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Gender, Relationship Type, and Perceptions of Interpersonal Violence

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ABSTRACT

Intimate partner violence continues to be a controversial issue for the legal and criminal justice system. Difference in how people interpret violence in the domestic context can have substantial consequences for victim and bystander reporting and responses. Yet few studies have explored the possible influence of gender-based normative expectations for understanding instances of violence between men and women. How do perceptions of violence vary between relationship type and sex of the perpetrator? I test whether reports of criminality, recommendations to contact police, and perceived level of injury vary across relationship intimacy (i.e., acquaintance, dating, spouses) and perpetrator sex. I analyzed 292 undergraduate survey responses to vignettes involving intimate partner violence. Analyses revealed interesting effects regarding relationship type and gender. While violence between acquaintances increased the odds that respondents identified the act as criminal and recommended contacting the police, no differences emerged for police reporting or criminal identification between dating partners and spouses. Female violence was reported as less injurious, less criminal, and less worthy of police contact compared to men's violence. Male respondents reported the lowest ratings for female perpetrators' violence compared to female respondents. These differences were found across identical scenarios. Thus, my findings suggest gender norms may act as a backdrop for interpreting violence between women and men. I discuss the implications of this research for intimate partner violence prevention and intervention.

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INTRODUCTION

The acceptability of intimate partner violence and the rate of IPV have decreased in the last 25 years (Straus 2004). However, IPV persists as the predominant type of interpersonal violence in the U.S. (Straus 2004). Intimate partner violence is a controversial issue for the legal and criminal justice system. For example, there is considerable debate regarding the definitions of "batterers," the use of self-defense, battered woman syndrome (BWS), and appropriate responses to provoked violence. These labels yield significant consequences in understanding violence between women and men. Furthermore, research consistently shows that most cases become involved in the criminal justice system through victim initiation. Thus, labeling an incident as a crime is a crucial first step in the post-incident decision making process. This labeling regarding victimization experience can influence the level of distress, perceived severity of the crime, and future action taken by the victim (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Why would gender matter in the interpretation of violence?

Gender helps us define ourselves in relation to others, and serves as a background identity to anticipate appropriate behavior (Ridgeway and Correll 2004). When sex-based distinctions are made, categorizations follow to easily distinguish men from women. Thus, common differences emerge and stereotypes are created. Many argue that societal structures and norms encourage these stereotypes, and the end product is hegemony (Ridgeway & Correll 2004). In Western society, these hegemonic beliefs imply that men are "breadwinners;" they are more status-worthy and competent (Ridgeway & Correll 2004). In contrast, women's competency is found in communal relations, they have less economic power, and are less agentic

(Ridgeway and Correll 2004). Gender stereotypes prescribe women to hold less responsibility in the workplace and more responsibility in the home (Sullivan 2004). Therefore, women's external legitimacy is undermined; their primary legitimacy resides in the home.

System justification theory suggests that we tend to justify the very system in which we live, regardless of whether or not it benefits us (Altermatt, DeWall, and Leskinen 2003). If we live in a system that champions differences and hierarchies over similarities and equality, then it would come as no surprise that categorizations and stereotypes arise from this focus on differences. These very categorizations may be reasonably limiting, placing men and women in "boxes" that prescribe behaviors related to gender and stereotypes (Altermatt et al. 2003). As a result, perceptions of agency and power may differ significantly between women and men. We may expand our knowledge of the relationship between agency and structure by investigating in previous research the means in which structures repress women (Apter & Garnsey 1994).

Belief in traditional prescribed gender behaviors has decreased over time since the 1980s (Coontz 1992). However, significantly more men than women believe the man should be the breadwinner and the woman should be the caretaker, indicating a disparate gender gap about myths regarding prescribed gender behaviors (Coontz 1992). Even with shifting responsibilities for men and women today, as men are now spending more time in the home than in previous decades, these stereotypes remain pervasive (Sullivan 2004).

Women are perceived as generally powerless within structures such as the educational system and the workplace (Apter & Garnsey 1994). Agency is interlocked with overlying structures, and it is these very structures that favor men in most situations. Studies find that men are perceived as more agentic and powerful (Apter & Garnsey 1994; Altermatt et al. 2003), typically hold significantly more wealth (Denton & Boos 2006), and are viewed as more

competent compared to women (Ridgeway & Correll 2004). It is possible that men and women may not only feel pressured to conform to expectations imposed by these structures, but experience these pressures without even being aware of them.

Likewise, imbalances in responsibilities may be due to imbalances in perceived agency and power between women and men. McCarthy, Hagan, and Woodward (1999) suggest that these power differences are ingrained at the earliest stages in life through socialization, especially within the home. Boys in patriarchal families are perceived as more competent, more accepting of conventional views of gender, and experience less parental control (McCarthy et al. 1999). In contrast, girls experience more parental control, and are perceived as both less competent and less agentic (McCarthy et al. 1999).

Themes of power and agency are important in understanding IPV, especially within the home. When dealing with the family or marriage, we are dealing with patterns of communication that have become largely routinized, entrenched in power foundations, and taken for granted in interaction, that effects are experienced as divorced from causes of previous action (Apter & Garnsey 1994). These effects have become relatively normative that we often forget they exist. For example, when a woman and man exchange vows through the act of marriage, norms pressure women to adopt the man's last name while men are permitted to retain their last name. Essentially, women are pressured to change their identity, whereas men are not. This norm remains quite common in American society, but discussion as to its legitimacy remains elusive. Similarly, it may come as no surprise that cultural norms for women and men's behavior present a double standard when considering instances of IPV. For example, when visualizing a woman and a man committing similar acts of violence in the home, do perceptions of the amount of

harm inflicted differ? If so, what may explain these differences? If we seek to understand IPV, understanding cultural norms of behavior for men and women is imperative.

Gender, Power, and the Interpretation of IPV

Acts of perceived agency may be reinterpreted by others. Thus, intention is not only authored by the agent, but we may also socially author the agent's intention and translation of his or her behaviors (Bierria 2014). When considering this reinterpretation of behaviors in the domestic context or in relationship type between a man and a woman, we may assign 'phantom intentions' when attempting to understand instances of violence, especially violence committed by women (Bierria 2014). These phantom intentions are gender based to make sense with our social world where women are submissive, less competent, and less powerful than men.

Morality and appropriate ways of acting have also been intimately tied with women's identity: while morality was previously associated with rationality and reason, the transition of morality from reason to emotion planted it strictly in women's domain because of the stereotype that women are more emotional than men (Altermatt et al. 2003). As a result, women came to be perceived as the moral teachers of society who were obliged to socialize not only their children, but also their husbands (Altermatt et al. 2003). If the children or the husband are involved in issues of conflict or control, especially within the home, then cultural norms that value women's role in the home may permit mothers or wives to resolve these issues. Consequently, women's greatest perceived responsibility and power may reside in the home, in which their actions – especially physically abusive actions – may be largely condoned.

In essence, the failure for women to be perceived as fully agentic and powerful does not emerge entirely from their own actions, but emerges in the misrepresentation of their intentions by others, including societal and political settings that validate these misrepresentations (Bierria

2014). Consequently, perceptions of power and competency are not only constrained by structural and interactional forces (Lopata & Thorne 1978), but are also familially bound by both sex (female) and master status (wife). As a result, the effects of believing subordinate groups lack agency are twofold: group disparities in access to power are encouraged, while subordinate groups' actions toward freedom and independence are discouraged (Altermatt et al. 2003). Furthermore, using the terms sex role, or gender role, may significantly limit our understanding of gender as creating the framework and social structure that signifies relations of power between women and men, rather than merely assuming our identity is determined by an overarching norm regarding sex or gender (Lopata & Thorne 1978).

