

FEMALE AGGRESSION TOWARD MALE INTIMATE PARTNERS: AN EXAMINATION OF SOCIAL NORMS IN A COMMUNITY-BASED SAMPLE

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We investigated the effect of assailant gender on injunctive social norms (i.e., beliefs about what ought to happen) regarding violence toward an intimate heterosexual partner. In a random-digit-dialed survey conducted in four languages, 3,769 community-residing adults were presented with five vignettes in which we experimentally manipulated characteristics of the assailant, victim, and incident. We examined the vignette variables and measured respondent characteristics using multivariate logistic regressions. Judgments about women's violence against male intimates (vs. men's violence against female intimates) were less harsh and took contextual factors more fully into account. The type of violence and the presence of a weapon played a central role in respondent judgments. Respondent demographic characteristics were largely unrelated to their judgments.

Scientific controversy about men's and women's violence in intimate relationships has not abated since the question was first addressed in the literature nearly 30 years ago (Steinmetz, 1977). The debate is linked to beliefs about what behavior is typical, that is, to descriptive social norms about gender and about intimate partner violence. The present investigation extends prior work by focusing on injunctive social norms—collective beliefs about what behavior ought to occur (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).¹

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Although social scientists differ on the details, there is general agreement that social norms are the written and unwritten rules of a society and constitute the foundation for appropriate behavior within that society. Informal (i.e., unwritten) norms are sometimes codified into law, the latter of which is roundly criticized as being inaccessible to "average" people and needing legal expertise to understand. However, informal social norms are no better and, in fact, are likely to be far more complicated. For example, laws in all 50 U.S. states make it illegal to beat one's spouse, but social norms suggest that hitting one's spouse may be acceptable under certain circumstances (e.g., Simon et al., 2001). Ideally, an assessment of social norms will take into account these circumstances or conditions that can affect normative judgments.

Direct yes–no questions designed to assess social norms evoke socially desirable responses and do not assess the thoughts or values that may affect the response. Even questions describing extreme cases, for which one might expect there to be consensus, may evoke a variety of responses; for example, when asked "Do you think it is acceptable for a husband to kill his wife?" respondents may reply affirmatively if thinking of a situation involving self-defense. However, with simple yes–no questions, the researcher can only surmise what information or values respondents bring to bear in their judgments.

The task of those attempting to measure social norms perhaps can be described best as determining what considerations shape people's judgments about what behavior ought to occur and what sanctions, if any, ought to follow.

For many, the methodological gold standard by which to assess social norms is the factorial design (e.g., Rossi & Anderson, 1982). The factorial survey combines sample survey and experimental methods. Factorial designs use scenarios (vignettes) followed by a series of questions regarding the behavior and appropriate outcomes. The vignettes have variables in common, and the researcher manipulates those variables. In essence, an experiment occurs. Because the variable categories are randomly assigned, they can be examined independent of one another. For example, factorial studies of social norms about intimate partner violence allow the researcher to assess the independent effects of characteristics of the actors (e.g., gender) and their circumstances (e.g., married) upon respondent judgments about the behavior. In addition, factorial designs allow the researcher to examine how characteristics of the observers affect their judgments. In other words, factorial designs allow researchers to examine what goes into the judgments of thoughtful respondents.

We focus herein on the peer-reviewed literature on beliefs about heterosexual intimate partner violence that used an experimental vignette design. Whereas gender of the observer (i.e., the respondent) is commonly examined in experimental vignette studies of perceptions of intimate partner violence, gender of the assailant has received less attention.

The Role of Assailant Gender in Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence

All of the experimental vignette studies that examined assailant gender in intimate partner violence found male-to-female aggression to be judged more harshly than female-to-male aggression. Men's violence against intimate female partners is disapproved of more or considered more serious than women's violence against intimate male partners (Bethke & DeJoy, 1993; Beyers, Leonard, Mays, & Rosen, 2000; Cook & Harris, 1995; Feather, 1996; Hannon, Hall, Nash, Formati, & Hopson, 2000; Harris & Cook, 1994; Hilton, Harris, & Rice, 2003; Lehmann & Santilli, 1996; Simon et al., 2001). In addition, a male victim (vs. a female victim) is assigned more responsibility for the violence (Harris & Cook, 1995; Lehmann & Santilli, 1996), as is a male assailant (vs. a female assailant) (Feather, 1996). Moreover, in the one study that examined perceptions of future violence in a casual relationship, the risk of future violence was considered to be greater when a man (vs. a woman) was violent (Bethke & DeJoy, 1993). Given these findings, it is not surprising that people express greater willingness to intervene when the assailant is a man (Bethke & DeJoy, 1993; Harris & Cook, 1994).

Although each of the aforementioned studies used an experimental (factorial) design, very few variables were manipulated (one to four), and the number of variable categories was few (two categories were most common). Although the role of respondent gender often was examined

in these studies, other respondent characteristics generally were not reported. All samples were ones of convenience, typically undergraduate college students. Typically one type of violence, usually physical violence, was examined.

