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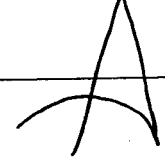
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Domestic Violence Statutes and Rates of Intimate Partner and Family Homicide

A Research Note

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This study explores whether states adopting specific domestic violence laws have significantly lower rates of intimate partner and family homicide, as well as a lower average of the two homicide rates. Point biserial correlation and multiple regression were used to analyze homicide rates, as measures of domestic violence, across seven statutory categories of state domestic violence laws for 47 continental states in the United States. With two exceptions, data show that state laws on domestic violence were not related to intimate partner and family homicide rates by state, or the average of the two homicide rates. The exceptions were moderate, but significant inverse correlations were found between family homicide and the average of family homicide and intimate partner homicide rates and states prohibiting firearm possession during a restraining order. However, in three separate regression models, no more than 23% of the variance in homicide rates was explained.

Keywords: *domestic violence; domestic violence policy; domestic violence homicide*

Introduction

As public awareness of domestic violence has increased over the last decade, so has the number of laws passed by state legislatures to help address the problem of domestic violence (Miller, 2002). In a study for the Institute of Law and Justice, Miller (2004) reported that from 1997 to 2003, state-level legislatures passed over 700 statutes related to domestic violence. The passage of these statutes suggests that states are getting more punitive on domestic violence crimes, as evidenced by increasing pre-charge requirements and surveillance, increasing charges of arrest

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suspects to felonies instead of misdemeanors, increasing penalties for those found guilty, and imposing additional conditions at sentencing. However, even with the “avalanche” of new laws passed, there has been little effort by state legislatures to examine relevant research and to determine “what works” before passing new legislation (Miller, 2004, p. 1). The proliferation of domestic violence laws presents a unique opportunity to study the effectiveness of such legislation. The primary purpose of this research is to determine whether state domestic violence legislation is correlated with, and has some predictive explanation of, family and intimate partner homicide rates.

Although each state in the United States defines domestic violence with some variation, domestic violence generally refers to all forms of violence perpetrated by one family member or intimate partner against another. Intimate partners are often defined as current and former spouses, including common-law spouses, and current and former boyfriends and girlfriends, including same-sex relationships. Family members are defined as parents, siblings, aunts/uncles, stepparents and stepchildren, in-laws, and “other” family (Gallup-Black, 2004). Domestic violence accounts for over 20% of all violent crime against women, and recent national statistics show that almost one third of female murder victims in this country were killed by an intimate partner (Miller, 2004). Although intimate partner homicide rates have been declining over the past decades (Dugan, Nagin, & Rosenfeld, 2003, 1999; Vigdor & Mercy, 2006), domestic violence continues to be a significant public health and criminal justice problem. Research by Vigdor and Mercy (2006) reports an average of 3.5 people killed by intimate partners everyday in this country, and approximately 45,500 intimate partner homicides between 1981 and 1998. Furthermore, each year about 1 in 3 female homicides and 1 in 20 male homicides were committed by spouses, ex-spouses, or boyfriends (Vigdor & Mercy, 2006). Recent data show the most significant decreases in the intimate partner homicide rates have been for male victimizations (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). A comprehensive analysis of intimate partner homicides between 1976 and 2004 suggests intimate partners were responsible for 11% of all murder victims (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006); however, these data also point to a decrease in intimate partner homicide rates. Intimate partner homicide rates involving male victims have decreased by 71% since 1976, and the rates for female victims reached a low point in 2004. Guns were the most common weapon used, with two thirds of intimate partners being killed by a firearm (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006).

Domestic Violence Statutes

The evolution of domestic violence legislation has often reflected the social norms of the time. No major federal legislative initiatives regarding domestic violence were enacted until the start of the women’s rights movement in the 1970s. As a result of this movement, criminal justice officials and lawmakers began to base legislation

and specialized policies on the needs of domestic violence victims (Dugan, Nagin, & Rosenfield, 2003). There are a variety of statutory provisions that legislatures have used to target domestic violence offenders, including gun restrictions, mandatory counseling, mandatory sentencing, and mandatory arrest.