One area where these stereotypes and perceptions of women and men may be limiting is in IPV, especially in the home, in which women may hold more or less power and where instances of conflict and control may occur. Stereotypes are especially relevant when understanding violence in domestic relations, where women are primarily expected to spend their time. Societal norms and stereotypes, including portrayals of women as submissive and physically vulnerable and men as dominant and physically stronger, provide the social context for our current understanding of violence. The norms also include differences in power and agency. Men are perceived to hold more power and agency, whereas women are perceived to hold less power and agency (Altermatt et al. 2003; Apter & Garnsey 1994). These normative expectations include appropriate ways to react to violence, whether to report to the police, and perceptions of criminality.

The salience of gender in everyday life may act such that perceptions of violence in domestic contexts vary between men and women based on existing norms. If gender norms do indeed guide our perceptions of violence and criminality, then it would come as no surprise to

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see women's IPV behavior as less serious compared to that by men. Similarly, these norms of differences in power and agency may also limit our ability to ascribe blame and culpability, recognize injury, and label events as criminal. Thus, IPV represents the intersection between social norms regarding violence and norms regarding relationships. It is a key context for understanding the operation of gender.

Gender and the Asymmetry of IPV

Previous literature on intimate partner violence (IPV) has generally been divided between two competing perspectives: a) the feminist perspective, which argues that men commit most of IPV against women in heterosexual relationships, and b) the family violence perspective, which argues that women's violence against men in heterosexual relationships is at least equal to men's violence against women (Johnson 2006). The discrepancies in findings between the two perspectives appear to be rooted in the types of samples used: the feminist approach more heavily using agency samples (courts, shelters), and the family violence approach using representative (general surveys) samples (Johnson 2006). Nevertheless, Johnson (2006) notes that the main distinction in identifying IPV lies in identifying the methods of control used by partners in relationships, and offers four distinct types of IPV: 1) intimate terrorism, in which an individual is violent and controlling, but the partner is not 2) violent resistance, in which an individual is violent but not controlling and the partner is violent and controlling 3) situational couple violence, in which an individual is violent but neither partners are violent and controlling, and 4) mutual violent control, in which both partners are violent and controlling.

The first two forms types of violence lend evidence to the gender asymmetry argument, such that significantly more men engage in violence compared to women; these women are not controlling and attempt to resist through their own violence. Yet, the latter two types of violence

support the gender symmetry argument, such that men and women typically engage in what has been termed 'common couple violence.' Johnson (1995) argues this lack of distinction between different forms of IPV has led to continued debate over gender symmetry in violence (Johnson 2006).

Common couple violence is a more general form of violence that occurs in response to occasional conflicts between partners that occur in everyday life. Research has shown that women and men engage in similar rates of violence (Thornton et al., 2012; Dasgupta 2002; Johnson 1995; Tillyer & Wright 2014; Johnson 2006; Straus 2004). Common couple violence is motivated by a need to control certain situations without trying to dominate the relationship (Johnson 1995). In instances of IPV, the man was the sole perpetrator of violence in 25.9 percent of cases, the woman was the only perpetrator of violence in 25.5 percent of the cases; both partners were violent in 48.6 percent of cases (Straus 2004).

Gender, the Interpretation of Violence, and Perceptions of Criminality

While the legal system sanctions penalties based on the actions performed in a particular case, the level of involvement deemed necessary is nonetheless subject to cultural interpretation. In other words, the criminal justice system is a forum for the application of cultural norms. These norms frame appropriate reactions to violence (Gilbert 2002; Greenberg & Ruback, 1992). For example, decisions to divert women from prison may stem from the cultural value of women's presence in the home as caretaker (Erez 1992; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Sullivan 2004; Coontz 1992). Gender may not only influence men's and women's perceptions of violence, but also witnesses' perceptions of a crime (Felson & Paré, 2005), and perpetuate power disparities and stereotypes between the sexes (Dasgupta 2002; Kruttschnitt & Carbone-lopez, 2006). Portrayals

of women as submissive, vulnerable, and domestically-oriented, challenge perceptions of criminality.

Previous research by Zaykowski (2011) suggests that not all reported incidents are necessarily perceived as criminal, but unreported incidents may still be seen as a crime. She finds that victims who have no prior record of offending were more likely to perceive incidents as criminal, compared to victims who were also offenders, especially offenders who have recently committed a crime (2011). In this instance, the victim, but not the offender, perceived the incident as a crime. On the other hand, victims who have survived multiple victimizations are less likely to report incidents. She explains this negative association as due to a desensitization effect, in which incidents of crime may be perceived as normal and expected (Zaykowski 2011). Perceptions of criminality are also influenced by norms after a crime has occurred. For example, once a particular case reaches the legal system, gender difference may impact determinations as to the appropriate sanctions for offenders.

Some research supports this idea, suggesting women receive preferential treatment from criminal justice authorities (Kruttschnitt 1984). Studies find when they more closely resemble the cultural portrayals of women, they are more likely to be released if they have committed a 'light' offense, live with children, or have children (Kruttschnitt 1984). Additionally, women appear to receive more lenient sentences if she has no outstanding court cases, her crime is less serious, and she is employed (Kruttschnitt 1984). Judges may more heavily value other aspects of women's current behavior in determining disposition because women normally have less extensive criminal records than men (Kruttschnitt 1984). These other aspects of women's behavior may include cultural norms that prescribe appropriate behavior for women, and may suggest that women are not really capable of committing violence because women do not possess the capacity to act in

violent ways. In addition, women's violence may be perceived as less criminal due to their perceived ability to inflict harm. Previous research supports the argument that women's violence may be condoned compared to men's violence based on these cultural norms. Greenberg and Ruback (1992) found that crimes were perceived as more serious that included female victims than male victims.

Gender and Perceptions of Level of Injury

Why would society be more tolerant of violence committed by women? Straus (2004) notes that both sexes are more accepting of women hitting husbands than the opposite. One implicit justification for this difference is that women are less likely to cause physical harm. There is empirical evidence to support this idea. The rate of injury producing assaults by females is 0.6 per 1,000 (Straus 2004). This rate is significantly lower than men's rates (3.7 per 1,000), a fact that supports and perpetuates the norm that women's violence is trivial (Straus 2004). Davidovic et al. (2011) finds that women are significantly less likely to rate their own aggression as injurious, thus suggesting that women's IPV is disinhibited by the belief that men are physically invulnerable to their violence. In other words, female perpetrators' acts are less injurious and generally uninhibited in response to their partners.

Furthermore, Dasgupta (2002) demonstrated that while some research has shown similar levels of IPV among men and women (Thornton et al., 2012; Dasgupta 2002; Johnson 1995; Tillyer & Wright 2014; Johnson 2006), women victims experience more serious injuries. Tillyer and Wright (2014) classified a small number of women as victims of the most severe (injured 20 or more times in the past year) violence. No men were in that category of injury, or the less serious classification (11-20 injuries). These findings support feminists' perspectives of IPV, such that men's violence is more pervasive and severe than women's violence. The authors

suggest that a small fraction of this reported violence is 'gendered, ongoing,' and in which serious violence persists (Tillyer & Wright 2014). However, a substantial amount of evidence supports the family violence perspective of gender symmetry, finding similar rates of violence between men and women (Thornton et al., 2012; Dasgupta 2002; Johnson 1995; Tillyer & Wright 2014).

Regardless of the prevalence and similarities of women's violence against men, there are significant differences in how women's violence is viewed relative to men's. Women's violence is still perceived as trivial and less harmful (Davidovic et al. 2011; Ryder 2010). In addition, women's perceptions of their own violence may also minimize the severity and level of injury inflicted (Ryder 2010). Thus, although less injurious, the high incidence of violence by women warrants investigation as to the underlying causes, correlates, and social responsibilities.