Moving beyond the usual reliance on college student samples, Simon and colleagues (2001) used a nationally representative sample of 5,238 U.S. adults and found that respondents were more accepting of women hitting men than men hitting women in an intimate relationship. Using the tabulated data for their 2×3 design, we calculated that 8.5% of the respondents reported that it was acceptable for a man to hit his wife/girlfriend if she hit him first, and 1.7% reported that it was acceptable for him to hit her to discipline/keep her in line. The corresponding percentages for female assailants are much higher: 30.4% reported that it was acceptable for a woman to hit her husband/boyfriend if he hit her first, and 4.7% reported that it was acceptable for her to hit him to discipline/keep him in line.

The Present Investigation

The factors that tend to influence or be associated with judgments about violence or aggression fall into three broad categories: (a) characteristics of the persons involved, (b) characteristics specific to the incident, and (c) characteristics of those making the judgments. Flowing from these categories, the experimentally created vignettes for this study included characteristics of the victim and the assailant, as well as characteristics about the violent incident itself; in addition, multiple respondent characteristics were measured. Selection of the most relevant variables and their categories to include in the vignettes was based on a review of the literature and the advice of community-based experts (survivors of intimate partner violence, directors of battered women's shelters and rape crisis services that serve a variety of ethnic communities, providers of services to batterers, and the creator of a media campaign about rape) who were assembled to assist in the development of the questionnaire.

In addition to gender (the assailant and victim characteristic of primary interest in this investigation), age, ethnicity, nativity, occupational status, and relationship status of the assailant and victim were included in the vignettes. We included ethnicity because past experimental vignette studies with college student samples have found ethnicity to be a significant factor in judgments about intimate partner violence, with respondents being more sympathetic toward Black (vs. White) assailants (Harrison & Esqueda, 2000; Locke & Richman, 1999). Age was included because assumptions about marriage prospects and other considerations may affect norms about the behavior as related to age of the couple. Nativity (i.e., whether the person was born in the U.S.) has received little research attention in intimate partner research and was included because previous studies document prevalence differences in intimate partner

violence by nativity as well as ethnicity (e.g., Sorenson & Telles, 1991) and because immigrants are sometimes considered to be ignorant of the law or to have social norms that might be considered deviant in the U.S.² Occupational status is included because research suggests that it may be relevant: harassment situations are perceived, in part, on the basis of the status of the harasser and whether a power differential was involved (Bourgeois & Perkins, 2003). Given that employment and occupational status are key indicators of societal power, we included the assailant's and the victim's occupations in the vignette. Relationship status was included because prior vignette studies found that the nature of the relationship was an important consideration in judgments about the behavior. For example, Bethke and DeJoy (1993) found that respondents were more likely to consider a slap to be appropriate and a male perpetrator less responsible if the relationship was serious rather than casual.

In addition to describing the individuals involved, the vignettes we constructed included characteristics of the incident itself. We included six situational characteristics that might influence judgments. Three—the assailant's motive, the type or intensity of abuse, and whether alcohol was involved—have been examined in prior experimental vignette research about intimate partner violence. Previous studies are limited by the size and nature of their sample and the number of variables manipulated, thus, the importance of further study of the effect of these variables on normative judgments. We assessed three additional situational characteristics: weapons, children, and frequency. The use of weapons in an assault is associated with increased injury. In addition, the presence of a weapon can be perceived as increasing the threat level of the incident, even if the weapon is not used. Therefore, in some of the vignettes, we included “grabbed an available object in a threatening manner” (suggested by the community experts because it, in their experience, constitutes the most common weapon use in intimate partner violence), “pulled out a knife,” or “pulled out a gun.” In some vignettes we indicated that a child was in another room. There is substantial interest in the effects that domestic violence has on children, and we assessed whether the inclusion of information about a child would affect respondents' judgments about the incident. Lastly, we included information about the frequency of the incident. Prior research suggests that, even when no information is provided, respondents make assumptions about whether the violence had occurred before and whether it would occur again. Lehmann and Santilli (1995) found that respondents thought that the situation involving a female victim was more likely (than that involving a male victim) to remain stable over time. In addition, there is general sentiment that it is preferable to intervene before the violence becomes entrenched. We, therefore, experimentally manipulated incident frequency so as to better understand the role of prior violence in respondent judgments.

Finally, because the norms being assessed may be associated also with characteristics of those assigning judgment, multiple respondent characteristics were assessed for inclusion in the multivariate analyses. Gender is the respondent characteristic that has been examined most often in related work. Although a few studies have found women to be more sympathetic to victims than men (e.g., Locke & Richman, 1999), others do not find gender differences in perceptions of intimate partner abuse (e.g., Beyers et al., 2000; Lehmann & Santilli, 1996). In addition to respondent gender, we examined the links between social norms and respondent ethnicity, nativity, age, relationship status, and socioeconomic status (via education, income, and employment status). The rationale for measuring these respondent characteristics is largely the same as the rationale for including these variables in the vignettes. Measuring all of these respondent characteristics along with manipulating the vignette variables allowed us to ascertain each variable's independent contribution to respondent judgments.

