyla Concepcion/PIO; 5/7/12 1300
- ... Staff researcher Barbara Hijek contributed to this report
- ... Contributions by Frank H. Conlon/The Star-Ledger ...

I suggest the media could improve its reporting of IPH-S by including details to inform the public of the fear and danger inherent in these abusive, violent, and controlling relationships. In general, media descriptions of these incidents seemed brief; however, changing the scroll bar along with further review indicated that the largest circles demonstrated meaningful concepts with higher frequency. "The brightness of a concept was related to its frequency, i.e. the brighter the concept, the higher frequency and more often it appeared in the text. The brightness of links related to how often the two connected concepts co-occur closely within the text; nearness in the

map indicated that two concepts appear in similar conceptual contexts, i.e. they co-occur with other similar concepts” (<http://www.uow.edu.au/commerce/econ/atul>). Another view of frequency could be seen by examining the Leximancer Ranked Concept List (see Figure 3), which visibly demonstrated both count (numerical) and relevance (percentage) frequency. As you move the scroll bar to 25%, to 50%, and to 75%, the graphic revealed the appearance of differing concepts. Without doubt, this is precisely where Leximancer software demonstrated its specific usefulness and value for this research. When using this software to analyze the data, numerous concepts that were previously hidden were revealed as the graphic was rotated. This can be viewed next as we address the following questions, with the use of automatic content analysis.

The first Leximancer graphic displayed included 12-month themes with names, but no concepts (see Figure 4). The themes were visible and remarkably still managed to tell the story, although at its most basic level: *happened, family, domestic, house, home, son, investigation, shot, died*. Even more notable, the term “domestic” can actually be seen, which demonstrated the fundamental nature of this crime. This was a critical outcome for this research.

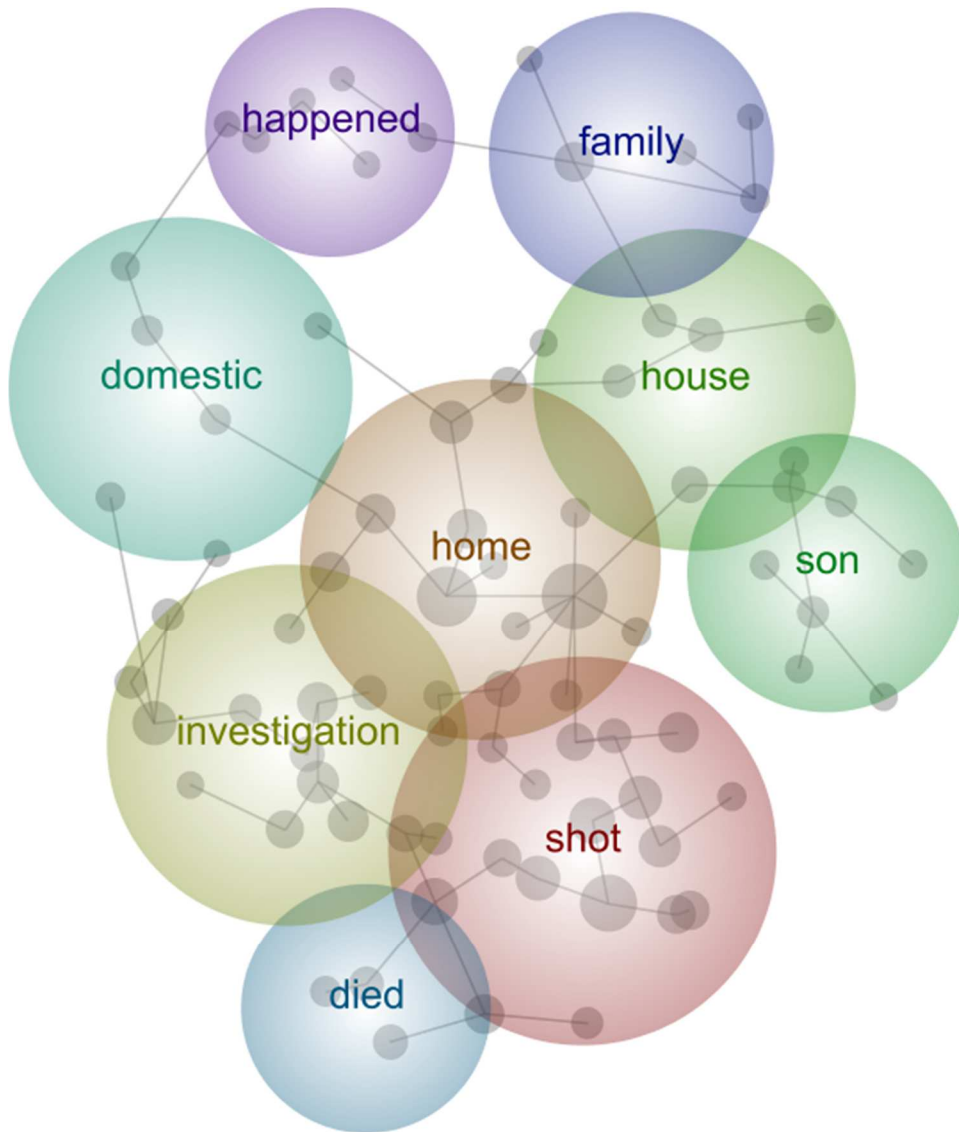


Figure 4. Themes from Leximancer analyses of intimate partner homicide-suicide dyads for 2012 with no visible concepts.

Themes from Leximancer analyses of intimate partner homicide-suicide dyads for 2012 with no visible concepts (Figure 4) established terms listed along with their percentage ratio representing frequency within the 2012 data. These terms include *home, police, shot, family, investigation, dead, couple, killed, wife*, which again provided the narrative of the intimate partner homicide-suicide within the home and family. There was a police investigation into this event that resulted in the dead couple, specifically with the wife killed. The term “domestic” was not visible on this ranked concept list, but “murder-suicide” did appear with the count: 674 at 38% percentage. By varying the percentage of concepts visible, we can more easily differentiate the concepts involved in these incidents; this graphic is notably easy to evaluate, largely because no concepts were seen. This was produced in Figure 5, the Leximancer Ranked Concept list, with user-defined concepts, from the Leximancer analysis of intimate partner homicide-suicides in 2012.

Next, see Figure 6, Leximancer analysis, with 50% visibility with the themes, names, and concepts of the 2012 Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide Incidents; note that the concepts are revealed in large number, in fact, making the complete graphic somewhat difficult to read. The Leximancer Ranked Concept List (Figure 3) is critical in providing the more precise details of each concept, including frequency and percentage seen.

Ranked Concept List

Name-Like		Count		Relevance
Police	760	43%		
Saturday	250	14%		

Word-Like		Count		Relevance
home	1755	100%		
police	1555	89%		
shot	1235	70%		
dead	925	53%		
family	891	51%		
family	891	51%		
couple	795	45%		
wife	758	43%		
year-old	741	42%		
man	737	42%		
murder-suicide	670	38%		
killed	648	37%		
gunshot	624	36%		
shooting	601	34%		
house	601	34%		
called	569	32%		
told	567	32%		
died	557	32%		
scene	535	30%		
gun	532	30%		
gun	532	30%		
inside	520	30%		
time	508	29%		
woman	503	29%		
death	499	28%		
morning	479	27%		
bodies	472	27%		
children	445	25%		
people	444	25%		
husband	426	24%		
suicide	420	24%		
mother	419	24%		
investigation	385	22%		

Figure 5. Ranked concept list, with user-defined concepts, from Leximancer analysis of intimate partner homicide-suicides in 2012.

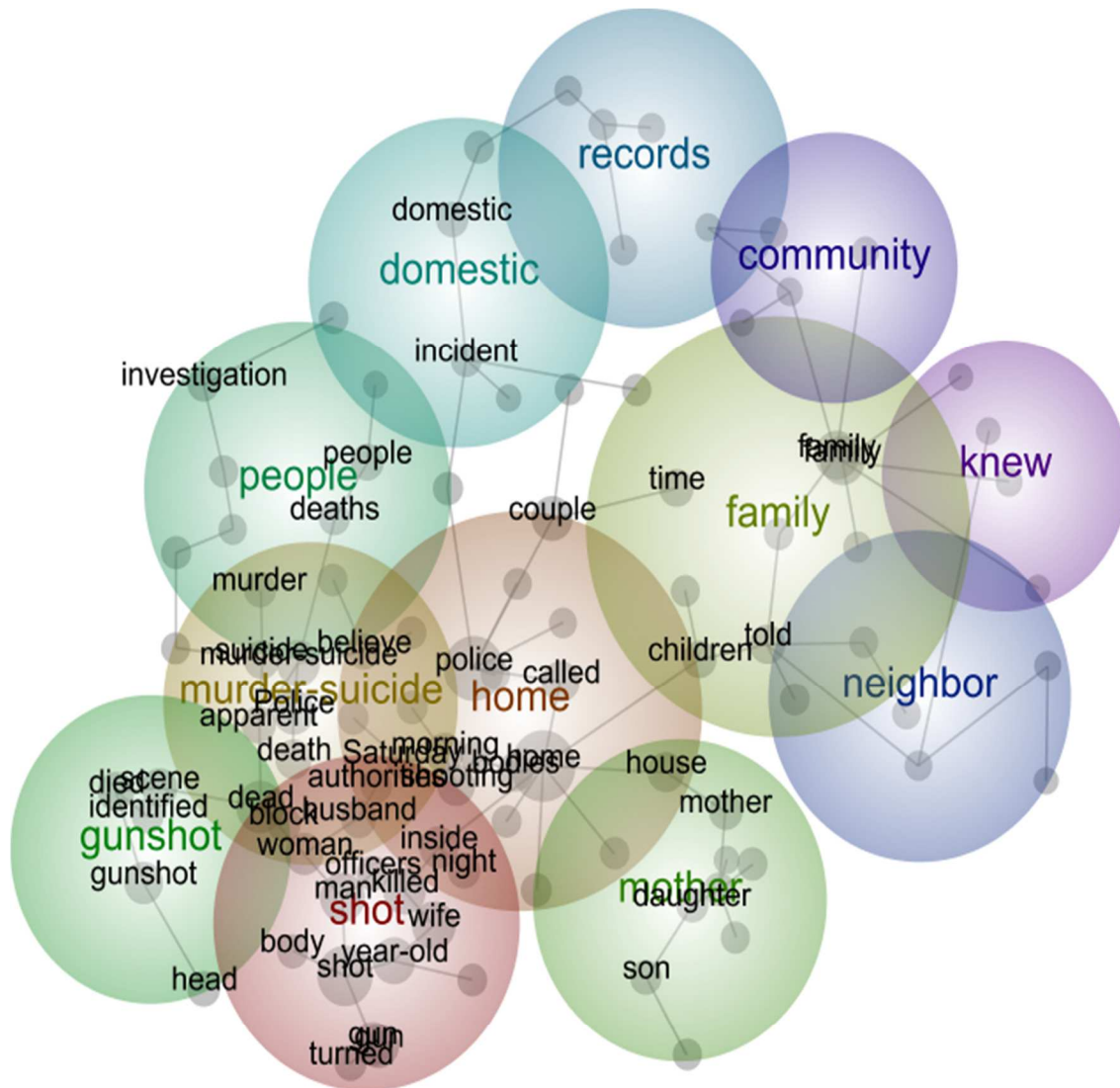


Figure 6. Themes from Leximancer analysis of intimate partner homicide-suicide for 2012 with 50% visible concepts.

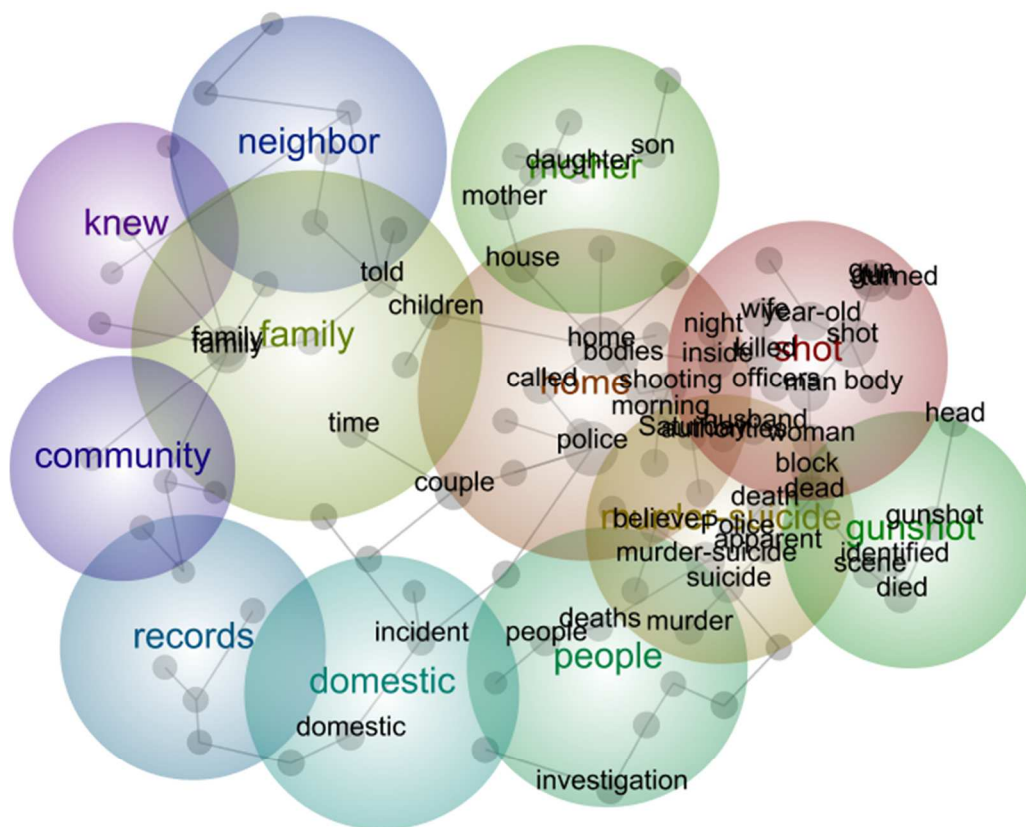


Figure 7. Themes from Leximancer analysis of intimate partner homicide-suicide for 2012 with all concepts visible.