Gender, Interpretation of Violence, and Crime Reporting

There appear to be multiple cultural explanations for not reporting violence. Greenberg and Ruback (1992) suggest that normative expectations, such as social approval or disapproval and seriousness of the crime, are more significant predictors of crime reporting than other perceived outcomes, such as receiving medical care or counseling. Cultural norms of hypermasculinity and male physical dominance may dissuade men from reporting to the police to avoid being a 'victim' of women's violence (Felson & Paré 2005). Additionally, norms of chivalry for men and domestic relations for women appear to put men in a "double bind." On one hand, men may believe violence against women is prohibited across all relationship types, so they cannot fight back against female perpetrators (Felson & Paré 2005; Davidovic et al. 2011). On the other hand, men can also be discouraged from reporting to the police for fear of embarrassment, shame, and social disapproval (Felson & Paré 2005; Davidovic et al. 2011).

Research has shown that victims' reasons for not reporting violence include: thinking the police could not do anything, they would not be believed, they were afraid of reprisal, and they would be embarrassed (Felson & Paré 2005).

What factors are most successful in predicting police awareness? Previous research (Zaykowski 2011; Hart & Rennison 2003) found that injury severity was the most predictive factor of police awareness. Across every marital status group, female only violence is greater than male violence; this may be due to sex differences in reporting (Stets & Straus 1989). Zaykowski (2011) also found that situational variables (e.g., level of injury, sex of victim and perpetrator) may be more influential than demographic variables (e.g., age and race) in predicting police awareness. In many instances, however, perceptions of criminality may not be so black and white, or may even be absent altogether. In these cases, police reporting is significantly effected. If an act of violence is not labeled a crime, then the decision process is essentially nullified, as there remains little motivation to contact police (Greenberg & Ruback 1992).

A significant predictor of the frequency of IPV is relationship type. Stets and Straus (1989) showed that cohabiting couples are more likely to experience IPV compared to couples who were dating or were married. Among relationship status category in Stets and Straus' (1989) research, female perpetrated violence was more common than male perpetrated violence; however, these differences in rates of violence may be related to sex differences in reporting. Again, these norms for gender-appropriate behavior may explain these rates, as cohabiting couples may feel less pressure than married couples to avoid using violence, but are more committed and in closer physical proximity than dating couples that violence becomes a control tactic (Stets and Straus 1989). Weaker social ties to family and friends are also related to greater

IPV (Stets and Straus 1989). This suggests that when victims of IPV have limited social support from friends and family who may offer advice and constructive ways to handle conflict, victims of IPV may not fully recognize or act upon their ability to leave abusive relationships.

The knowledge and support of family members also influence decisions to notify police of instances of violence. Parental knowledge of victimization increases the likelihood of police awareness by almost five times (Zaykowski 2011). Yet, if the offender was a family member, the victim is five times less likely to report to the police (Felson & Paré 2005). Perceived severity predicts the likelihood of police notification as well. The likelihood of police notification is increased if the incident is more severe (Felson & Paré, 2005; Zaykowski 2011; Greenberg & Ruback 1992; Hart & Rennison 2003). On the other hand, the most frequent reasons victims indicated for not reporting to the police was that the incident was 'too minor' (Felson & Paré 2005).

Sex differences are also salient in reporting to the police. Violence against women is more likely to be reported than violence against men (Hart & Rennison 2003), and men are especially unlikely to report IPV (Felson & Paré 2005). These sex differences in reporting may be explained by cultural norms that influence behavior and decision making after a crime has occurred.

THE CURRENT STUDY

The current study builds upon the family violence literature and examines perceptions of criminality in heterosexual relationships. Specifically, I look at the effect of sex on: 1) perceptions of criminality 2) perceived level of injury, and 3) recommendations to report violent scenarios to police. I also test whether gender norm salience affects these interpretations. While

it may be argued that there will be no differences across relationships after controlling for level of injury, I argue that differences still persist across relationship types when measuring perceptions of criminality, level of injury, and whether to report to police. If these differences in perceptions persist (after controlling for level of injury), this may be due to cultural norms that permit these differences. Barber et al. (1999) states that society may have a major impact in producing male-female variations in aggression, especially variations in physical aggression. Therefore, I expect to find cultural differences that explain variations in perceptions of women and men's violence. I expect these cultural differences (e.g., protection of women, but not men, is valued; women are perceived weaker than men) to be expressed through double standards in perceptions of criminality, perceived level of injury, and whether to report to police.

METHODS

Participants and Procedure

Participants were asked a series of questions regarding their demographic characteristics, including their sex, age, religion, marital status, and race/ethnicity. Sex, race, and relationship type are my independent variables. Sex is coded as either female or male. Participants reported their race/ethnicity. These categories were recoded to create a dichotomous measure of White (60.0%) and Nonwhite (40.0%) ethnicities.

Approximately fifty-eight percent of respondents (N=169) identified as single/not in a relationship, and about thirty-two percent of respondents (N=130) reported they were in a dating relationship. Being in a "cohabitating/living together relationship" was reported by twenty-four respondents (eight percent). The remaining six respondents reported as separated, divorced, or 'other.' About seventy percent of respondents (N=201) identified as being a member of a

specific Christian denomination religion, and about 11 percent (N=32) reported being spiritual, but not religious. These categories were recoded as a series of dummy variables, indicating Christian religion, Other religion, and No religion. The remaining 59 respondents (20.2%) reported as General Christian, not religious, or as members of other religions. Family household income was measured on a 0-9 scale (0 = less than $10,000, 9 = $90,000 or more). Average reported household income was 5.41 (sd=3.31).

This study utilizes secondary data analysis of data from previous research (the Retaliatory Violence Project; Bradley, forthcoming manuscript) of relationship violence. The data was collected during Fall 2013. Descriptive statistics for the original project follow. Participants enrolled in general sociology classes were allowed to complete a short survey. Surveys were anonymous and participation was voluntary. IRB approval was received for both the original study and this secondary data analysis. 292 respondents completed the survey. About 42 percent (N=123) of respondents were male. About 60 percent of respondents reported they were White (N=175); the remaining categories were collapsed into Nonwhites (N=117), of which about 37 percent (N=43) identified as Black/African-American, and 42 respondents (about 14 percent) did not identify a race. The age range in this sample (17-42) was determined to be at the highest risk for intimate partner violence (IPV). Therefore, understanding perceptions of respondents within this age range allows further insight into factors predicting IPV.

Vignettes

Respondents read brief vignettes about scenarios in which an act of violence occurs between two people. These vignette scenarios have been used in previous research (Feld and Felson 2008), and were used in these surveys with permission from the authors. The original vignette obtained from the authors was extended to include other variables (e.g., relationship

types) relevant to the current research question of interest. The scenarios in the vignettes varied

across three independent variables: sex of perpetrator, sex of victim, and relationship between

perpetrator and victim (acquaintance, non-marital partner (boyfriend/girlfriend), or spouse).

Manipulation of these scenarios was random, and distributed randomly to respondents.

Consistent with the original authors from whom these scenarios were created, one manipulation

of the vignettes read:

Imagine that a young man, John, gets very angry at an acquaintance, Beth, for no good
reason. John swears at Beth in front of a group of Beth's friends and hits her hard enough to
bruise her arm.

Other versions vary these independent variables (sex of perpetrator, sex of victim, type of

relationship).