The present investigation builds upon prior research and brings several important methodological strengths that create the opportunity to make a contribution to the existing literature. First, we employed a large community-based sample that is ethnically, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse as well as diverse in age, relationship history, childbearing, and many other characteristics. Second, we studied many variables via a fractional factorial design to assess the role of many characteristics of the victim, the assailant, and the incident as well as multiple demographic characteristics of the respondents. Third, we expanded the range and types of violence studied. We examined the full range of abusive behaviors in intimate partnerships: controlling and emotionally abusive behaviors, sexually abusive behaviors, and physically abusive behaviors. Finally, because of the large sample size, we were able to use analytic techniques not commonly used in previous studies.

Our primary hypothesis, based on the existing literature and observations from practitioners, is that women's violence against male intimates would be perceived as less of a violation and less in need of intervention by formal social agencies than men's violence against female intimates. Regardless of the epidemiological data (e.g., Archer, 2000), male-to-female violence is perceived as the descriptive norm in intimate partner violence. By extension, injunctive norms about men's violence against intimate female partners likely are more fully developed than those about women's violence against intimate male partners. Therefore, we also hypothesized that social norms about women's violence in heterosexual relationships would be less clear than those about men's violence in heterosexual partnerships. Specifically, we predicted that when the assailant is a man, the regression coefficients would be more homogeneous and the standard deviation of the residuals would be smaller than when the assailant is a woman.

METHOD

Vignette and Questionnaire Development and Design

Each vignette contained randomly assigned categories from up to 12 variables about the victim, the assailant, and the incident (see Table 1). The victim and assailant were always described as being of the same age; however, other characteristics (i.e., ethnicity, nativity, occupational status, and alcohol use) were varied between victim and assailant. Each vignette described one of nine behaviors against a current or former intimate partner (see “Abuse type” in Table 1). The first vignette included a randomly assigned category of each variable, for example:

Connie, a 35-year-old African American woman is an office administrator and born in the U.S. She is living with Jim, a White man of the same age who is a medical doctor and is U.S. born. One evening he accused her of looking at another man. Then he pulled out a gun and forced her to have sex with him. No children were around during this incident. Before this inci-

dent occurred, he drank heavily and she had nothing to drink. This was the only time that an incident like this had happened between them.

The $2 \times 4 \times 6 \times 4 \times 5 \times 5 \times 4 \times 4 \times 9 \times 3 \times 4 \times 4$ design results in a possible 33,177,600 unique vignettes. A fully factorial design was not possible, nor necessary. Factorial designs include all categories of each of the variables being studied. That is, if thought of as a contingency table, all marginals and all cells inside the table would be filled. Full factorial designs allow for the examination of main effects and all interaction effects. By contrast, in fractional factorial designs (as used herein) all marginals are covered but all cells inside the table are not filled. Fractional factorial designs allow for the examination of main effects and some, but not all, interaction effects. The researcher can structure the design such that the interaction effects of interest will have sufficient power to be able to identify statistically significant differences. The main advantage of fractional factorial designs over fully factorial designs is one of economy because more variables and variable

Table 1

Vignette Variables in Scenarios of Adult Heterosexual Intimate Partner Violence

Victim and Assailant Characteristics

Assailant gender

Female, Male*

Age

20, 35,* 55, (no mention)

Ethnicity^a

African American, Latino, White,* Asian American, Korean American, Vietnamese American

Nativity

Born in the U.S.,* Born outside the U.S. but has been here a long time, A recent immigrant, (no mention)

Occupational status

Unemployed, Factory worker,* Office administrator, Medical doctor, (no mention)

Relationship status

Dating, Living with, Married to,* Separated from, Divorced from

Situational Characteristics

Motivation

Accused her of looking at another man (jealousy),* Told her that he did not want her to visit her family tonight and that he would not allow it (control), Accused her of cheating on him (infidelity), Accused her of disrespecting and shaming him (humiliation)

Weapon

Grabbed an available object in a threatening manner,* Pulled out a knife, Pulled out a gun, (no mention)

Abuse type

Belittled and insulted,* Told her she could no longer have contact with anyone but him, Destroyed her Social Security card and driver's license,^b Threatened to harm her, Slapped her, Pressured her to have sex with him, Punched her with his fist, Beat her up, Forced her to have sex with him

Children present

No children were around,* There was a child in the other room, (no mention)

Alcohol use

Had nothing to drink,* Had two drinks, Drank heavily, (no mention)

Frequency of incident

The only time,* The fifth time, One of many times, (no mention)

Note. Each asterisk indicates the reference category that was used in multivariate analyses.