In 1994, Congress passed the Violent Crime Control Act, legislation that enabled the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). This Act was recently renewed in 2000 and then again in 2006. Among other things, VAWA makes it a federal offense to possess a gun while subject to a domestic violence protection order (Killian, 2001). Gun control targeting domestic violence offenders was further addressed at the federal level when Congress passed the Lautenberg Amendment in 1996 that expanded the Gun Control Act of 1968. The Lautenberg Amendment makes it a federal offense for offenders convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence crimes to possess a firearm. The New Jersey Senator who proposed the amendment, Frank Lautenberg, expressed the opinion that “[A]ll too often, the difference between a battered woman and a dead woman is the presence of a gun,” recognizing that adding a gun to a violent domestic violence scenario increases potential lethality (Nathan, 2000, p. 823). The use of firearms significantly increases the lethality of a domestic violence incident, and firearm-related incidents more often result in death (Vigdor & Mercy, 2006).

The Lautenberg Amendment differs from other gun control legislation in one important way: it provides no exceptions for police or military personnel. Nathan (2000) analyzed recent cases in which courts have examined the constitutionality of the Lautenberg Amendment. Based on this research, Nathan argues that exceptions for police or military personnel would be self-defeating because “police and the military have a high incidence of domestic violence,” and “members of the military are often involved in domestic abuse that is more violent, more likely to involve lethal force, and more likely to involve the use of a weapon” (Nathan, 2000, p. 856).

Prompted by federal legislation, states began to include stricter gun laws in domestic violence legislation as a way to reduce homicide rates (Jose, 2003). By 2003, 18 states had enacted legislation similar to the Lautenberg Amendment (Vigdor & Mercy, 2006). Furthermore, by 2006, 18 states had laws that prohibited domestic violence misdemeanants from buying or possessing a firearm, and 27 states enacted laws that restricted firearm possession by offenders with active restraining orders against them. A recent study found that states with restraining order laws that restrict gun access have decreased rates of intimate partner homicide (Vigdor & Mercy, 2006). Even though strict federal gun restrictions are in effect, many researchers have asserted that without similar state legislation, federal legislation is not sufficiently enforced and does not work (Gold, 2002). Specifically, Gold (2002) argued that because state police officers primarily respond to the scene of domestic violence cases, they should have clear state statutory authority to confiscate firearms.

Mandatory sentencing and batterer’s intervention counseling are other common statutory components for addressing domestic violence. Some research has suggested that mandatory jail sentences for misdemeanor domestic violence offenders result in

lower conviction rates by reducing the percentage of defendants who pleaded guilty (Carlson & Nidey, 1995). But other research supports the use of mandatory sentencing. Killian (2001) proposed that mandatory sentencing works to decrease incidents of domestic violence in three ways. First, sentences could deter domestic violence by making incarceration the only available option. Second, the legislation could make victims more likely to report crimes because in calling the police, they know that mandatory sentencing would be an automatic result. Finally, mandatory sentences remove the offender from the physical relationship and, therefore, protect the victim from further physical abuse (Killian, 2001).

As the number of mandatory arrest statutes has increased, so has the number of statutes mandating batterers' counseling (Feder & Dugan, 2002). Although there has been some research supporting the effectiveness of batterers' counseling as a deterrent, Feder and Dugan questioned the experimental design or external validity of previous studies and determined that there was no compelling scientific evidence to support those findings (Feder & Dugan, 2002). Their study of male offenders sentenced to probation examined the efficacy of batterers' counseling programs by using random assignments of the probationers to either a control group (without counseling) or an experimental group (with counseling). The study concluded that there were no significant differences in either re-arrest rates or attitudes between the men who received counseling and those who did not (Feder & Dugan, 2002).

The most common legislative enactment adopted by states regarding domestic violence has been mandatory arrest. Although most states have enacted either mandatory or pro-arrest policies for domestic violence cases, some research has questioned whether mandatory arrest is the most effective way to deter domestic violence offenders (Rizer, 2005; Wanless, 1996). For decades, criminal justice researchers have focused on the effectiveness of arrest as a deterrent for domestic violence, but it was the pioneering studies on arrest by Sherman and Berk (1984) that resulted in widespread mandatory or pro-arrest policies. This early study found that arrest of domestic violence suspects reduced recidivism (Sherman & Berk, 1984).