Content Analysis

Simply put, content analysis is a major research methodology used to analyze any form of communication, from written to spoken forms; it is a research tool used for determining the presence of words or concepts in collections of textual documents. Therefore it can be used for breaking down the material into manageable categories and relations that can then be quantified and analyzed. In short, content analysis is an extensively used qualitative research technique for extracting meaning from bodies of text. Rather than being just a single method, there are three distinct approaches: conventional, directed, or summative. “All three approaches are used to interpret meaning from the content of text data, and, hence, adhere to the naturalistic paradigm” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1277).

The success of a content-analytic method is often referred to as *validity*. The analysis of validity will generally follow the typology presented by Krippendorff (2004). This typology offers an inspiring structure for monitoring validation efforts not only in text content analysis, but also in knowledge discovery generally. Smith and Humphrey note it “will be interesting to see how much more information can be extracted from lexical co-occurrence, using combinations of different measurement formulae and nonlinear learning algorithms. It is apparent there is an abundance of rich and complex information that *can* be extracted by means such as Leximancer. For rapid human appreciation of the information contained within nontrivial amounts of natural language, perhaps the challenge is to choose what level of detail to abstract” (Smith & Humphreys, 2006, p. 277). The authors confirm by selecting the level of detail needed in further research, that one could generate extra elements by abstracting more detail from inside these violent relationships.

Smith and Humphreys (2006), in their foundational article on content analysis on “evaluating unsupervised semantic mapping” note there are several reasons why one would want an automated system for content analysis of text (pp. 262, 277). It’s relatively easy to conclude that human decision-makers might be subject to influences they might be unable to report (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).

In addition, additional time and money must be utilized in the content analysis process when using humans, including: codebooks must be validated, coders must be trained, and inter-coder reliability must be tested. This potential concern does not apply in this research because of using one-coder to conduct the coding. Basically, increasing the automation or computerization of this process should reduce the cost and allow a much more rapid and frequent analysis and reanalysis of the text. The authors also assert such a system should be appropriate for extremely large amounts of text where there is limited possibility of concentrated human analysis. Smith and Humphreys (2006) suggested expanding terms used in content analysis to increase detail studied.

Semantic mapping described by Smith and Humphreys (2006) has also been published elsewhere (Smith, 2003). The Leximancer system used in the research performs this unique style of automatic content analysis; the system goes far beyond key word searching by discovering and extracting thesaurus-based concepts from text data, with no requirement for a prior dictionary, though one can be used if desired. These concepts are then coded into the text, using the thesaurus as a classifier; the resulting asymmetric concept co-occurrence information is then used to generate a concept map.

The key methods and essential features are as follows:

1. A unified body of text is examined to select a ranked list of important lexical terms on the basis of word frequency and co-occurrence usage.
2. These terms then seed a bootstrapping thesaurus, which learns a set of classifiers from the text by extending the seed word definitions.
3. The resulting weighted term classifiers are then referred to as *concepts*.
4. Next, text is classified using these concepts at a high resolution, which is normally every three sentences, which produces a concept index for the text and a concept co-occurrence matrix.
5. By calculating the relative co-occurrence frequencies of the concepts, an asymmetric co-occurrence matrix is obtained.
6. This matrix is used to produce a two-dimensional concept map via a novel emergent clustering algorithm. The connectedness of each concept in this semantic network is employed to generate a third hierarchical dimension, which displays the more general parent concepts are the higher levels. (Smith & Humphreys, 2006, p. 262)

Overall, a major goal of the Leximancer analytic system is to make the analyst mindful of the global context and importance of concepts, primarily to help prevent fixation on particular anecdotal or subjective evidence, which may be atypical or erroneous (Smith & Humphreys, 2006; Smith, 2000). For our purposes of this research, a content analysis was performed using the Leximancer software to analyze the content in media reports across the United States throughout 2012; this technique can be used to extract valuable historical and cultural insights. Content analysis can be conducted on countless forms of data, ranging from political speeches

and open-ended interviews to newspaper articles and historical documents; it was invaluable in this research.

In general, approaches to content analysis fall into two major categories: (a) *conceptual or thematic analysis*, and (b) *relational or semantic analysis*. Content analysis computes the frequency with which each word is used and then calculates the distance between each of the terms (co-occurrence). The algorithms used are statistical, but they employed non-linear dynamics and machine learning. The results of computations are displayed as a concept map that can be explored on individual concept levels (Smith & Humphreys, 2006).

In *conceptual analysis or thematic analysis* documents were measured for the presence and frequency of concepts; such concepts can be words or phrases, or more complex definitions, such as collections of words representing each concept. These analyses, on the other hand, measured how such identified concepts are related to each other within the documents. One of the strengths of the Leximancer system is that it conducts *both* forms of analysis, measuring the presence of defined concepts in the text as well as how they are related.

Penn-Edwards examined the role of Leximancer Computer Software in 2010 noting, “Leximancer was used with default settings and at a base level, but it validated and informed the listing of concepts, the development of phenomenographic categories of descriptions, and the mapping of these categories without losing the embedded role of the researchers which is an integral part of the methodology” (Penn-Edwards, 2010, p. 264).

There were several possible reasons for urban settings producing more intimate partner homicide-suicide incidents; perhaps a lack of accountability, increased depersonalization, or what one might conclude initially, simply more people living in urban versus rural areas, and therefore the likelihood of more incidents.

We did not find responsibility or blame assigned in the media reports that were collected for this research. Actually, this may be a positive finding as often the victim is blamed for her own victimization, and this was not seen in our media reports. Future research may call for a more precise examination of crime facts or of any defined or implied realities, such as *physical aggression, psychological abuse, or coercive control, victim blaming, or exoneration of the perpetrator.*

The police usually were already at the crime scene with little explanation on how they were contacted; through additional checking, or the original reports from newspapers in some examples, we determined neighbors or family members called 911. Coding for such statements and behaviors within relationships could be accomplished by using terms such as *firearms, troubled family, assaults, criminal record, guns in house, trouble with law, convictions, loaded shotgun, police, defused situation, byline, contribution, neighbor, family member.*

The data collected by the media reports demonstrated actions by particular neighbors or family members; however, we didn't record the possible bylines for the report and would recommend such in future research. On further review it was apparent that many of the original reports had recorded authorship as well as "*contributions from*" by various individuals following the original report. In future research, we expect to code for several additional factors, including byline.

As stated previously, we had expected to see language that would inform the content knowledge of journalists writing the reports; in fact, there were some meaningful data regarding domestic violence in the reports, just not using the direct term, which was identified just one time. Leximancer revealed this term on the Ranked Concept List along with other terms on the concept list, as well as counts and percentages used in the media report. In fact, the term

“murder-suicide” showed up at count #254, seen at 35% relevance. However, note the terms above murder-suicide on the list that do indicate a crime had taken place: *police, shot, dead, couple, investigation, killed, bodies, gunshot, shooting, death*. The term, “domestic” didn’t appear until p. 2 at count #135, 19% relevance. Most of the data collected and confirmed through content analysis were primarily crime data, likely taken directly from police on the scene.

Notably, it would seem that “domestic violence” was often not directly identified within the reported incidences of intimate partner homicide-suicide seen through the content analysis; yet it is at the very core of these violent deaths. Most of the events seem to be reported as a private family tragedy, not as a pattern of repeating criminal actions affecting every one of us in the United States. Changing this focus would be a much-needed goal for future research.

In summary, while these media reports did provide abundant details of what had taken place within the incidents of intimate partner homicide-suicide; the media reports could have presented a much more “teachable moment” on domestic abuse and violence, along with information directed toward the community, discussing its responsibility to respond to intimate partner violence; the media report could have suggested ways the public or community could support people affected by violence in their homes, including children, women, and men.

This content analysis further confirms the following statement: “*Sources shape the Story*” (<http://dvonline.guide.org/>). What this means is that the source used could change the content of the media reporting. Some sources simply do not have the basic knowledge of the dynamics of domestic violence, whereas other sources might call attention to it. On the scene eyewitnesses or bystanders—such as family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers—initially often respond with disbelief and denial. We all have been taught not to speak ill of the dead and these bystanders are no different. In some cases, these spectators may often revise their assessment of the incident,

from denial to an appreciation of domestic violence, in just a few days after the incident (Willhite, 2010).

Domestic violence was only commented on one time in the many (500) media reports; often these incidents were viewed through the singular lens that portrayed the intimate partner homicide-suicide as a personal story in which somehow the relationship went downhill. Frequently, when reporters interview bystanders and neighbors, who are likely the most accessible if not the most knowledgeable, media reports simply do not portray the perspective offered by specialists, such as domestic violence professionals or survivors.

However, it was encouraging to note that a few media reporters did expand their source options to include domestic violence experts, such as trained police, domestic violence specialists, shelter providers, advocates, and survivors. Lastly, unless reporter and/or editorial staff was educated about this topic, the psychological variables and dynamics present within the relationship were often missing from media coverage. For many reasons, it was important for advocates and psychological specialists to build and maintain close relationships with journalists, who could be happy to work with the media in this endeavor as one of their goals might be to educate the public on this complicated issue. The key strategy here is to make that journalist's job easier, and this could be accomplished because you would be helping the journalist by providing and discussing background materials. If you decide to provide journalists with a news story, make sure it's news: For example, use the three C's: *Is it current? Is there conflict? Is it controversial?* In so doing, journalists may begin to rely on you as someone who has a solid knowledge base and is also respectful of the demands and deadlines of their work life.

Obviously our content analyses demonstrated incomplete reporting on intimate partner homicide-suicides. Of most concern was that the terms, *domestic violence* or *intimate partner*

homicide-suicide, were identified just one time in over 500 media reports. Our original expectation was for journalists to write not just about the incident as a relationship breakdown, but also about this far-reaching, extensive social problem affecting so many people. There are a few positive signs indicating that current media reporting might be changing; this can be seen with journalists who have worked with local domestic violence experts to increase knowledge on domestic violence, thus improving media coverage of these events.

Secondly, did the research demonstrate where the homicide-suicide incidents took place, within the calendar year 2012, across the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii?

The content analysis and geomapping was done using the research data, which established the widespread presence of intimate partner homicide-suicide incidents across the United States, 2012. Further research in this area might target areas of possible cluster hotspots in order to examine these areas and respond to the conditions uncovered.

Limitations

First, it was necessary to consider that the research findings may be influenced by the social climate and possible levels of activism in various locations across the United States. Coalitions against domestic violence exist in most of our United States, although in certain areas, some are more active in working with the media than others; the states that have active domestic violence organizations might alter findings related to this research. As noted earlier, future research in this area should focus on the actions, behaviors, and feelings within these violent relationships with coding that could reflect specifically on these options.

Implications and Future Research

The current research represented preliminary work, and sets the stage for future research into the challenging issue of intimate partner homicide-suicide. Initially, we coded for intimate

partner homicide-suicide across the US; future research should focus coding a number of additional terms, specifically on the internal dynamics of these relationships with terms such as: *power, control, fear, safety, firearms, troubled family, assaults, criminal record, guns in house, trouble with law, convictions, loaded shotgun, police, defused situation*. Therefore, to complete the picture of these incidents, we conducted further analyses using the Leximancer software program again and notably, when we examined the newly generated ranked concept lists, we observed several terms of interest; for example, *police* (count of 1556, 87%), *gunshot* (count of 707, 40%), and *murder-suicide* (count of 674, 38%). Terms became visible though were far down on the ranked concept list. However and importantly, when we examined the graphic seen below, there is NO overlap between “*domestic*” and “*murder-suicide*” and key related terms that would have indicated a domestic homicide-suicide incident. This is critical and it would be essential to examine this element in future research on this topic.

In addition, there is a critical need to build on this research by conducting further research into the intimidating, violent dynamics within intimate partner violence, specifically seen in these most severe forms of intimate partner homicide and intimate partner homicide-suicides. These supplementary analyses could be helpful in understanding just what is truly taking place within a very violent relationship; and next, to use those findings to help individuals, the public, our communities, and the media to better understand this difficult, multifaceted issue.

From the Sacramento Bee, September, 2013 by Camille Hayes.