Every version included cross-sex dyads (i.e., the sex of the perpetrator always differed

from the sex of the victim). Sex of perpetrator and victim were transformed into a dichotomous

variable (Male perpetrator/Female victim=0, Female perpetrator/Male victim=1). Findings were

analyzed across relationship type (using dummy variables to indicate whether the scenario

involved acquaintances, a girlfriend and boyfriend, or spouses).

My dependent variables (noted above) measured the extent to which respondents agreed

that the scenario was a crime and whether police contact was necessary.

Perceptions of criminality (a), reporting of the crime (b), and level of injury (c) all

represent my dependent variables.

A) *Perceptions of Criminality*

After reading the vignette, participants indicated the extent to which they agreed (i.e.,

Strongly agree, Somewhat agree) or disagreed (Strongly disagree, Somewhat disagree) with a

statement classifying the event as criminal ("The [hitter] has committed a crime."). These

categories will be collapsed into a dichotomous measure of 0 (somewhat disagree and disagree) and 1 (somewhat agree and agree).

B) *Recommendations Regarding Crime Reporting*

Using the same scale (Strongly agree to Strongly disagree), participants also indicated the extent to which they agreed with statements regarding police contact. The first statement indicated that "The victim should contact the police." The second rated the participants' willingness to report the incident ("If you were [victim] in this situation, you would contact the police."). These categories will be collapsed into a dichotomous measure of 0 (somewhat disagree and disagree) and 1 (somewhat agree and agree).

C) *Perceived Level of Injury*

Participants indicated how severely he or she would rate the victim's level of injury, rated on a scale from 1 ("No injury") to 10 ("Serious injury, warrants medical care").

Some variables that could potentially obscure relationships between my main independent variables of interest (i.e., sex of offender, sex of victim, relationship type) and my dependent variables were used as control variables (e.g., respondent's race, relationship status, religiosity, and household income).

Analytical Strategy

My models predicting criminality and reporting are based on binary outcomes. Therefore, chi-square tests are appropriate bivariate comparisons, and logistic regression is appropriate multivariate analytical technique. Logistic regression predicts the outcome of categorical dependent variables, which is appropriate for my collapsed binary (crime or not, report or not) measures. Logistic regression usually appears in the form of an s-shape curve on a graph, and

demonstrates the probability of a 'success' between 0 and 1 across all levels of the independent variable (Agresti & Finlay 1997).

My level of injury outcome is based on a continuous measure. Therefore, I will use t-tests for bivariate comparisons and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression for multivariate comparisons. Ordinary least squares regression attempts to predict dependent measures in a linear line on a graph, and takes into account the levels of variance for each dependent value. In other words, ordinary least squares regression predicts the line of best fit for the dependent variable across the x-axis. Level of injury is rated on a scale from 1 to 10, so linear regression is the appropriate test for this dependent measure.

Based on a review of the literature, I make the following predictions.

Hypotheses

Considering social norms and gender stereotypes, we may be less likely to label women's IPV as criminal for two reasons. First, cultural norms value women's presence in the home and believe they are best fit to handle communal relations. Second, perceived differences in physical strength trivialize women's violence and forbid men's violence. These cultural norms also permit women to use violence against their partners as a form of informal social control within relationships. As a result, violence committed by women may be viewed as less criminal compared to men.

> H_1: Sex of the perpetrator and victim will affect whether violence is identified as a crime, such that men's violence will be more likely to be identified as criminal compared to women's.

To test Hypothesis 1, I will use chi square comparison. I will compare the probability that the scenario was characterized as a crime (1 = agree it is a crime, 0 = do not agree it is a crime) across sex of the perpetrator.

Perceived differences in physical strength between men and women guide our perceptions of the extent to which harm may be inflicted. Considering that women are generally weaker than men, I would expect level of injury ratings of women's violence to be lower than level of injury ratings of men's violence. These cultural norms also permit women to use violence against their partners as a form of informal social control within relationships.

H_2: Sex of the perpetrator and victim will affect perceived level of injury, such that women will be perceived as being more injured from men's violence.

To test Hypothesis 2, I will use a t-test comparison of means, comparing sex differences in the mean reported level of injury (1 = No injury, 10 = Serious injury, warrants medical care).

The chivalry norm (Davidovic et al. 2011) posits that men are required to protect women at all times and under all contexts; any type of violence against women is denounced. Therefore, I expect violence against female victims to have an increased likelihood of reporting compared to violence against male victims.

H_3: Sex of the perpetrator and victim will affect police reporting, such that respondents will more recommend reporting for female victims than male victims.

To test Hypothesis 3, I will use logistic regression and chi square comparison. I will compare the probability that the respondent would report to the police (0 = do not report the crime, 1 = report the crime) across sex of the perpetrator. I will use logistic regression to determine if gender differences exist after controlling for differences in ratings of the level of injury.

While previous research has suggested taking into account the type of relationship between the perpetrator and victim, this variable has not been accounted for when considering perceptions of criminality, whether to report, and perceived level of injury. Therefore, the following three hypotheses take into account how relationship type conditions these primary dependent variables.

Due to conventional forms of patriarchy, cultural norms also stigmatize men's violence against women. As a result, men's violence may be perceived as more criminal compared to women's no matter the relationship type. Previous research (Ryder 2010) suggests that women don't really take their violence seriously, and consequently, they can frame their behavior as not 'really' violence. Additionally, as relationship intimacy increases, I expect women's violence to be perceived as less criminal. The reasoning for this hypothesis is that women's value lies in the domestic context, and I believe this norm condones women's violence in the home in order to maintain stable family relations. In other words, their violence is more so a type of informal social control rather than 'actual' violence, especially as relationship intimacy increases.

> H_4: Relationship type will increase the likelihood that violence is identified as a crime, such that the closer the relationship, the less likely violence will be perceived as criminal.

To test Hypothesis 4, I will use logistic regression. I will compare the probability that women's violence was perceived as a crime (0 = do not agree it is a crime, 1 = agree it is a crime) across relationship types coded as a series of dummy variables (0/1) to reflect whether the event involved an acquaintance, boyfriend/girlfriend, or spouses. I will use logistic regression to determine if gender differences exist after controlling for differences in ratings of the level of injury.

Research has shown (Zaykowski 2011) that the primary determinant of whether a crime is reported is injury severity. If the familial gender norms diminish perceptions of women's power, I would expect perceptions of injury from women's IPV to differ across relationship type. Specifically, I expect ratings of perceived level of injury to decrease as relationship intimacy increases. Cultural norms of women in the home and perceived differences in physical strength would be the primary explanations for this hypothesis. I expect to see a relationship between perceived severity of injury and reporting of a crime across relationship type.

H_5: Relationship type will affect perceived level of injury, such that the closer the relationship, the less injurious violence will be perceived.

To test Hypothesis 5, I will use OLS, comparing sex differences in the mean reported level of injury (1 = No injury, 10 = Serious injury, warrants medical care) across relationship type (acquaintance=0, girlfriend/boyfriend=1, spouse=2).

The more involved a couple's relationship, the more that cultural norms both permit women to use violence as a type of informal social control over their partners, and suggest that men should tolerate it. Second, due to common beliefs about differences in physical strength, I would expect average scores for perceived level of injury to be higher for female victims compared to male victims of physical violence. In addition, cultural norms value women's presence in domestic and communal relationships (Ridgeway & Correll 2004). Therefore, women's violence against spouses may be condoned more so than violence among acquaintances.

H_6: Relationship type will affect whether a respondent recommends reporting a crime, such that the closer the relationship, the less likely respondents will recommend reporting violence.

To test Hypothesis 6, I will use logistic regression. I will compare the probability that the respondent would report to the police (0 = do not report the crime, 1 = report the crime) across sex of perpetrator and across relationship type (acquaintance=0, girlfriend/boyfriend=1, spouse=2).