^aAll six ethnic categories were used with Asian American (i.e., Korean American, Vietnamese American, and other Asian American) respondents. The first four categories were used with non-Asian (i.e., Black, Latino, and White) respondents.

^bWhen the victim was “a recent immigrant,” “Social Security card and driver's license” was replaced with “green card.”

categories can be examined without increasing sample size.

A fractional factorial design was used in which each respondent was presented with seven vignettes.³ A computer program was devised to generate the vignettes; the variable categories were selected independently from one another. That is, a category of victim gender was randomly chosen (i.e., male, female), a category of victim age was randomly chosen from the predetermined values (see Table 1), a category of victim ethnicity was randomly chosen (see Table 1), and so on until a complete vignette was constructed.

All variables were included in the first vignette. Fewer variables and variable categories were used in subsequent vignettes so as to reduce respondent burden and administration time. We predetermined the percentage of vignettes in which each variable or each variable category would appear. Our *a priori* decisions were based on the research question under study, statistical power needed to ascertain differences, and respondent and interviewer burden. Victim and assailant gender, ethnicity, and relationship status and abuse type were included in every vignette because these variables, according to the literature as well as the advice of the community experts panel, were believed to be crucial to the integrity of the scenarios.

After each vignette, respondents were asked a series of questions, specifically:

- (1) "Do you think that [assailant's name]'s behavior is right or wrong?"
- (2) "Do you think [assailant's name]'s behavior is illegal in California?"
- (3) "Do you think [assailant's name]'s behavior should be illegal?"
- (4) "Should the police be called?"
- (5) "Should [assailant's name] be arrested?"
- (6) If an affirmative response was given to the previous question, respondents were asked: "Should [assailant's name] serve time in jail or prison?"
- (7) "Should a restraining order be issued—in other words, should a judge say that [assailant's name] can't come near [victim's name]?"
- (8) "Should all guns be removed from [assailant's name]'s possession?"⁴
- (9) If children were mentioned as being "in the next room" in the vignette: "Should social workers be called to check on the children?"

Respondents were asked about who was at fault and who was responsible, the topics of primary interest in prior research on attributions in intimate partner violence.⁵ Respondents were also asked, after the vignettes, whether they personally know a victim of domestic violence (e.g., a friend, relative, or coworker).⁶ Finally, respondents were asked whether they support efforts to prevent domestic violence and various methods by which an ongoing revenue stream might be established to support prevention programs (Sorenson, 2003).

Using information gleaned from cognitive interviews, focus groups, and pre-tests (Dugoni & Baldwin, 2000), the questionnaire was revised several times to improve its clarity and to reduce its length. The final English-language version of the questionnaire was translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean. Each version was then translated back into English followed by minor adjustments to ensure equivalency of the forms.

As noted previously, the main section of the questionnaire comprised seven vignettes. We limit our focus herein to the five vignettes involving heterosexual adults: four that portrayed a male assailant and a female victim and one that portrayed a female assailant and a male victim. The two vignettes that are not included in the analyses reported herein were about teen dating violence and intimate partner violence among gay and lesbian couples.⁷

Study Participants

Six samples of California adults were drawn using random-digit-dial (RDD) methods. The first, a cross-sectional sample of the state, was obtained using a statewide RDD sampling frame of residential telephone numbers. Five additional samples designed to yield high proportions of African Americans, Hispanics, Korean Americans, Vietnamese Americans, and other Asian Americans, were obtained using RDD sampling frames of residential phone numbers from geographic regions (i.e., block groups and census tracts) known to have high concentrations of these populations. These groups were chosen because they are large population groups within the state and because several of the groups contain high proportions of immigrants, whose social norms were of particular interest from scientific and practice perspectives.

The National Opinion Research Center (NORC) of the University of Chicago drew the samples and collected the data. The overall response rate, calculated using the standard response rate formula of the American Association of Public Opinion Research, was 51.5%, which is higher than that obtained in other recent, large, multilingual statewide surveys in California (California Health Interview Survey, 2002; Weinbaum et al., 2001).

The final sample consists of 3,679 California adults, with roughly equal proportions of persons from each sampled ethnic group (see Table 2). The majority of the sample was foreign-born and had been in the U.S. an average of 14 years, which is comparable to the national average of 14.4 years of residence for foreign-born persons (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). A majority were women, and the mean age was 41 years. Most respondents worked full-time and lived in urban areas. Nearly half were married at the time of the survey, whereas about 30% were not in a relationship. The sample diversity extended to educational background, income level, and number of persons supported on the income.