Subsequent replications of this early study showed conflicting findings, but Sherman's later work in Milwaukee helped to distinguish when arrest works best in domestic violence cases (Sherman et al., 1992). Specifically, Sherman and his colleagues (1992) found differences in the impact of arrest across offender employment status, marital status, education level, and race. Examination of 1,200 misdemeanor domestic violence arrests found that offenders who were "socially marginal" were more likely to reoffend within one year of an arrest for domestic violence, whereas offenders who were employed and married were more likely to be deterred by arrest (Sherman et al., 1992). Sherman's research was replicated in Colorado (Berk, Campbell, Klap, & Western, 1992) and in Omaha (Dunford, Huizinga, & Elliot, 1990) with similar findings. Recently, Sherman and colleagues conducted a meta-analysis of domestic violence research and found differences in recidivism across employment status. Specifically, employed individuals who were arrested were less

likely to recidivate than unemployed individuals (Sherman, Farrington, Welsh, & MacKenzie, 2002).

Rizer (2005) suggested that recent research on the effectiveness of mandatory arrest as a deterrent has been mixed. He concludes that the most positive outcomes of mandatory arrest policies include: sending strong messages to the community and to offenders that domestic violence will not be tolerated; clarifying the role of the police officer; and protecting victims from immediate violence (Rizer, 2005). Meanwhile, the most common criticisms of mandatory arrest laws include: the policies are too harsh and result in unintended consequences; the policies do not empower women victims, but instead reduce their autonomy; the policies result in too many victims being arrested; and, finally, the policies lead police to engage in both gender and racial discrimination (Rizer, 2005).

Homicide Rates as a Measure of Domestic Violence

Researchers examining the efficacy of domestic violence statutes have relied on homicide data as one measure of statutory effectiveness. Dugan, Nagin, and Rosenfield (1999) attempted to explain the decrease in domestic violence homicide rates over the past few decades by assessing various exposure-reducing measures that reduce the contact a victim has with a violent partner. The study used data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR), which includes information on the victim. Male and female intimate partner homicide rates per 100,000 population for married and unmarried partners (in accordance with SHR definitions) were assessed using variables of domestic violence services, domesticity, and women's economic status (Dugan et al., 1999). The researchers found mixed results, but concluded that most exposure-reducing measures, including aggressive arrest policies, resulted in lower levels of intimate partner homicide (Dugan et al., 1999).

Building on their past research and including a measure for protective orders, Dugan, Nagin, and Rosenfield (2003) evaluated the relationship between certain exposure-reducing resources and the domestic violence homicide rate. Results showed that "more often than not, communities with more abundant alternatives to living with, or depending on, an abusive partner have lower levels of intimate-partner killings" (Dugan et al., 2003, p. 191). Conversely, greater levels of wife homicides were found in cities with mandatory arrest laws. However, in general, findings suggest that policies that remove the offender for some period of time also remove the victim from immediate danger (Dugan et al., 2003).

In a separate study, Dugan (2003) analyzed state statutes to determine if the presence of particular statutes was correlated with the overall rate of domestic violence. Dugan theorized that residents in states with strict statutes would experience lower rates of domestic violence than those in states without the statutes. The study found that most strict statutory provisions targeting domestic violence, including mandatory

arrest laws, do reduce the likelihood for domestic violence (Dugan, 2003). Yet the study also found that domestic violence is less likely to be reported to police in states with mandatory arrest laws (Dugan, 2003).

Vigdor and Mercy (2006) examined whether laws that restricted firearm access by perpetrators and that permitted confiscation of firearms at a domestic violence crime scene influenced either domestic violence homicide rates or incidents involving the use of a firearm. The SHR rates from 1982 to 2002 were used to determine homicide statistics and were supplemented with four additional data sources. Results suggest that limiting firearm access reduces the domestic homicide rate, with rates decreasing by 8% after the enactment of the legislation. Female homicide rates were 8% lower, and those involving firearms were 10% lower (Vigdor & Mercy, 2006). Restraining order laws only impacted rates in states that provided adequate background checks and those that kept qualified domestic violence offenders from possessing a gun altogether.