RESULTS

Table 1: Sample Descriptives (N=292)

Independent Variables	Mean (sd)	Percentage
Age	20.72 (4.38)	-
Female	-	57.9% (N=169)
Male	-	42.1% (N=123)
Race	-	-
White	-	60.0% (N=175)
Black	-	14.7% (N=43)
Hispanic/Latino/Asian	-	10.9% (N=32)
Missing/Non-reported	-	14.4% (N=42)
Total	-	100.0% (N=292)
SES	5.41 (3.31)	-
Female Perpetrator	-	52.7% (N=154)
Male Perpetrator	-	47.3% (N=138)
Relationship Type	-	-
Acquaintances	-	34.6% (N=101)
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	-	30.8% (N=90)
Spouses	-	34.6% (N=101)

Dependent Variables			
Agree it's a crime			
	Yes	-	63.4% (N=185)
	No	-	36.6% (N=107)
Report to police			
	Yes	-	45.9% (N=134)
	No	-	53.8% (N=157)
Level of injury		3.93 (1.77)	-

As we can see from Table 1, the average age of the respondents was about twenty-one years of age, ranging from seventeen to forty-two years of age. About sixty percent of

respondents identified as White. The rest of the respondents who identified a race other than White were collapsed into a Nonwhite category. The average household income (m=5.41) fell in the "50K to $59,999" category. About fifty-eight percent of respondents identified as female and about forty-two percent of respondents identified as male. Roughly thirty-five percent of relationship scenarios involved acquaintances, thirty-five percent of relationship scenarios involved spouses, and about thirty-one percent of relationship scenarios involved dating partners (i.e., boyfriend/girlfriend).

Roughly sixty-three percent of respondents agreed that the act of violence between women and men, regardless of relationship type or sex of perpetrator, is a crime. Though the majority (63.4%) of respondents identified the violence as criminal, only 45.9 percent of respondents recommended reporting the violence to police. These results do not account for relationship type or sex of perpetrator. Subsequent analyses should reveal differences between female and male perpetrators and the type of relationship in which they are engaged. Respondents' average rating of perceived level of injury was 3.93 on a scale from 1 (No injury) to 10 (Serious injury, warrants medical care), regardless of sex of the perpetrator or victim. This suggests that the perceived level of injury was broadly minimal, though greater differences are expected when accounting for male and female victims and perpetrators.

Table 2: Labeling of Event as Criminal Across Perpetrator/Victim Sex

	No	Yes	Chi-Square	Significance
Female Perpetrator	64.3% (N=99)	35.7% (N=55)	107.24	p<.001
Male Perpetrator	5.8% (N=8)	94.2% (N=130)	-	-

As we can see from Table 2, about sixty-four percent (N=99) of respondents disagreed that the act of violence was a crime when committed by a woman; about thirty-six percent (N=55) of respondents agreed that the violence was a crime in the same scenario. Conversely, approximately six percent (N=8) of respondents disagreed the violence was a crime when committed by a man, while over ninety-four percent (N=130) of respondents agreed that the violence was a crime in the same scenario. Though the acts of violence were portrayed exactly the same for both sexes in the vignettes, respondents were overwhelmingly more likely to label men's violence as criminal compared to women's violence. Though men's violence may be more likely to be perceived as criminal, how do perceived levels of injury vary between female and male perpetrators?

Table 3: Mean Level of Injury Across Perpetrator/Victim Sex

	Mean	SD	F value	p-value
M perpetrator/F victim	4.47	1.81	0.66	<.001
F perpetrator/ M victim	3.51	1.61	-	-

Table 3 provides the mean perceived levels of injury for women and men. When distinguishing between male and female perpetrators, differences between the sexes become clearer. When evaluating male perpetrators committing an act of violence against female victims, the average rating of injury was 4.47 (sd=1.81) on a scale from 1 (No injury) to 10 (Serious injury, warrants medical care). When respondents evaluated female perpetrators' perceived level of injury, the mean was 3.51 (sd=1.61). These results indicate that when evaluating male victims' level of injury, respondents' average rating was significantly lower than when rating the injury of female

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victims. Perceived differences in strength between women and men may explain these differences in perceived level of injury, including men's capacity for criminal activity.

Table 4: Recommendations of Reporting Across Perpetrator/Victim Sex

	No	Yes	Chi-Square	Significance
Female Perpetrator	83.8% (N=129)	16.2% (N=25)	104.63	p<.001
Male Perpetrator	24.1% (N=33)	75.9 % (N=104)	-	-

As we can see from Table 4, in instances of female perpetrators committing violence, approximately eighty-four percent (N=129) of respondents did not recommend contacting the police, while about sixteen percent (N=25) of respondents recommended contacting the police. Conversely, in instances of male perpetrators committing violence, approximately twenty-four percent (N=33) of respondents did not recommend contacting the police, while around seventy-six percent (N=104) of respondents recommended contacting the police. The chi-square value is 104.63, which indicates a strong fit between expected values and observed values; recommendations to report that are highly unlikely to be due to merely chance alone. In addition to perceived criminality, it appears that recommendations for reporting to police vary substantially between female and male perpetrators.

As we can see in Table 5, accounting for relationship type appears to yield differences in ratings of criminality for women and men. In the first model, being a female perpetrator does not appear to increase the odds that their violence will be considered a crime (p<.001). In fact, violence committed by female perpetrators has .03 times the odds of being identified as criminal compared to male perpetrators (β=.03). This finding is also significant (p<.001). Relationship type appears to play a role in criminal identification of violence as well. If a man and a woman are dating, the odds of

identifying violence between them as criminal decreases, such that violence between dating couples

have .46 times the odds that the same act of violence between acquaintances will be considered

criminal (p<.05). Last, violence between spouses has .47 times the odds of being labeled as criminal

compared to violence between acquaintances (p<.05). Being in a dating relationship (i.e.,

Boyfriend/Girlfriend) appears to hold a similar effect compared to spouses when identifying

violence as criminal. Effects of relationship type (i.e., Dating, Spouses) appear to decrease the odds

violence between couples will be labeled a crime.

Table 5: Logistic Regression of Criminal Identification on Predictors

Independent Variables

Model 1
Ref. Category=
Acquaintances

	B	S.E.	df	Significance	Exp(B)
Constant	3.33	.45	1	.000	27.80
Perpetrator					
Female	-3.47	.41	1	.000	.03
Relationship Type					
Dating	-.77	.39	1	.045	.46
Spouses	-.75	.38	1	.049	.47

Model 2
Ref. Category=
Acquaintances

	B	S.E.	df	Significance	Exp(B)
Constant	2.33	.58	1	.000	10.25
Perpetrator					
Female	-3.36	.41	1	.000	.04
Relationship Type					
Dating	-.79	.39	1	.045	.46
Spouses	-.82	.39	1	.036	.44
Level of Injury	.25	.10	1	.012	1.29

The second model takes into account perceived level of injury. Again, female perpetrators do not increase the odds an act of violence will be considered criminal. In fact, violence committed by female perpetrators has 96 percent lower odds of being identified as criminal compared to male perpetrators' violence (p<.001). Similarly, being involved in a relationship appears to decrease the odds of labeling violence as criminal. Violence between dating couples has .46 times the odds of being labeled as criminal compared to acquaintances, and violence between spouses has .44 times the odds of being labeled as criminal compared to acquaintances (p<.05). In other words, violence between dating couples and spouses have about half the odds of being labeled as criminal compared to acquaintances. Again, we observe similar effects in labeling violence between intimate partners (i.e., Dating, Spouses) as criminal. Last, a one unit increase in scale of injury leads to a 1.29 multiplicative increase in the odds of identifying an act of violence as criminal; in other words, the odds of criminal identification is increased by about 30 percent with a one unit increase in scale of injury (p<.05). This finding indicates that the greater the perceived level of injury, the higher the odds that the act of violence will be labeled as criminal.