In October 2012, a man opened fire in a Wisconsin beauty salon killing three people and wounding four before fatally shooting himself. On April 21 of this year, a 27-year-old in Seattle shot and killed four residents of an apartment complex before dying in a firefight with police. On June 7 in Santa Monica, a gunman killed five people, three of them on a college campus, then was fatally shot by police.

In examining the above paragraph, Hayes states, “what these mass killings all have in common, aside from the sadly predictable use of firearms, is that each involved domestic violence, either as an immediate or a related cause” (C. Hayes, 2013, p. 2). The Santa Monica gunman grew up watching his father viciously beat his mother, was kicked out of high school for making violent threats, and later became a very disturbed adult male obsessed with weapons. In the Wisconsin and Seattle shootings, the perpetrators’ main targets were their wife and girlfriend; the rest of the victims were unfortunate bystanders who simply got in the way (C. Hayes, 2013). In an ideal world, realistic and accurate reporting of media narratives, and others like them taking place daily in the United States, would be all the evidence needed to demonstrate that

domestic violence isn't just a problem for individual couples, but a serious public safety threat to all of us; making a serious investment in prevention and intervention of domestic violence would seem to be an urgent and obvious next step.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we used a variety of Internet search engines to collect digitized media reports ($n=500$) from newspapers across the United States from throughout 2012. Without a doubt, the news media played a major role in shaping society's perceptions of social issues, including domestic violence, domestic homicide, and domestic homicide-suicide. The media have a unique ability to capture the attention of news consumers and thus shape public knowledge and opinion regarding social problems such as intimate partner violence as well as society's role and responsibility in prevention and intervention efforts. We used the Leximancer software program to conduct content analyses of these digitized media reports in order to determine the quality of the reporting on this topic. Several aspects of this research became evident as we examined the results of these content analyses; in subsequent research, there is a significant need for detailed coding in order to retrieve terms and feelings meaningful within these families.

Make the connection. Intimate partner violence is at the very core of every one of the 500 dyads collected of intimate partner homicide-suicide incidents from 2012, yet very few of the media reports made this connection. Understanding this association is absolutely critical to understanding the ever-repeating pattern of intimate partner violence within our homes and communities.

Recommendations

Development and funding of programs. Domestic violence is frequently associated with homicide-suicides; power, intimidation, and control, and related critical issues in domestic violence are consistent with the perpetrator's actions in cases of homicide-suicide. Accordingly, there is a need for allocating financial resources to fully fund human service programs for victims, abusers, and their families, as well as funding specialized services that assist men in coping with issues of anger, control, and separation that seem both urgent and essential.

Numerous experts have proposed that additional research should be focused on the impact that domestic violence and homicide-suicides have on individuals, families, and communities left behind.

Need for a national database. There is a critical need for a comprehensive, nationwide database to be established and fully funded in order to track intimate partner homicide-suicides. At this time, there is partial funding for this type of database, though full and reliable funding seems tenuous. This database could assist professionals, community members, and the general public to more fully understand these events, to understand the human costs of homicide-suicide, and to develop effective prevention plans and policies.

The type of data collection should be detailed and include the following: gender, sex, age, ethnicity, and professions of the perpetrator and victim(s); the type of weapon used, including the make and model of firearm; the specific location of the event (i.e., workplace, specific room in residence); and any available information concerning the motivation of the murderer. Staff at the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS), located at the CDC, the Violence Policy Center in Washington, DC, as well as several independent researchers, have called for re-funding of the NVDRS or another system in order to provide a national database.

Homicide-suicide is NOT a solitary event. Most people think of a homicide, a suicide, or a homicide-suicide, as a solitary action or event, affecting just one or two isolated individuals. In most circumstances, this is simply not the case. Intimate partner violence is at the very core of all of these dyads of intimate partner homicide-suicide. The effects of homicide-suicide go far beyond the perpetrator and victim to include family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, community members, and total strangers. Homicide-suicide often leaves behind children without parents. “During the six-month period that the Violence Policy Center tallied in their [2012] study, there were 313 suicides—yet the total number of deaths was 691” (Violence Policy Center, 2012, p. 2).

This convincingly substantiates the term “collateral killing,” coined by Lori Ann Post, PhD, Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine, Yale Center for Medical Informatics, who defined collateral killing as “those persons, other than the focal victim, killed as a result of intimate partner violence” (Post et al., 2009, p. 74). “More people died from murders associated with the suicide—378—than from the suicides themselves. These numbers call into serious question the common belief that suicide, especially suicide with a firearm, is a solitary act that affects only one person, the shooter” (Violence Policy Center, 2012, p. 9).

Access to a firearm. Overwhelmingly, the most common component in homicide-suicides is the firearm, and its easy availability likely contributed to countless homicides and homicide-suicides. Accessible firearms allowed a shooter to act on impulse; in contrast, the use of a knife in a homicide-suicide would involve physical strength and a far greater, more intimate struggle; in addition, it would be messy and conceivably distasteful (Webster et al., 2010). In their research, Webster et al. (2010) concluded, “shootings are the most common method by which women are killed by an intimate partner in the United States” (p. 94). As every major

homicide-suicide study ever conducted—including the current study—has shown, a firearm, with its unmatched combination of *high lethality* and *easy availability*, was the weapon of choice with offenders, used to murder the victims, and then turned on themselves (Felthous & Hempel, 1995; Violence Policy Center, 2012). A study of risk factors for women being murdered by a current or former intimate partner after prior IPV found that the abusive partner's ownership of a firearm was associated with a five-fold increased risk (Campbell et al., 2003). Without a doubt, additional unbiased research and policy change could be critical in this intricate and difficult situation. *The New Republic* offers the scariest facts about guns and domestic violence—yet also two more facts that make a strong case for mandatory background checks (<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/115404>). They reported 46 total women were shot to death each month by a current or former intimate partner. Remarkably, a woman was 500% more likely to be killed in a domestic violence situation when a gun is present. And by probing the core of mass shootings, it was possible to determine that 57% of mass shootings between 2009 and 2013 involved incidents of domestic violence. Lastly, 1100% was the proportion of women in the United States who were much more likely to be murdered with a gun than women in other high-income countries; this was largely due to the lack of gun control in the United States.

However, *The New Republic* also showed there were two promising facts about guns and women; there are 38% fewer women murdered by intimate partners in states that required background checks for all handgun sales, and 250,000 attempted gun sales to domestic abusers had been prevented by these background checks.

Much research has been conducted on domestic violence and weapons, specifically related to firearms or handguns in the house. In fact, the current study on the Media Coverage of Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide convincingly confirmed and validated the powerful and

convincing relationship concerning domestic violence and firearms. Guns, specifically handguns, play a significant role in lethal domestic violence confrontations.

Early researchers Frattaroli and Vernick (2006) reviewed state laws regarding two policies that were designed to separate batterers from firearms, demonstrating,

1. Laws authorizing police to remove firearms when responding to a domestic violence complaint (police gun removal laws), and
2. Laws authorizing courts to order guns removed from batterers through a protective order (court-ordered removal laws).

The state of California has led the way in the removal of firearms in combination with the issuance of a protection order for domestic violence (PODV). The California Department of Justice funded a pilot program in which Sheriff's Offices in just two counties established a system for better enforcement of the firearm surrender obligation. Persons under particular domestic violence restraining orders in California are required to relinquish any firearms in their control within 24 hours of service of the protection order. There were 17 recipients of protection orders who were interviewed about their experiences with, and feelings about, the removal of firearms from their abusers (Vittes, Webster, Frattaroli, Claire, & Wintemute, 2013). Findings indicated that most of the women surveyed wanted firearms removed and felt more safe and protected as a result of their removal.

Webster et al. (2010) demonstrated that of the 542 in their study who had obtained a PODV, 82 (15%) reported that the abuser owned a firearm. Although state law either allowed or mandated judges issuing PODVs to require abusers to surrender their firearms, only 21 (26%) reported that judges actually used this authority. Findings indicated that when the judge ordered the abuser to surrender his firearms, victims were more likely to report that all firearms were

either surrendered by the abuser or confiscated by law enforcement. Yet, based on the perceptions of the IPV victims in the study, laws in place and designed to disarm domestic violence offenders were either poorly implemented or did not require informing victims when their abuser's firearms were surrendered or confiscated.

There was some variation across the United States concerning the three types of laws on intimate partner homicide; these laws restricted access to firearms by individuals who were subject to a protection or restraining order, as well as firearms surrendered from those who had been found guilty of a domestic violence misdemeanor; they also allowed law enforcement officers to confiscate firearms at a domestic violence scene. These authors found that female intimate partner homicide rates declined by nearly 7% after a state passed a restraining order law (Vigdor & Mercy, 2006). So, it would seem a credible solution for all states to work to pass laws to produce a similar result.

In an attempt to ensure that IPV offenders were disarmed, and thus prohibited from possessing a firearm, 16 states have passed laws that either allowed or required judges issuing PODVs to order defendants to surrender any firearm in their possession (Frattaroli & Vernick, 2006). The authors advocated these laws be compulsory, applied to all guns and ammunition owned by an abuser, and include well-defined procedures to ensure compliance and increase success.

A far more troublesome fact was revealed in research conducted by the Center for Gun Policy and Research at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The purpose of this study was to both describe and clarify perceptions of women who had requested court orders for protection from domestic violence; the study examined the observations of these women concerning incidents and specific proceedings designed to implement the laws envisioned to

remove weapons from their abusers. Researchers identified female victims of intimate partner violence in both New York and Los Angeles through family courts and police records. Surveys were conducted with 782 women, asking about their experiences seeking a PODV (protection order for domestic violence) from courts, judges ordering removal of firearms from defendants, and lastly, if firearms were actually relinquished or confiscated. Of the 542 victims who had obtained a PODV, only 82 or 15% reported their abuser possessed a firearm. State law either allowed or mandated judges issuing PODVs to compel abusers to hand over their firearms, however just 21 to 26% of specified judges truly used this authority. Researchers have confirmed that laws designed to disarm domestic violence offenders have either been poorly implemented or have failed to inform victims when their abuser's firearms were either surrendered or confiscated (Webster et al., 2010).

There have been undeniable challenges in enforcing the domestic violence surrender provision in many PODVs. Some law enforcement officers have reported they had little or no recourse if, upon serving an order with a firearm surrender provision, the abuser simply denied possessing any firearms, thereby enabling that abuser to continue to retain and maintain ownership of any weapons (Frattaroli & Teret, 2006). And lastly, a victim must be informed or have existing knowledge of any restrictions on the abuser that were included in the order of protection; if victims and their advocates expect law enforcement agencies to confiscate abusers' firearms, those victims and advocates must become knowledgeable of just what is included in that PODV. It's interesting to note that if the enforcement and implementation of the firearm surrender option is handed down to the victim, they may not have the knowledge, information, or support to be aware of any potential expectations, much less to ensure they could be achieved. I have said for many, many years through my work with victims, "*If you don't know what your*

options are, they are not options”; this offers a perfect example. All these researchers affirm the considerable gaps in the enforcement of the firearms surrender condition with domestic violence restraining orders; each wholly recommended adaptations concerning the existing firearm removal policies that could facilitate more successful disarming of batterers. In states that allowed judicial discretion for ordering firearm removal (Frattaroli & Vernick, 2006), it may be critical to first conduct trainings for judges concerning the significant increase in the risk of lethal violence when abusers have access to firearms (Campbell et al., 2003).

Frequently, victims did not feel it was necessary to request removal of firearms if they believed judges would take such actions on their own. In addition, in my experience, victims often minimized the danger they were in; this could be for the reason that if they truly knew the danger, they might justifiably be overwhelmed and conceivably incapable of handling day-to-day affairs. Clearly, further research is needed to explore victims’ knowledge and beliefs concerning the abusers’ access to firearms and strategies for disarming them. The Danger Assessment can be accomplished to determine the level of safety or danger for each woman living with an abuser. All of this should be followed by ongoing education and training for community advocates who work with victims across the United States, so that they learn, know, and understand the laws and regulations available to victims.

Each year, more than 30,000 Americans die in gun suicides, homicides, and unintentional shootings, the upshot of the ready availability, and accessibility, of particular classes of firearms or handguns. Gun violence is more than a criminal concern; in fact, it is a broad-based public health crisis of which crime is simply the most visible, recognized, and documented characteristic. The “Violence Policy Center (VPC), a national tax-exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Washington, DC, has worked to stop the annual toll of death and injury

through research, advocacy, education, and collaboration” (<http://www.vpc.org>). Any facts on women and guns can be found in the Violence Policy Center’s Annual Report, entitled “*When Men Murder Women*”; VPC drew on Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports (FBI) to expose the facts about women murdered by men in 2011. Of course reducing the number of guns in the wrong hands is not so simple, as we have seen with any concerted effort to limit gun ownership in the United States. The NRA or National Rifle Association, purportedly preserving the “right to bear arms” in this country, receives tens of millions of dollars from gun manufacturers, including dedicated money for marketing guns to women. The NRA characterizes firearms as the solution for a woman’s protection, but the facts tell quite another story about women and guns. In fact, every year, more than 1,700 women are murdered by men, almost always by someone they know, and most often with a gun (<http://huffingtonpost.com/josh-sugarman>).