Table 2

Respondent Characteristics (*N* = 3,679)

	%
<i>Ethnicity</i>	
Black	15.0
Hispanic	18.1
White*	16.4
Korean American	16.8
Vietnamese American	16.9
Other Asian American ¹	16.8
<i>Nativity</i>	
United States*	39.7
Outside of United States	59.9
<i>Gender</i>	
Female*	58.8
Male	41.2
<i>Age (in years)</i>	
18–39*	49.7
40+	49.3
<i>Current relationship status</i>	
Married*	47.3
Living with partner	5.3
In serious relationship	5.8
Dating	11.4
<i>Ever married</i>	
Not currently in a relationship	29.4
Yes*	66.3
<i>Ever divorced or separated</i>	
Yes*	21.7
<i>Number of persons 18 or more years old in household</i>	
1*	23.1
2	43.5
3 or more	32.7
<i>Any children under 5 years of age</i>	
No*	80.6
<i>Any children age 5 to 17 years of age</i>	
No*	64.7
<i>Education (highest level completed)</i>	
11th grade	13.0
12th grade*	22.7
Some college, trade, or vocational	25.0
College graduate or more	38.6
<i>Annual income</i>	
Less than \$20,000*	23.9
\$20,000–\$39,999	24.5
\$40,000–\$59,999	15.2
\$60,000 or more	20.8
<i>Number of people supported on income</i>	
1*	24.9
2	25.0
3	17.3
4	15.7
5 or more	13.4
<i>Employment status</i>	
Working full-time*	53.5
Working part-time	11.2
Unemployed	5.9
Retired	10.8

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

	%
Keeping house	7.9
In school	8.5
Other	1.9
<i>Size of town</i>	
Large city (over 250,000)*	60.9
Suburb/medium city (50,000–249,999)	28.1
Small city, town, or farm (< 50,000)	9.3

Note. Percents do not always sum to 100.0 because of missing values (i.e., “don’t know” responses, refusals, interviewer error) that are not listed in the table. Missing values ranged from 0.0 to 1.7% for all variables, except for “income” (15.5%) and “number of people supported on income” (3.6%). Each asterisk indicates the reference category that was used in the analyses.

¹Respondents of Asian-Pacific Islander descent who are not Korean American or Vietnamese American.

The study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at UCLA and the Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects’ Rights at the University of Chicago for NORC. NORC recruited, trained, and supervised staff to conduct interviews in each of the four specified languages using Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing. The average interview lasted 27 minutes. Data collection began April 11, 2000 and ended March 25, 2001.

Statistical Analysis

The unit of analysis is the vignette. Given five vignettes per respondent (*n* = 3,679), there were a potential 18,395 vignettes for analysis. Although it may seem that the design space (i.e., all the cells) cannot be covered by a sample of 18,000 vignettes, all of the main effects and most two-way interactions can be explained with ample power given that the cell sizes for the variables ranged from 1,492 to 14,854. Cell sizes vary because, as noted previously, not all variables or variable categories were presented so as to reduce respondent burden.

Standard diagnostic statistics (i.e., correlation matrices, frequency distributions, and tests for multicollinearity) were examined for all predictors (see variable lists in Tables 1 and 2) and found to be acceptable. General response patterns were assessed by examining frequencies and percentages for each outcome variable.

Multivariate logistic regressions were conducted to assess the effects of each predictor on outcomes while taking all other predictors into account. The variables taken into account in the regressions included all vignette variables and all measured respondent variables. In addition, vignettes were nested within respondents (i.e., each respondent was presented with five vignettes), and we took this into account in the analysis via the robust cluster option in the statistical software Stata. In addition, a Bonferroni correction (Pedhazur & Kerlinger, 1982) was made to take

into account the multiple statistical tests. Specifically, the standard p -value of .05 was divided by 107—the number of Wald tests conducted in each logistic regression—resulting in an adjusted p -value of $p < .00047$. Findings at or below the adjusted level of statistical significance are emphasized herein.

Following from the stated purpose of the research, we next performed separate multivariate logistic regressions for the vignettes with a female assailant and for the vignettes with a male assailant. Doing so provides a clear and direct comparison of the role of assailant gender in intimate partner violence. The regressions by assailant gender were conducted with the outcome variables assessed in survey questions 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8, as listed above. These questions focused on injunctive social norms, that is, how the behavior ought to be viewed and what action ought to be taken. One outcome variable—whether the respondent considered the behavior to be wrong—had, as will be seen in the cross tabulations, little variability. Another variable—whether the behavior is illegal—assessed knowledge and perception not informal social norms. Two outcome variables—whether the assailant should serve jail time and whether social workers should be called to check on the children—were not examined; the number of respondents who were asked these questions precluded multivariate analysis by assailant gender.

We then checked for variables of interest by comparing coefficients in the male-to-female violence with corresponding coefficients in the female-to-male violence regressions. To easily identify and present the findings, we plotted the coefficients obtained in the male-to-female violence regression (y -axis) against the coefficients obtained in the female-to-male violence regression (x -axis). This graphic display allows for quick visual identification of key variables.