Table 6: Ordinary Least Squares of Level of Injury on Predictors

Independent Variables

	B	S.E.	Significance	Std.(B)	R^2
Constant	4.25	.23	.000	-	.10
Sex of Perpetrator					
Female	-.98	.20	.000	-.28	-
Female Respondents	.58	.20	.004	.16	-

*Ref. Category=Acquaintances

Table 6 demonstrates the diverging effects of perpetrator sex on perceived levels of injury. Violence committed by a female perpetrator decreased ratings of perceived level of injury almost a

full point (.98). Interestingly, respondents' sex holds a significant (p<.01) effect on perceived level of injury, such that women reported higher perceived level of injury scores compared to men. Among male respondents, the average rating of level of injury for male perpetrator incidents is 4.25 (scaled 1-10). Male respondents' average rating of perceived level of injury from female perpetrator incidents is 3.27. Among female respondents, the average rating of level of injury for male perpetrator's violence is 4.83. Female respondents' average rating of perceived level of injury for females' violence is 3.85.

Men considered women's violence as least injurious. Similarly, women also rated women's violence lower, but not to the extent that men did. The R squared value for this model is .10, indicating 10 percent of the variability in injury ratings can be accounted for by the model. Neither dating partners nor spouses reached significance in models of level of injury. A separate model was run to test the effects of relationship type, with the reference category as 'Dating,' but the results did not differ from the model presented.

Table 7 demonstrates the effect of the predictors (i.e., sex of perpetrator/victim, relationship type) on decisions to report to police. In model 1, violence committed by a female perpetrator has .06 times the odds to be reported to police compared to male perpetrators (p<.001). Across relationship type, violence between dating couples has .37 times the odds of be recommended for reporting compared to violence between acquaintances. This finding for spouses is not significant.

When dating couples are the reference category in model 2, perpetrator sex still holds similar effects. Female perpetrators' violence has .06 times the odds of being reported to police compared to male perpetrators' violence (p<.001). In other words, the odds of recommending police reporting decrease by 94 percent for female perpetrators' acts compared to male perpetrators' acts. Similarly, relationship type still yields significant effects. Violence between acquaintances is almost three

times as likely to be reported to the police compared to violence among dating couples (p<.01),

while violence between spouses is non-significant when compared to violence between dating

couples. This indicates that there are no significant differences in the odds of recommending

reporting violence between spouses and dating scenarios. However, acquaintances have nearly three

times the odds (2.72) of dating scenarios of being recommended to report to police. The r square

value for these models is .34. Models were tested with each of the reference categories; as expected,

findings did not change.

Table 7: Logistic Regression of Police Reporting on Predictors

	B	S.E.	df	Significance	Exp(B)
Sex of Victim/Perpetrator					
Constant	.13	.89	1	.88	1.14
Female	-2.95	.32	1	.000	.05
Relationship Type					
Acquaintances	1.08	.39	1	.006	2.93
Spouses	.53	.38	1	.16	1.70

*Ref. Category=Dating

Collectively, the findings seem to suggest that for female perpetrators, violence is less likely

to be perceived as criminal, less likely to be reported, and less likely to be perceived as injurious

compared to men's violence. Perceptions of violence vary across relationship types as well. Violence

committed by dating partners and spouses is less likely to be reported, less likely to be considered a

crime, and considered as less injurious compared to violence committed by acquaintances.

DISCUSSION

Sex of the perpetrator was a major predictor in how violence is viewed. When considering violence committed by a male perpetrator, ratings of criminality, perceived level of injury, and police reporting all increased relative to female perpetrators. Violence committed by a female perpetrator was consistently deemed less serious across all three outcomes: ratings of criminality, perceived level of injury, and police reporting. These findings suggest that gender is driving these effects, and is an important influence on perceptions of violence, even in objectively identical scenarios. Specifically, while sex of the perpetrator was a primary predictor in perceptions of violence, the outcomes weren't necessarily linked to sex, per se. Rather, the outcomes may have been more so a result of the perceived gender that is attached to the subject's sex. In other words, identifying the subject as either masculine or feminine may have elicited culturally prescribed behaviors that are congruent with men acting physically dominant and women acting physically weaker. Therefore, it appears that gender may remain as a background identity.

Effects were found for the type of relationship in which the targets were engaged, but the effects are not necessarily what I expected. The only main difference for relationship type was between acquaintances and dating couples/spouses. No significant differences were discovered between dating partners and spouses. In other words, it appears as though simply describing individuals as intimately involved (either as dating partners or as spouses) fostered differences in respondents' perceptions of criminality, perceived levels of injury, and police reporting, compared to violence between acquaintances. There were no differences in ratings between dating couples and spouses across these measures.

The vignettes in this study show that even when social norms are not made salient, we still impute differences between women and men across all three primary dependent variables (perception of criminality, level of injury, and whether to report to police). In other words, even though respondents were not primed with social norms and there was no discussion of social norms between women and men (e.g., I made no mention that men are perceived as stronger and dominant or that women are perceived as weaker and submissive in any of the scenarios), these subconscious differences are expressed through respondents' perceptions and ratings of violence in the vignettes. Female perpetrators' violence is perceived as less criminal, less injurious, and is less likely to be reported to police compared to men's violence, and is considered especially less severe in intimate partnerships. What may explain these differences?

Cultural norms of gender-appropriate behavior guide our understanding of violence. Due to perceived closer bonds to the family, reproduction, and childrearing, women are culturally prescribed to be warm, caring, and nurturing. With these norms, however, a paradox emerges. These same women who are warm and kind to others may also engage in violent behaviors, such as hitting, that simultaneously counter these norms. This paradox appears to be reconciled through respondents' ratings of criminality, perceived level of injury, and police reporting – female perpetrators' violence is perceived as less criminal, less injurious, and is less likely to be recommended to report to police. Relationship violence, especially females' violence, is more likely to be trivialized.

Female violence may be perceived as less criminal for at least two reasons. First, cultural stereotypes characterize women as naturally warm, friendly, and kind. Consequently, it may be assumed that women who exhibit violent behaviors aren't fully capable of committing these behaviors because their behavior counters these norms – committing violence is simply not

women's nature. Second, perceived strength differences may alter perceptions of women's violence as well. Women are generally perceived to be weaker than men. Therefore, it may be assumed that even if a woman demonstrated violence against a man, she still wouldn't be able to inflict much harm; not only is she weaker, but the man is also stronger and conceptually less susceptible to her violence.

Similarly, it would also be no surprise to see these norms hold the opposite effect for men. While norms prescribe women to be warm, friendly, and kind, men are prescribed to be bigger, stronger, and dominant. If these norms hold true when reading the vignettes, then we would expect to see men's violence to be perceived as more criminal, more likely to be reported to police, and more injurious compared to women. Indeed, this is what we found. Men's violence (m=4.47; sd=1.81) was rated almost a full point higher than women's violence (m= 3.51; sd=1.61) on a scale from one (No injury) to ten (Serious injury, warrants medical care) for the exact same act of violence. Men's violence may also be perceived as more criminal and is more likely to be reported to police because norms prescribing masculine behavior include more physical, dominate characteristics. So if a man commits violence, then it is not quite so abnormal or deviant compared to women because norms prescribing masculine behavior normalize and encourage physical and violent behavior. Similarly, men's violence may be perceived as being more injurious due to not only these norms that permit violence as inherent to masculine identity, but also due to the perceived physical strength differences between women and men. If men commit violence against a woman, it is more injurious than a woman committing violence against a man, because not only are men stronger and able to inflict more harm, women are weaker and thus, more vulnerable to men's violence.