The present study attempts to add to the domestic violence policy literature by comparing Uniform Crime Report (UCR) SHR data with state statutes on gun control, enhanced charging, and sentencing options. Figure 1 highlights the legal provisions of the seven categories by pre-charge, charge, or conviction.

Specifically, seven categories of domestic violence statutes are identified and categorized: pre-charge (i.e., statutes that prohibit firearm possession when a person is subject to a restraining order); charge (i.e., statutes that allow a first offense domestic violence to be prosecuted as a felony; statutes that allow the charge to be enhanced to a felony when committed in the presence of a minor; statutes that allow the crime to be enhanced to a felony when there are priors); and sentencing (i.e., statutes that mandate jail time; statutes that mandate batterers' counseling; and statutes that prohibit firearm possession after conviction). This research explores whether each statute is related to lower rates of domestic violence homicide.

Method

Following the methodology of Lester (1988), the present study correlated state domestic violence statutes with rates of homicide for 47 states in the United States. Specifically, this study tests whether states adopting specific domestic violence laws had significantly lower rates of intimate partner and family homicide, as well as a lower average of the two homicide rates.

To begin, state domestic violence legislation was examined to determine if individual states had "more punitive" policies of domestic violence based on whether their policy included any of the seven specific categories above. Initial statutory language and subsequent changes to state statutes were examined. Five of the policy categories were drawn from Miller's (2004) work, with two additional categories added. The two additional categories highlight restrictions to an individual's access to firearms both when that individual is subject to the terms of a restraining order and/or when

Figure 1
Domestic Violence Statutes by Pre-Charge, Charge, and Conviction Requirements