In addition, the slope of the line through these coefficients provides information relevant to the hypothesis that

social norms about male-to-female violence are less clear than those about female-to-male violence. A slope of 1.0 would indicate that the structure of the social norms is the same for women's violence and men's violence in heterosexual relationships. If the slope is flatter, it would indicate that respondents are making greater distinctions between predictors for women's violence than they are for men's violence. If the slope is steeper, it would indicate that respondents are making greater distinctions between predictors for men's violence than for women's violence in heterosexual relationships. As another indicator for the second hypothesis, we compared the standard deviation of the residuals by assailant gender for each of the outcome variables. If the standard deviation of the residuals is smaller for male-to-female versus female-to-male violence, there is less dispersion in the residuals of the responses indicating that there is less "noise" in the responses. Finally, we examined variables of substantive interest in the graphs. Data points that indicated agreement and disagreement in respondent judgments for each of the outcome variables were identified.

RESULTS

Our hypotheses were supported by the data. We turn, first, to the initial question of whether women's violence against male intimates is less likely to be considered wrong and less likely to be considered in need of intervention than men's violence against female intimates. As can be seen in Table 3, simple frequency data indicate this to be the case; this gender-based finding is observed across each of the outcome variables.

Although the gender difference for "right or wrong" was statistically significant, it is important to note that the behavior was considered wrong in almost all of the vignettes (93.3% when the assailant was female, 96.3% when the assailant was male). Despite little difference by assailant

Table 3
Percentage of Affirmative Responses, by Assailant Gender

	<i>Female Assailant</i> ($n = 3,679$) %	<i>Male Assailant</i> ($n = 14,718$) %	<i>Pearson</i> $chi^2_{(1)}$	<i>p</i>
Assailant's behavior was wrong	93.3	96.3	65.9	0.000
Assailant's behavior was illegal	59.3	73.3	279.6	0.000
Assailant's behavior should be illegal	66.7	79.4	268.1	0.000
Police should be called	39.9	58.9	428.5	0.000
Assailant should be arrested	29.4	37.0	73.7	0.000
Assailant should serve jail or prison time ^a	72.9	78.6	16.9	0.000
Restraining order should be issued	39.9	57.1	351.2	0.000
Guns should be removed	79.6	84.4	50.7	0.000
Social workers should be called ^b	64.9	70.2	8.9	0.003

Note. The clustered nature of the observations was not taken into account in the chi-square tests.

^aThe "jail/prison time" question was asked only of respondents who answered "yes" to the "should be arrested" question ($n = 6,530$).

^bThe "social worker" question was asked only if the vignette indicated that there was a "child in the other room during the incident" ($n = 5,714$).

gender in whether respondents perceived the behavior as wrong, a lower proportion of incidents perpetrated by women were considered illegal as compared to those perpetrated by men (59.3% vs. 73.3%, $p < .000$). Respondents thought that a higher proportion of the incidents should be illegal than they thought actually were illegal; this finding was observed for both assailant genders (66.7% vs. 59.3% when the assailant was a woman, 79.4% vs. 66.7% when the assailant was a man). Although respondents reported that the behavior should be illegal in two thirds of the vignettes with female assailants, they thought that police should be called in relatively fewer cases (39.9%). A similar but attenuated pattern is observed for male assailants—respondents thought his behavior should be illegal in 79.4% of the vignettes but that police should be called for a lower proportion (58.9%). The proportion of incidents for which respondents thought the assailant should be arrested was even lower—29.4% with female assailants and 37.0% with male assailants. If an arrest occurred, respondents typically wanted the assailant to be incarcerated. (As can be seen in Table 3, this finding was observed for vignettes with a female assailant as well as those with a male assailant.) The proportion of incidents for which respondents thought that a restraining order should be issued (39.9% with female assailants, 57.1% with male assailants) was nearly identical to the proportion that wanted police to be called. The largest proportion of support was reported for whether guns should be removed from the assailant's possession (79.6% if the assailant was female, 84.4% if the assailant was male). Respondents were asked whether social workers should be called to check on the children only if the vignette indicated that a child was present in the other room. Support for social workers being called was relatively high among the respondents who were asked this question (64.9% of female assailant vignettes and 70.2% of male assailant vignettes).

Another way to consider the findings in Table 3, which is consistent with the analyses to follow, is through adjusted odds ratios (i.e., exponentiated regression coefficients). When other variables are taken into account through multivariate analysis (in this study, all vignette variables and all measured respondent variables), the odds ratios are considered to be “adjusted” and are referred to as adjusted odds ratios (AOR). We anticipated that the multivariate analyses would be consistent with the gender-related bivariate analyses, and Table 4 bears out that assumption. The first column of data presents the regression coefficients from the multivariate logistic regressions. The AORs, presented in the second data column of Table 4, were all in the same direction and of similar magnitude for each outcome variable with the exception of whether social workers should be called, in which case the AORs were in the same direction but not statistically significant (see the third data column). Setting aside the social worker outcome, when all other vignette and respondent characteristics are taken into consideration, assailant gender continues to be a potent predictor of each outcome variable.⁸ Because assailant gender is the