Violence between dating partners and spouses have .46 times and .44 times the odds, respectively, of being identified as criminal compared to violence between acquaintances (p<.05). These effects are both congruent with and different from our expectations. We predicted that as relationship intimacy increases, violence between couples would be less likely to be identified as criminal. Violence dating partners and spouses is less likely to be identified as criminal, which is congruent with our predictions. However, there appear to be no significant differences between identifying violence between dating couples and spouses as criminal. This finding was not expected. This may be due to similarities in sex salience prompted by these scenarios. Acquaintances are not intimately tied (and therefore violence is less condoned), but dating couples and spouses are intimately tied, thus the focus may be more on the violence itself rather than the distinction between whether or not the couple are dating or married. In other words, the fact that the couples were intimately involved was enough evidence to warrant minimizing their violence. Level of injury was significant (p<.01) in the second model, indicating that violence was more likely to be identified as criminal as the perceived level of injury increased. However, the sex and relationship effects remained, even after controlling for differences in ratings of injury.

Recommendations regarding reporting violence differ across relationship type as well. Not only is violence against women generally more likely to be reported than against men, the odds of violence between dating couples being reported is .34 the odds of violence between acquaintances being reported (p<01). Violence between spouses is also less likely to be reported compared to violence between acquaintances (Exp(b)=.58). Again, there appears to be no significant difference in reporting between dating couples and spouses, suggesting the

overarching status of being exclusive, romantic partners trumps any meaningful differences between being married or not and police reporting.

Male perpetrators' violence was significantly more likely to be rated as more injurious compared to female perpetrators' violence ($p<.001$). Violence among dating couples and spouses was less likely to receive more injurious ratings compared to violence among acquaintances. This remains congruent with our expectations that respondents' would be more likely to recommend police reporting in instances of violence between acquaintances than more intimate relationships. Respondents' sex also significantly ($p<.01$) predicted perceived level of injury scores, such that female respondents gave higher perceived level of injury scores compared to men. This may be due to a couple different reasons. First, men may score ratings lower for male victims, because he is considered a wimp if it hurts more. The implicit norm suggests that men are stronger and, therefore, must not be as vulnerable to women's violence. Second, women may score higher ratings for female victims, because she is especially vulnerable to men's violence and should not have to sustain those types of injuries. The implicit norm here suggests that women are weaker and, therefore, especially susceptible to men's violence.

Notably, sex appears to be an important factor in two ways – both sex of the perpetrator and sex of the respondent. Sex of the respondent predicted ratings of injury. Men rated women's violence as the least injurious, while women demonstrated a similar, but less extreme, pattern. Additionally, female perpetrators' violence was rated as less criminal, less injurious, and received less recommendations for police reporting. So when considering violence, gender is not only relevant, but also relationship based. In other words, replacing the gender-neutral word 'acquaintance' with the gender-biased word 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend' yielded significantly different ratings across all measures (i.e., criminal identification, police reporting, perceived

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level of injury). My findings suggest that using gender-biased language (boyfriend/husband, girlfriend/wife) mattered not only in perceptions of the violence as criminal or not and the level of injury inflicted, but also in deeming whether police reporting was warranted. This suggests that from the very start, individuals are framing violence before even learning the full story.

Agency, structure, and power are also important factors to consider when interpreting violence. Overarching norms prescribing gender-appropriate behavior promote very disparate characteristics between women and men. Men are often portrayed as stronger, more competent, and more dominant. Women are characterized as weaker, less competent, and submissive. As a result, these polarized characteristics significantly alter our perceptions of their behavior and violence. Indeed, respondents held very different perceptions of violence across all three primary dependent variables (i.e., criminal identification, level of injury, police reporting). The act of violence was the exact same for women and men in the vignettes. The only manipulated variables were sex of the perpetrator and victim, and relationship type. Yet perceptions of identical acts of violence still varied substantially. In instances of conflict and violence between women and men, women's violence was played down, whereas men's violence was not; perhaps because respondents subscribed to stereotypes that women are not fully agentic. Therefore, even if women commit violence, respondents still believe they are not able to really inflict much harm. Cultural norms suggest that violence is not inherent to women, and women are not as physically strong as men.

These norms not only reproduce existing inequalities between women and men, but they also reside within an overlying structure of hegemonic masculinity. This structure is the vehicle through which inequalities are reproduced, keeping men in the more dominant social positions at the expense of women, who are subjected to subordinate social positions. It may seem that we

are largely unaware of the lurking gender pressures influencing our behavior as a background identity. This gender background, conceived of as natural and inherent in social life, is of the essence. This gender background is reinforced by hegemonic structures. Consequently, couples involved in more intimate relationships (e.g., dating, spouses) and who experience violence may be under pressure to conform to these norms, and therefore, actions of violence and reactions to violence are not experienced as freely as we might expect. Normative expectations are more significant predictors of reporting crimes than other predictors, such as anticipated help and treatment (Greenberg & Ruback 1992). In reality, we may be under constant pressure to obey these norms of gender, or else jeopardize our social standing. It may seem perfectly acceptable to help a woman who has experienced violence (e.g., through counseling, economic/social support, taking care of her children), but when considering helping a man in the same way, social norms may heavily dissuade, and even forbid, men to receive the same level of help.

This study is important for several reasons. First, more insight into our (mis)perceptions of violence perpetrated by women can inform interventions. Women who engage in IPV are more prone to demonstrate a range of problematic behaviors and risk factors (Thornton et al. 2012), which may include increased likelihood of delinquency and using alcohol when experiencing marital discord (Dornfeld & Kruttschnitt 1992). Learning to appropriately identify minor violence early on can help to prompt attention so that women's health may benefit from relevant treatment.

Second, this study speaks to issues of gender symmetry in domestic violence, suggesting one of the challenges we face is in recognizing violence at all. While many believe that men commit most domestic violence, the majority (over 50%) of both men and women reported female perpetration of violent behaviors (Thornton et al. 2012). Yet outside observers may

simply disregard violence by women against male partners. Women's violence should be taken seriously by the justice agents and the general public, because effects of women's violence account for almost half of the past year's injuries, created over one-fourth of the injuries requiring medical attention, and accounted for thirty-eight percent of the victims who lost time from work and thirty-one percent of the victims who feared bodily injury (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). These norms influence engagement in IPV, which yields significant health implications.

Third, women's IPV is largely recognized in this discussion as a type of informal social control over their partners. Throughout the literature review, the importance of context in instances of IPV is quite relevant in understanding women's violence. Previous research suggests that women engaging in IPV may use violence as a form of resistance against their partners (Dasgupta 2002; Johnson 2006). This is where the legal system fails in two conspicuous ways. First, the legal system is blind to the power of context. The legal system penalizes the physical initiator regardless of the contextual characteristics of the incident (e.g., the motive of the initiator). Second, the legal system does not recognize other forms of violence (emotional) in IPV; only physical abuse is recognized as violent (Saunders 2002; Kruttschnitt & Carbone-lopez 2006; Ryder 2010; Adshead 2011).

Furthermore, the legal system fails in a number of ways in dealing with IPV because its understanding is rooted in a system of patriarchy, in which men are in control and dominate the most important aspects of social contexts (e.g., legal, economic, political) (Johnson 2005). Patriarchy only recognizes women as friendly, emotional, and irrational people who are incapable of making logical, rational violent decisions and even demonstrate violent behavior. As a result, it should come as no surprise that females who do not fit societal prescriptions of

being a woman will be treated differently in every aspect of violent offenses, whether she is a victim, perpetrator, or murderer.