In 2011, according to VPC’s publication, “When Men Murder Women,” there were 1,707 females murdered by males in America in single victim/single offender incidents; in these cases, 94% of these women were murdered by a male they knew. Victims who knew their offenders (61%) were described as wives or intimate acquaintances. In fact, this actual percentage could be higher, because in this particular study, ex-girlfriends were not included in these statistics. Interestingly, nearly all the homicides (87%) were not related to the commission of any other felony, such as rape or robbery. In these cases, the action was focused only on murder of an intimate partner.

The Violence Policy Center demonstrated that when it comes to guns and women, firearms are being used to take women’s lives, not defend them. In the 2011 study, VPC found that more homicides were committed with firearms (51%) than with any other weapon, and of

those, 73 were murdered with a handgun (Violence Policy Center, 2012). In fact, nine women are shot to death by their husbands or intimate partners every week in the United States.

A fundamental problem. There is a fundamental problem and erroneous understanding with the belief that guns actually protect the hearth and home. In fact, guns rarely get used that way. Having a gun in the home actually increased the possibility that a woman would be killed. In a 2003 study by D. Wiebe of the University of Pennsylvania, researchers investigated the possible relationship between being shot in an assault and possession of a gun at the time. That study found that females living with a gun in the home were 2.7 times more likely to be murdered than females with no gun at home (Wiebe, 2003). On average, guns did not protect those who possessed them from being shot in an assault. Wiebe determined that even though successful defensive gun habits occurred each year, the likelihood of a safe response by a home resident could actually be low for civilian gun users. Such users should reconsider their possession of a gun or, at least understand that regular possession necessitates careful safety countermeasures and increased awareness and specialized training specifically on gun use in the home. Several studies have found that regulating guns, on the other hand, could reduce that risk, thus validating the basic argument in favor of universal background checks designed to ensure that domestic abusers would be legally prohibited from having guns; and, in most cases, could not obtain them.

The burden of gun violence on American society is substantial and widespread, whether measured in years of productive life lost, disability, fear, or economic costs. The toll is unmatched among high-income countries. Weaknesses in existing gun laws have amplified this burden by establishing lenient standards for legal gun ownership amid significant and substantial loopholes in policies intended to keep guns from prohibited persons. When states expanded

firearm bans to high-risk groups, and accepted comprehensive measures to prevent rerouting of guns to prohibited persons, notably, fewer guns were redirected to criminals, and most importantly, there was less violence (Sorenson, 2006).

The most common component in homicide-suicide is the firearm, and its easy availability likely contributed to homicides and homicide-suicides. Accessible firearms allowed shooters to act on impulse; in contrast, the use of a knife in a homicide-suicide would involve physical strength and a far greater, more intimate struggle. As every major homicide-suicide study ever conducted—including the current study—has shown, a firearm, with its unmatched combination of high lethality and easy availability, is the weapon of choice used to murder victims, with offenders then turning the gun on themselves (Felthous & Hempel, 1995). Without a doubt, unbiased research and policy change is critical in this situation.

Children and global violence. A timely brief arrived in my office on December 2, 2013 from Violence Against Children entitled, “Millions of children reaching out to helplines worldwide” (http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/story/2013-11-20_929). Entitled “The Voices of Children and Young People,” it was a report released that day to mark the 10th anniversary of CHI, a network of 173 child helpline members operating in 142 countries. Violence and abuse within troubled family relationships worsened tensions at school and resulted in bullying atop the list of reasons why children and young people seek help on these helplines. Over 4 million children and young people reported to CHI regarding several forms of violence, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse throughout the last decade. Violence remained a constant, grave issue in all regions.

Developing a safety plan. Think about this: Children are taught safety plans for how to escape a house fire, and the importance of “stranger danger,” but in the case of intimate partner

violence, domestic violence safety plans often are either not considered, disregarded, or overlooked. Talking to children and teens about the general issue of domestic violence and what could be happening in the home, as well as what to do when someone yelled at or would strike another person in the house, contributed to the type of assistance that will stop a murder-suicide before it happens. Perhaps most importantly, especially when one considers the probable overwhelming impact on children as personal witnesses to these events, any early preparation or coaching with these children could also lessen much of the anxiety and stress experienced by the children who witnessed these events. Minimally, this kind of plan could offer an alternative to the predominant response of children in these situations, which is often to cry, run away, or hide in a closet or under a bed. Fear of the unknown could be a worry for these children; in many cases, not knowing what could be taking place may be more difficult for children than having details about what to do, along with assuring them they did nothing wrong. It is important to provide an Active Response Plan (ARP) by speaking with children in advance, before they are confronted or threatened with a violent act, along with talking about possible actions or behaviors they could take, such as running to a neighbor or calling 911; these actions often served to lessen their anxiety and fears and even increase their understanding.

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Appendix A: Leximancer Theme Analyses Tables

Table 1

Number of Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide Incidents By Region

Region US	<i>N</i>
Midwest US	105
Southeast US	178
Southwest US	61
West US	84
Northeast US	72

Table 2

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicide Dyads by Month for 2012

Month	<i>N</i>
January	56
February	44
March	41
April	50
May	49
June	42
July	58
August	36
September	40
October	25
November	35
December	24

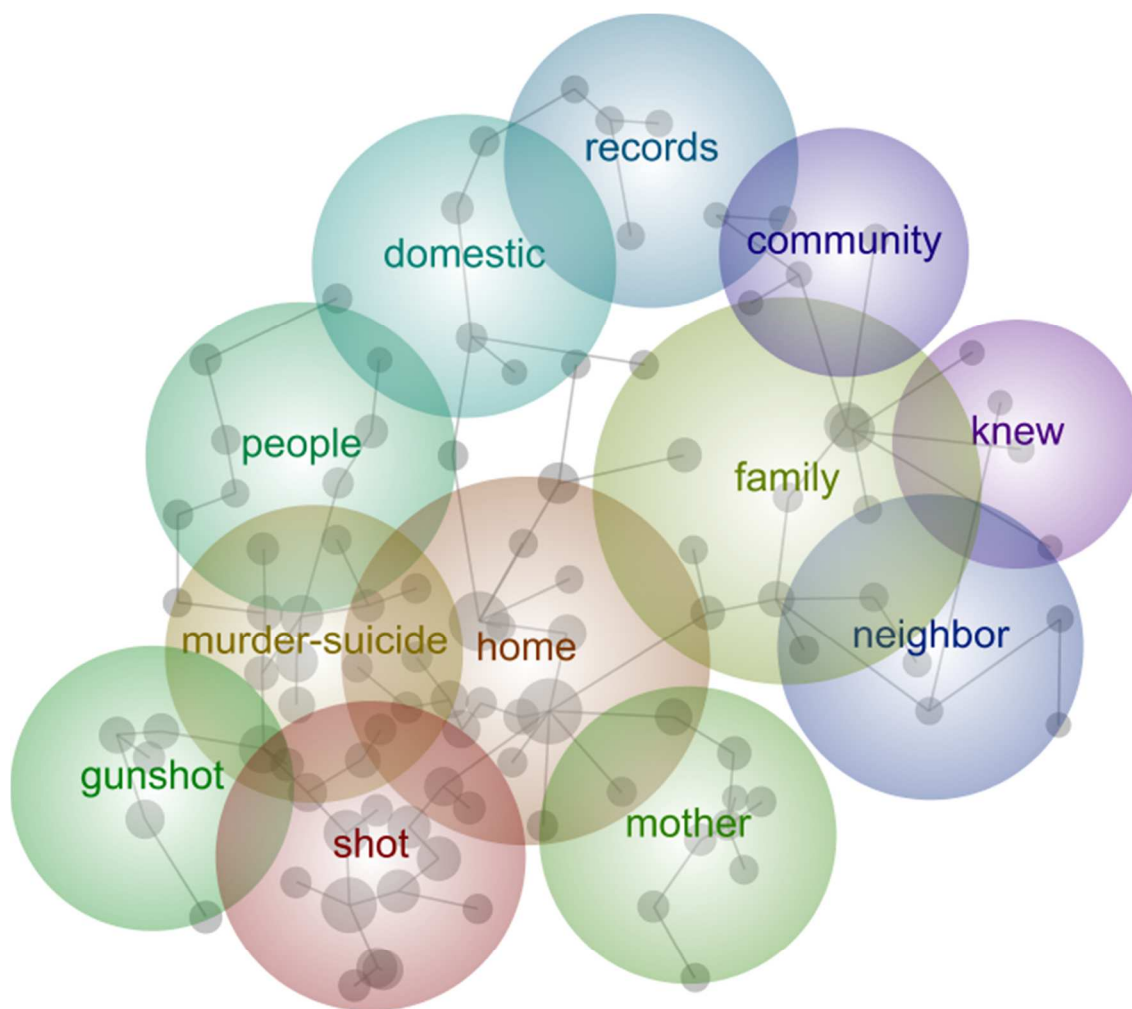
Appendix B: Leximancer Theme Analyses

Figure 8. Themes from Leximancer analysis of intimate partner homicide-suicide dyads for 2012 with no visible concepts.

Appendix C: Incidence Details

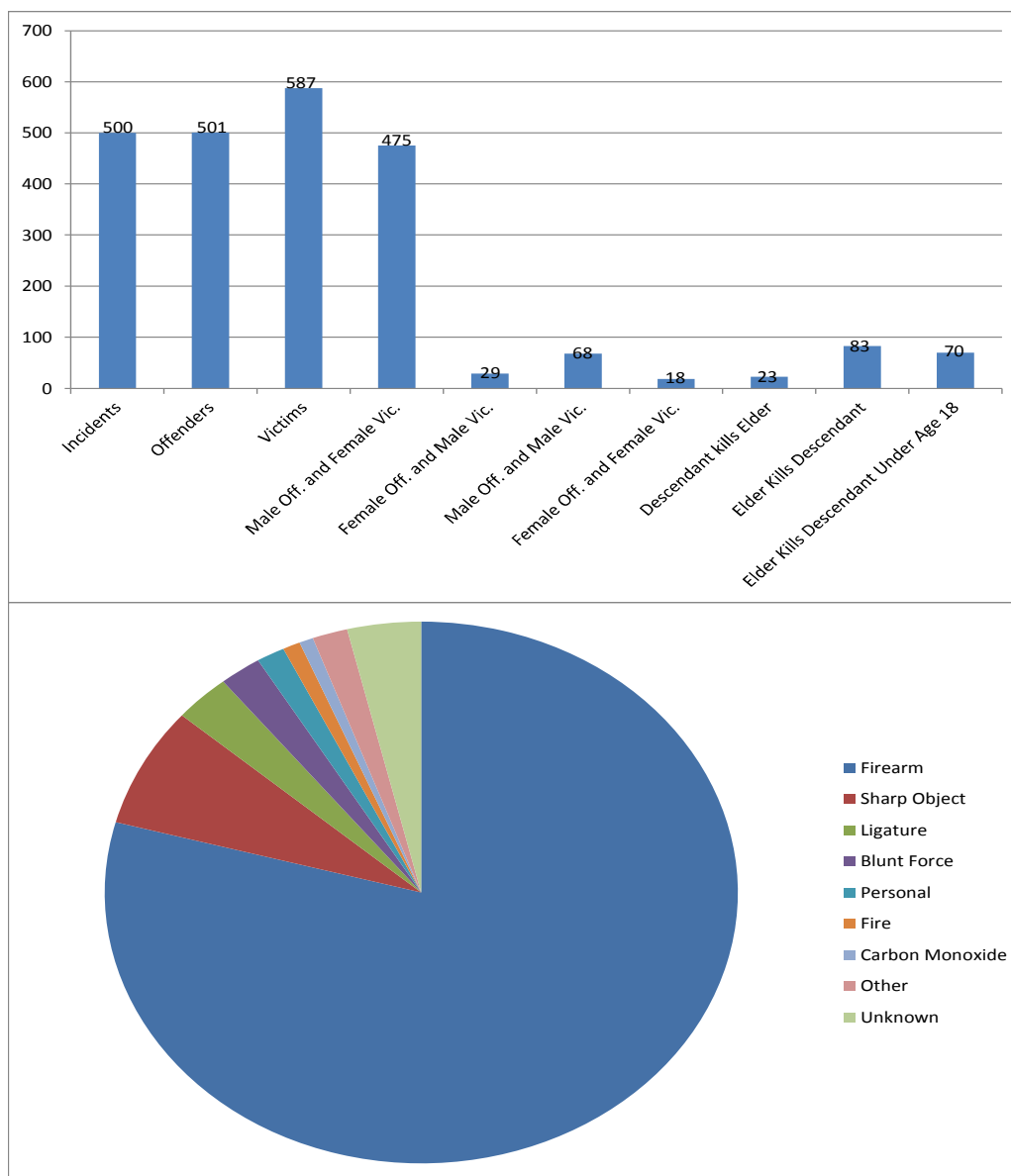


Figure 9. Top: Number of occurrences respectively in 2012. Bottom: Types of weapons used in incidents.