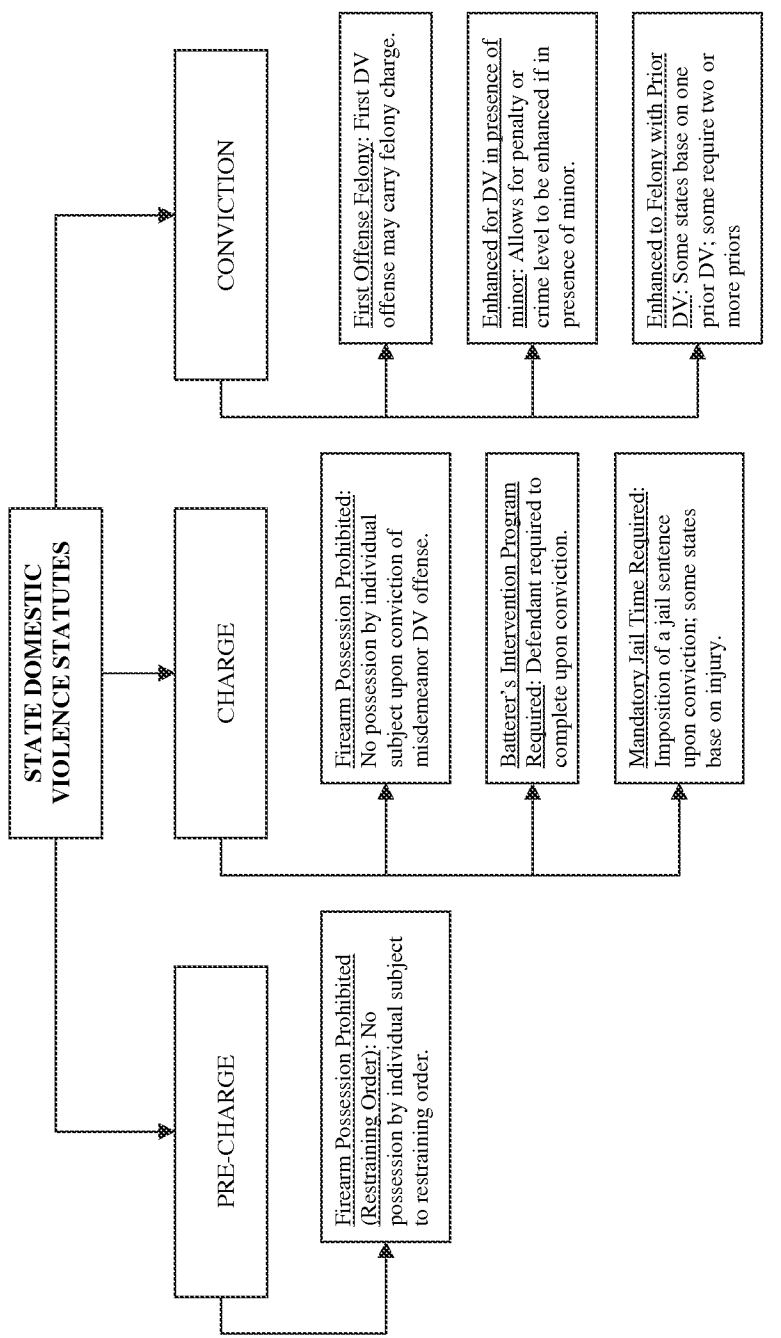


Table 1
Domestic Violence Statutes by State and Year Enacted

State	Felony (First Off)	Enhanced to Felony (Priors)	Enhanced (Minor)	BIP Required	Mandatory Jail	Firearm Prohibited	
						(Restraining Order)	(Misdemeanor Domestic Violence)
AL	2000				2000		
AZ		1998	2000	1997	1998	1996	
AR	1995	1995					
CA	1993			1994	1987	1994	1990
CO		2000		1994			
CT						1994	
DE				1999		1993	1999
FL			1998	1996	2001	1998	1998
GA		1996		2002			
ID	1998	2004	1998				
IL		1999	2001		2001	1996	2001
IN		1999				1999	
IA		2002		1991	1991	1997	1990
KS		1996			1996		
KY		2000				2003	2003
LA		1994	2003				
ME						1997	
MD						2002	2003
MA						1994	1998
MI		1994				1996	
MN		1995			1993		1992
MS	1998	1998	2002				
MO	2000	1998			1998		
MT		1991	2001	1991	1995	1995	
NE							
NV		1999		1999	1999		
NH						1999	2000
NJ						2003	2003
NM	1995						
NY						1996	1996
NC			2003	2000		2003	
ND				2003			1995
OH		1988*	1999			1999	
OK		1996	1999	1996			
OR		1997	1997				
PA						1997	1997
RI		1990		1995	1995		
SC	2003						
SD							
TN							
TX		1989				2003	2001

UT		2005	1997	2002	1995	
VT	1993	1993				
VA		1991			1994	
WA					1996	1996
WV		1994			2000	2000
WI		1988 ^a			1995	1996
WY		1996			1996 ^b	

a. Law could not be traced back before this year.

b. Law gives discretion to the judge to enforce this provision.

the individual has been convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence. Table 1 presents the various “categories” pertaining to the domestic violence statute and the date each was enacted. One might argue that states having legislated (more) categories have constituents who are supportive of the most punitive domestic violence laws, meaning they are “more opposed” to or “less tolerant” of domestic violence.

The homicide rates used were a 5-year rolling average of homicides by county from 1995 to 1999 provided by Gallup-Black (2004). Data were aggregated in 5-year averages to account for potential instabilities in the annual rates, particularly for the low-population counties. Gallup-Black’s source of homicide data was the FBI’s SHR from 1980 to 1999. Gallup-Black (2004) also used data from the 1980, 1990, and 2000 United States Census to calculate population-based rates. The rates of intimate partner homicide were per 100,000 ages 15 and over, while the rates of family homicide were per 100,000 for all ages. In the current study, rates of intimate partner and family homicide were obtained from Gallup-Black’s (2004) data set and converted to state-level data. The intimate partner and family homicide rates for individual states were then averaged.

A point biserial correlation was used to measure the association between specific categories of domestic violence policy in a state and its homicide rate. Whether a state has legislated (or not) each specific policy serves as the independent variable in the point biserial correlation. The point biserial correlation is calculated using the same equation used for the Pearson product-moment correlation. Additionally, as with traditional correlation, the correlation coefficient is constrained to values between negative and positive one, and the interpretation of the correlation coefficient is the same. More specifically, the point biserial correlation coefficient is positive when large values of X are associated with the existence of the dependent variable (i.e., $y = 1$); the coefficient is negative when small values of X are associated with the non-existence of the dependent variable (i.e., $y = 0$). Finally, multiple regression was used to determine the amount of variance explained in intimate partner and family homicide rates, as well as an average of the two homicide rates across the seven categories of domestic violence statutes. In each regression model, all of the independent variables (i.e., statutory categories) were entered simultaneously to account for the contribution of multiple factors—statutory categories in aggregate—toward the variances.