Norms tolerating low-level violence by women are further encouraged via mass media, which prescribe normative behaviors. The framing of women's violence by cultural norms also impacts our understanding of IPV. Cultural norms that perpetuate stereotypes about women (e.g., emotional, irrational, and powerless) also frames our understanding of IPV and women's motives for engaging in IPV (Saunders 2002; Kruttschnitt & Carbone-lopez 2006; Ryder 2010; Adshead 2011). The media is a key player in perpetuating these norms. Examples of morally appropriate acts include slapping husbands' faces in response to demeaning remarks (Straus 2004). Therefore, one first step (of many) to prevent severe assaults on women is for women to resist from engaging in these types of 'harmless' retaliations (Straus 2004). In addition, it is also important to recognize the social norms that permit women's violence and perpetuate harmful stereotypes that shape our understanding of violence. For example, violent women are viewed as abnormal and deviant from the cultural prescription of women to be kind and friendly (Gilbert 2002). Thus, labels such as 'lesbian' and 'evil' are attached to them, because continuing to frame violent women as "normal" humans counters existing norms of how women 'should be' (Gilbert 2002). The labeling of female murderers as 'monstrous' and 'manly' (Gilbert 2002) further suggests an emerging dichotomy of 'dangerous men' and 'evil women' when discussing violence between the sexes (Erez 1992). Therefore, recognizing the harmful impact of stereotypes in how we view violence and women is a crucial first step to reframing men and women's violence in a new light.

Finally, we have a warped understanding of what constitutes a 'good' (who is passive, helpless, and paralyzed by fear) victim who warrants sympathy and a 'bad' (who is resistant,

aggressive, and agentic) victim who warrants discipline (Dasgupta 2002). While women's violence may indeed cause more violence against them (Dasgupta 2002), victims do have the ability to respond to violence in a number of ways that may yield better outcomes, such as seeking social support and conferring with family members.

Society may significantly influence our behaviors and appropriate ways of behaving in interpersonal relationships. Previous research has shown that the anticipation of negative social evaluations of aggression may decrease the likelihood of aggressive behavior; therefore, the more negative evaluation of women who use aggression (most notably physical aggression) may end in unfair treatment of these women (Barber et al. 1999).

IMPLICATIONS

With men spending more time in the home today (Sullivan 2004), more opportunities may arise in which violence may occur. We now know that couples who are dating or are spouses are less likely to identify violence as criminal and to report to police. As a result, it is important to bring these tendencies to awareness that deem IPV as trivial and not as criminal compared to similar acts of violence between regular friends. This is especially true for female perpetrators. When women commit IPV, it validates the societal norms that permit some amount of IPV, simultaneously perpetuating a system in which women are the primary victims (Straus 2004).

Men diminish and trivialize women's violence. Women trivialize women's violence. Outsiders trivialize women's violence. If gender continues to operate as a background identity for the average citizen, who may or may not engage in violence, then what does this mean for police officers –also part of the general population – who handle instances of interpersonal

violence? In cases in which violence is reported to the police, the police are the first responders to assess the criminality of the violence, the perceived level of injury, and whether police contact was warranted. Police officers are also acting in a system in which gender is the background identity. As a result, police officers are not only influenced by those who call in these reports of violence, but they are also potentially influenced by the language used to describe these reports of violence, in which the terms boyfriend/girlfriend or husband/wife are used and even deemed as necessary and critical information before arriving upon the scene.

While men may be more likely to be sentenced to go to jail, not only are women left alone with the children, but the children lose out as well. The family requires both parents at the home. When one parent is gone, all the burden and responsibilities are placed on the remaining parent, and the children miss the opportunity to be with the other parent. Furthermore, men and women also experience bias after the sentencing has been determined. Research by Adshead (2011) suggests that our current treatment of women is both a disservice to women as well as men, as women are not allotted full rights or respect (e.g., the opportunity to take full responsibility for their actions, which is reflected in the treatment services offered). On the other hand, men are stuck with this double standard of accepting responsibility (which is a must) for their violence if they seek to complete treatment and carry on with their lives (Adshead 2011). This is not to argue that female offenders should receive the same treatment as men because we still must take into account this gendered structure. Rather, it is critical to scrutinize the current treatments allotted to men and women that serve to perpetuate the norms of the gendered system in which we live than to improve it.

The use of language is a key culprit in exacerbating misperceptions of violence between women and men. The term 'battered woman syndrome' exists for women, but no such term

exists for men. If we only see women as victims and men as violent perpetrators, our perceptions will only continue to reflect these perceptions, which is then further solidified through the use of language. The cycle repeats until a disruption is caused within the cycle. One possible direction for change is to not only challenge current norms of gender, but to also question others when words such as battered woman syndrome, or hints of victim blaming, arise.

Last, labeling subjects as either perpetrators or victims does not paint an accurate picture of the multifaceted influence of interaction. Agency and actions are not only constrained by structural forces, but they are also limited through interactions and identities of male and female. So when considering subjects engaged in violence, perceptions of violence may be skewed by structures.

Additionally, the terms victim and perpetrator may be very gendered. In other words, we tend to associate males as having more 'masculine' characteristics that include physical strength and dominance, and females as having more 'feminine' characteristics that include physical inferiority and submissive inclinations. Therefore, it may be easier to see women as victims, but not so much men; it may be easier to see men as perpetrators, but not so much women.

LIMITATIONS

Although not the focus of the present research, I did uncover significant effects in perceived level of injury across respondents' sex, such that men rated perceived level of injury scores lower than women. This was a main effect, across all relationship types. However, whether respondent sex has interactive effects is not tested in this study. Future research may test for potential differences in the influence of predictors across respondents' sex.

Relatedly, future studies should test the interaction between perpetrator sex and relationship type. The domestic context may also play a significant role in interpreting violence. Cultural norms prescribing women as more intimately tied to reproduction and communal relations may value women's presence and role in the home. If a man and woman are engaged in some type of intimate relationship, which is closely tied to the home, and if problems occur within the relationship (which may also be in the home), then we may permit women to use relationship-saving tactics to maintain stable relations in the home. Women may use these tactics – even physical violence – as a type of informal social control. If this is the case, then we would expect women's violence to be trivialized and condoned both compared to men and as relationship intimacy increases (e.g., acquaintances to dating partners, dating partners to spouses).

Finally, a limitation of this study is its focus on physical acts of violence. Violence can be expressed in a multitude of ways, not simply through physical contact. Women and men have been shown to engage in similar levels of violence (e.g., common couple violence), and making these distinctions between severe and nonsevere violence is important in understanding IPV, especially in the domestic context for future research and the legal system in creating new laws and policies (Johnson 2006). Currently, the legal system only recognizes physical abuse as violent, while ignoring motives and instances of verbal or emotional abuse, which some victims believe to be particularly deleterious (Saunders 2002; Kruttschnitt & Carbone-lopez 2006; Ryder 2010; Adshead 2011). Future research may examine the effects of verbal and emotional abuse across variables such as police reporting and criminal identification.

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January 31, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO:	Eric Allen Mindy Bradley
FROM:	Ro Windwalker IRB Coordinator
RE:	New Protocol Approval
IRB Protocol #:	14-01-424
Protocol Title:	*Perceptions of Retaliatory Violence between Women and Men*
Review Type:	☒ EXEMPT ☐ EXPEDITED ☐ FULL IRB
Approved Project Period:	Start Date: 01/31/2014 Expiration Date: 01/30/2015

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (http://vpred.uark.edu/210.php). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes.   All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 210 Administration Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

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