Table 4
Multivariate Analyses of Affirmative Responses, Adjusted Odds Ratios

	<i>Male Assailant Versus Female Assailant</i>		
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>AOR</i>	<i>p</i>
Assailant's behavior was wrong	.662	1.94	.00000
Assailant's behavior is illegal	.727	2.07	.00000
Assailant's behavior should be illegal	.671	1.96	.00000
Police should be called	.853	2.35	.00000
Assailant should be arrested	.851	2.34	.00000
Assailant should serve jail/prison time	.489	1.63	.00000
Restraining order should be issued	.835	2.31	.00000
Assailant's guns should be removed	.265	1.30	.00000
Social workers should be called	.074	1.08	.44000

Note. All other vignette variables and all measured respondent characteristics, as well as the clustered nature of the observations, were taken into account in these analyses.

predictor variable of primary interest, we present separate regression models for female and male assailants below.

Should the Behavior Be Illegal?

The first multivariate regressions by assailant gender pertain to the response that the behavior should be illegal. Central to the investigation is the assessment of behaviors respondents believe ought to be prohibited by law. If a certain behavior is so designated, one could assume that the logical extension of such a designation would include legal interventions such as police and arrest. Thus, we examined first whether respondents thought that the assailant's behavior should be illegal followed by the remaining four outcome variables.

The overall pattern of findings was generally consistent across assailant gender: the AORs for each corresponding variable category were in the same direction for all variable categories regardless of their statistical significance. This means that respondents' general reactions to characteristics of the victim, assailant, or incident described in the vignettes were similar regardless of assailant gender. In addition, judgments across assailant gender were similar across characteristics of the respondents. Thus, when respondents' judgments differed according to assailant gender, the differences were ones of magnitude, not direction.

As shown in Table 5, the predictors of the response that a behavior ought to be illegal differ relatively little by assailant gender. AORs for types of abuse typically considered more severe than controlling behaviors (i.e., to destroy identity documents, threaten to harm, pressure or force to have sex, slap, punch, beat up) and the presence of a weapon were elevated for both female and male assailants. A few predictor variables were specific to men's violence against a female

Table 5
Should the Behavior Be Illegal? Vignette and Respondent Predictors of Beliefs About Intimate Partner Violence
by Assailant Gender

	<i>Female Assailant</i> <i>n = 3,555</i>			<i>Male Assailant</i> <i>n = 14,339</i>		
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>AOR</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>AOR</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Vignette Variables</i>						
Victim and assailant age (vs. 35 years)						
20	0.01	1.01	0.93623	-0.08	0.92	0.32570
55	-0.06	0.94	0.69737	0.07	1.07	0.39840
Victim ethnicity (vs. White)						
African American	0.21	1.23	0.35520	0.08	1.08	0.55293
Latino	0.04	1.04	0.86063	0.00	1.00	0.99734
Asian American	-0.11	0.89	0.63845	-0.09	0.92	0.49619
Korean American	-0.26	0.77	0.27093	0.10	1.11	0.48602
Vietnamese American	-0.12	0.88	0.64629	0.01	1.01	0.93591
Assailant ethnicity (vs. White)						
African American	0.02	1.02	0.92891	-0.14	0.87	0.24195
Latino	-0.31	0.73	0.14944	-0.07	0.93	0.58614
Asian American	-0.20	0.82	0.38281	-0.23	0.80	0.08918
Korean American	-0.21	0.81	0.34311	-0.24	0.78	0.03688
Vietnamese American	0.01	1.01	0.98286	-0.05	0.95	0.73694
Victim socioeconomic status (vs. factory worker)						
Unemployed	-0.08	0.92	0.65870	-0.07	0.93	0.47807
Office administrator	0.05	1.05	0.74123	-0.12	0.88	0.13943
Medical doctor	-0.06	0.94	0.73932	0.04	1.04	0.67816
Assailant socioeconomic status (vs. factory worker)						
Unemployed	-0.22	0.81	0.17513	-0.06	0.94	0.46304
Office administrator	-0.12	0.88	0.42229	-0.18	0.84	0.02916
Medical doctor	-0.29	0.75	0.17843	-0.15	0.86	0.15997
Victim nativity (vs. born in the U.S.)						
A recent immigrant	-0.23	0.80	0.26006	0.11	1.11	0.24702
Born outside the U.S. but has been here a long time	-0.09	0.92	0.67808	-0.05	0.95	0.56800
Assailant nativity (vs. born in the U.S.)						
A recent immigrant	0.09	1.09	0.61714	0.04	1.04	0.67273
Born outside the U.S. but has been here a long time	0.13	1.14	0.50330	0.03	1.03	0.75432
Relationship status (vs. married to)						
Dating	0.10	1.10	0.49922	0.11	1.12	0.11197
Living with	0.26	1.30	0.06890	0.19	1.21	0.00497*
Separated from	0.25	1.28	0.06029	0.23	1.26	0.00152*
Divorced from	0.33	1.39	0.00930*	0.21	1.24	0.00485*
Weapon (vs. grabbed an available object in a threatening manner)						
Pulled out a knife	1.19	3.30	0.00000***	0.77	2.17	0.00000***
Pulled out a gun	1.45	4.28	0.00000***	0.93	2.54	0.00000***
Not mentioned	-1.10	0.33	0.00000***	-1.03	0.36	0.00000***
Motivation (vs. jealousy: victim accused of looking at someone else)						
Control: victim not allowed to visit family	0.26	1.30	0.06076	0.11	1.12	0.17205
Cheating: victim accused of cheating on assailant	0.04	1.04	0.76448	0.07	1.08	0.35271
Shame: victim accused of disrespecting and shaming assailant	0.09	1.09	0.57226	-0.05	0.95	0.52782
Abuse type (vs. belittled and insulted)						
Victim could no longer have contact with anyone but assailant	-0.16	0.85	0.29635	-0.01	0.99	0.94834
Destroyed Social Security card and driver's license	0.90	2.47	0.00000***	0.90	2.45	0.00000***
Threatened to harm	0.90	2.46	0.00000***	0.81	2.25	0.00000***
Pressured to have sex	0.79	2.20	0.00000***	1.11	3.02	0.00000***