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Family Homicide, Intimate Partner Homicide, the Average of Family Homicide and Intimate Partner Homicide, and Domestic Violence Statutes Predictor Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Number of States			9	28	12	15	12	26	18
Family Homicide	1.30	1.37	-.08	.09	-.14	.02	.07	-.32*	-.21
Intimate Partner Homicide	2.61	1.98	-.10	.08	-.08	.04	-.002	-.24	-.11
Average of Family and Intimate Partner Homicides	1.96	1.58	-.10	.09	-.11	.03	.03	-.29	-.16
Predictor Variable									
Felony (First Off)	.19	.40		-.02	-.04	-.24	.11	-.46**	-.27
Enhanced to Felony (Priors)	.57	.50		—	.31*	.07	.17	-.13	-.30*
Enhanced Minor	.26	.44			—	.30*	.14	.01	-.26
BIP Required	.34	.48				—	.35*	-.02	-.10
Mandatory Jail	.23	.43					—	-.03	.08
Firearm Prohibited (Restraining Order)	.57	.50						—	.50***
Firearm Prohibited (Misdemeanor Domestic Violence)	.38	.49							—

* $p < .05$ one-tailed. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Results

Table 2 presents the correlation coefficients between each of the seven different statutory domestic violence categories and the family homicide and intimate partner homicide rates. The correlation between the statutory categories and the average of the family and intimate partner homicide rates is also presented. The correlations for the family homicide rate and the average of the family homicide rate and the intimate partner rate across states having a statute which prohibits firearm possession by a person subject to a restraining order, were statistically significant ($r = -.32$, $p = .014$ and $-.29$, $p = .025$, respectively). As a further test, all data were subjected to regression analysis. The findings for the restraining order statute and rates of family homicide and the rates of the average of the family homicide and the intimate partner homicide remained significant. However, for the remaining six statutes these results do not support the hypothesis that states with these legislated domestic violence policies have significantly lower rates of intimate partner homicide, family homicide, or the average of the two rates of homicide.

Using multiple regression, the amount of variance explained was determined in each of the homicide rates and the average of both rates across the seven categories of domestic violence statutes. Only 12% of the variance in the intimate partner rates,

18% of the variance of the average of the intimate partner and family homicide rates, and 23% of the variance in the family homicide rates was accounted for. When all seven statutory categories were included in the individual regression models, they did not contribute to the prediction of the three different rates of homicide.

Results in Tables 2 and 3 demonstrate that although statutes which prohibit firearm possession were associated with a decline in homicide rates, there was no decrease in homicide rates when including all seven statutory categories. That is, there were no significant reductions in the rates of family homicide, intimate partner homicide, or the average of the two rates of homicide. The importance of a “lack of significance” finding for the statutory categories decreasing homicide rates highlights the “symbolic” nature of such policies (Stolz, 2002a; 2002b) as well as the reactionary nature of states “jumping on the bandwagon” to legislate-away issues without pre-impact analyses. Thus, although there has been an increase in the number of states adopting the various “more punitive” domestic violence statutes, overall none of the specific statutory categories appears to be related or to explain the family and intimate partner homicide rates.

Discussion

The goal of this article was to examine statutes recently passed by state legislatures targeting domestic violence offenders and to determine whether there is a correlation or some predictive explanation between legislation and homicide rates. After the initial passage of federal provisions under the Violence against Women Act, hundreds of state statutes regarding domestic violence were passed. But as many recent studies have found, most of these legislative initiatives were enacted without examining whether these laws might be effective deterring domestic violence.