Appendix D: ESRI Incidence Mapping

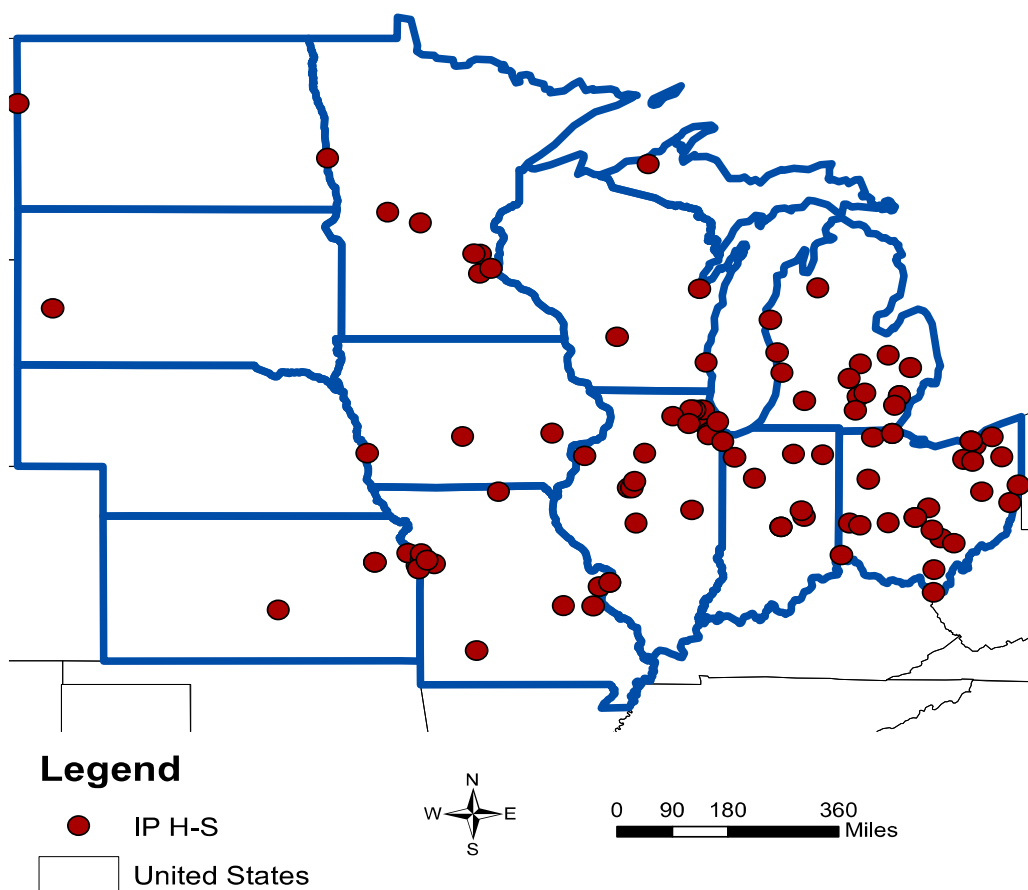
Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides
United States, 2012Midwest US
n=105Produced for Susan Hadley
Created by Mark Kelley

Figure 10. Intimate partner homicide-suicide dyad map for the Midwest region of the US. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

Northeast US
n=72

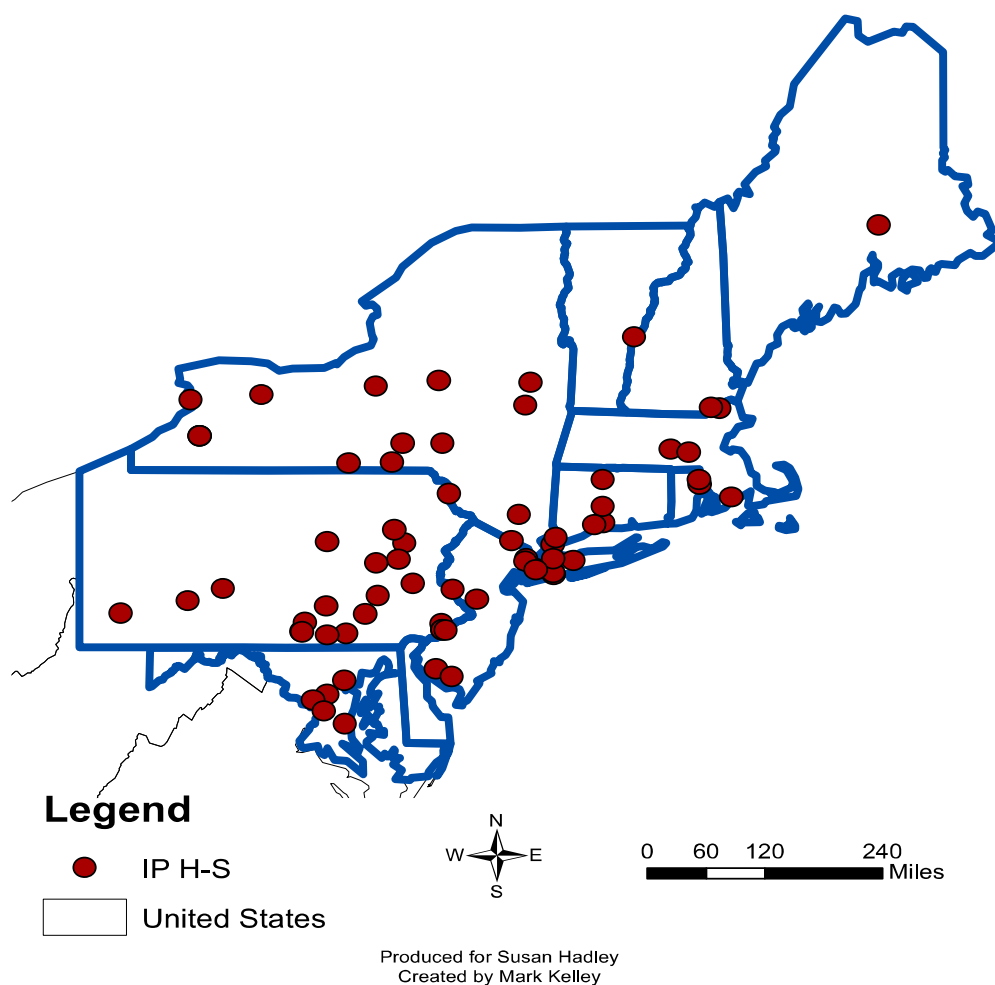
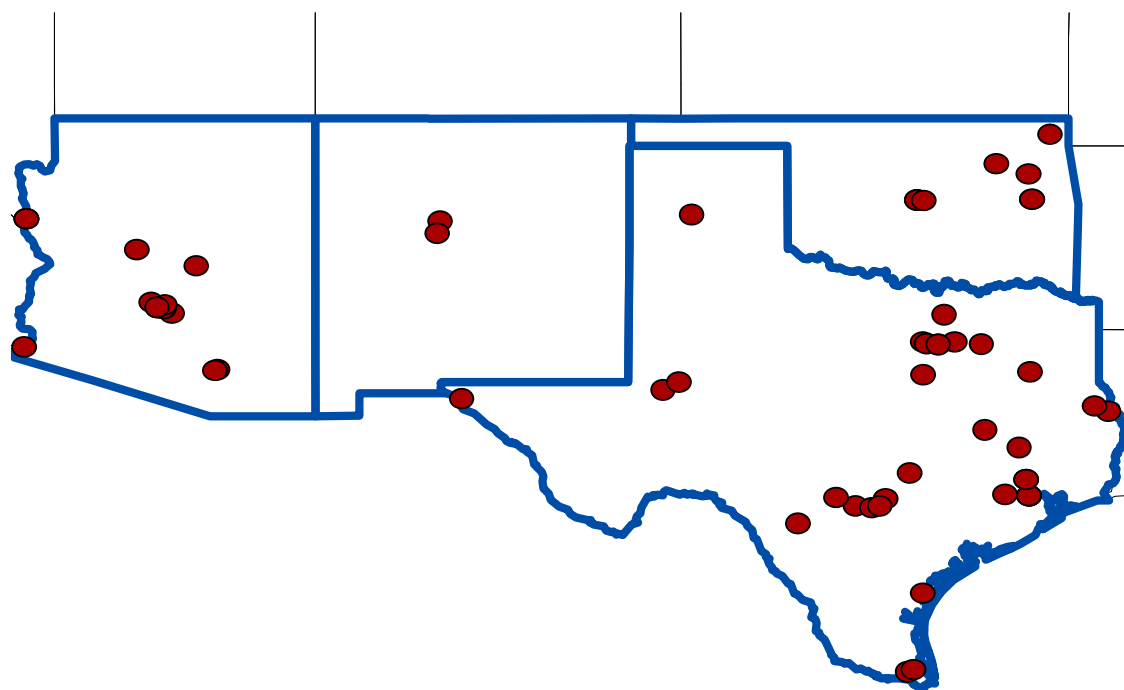


Figure 11. Intimate partner homicide-suicide dyad map for Northeast region of the US. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

Southwest US
n=61



Legend

- IP H-S
- United States



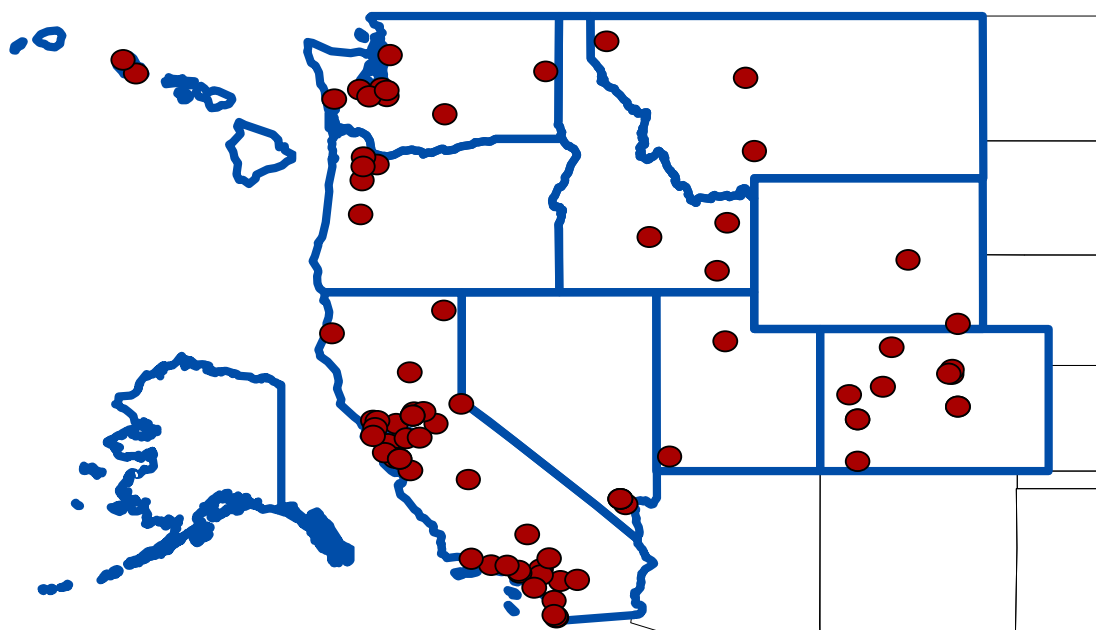
0 80 160 320
Miles

Produced for Susan Hadley
Created by Mark Kelley

Figure 12. Intimate partner homicide-suicide dyad map for the Southwest region of the US. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

West US
n=84



Legend

- IP H-S
- United States



0 130 260 520
Miles

Produced for Susan Hadley
Created by Mark Kelley

Figure 13. Intimate partner homicide-suicide dyad map for the Western region of the US. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