The statutes examined in this research were selected because they are representative of a state's more punitive or aggressive approach toward domestic violence cases. The authors tested whether the presence of these aggressive statutes might be correlated with lower rates of intimate partner or family homicide rates, but findings suggest no correlation between these laws and the intimate partner and family homicide rates with one exception. The exception notably was a moderate, but significant inverse correlation between family homicide rates and states mandating firearm restrictions during restraining order (as one statutory category of domestic violence). This means the family homicide rate decreased across 47 states as the number of states restricting firearms during a restraining order increased or vice versa. This suggests that perhaps limiting firearm availability once a restraining order has been served may help to reduce family homicide rates. A significant relationship between family homicide rates and laws restricting firearm possession by those subject to a restraining order is consistent with other studies (Dugan, 2003; Vgidor & Mercy, 2006) and emphasizes the need for further research.

Table 3
Regression Analysis Summary for Domestic Violence Statutes Variables
Predicting Family Homicide, Intimate Partner Homicide, and the
Average of Family and Intimate Partner Homicides

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients	<i>SEB</i>	<i>Beta</i>
Family Homicide* Predictor Variable			
Felony (First Off)	-1.21	.60	-.35
Enhanced to Felony (Priors)	.05	.43	.02
Enhanced Minor	-.61	.50	-.20
BIP Required	-.26	.48	-.09
Mandatory Jail	.54	.52	.17
Firearm Prohibited (Restraining Order)	-1.04	.49	-.38
Firearm Prohibited (Misdemeanor Domestic Violence)	-.52	.51	-.19
Intimate Partner Homicide** Predictor Variable			
Felony (First Off)	-1.37	.92	-.28
Enhanced to Felony (Priors)	.21	.66	.05
Enhanced Minor	-.47	.76	-.11
BIP Required	-.10	.74	-.02
Mandatory Jail	.16	.80	.03
Firearm Prohibited (Restraining Order)	-1.34	.76	-.34
Firearm Prohibited (Misdemeanor Domestic Violence)	-.12	.78	-.03
Average of Family and Intimate Partner Homicides*** Predictor Variable			
Felony (First Off)	-1.29	.71	-.34
Enhanced to Felony (Priors)	.13	.51	.04
Enhanced Minor	-.54	.59	-.15
BIP Required	-.18	.57	-.05
Mandatory Jail	.35	.62	.10
Firearm Prohibited (Restraining Order)	-1.19	.58	-.38
Firearm Prohibited (Misdemeanor Domestic Violence)	-.32	.60	-.10

* $R^2 = .23$ ($N = 47$, $p > .05$). ** $R^2 = .12$ ($N = 47$, $p > .05$). *** $R^2 = .18$ ($N = 47$, $p > .05$).

One important limitation in using homicide data as a measure of the effectiveness of domestic violence statutes is that domestic violence is only a small subset of domestic violence, and domestic violence legislation might affect overall domestic violence rates, but not the homicide rates. This means some state statutes may be correlated to the overall domestic violence rates, but not to individual homicide rates (Dugan, 2003). Similarly, some researchers have theorized that non-lethal offenders might be more affected by laws and policies more than lethal offenders (Dugan, Nagin, & Rosenfeld, 2003). In addition, to avoid potential problems with low statistical power and to obtain more stable estimates of correlations, researchers should use much larger sample sizes when possible.

Another limitation, due to the nature of the data used, relates to the specific statutory provisions examined. Several of the statutory provisions examined here specifically give

judges discretion about whether to enforce the provision. For instance, the Wyoming statute prohibiting the possession of firearms when a person is subject to a restraining order allows the judge to decide whether or not to impose this restriction. In other states, judges have discretion about whether to order jail time for offenders, even when the statute allows for or encourages the imposition of a jail sentence. This study examined whether or not the statute exists, and not how often the statutes are enforced.

This study illustrates the importance of examining the generality of research results over time. That is, despite the increase in states adopting domestic violence provisions over the past 20 years, the present study identifies only one association between state laws on domestic violence and rates of domestic violence. There was a moderate but significant inverse correlation coefficient for family homicide with states prohibiting firearm restriction during restraining order (as one statutory category of domestic violence). There is a paucity of research on this important topic. Longitudinal studies could best ascertain whether broader adoption of state domestic violence laws might lead to reduced rates of domestic violence. Additional research is needed to determine whether there is any correlation between these laws and arrest rates or other measures of domestic violence.

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