n=500

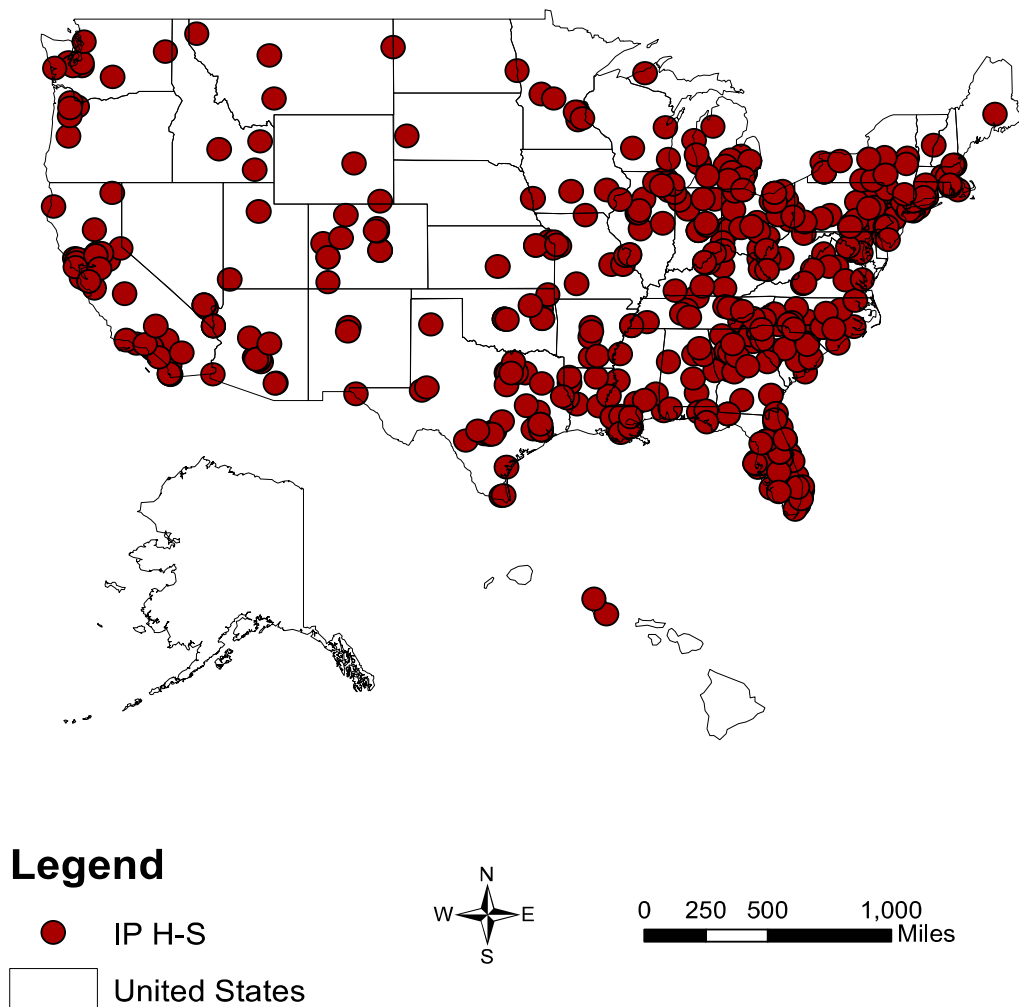
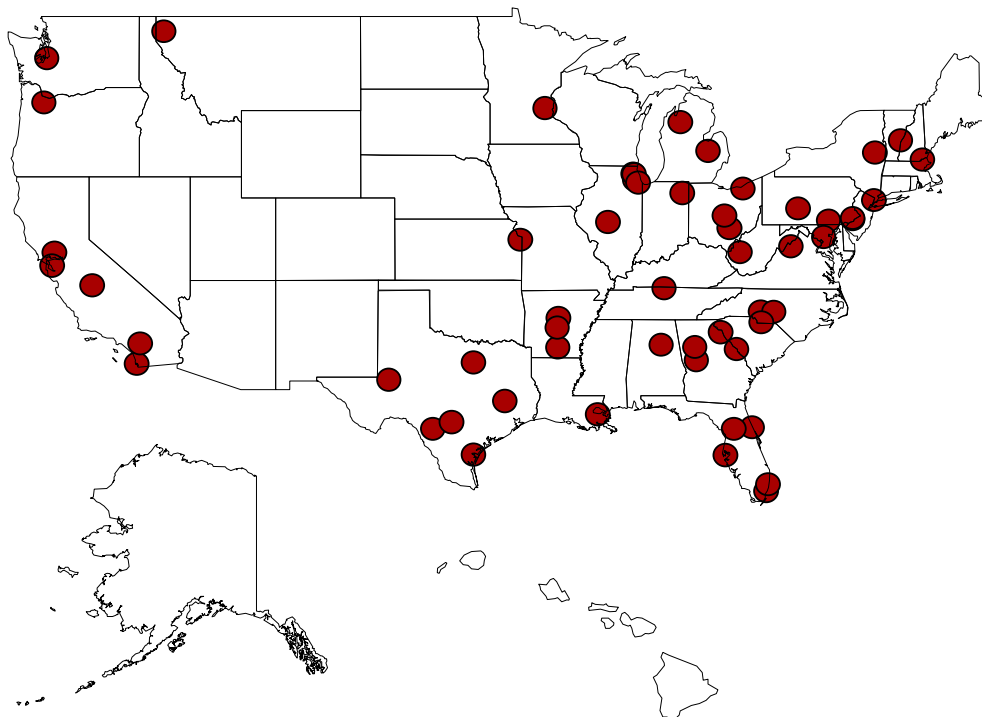


Figure 14. Map of intimate partner homicide-suicides in 2012. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

January
n=56



Legend

 United States

 IP H-S



0 250 500 1,000
Miles

Produced for Susan Hadley
Created by Mark Kelley

Figure 15. Map of intimate partner homicide-suicides in January 2012. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

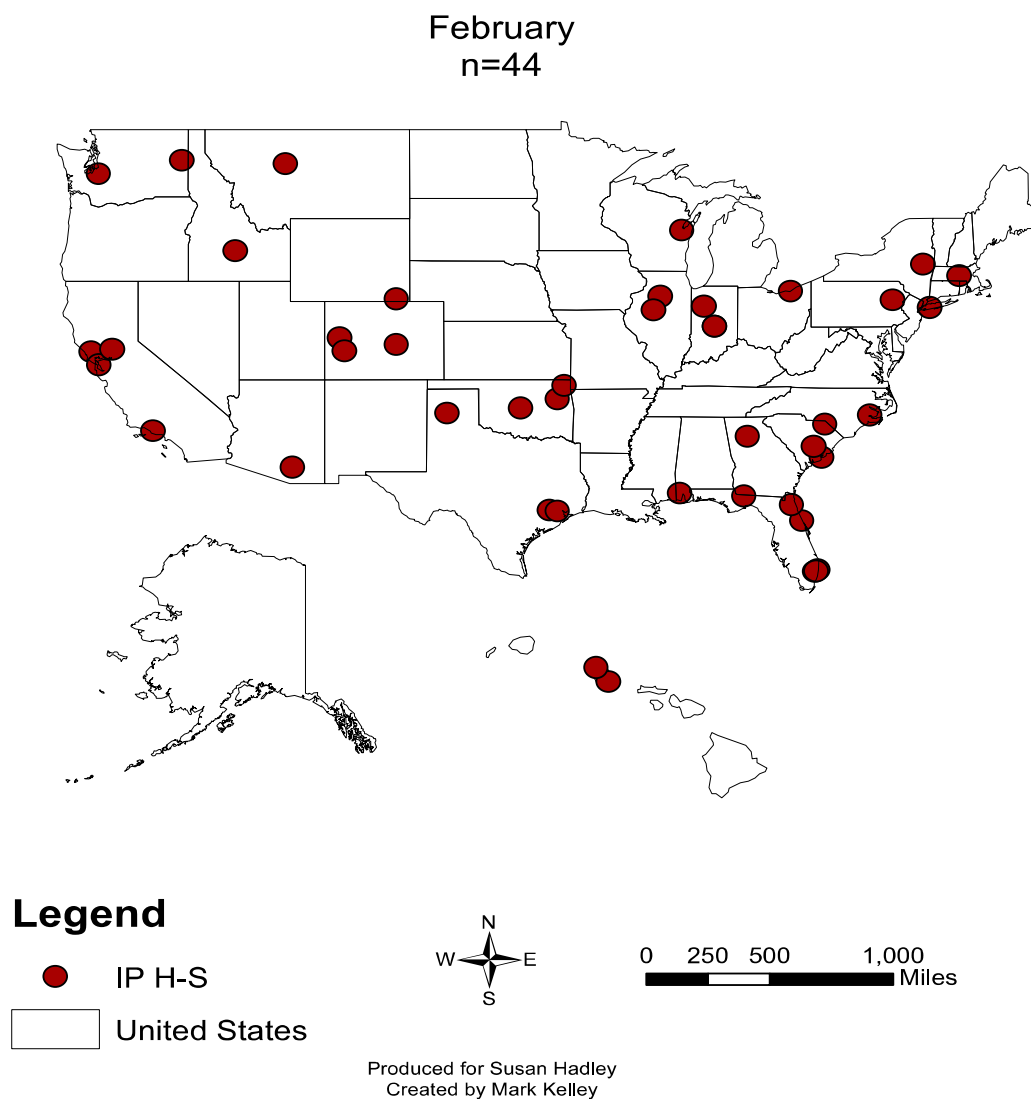


Figure 16. Map of intimate partner homicide-suicides in February 2012. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

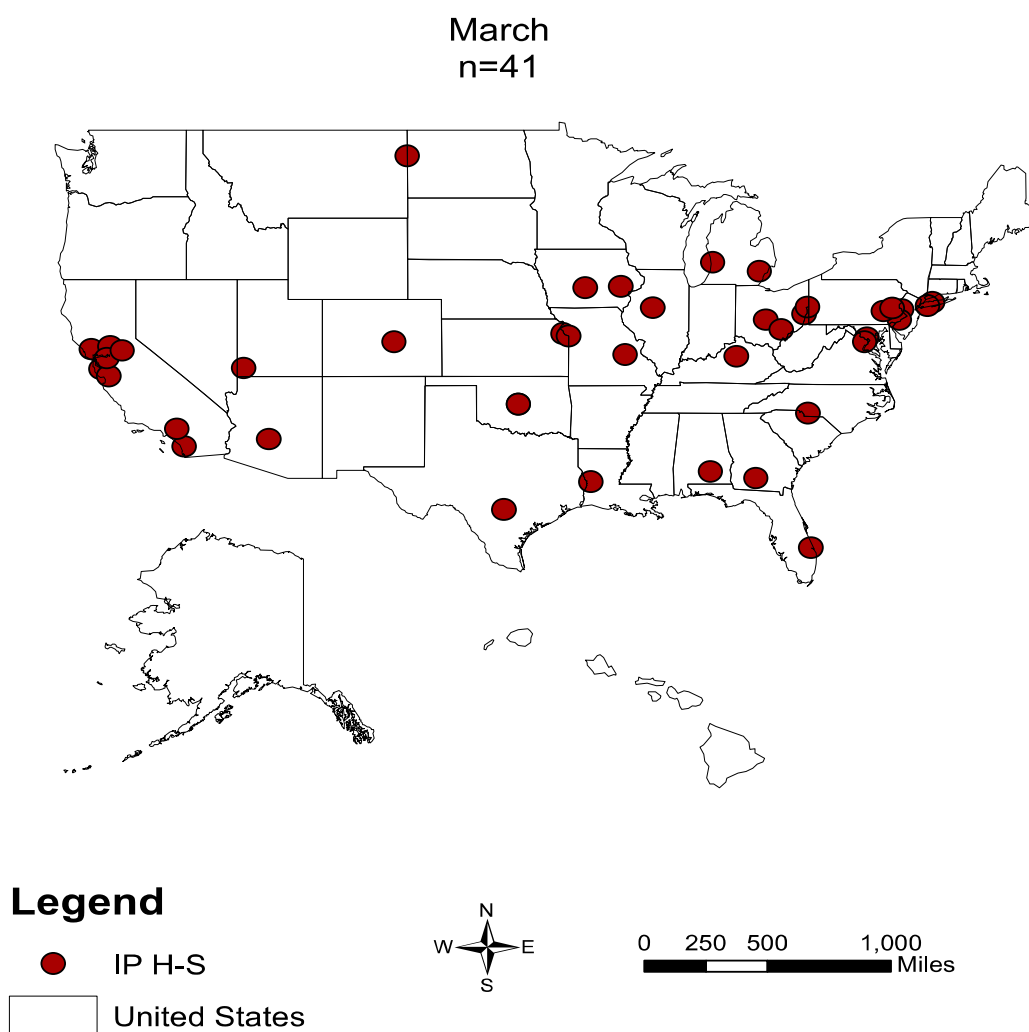


Figure 17. Map of intimate partner homicide-suicides in March 2012. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

April
n=50

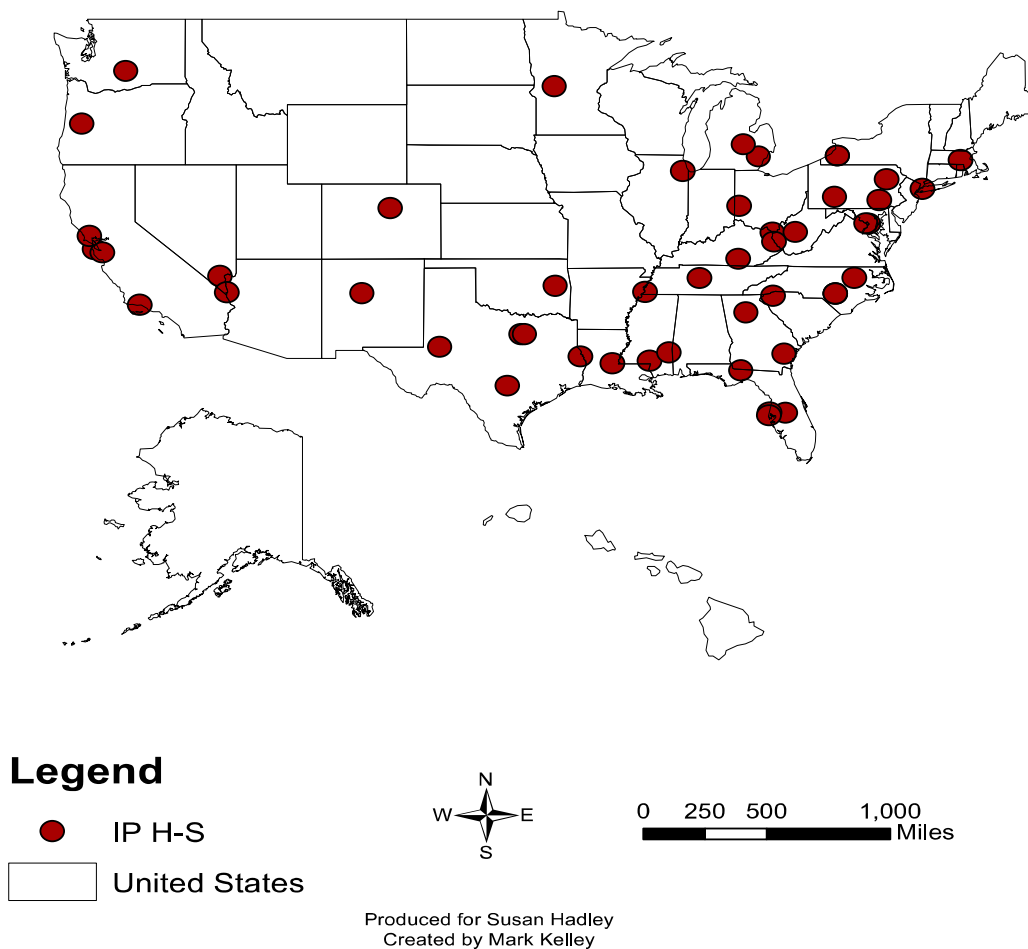


Figure 18. Map of intimate partner homicide-suicides in April 2012. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

May
n=49

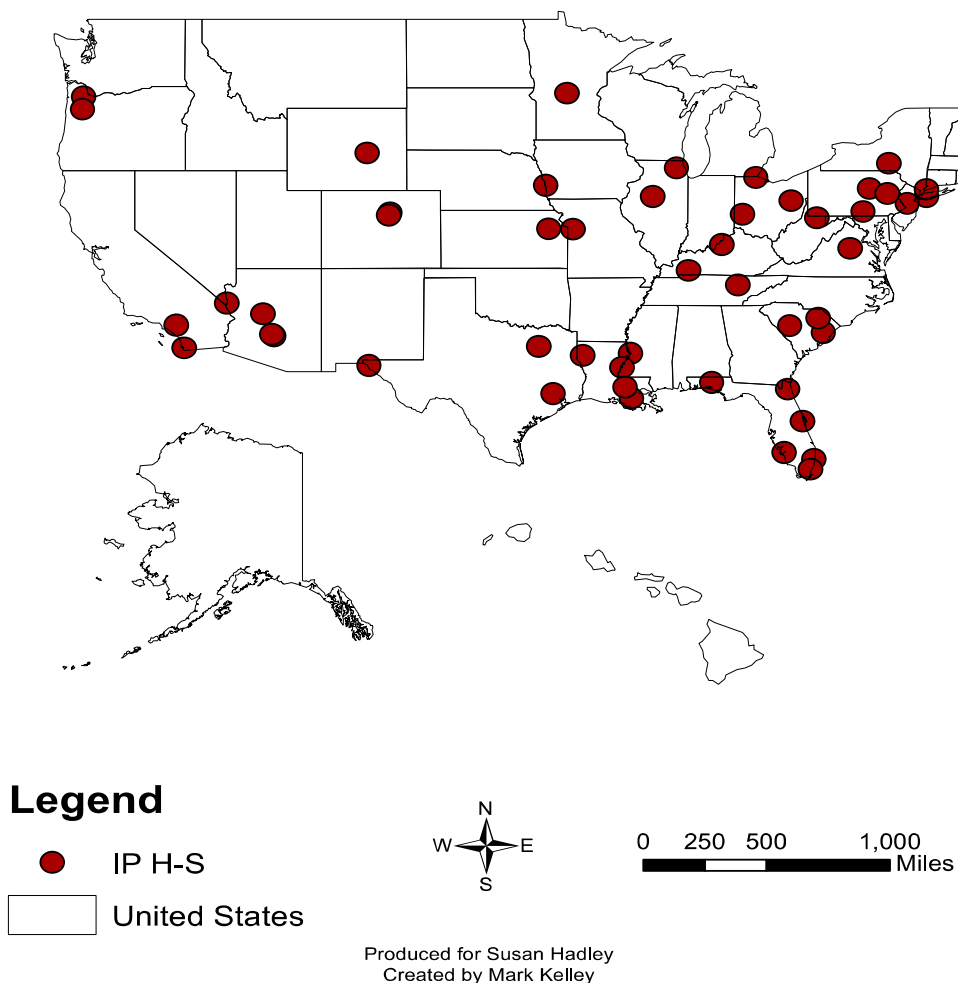


Figure 19. Map of intimate partner homicide-suicides in May 2012. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

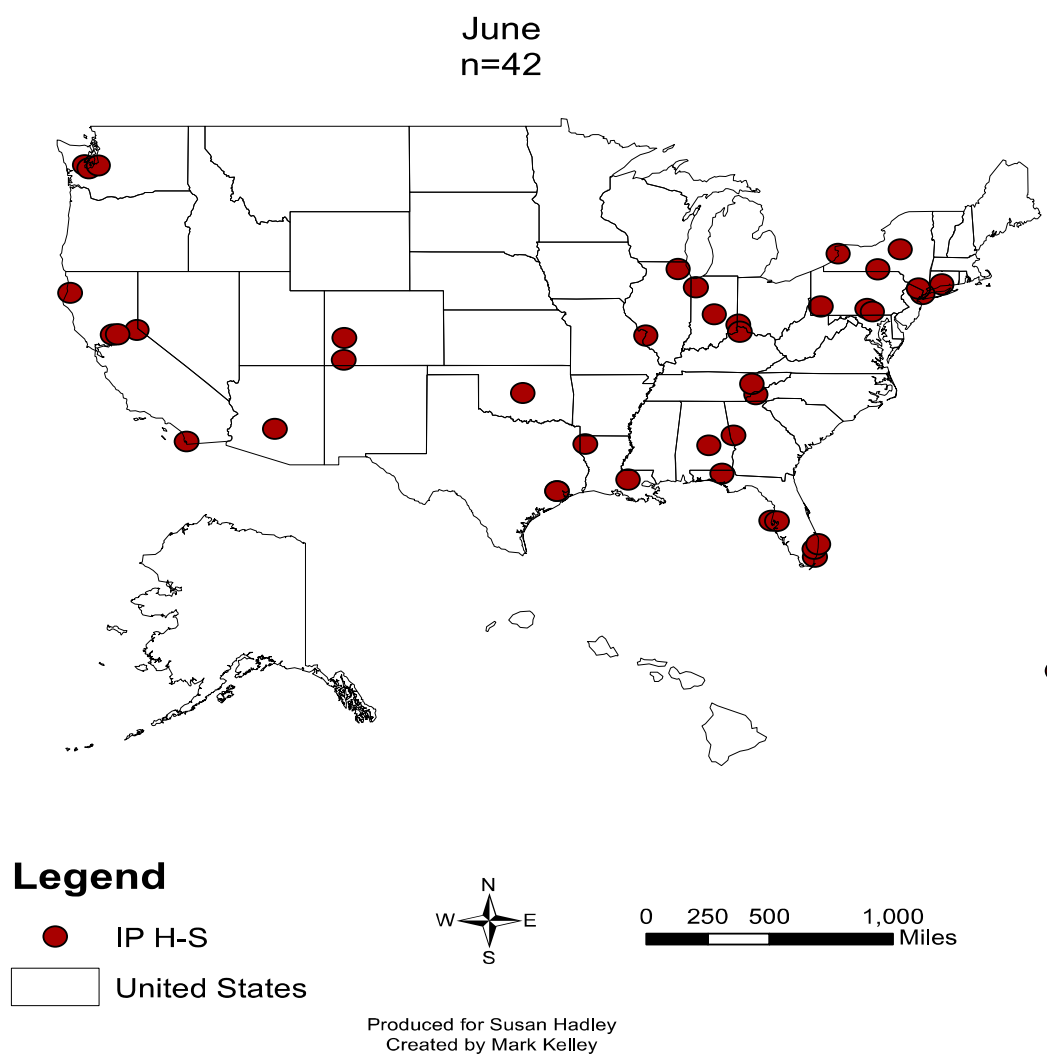


Figure 20. Map of intimate partner homicide-suicides in June 2012. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

July
n=58

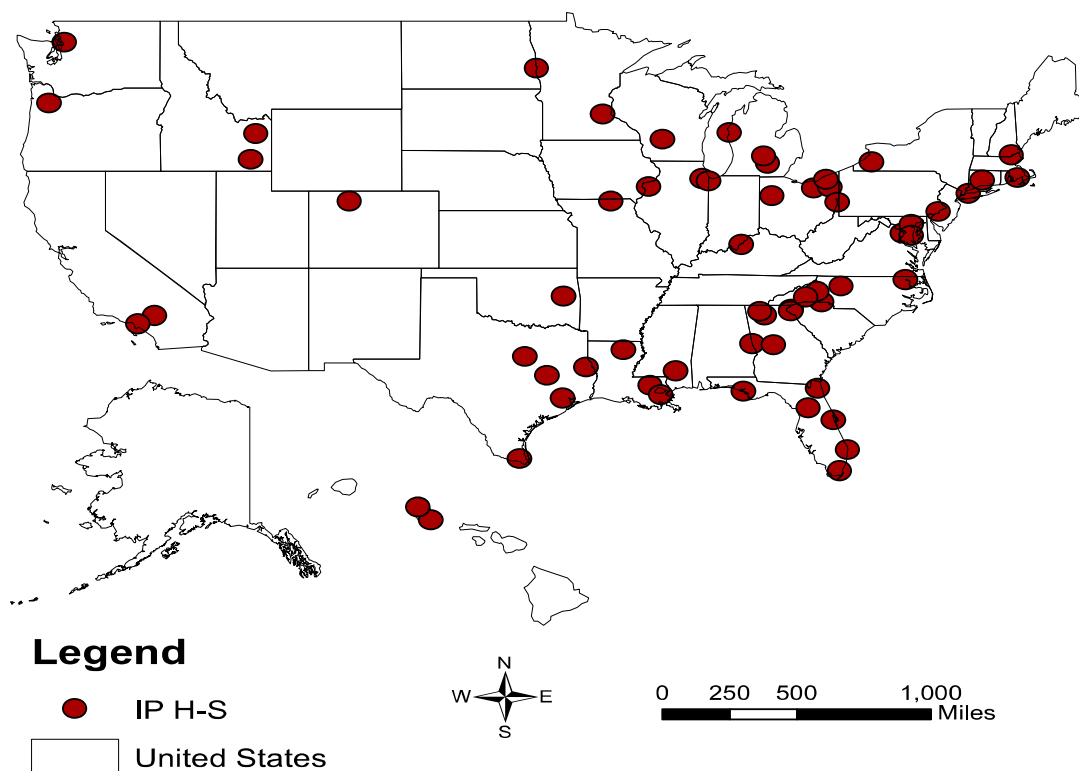


Figure 21. Map of intimate partner homicide-suicides in July 2012. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

August
n=36

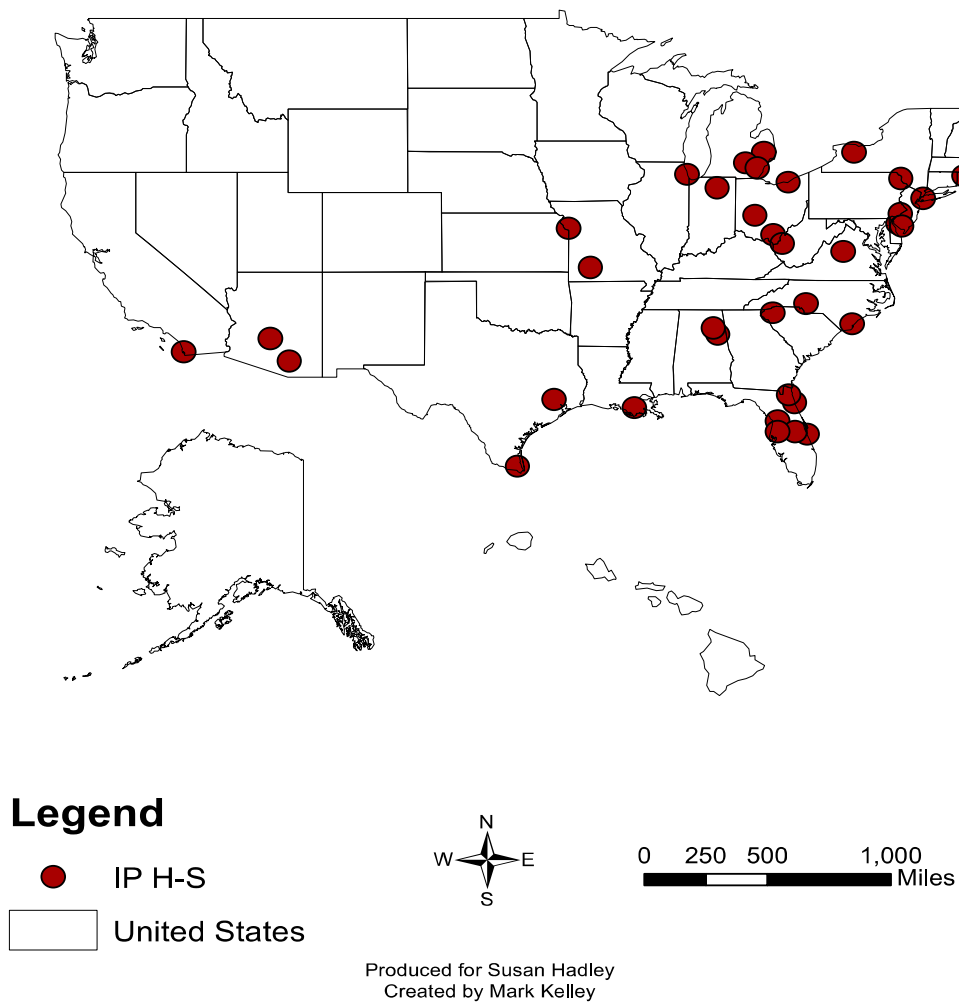


Figure 22. Map of intimate partner homicide-suicides in August 2012. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

September
n=40

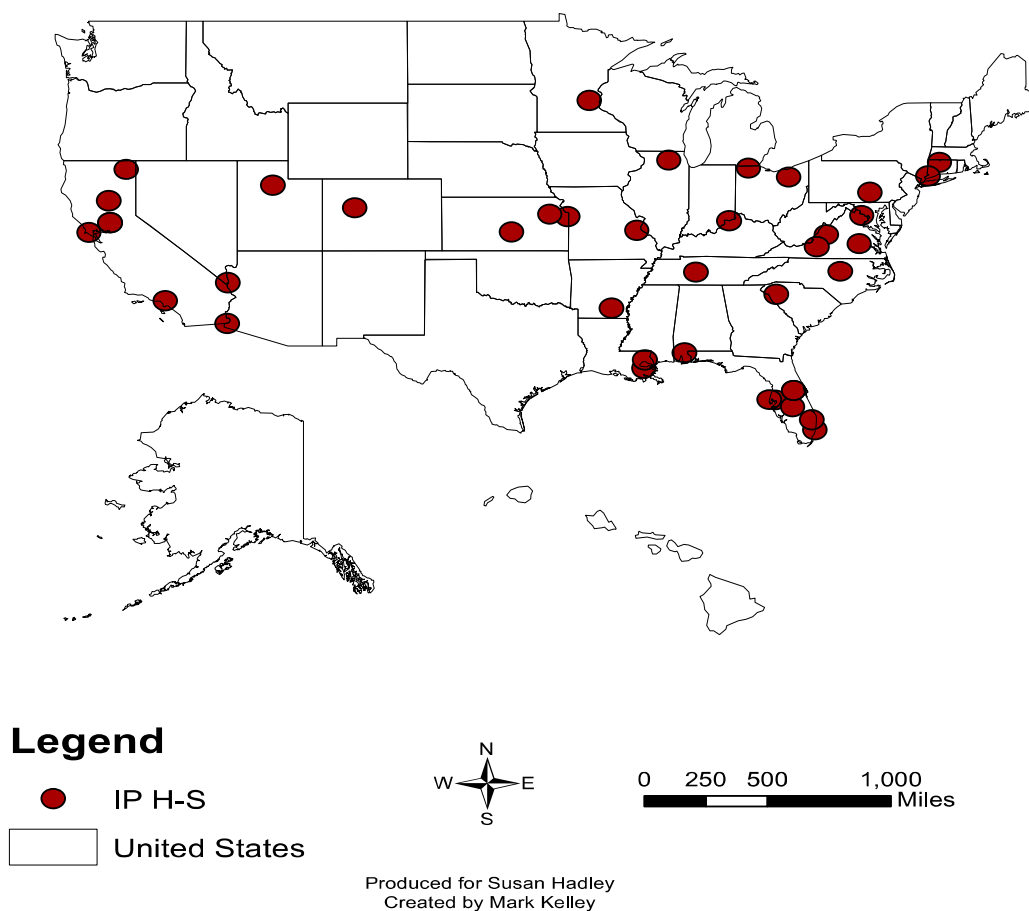


Figure 23. Map of intimate partner homicide-suicides in September 2012. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

October
n=25

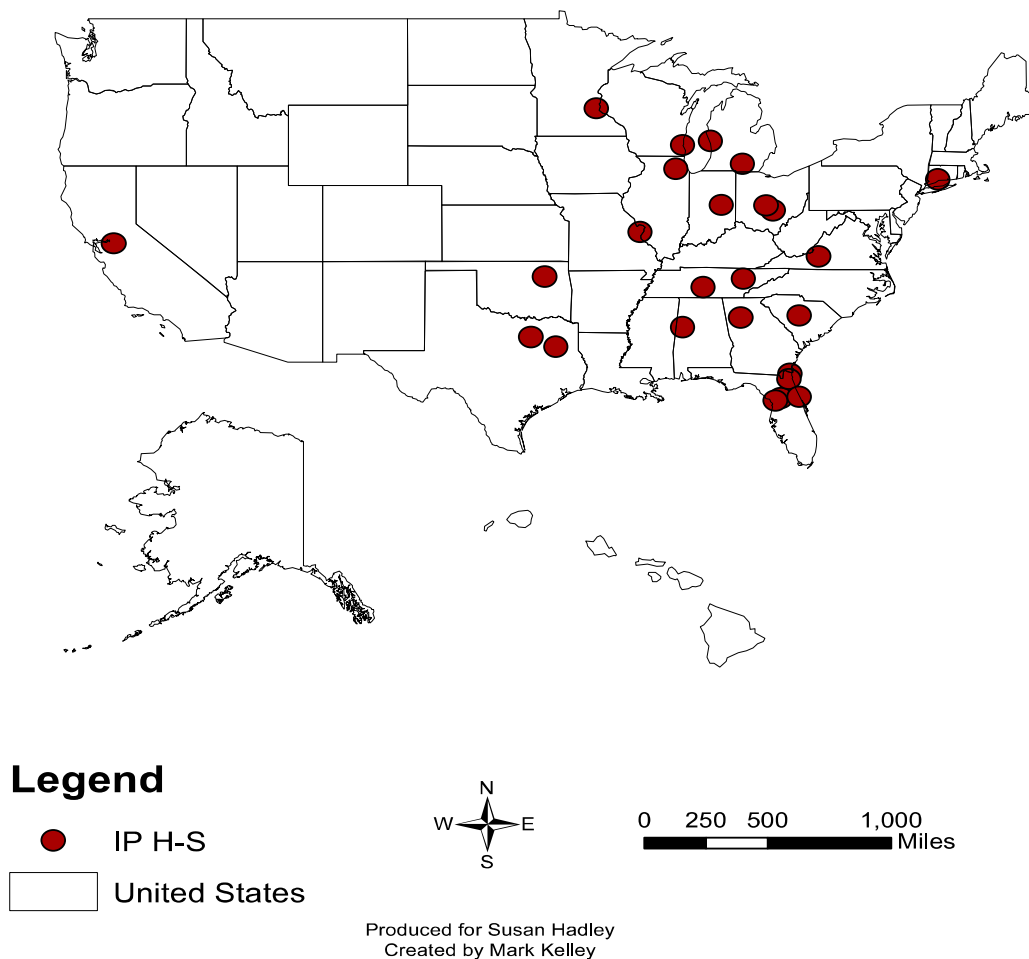


Figure 24. Map of intimate partner homicide-suicides in October 2012. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

November
n=35

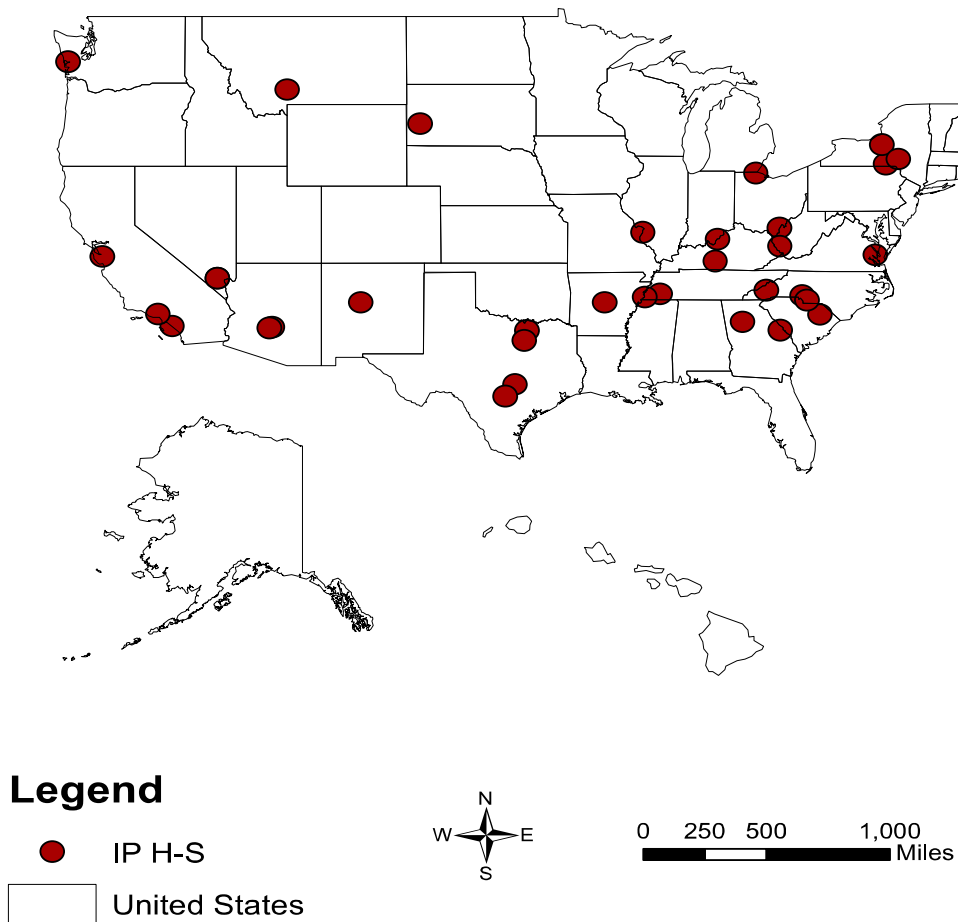


Figure 25. Map of intimate partner homicide-suicides in November 2012. Each red dot represents one dyad.

Intimate Partner Homicide-Suicides United States, 2012

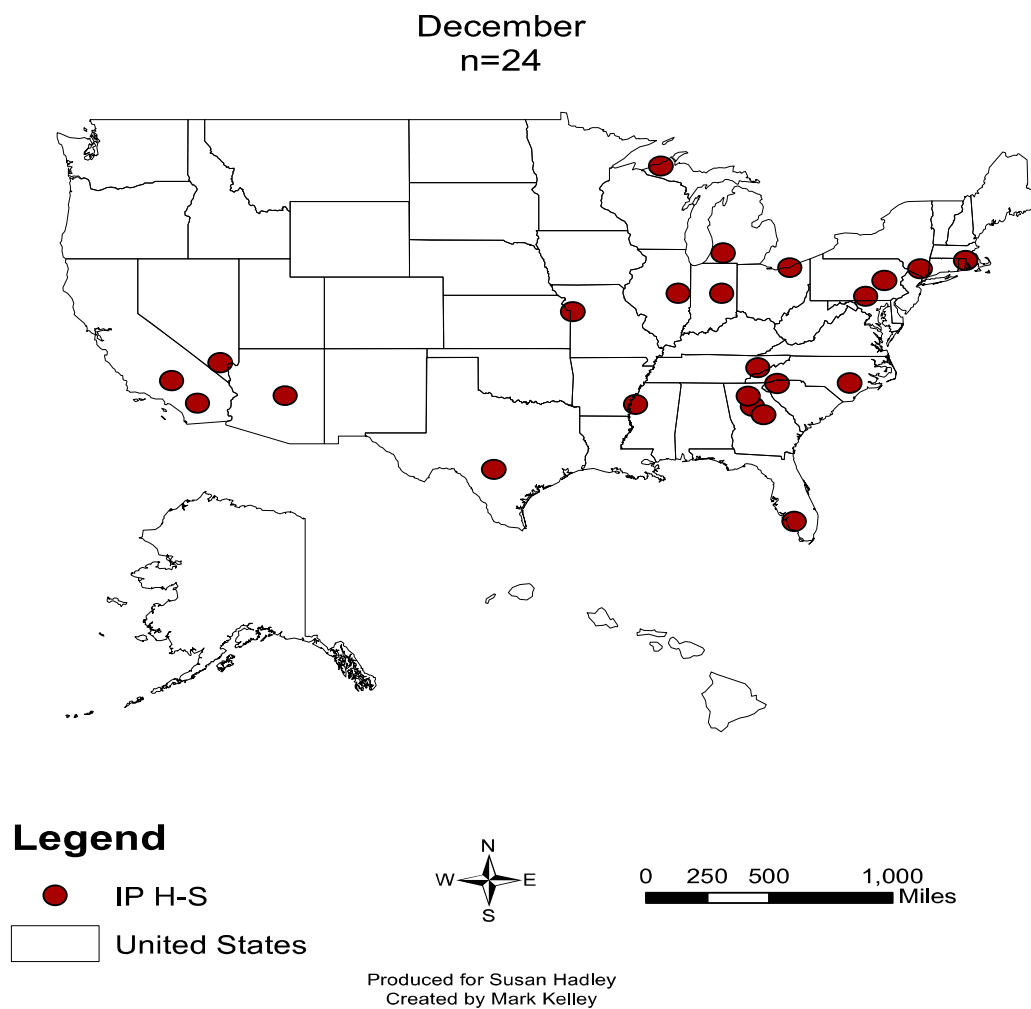


Figure 26. Map of intimate partner homicide-suicides in December 2012. Each red dot represents one dyad.