(continued)

Table 5 (continued)

	Female Assailant <i>n</i> = 3,555			Male Assailant <i>n</i> = 14,339		
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>AOR</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>AOR</i>	<i>p</i>
Forced to have sex	1.27	3.56	0.0000***	2.03	7.62	0.0000***
Slapped	0.93	2.53	0.0000***	1.62	5.03	0.0000***
Punched with fist	1.86	6.41	0.0000***	2.32	10.19	0.0000***
Beat up	2.67	14.38	0.0000***	2.26	9.61	0.0000***
Children (vs. no children were around)						
There was a child in the other room	-0.08	0.92	0.60605	0.08	1.08	0.27375
Victim alcohol use (vs. had nothing to drink)						
Had two drinks	-0.47	0.62	0.01466	0.04	1.05	0.63158
Drank heavily	-0.31	0.73	0.11199	-0.03	0.97	0.76264
Assailant alcohol use (vs. had nothing to drink)						
Had two drinks	-0.21	0.81	0.30401	0.11	1.11	0.25611
Drank heavily	0.06	1.06	0.76573	0.33	1.39	0.00037***
Frequency of incident (vs. the only time)						
The fifth time	-0.10	0.90	0.58325	0.33	1.39	0.00020***
One of many times	0.01	1.01	0.94810	0.18	1.19	0.03940
<i>Respondent Characteristics</i>						
Race/Ethnicity (vs. White)						
Black	0.36	1.43	0.01773	0.08	1.08	0.43848
Hispanic	0.51	1.66	0.00416*	0.45	1.57	0.00019***
Korean American	0.11	1.12	0.57399	-0.14	0.87	0.27613
Vietnamese American	0.35	1.42	0.08916	0.24	1.27	0.08902
Other Asian American	0.14	1.15	0.43256	-0.10	0.91	0.41551
Age (vs. 18–39 years old)						
40 and older	0.10	1.11	0.32656	0.11	1.12	0.11619
Gender (vs. female)						
Male	-0.04	0.96	0.65732	-0.21	0.81	0.00065**
Country of origin (vs. U.S.)						
Outside of U.S.	0.25	1.28	0.05879	0.34	1.40	0.00037***
Current relationship status (vs. married)						
Living with partner	0.31	1.36	0.19393	0.14	1.15	0.37989
In serious relationship	0.14	1.15	0.54900	0.08	1.08	0.60656
Dating	-0.28	0.75	0.17044	-0.06	0.94	0.66054
Not currently in a relationship	-0.05	0.95	0.77846	-0.04	0.96	0.75418
Ever married (vs. yes)						
No	-0.06	0.94	0.74058	-0.08	0.92	0.52101
Ever divorced or separated (vs. no)						
Yes	0.10	1.11	0.47489	0.05	1.05	0.61271
Any children under 5 years of age (vs. no)						
Yes	-0.18	0.84	0.15388	-0.04	0.96	0.64369
Any children age 5 to 17 years of age (vs. no)						
Yes	0.08	1.08	0.47406	-0.02	0.98	0.76559
Number of adults age 18 or over in household (vs. 1)						
2	-0.04	0.96	0.79493	-0.19	0.83	0.06559
3 or more	0.10	1.10	0.52538	-0.20	0.82	0.05892
Education—highest level completed (vs. 12th grade)						
11th grade	0.24	1.28	0.13353	0.18	1.20	0.16174
Some college, trade, or vocational	0.20	1.22	0.11100	0.13	1.14	0.12606
College graduate or higher	-0.08	0.92	0.48912	0.11	1.12	0.17573
Size of town (vs. large city—over 250,000)						
Suburb/medium city— 50,000 to 250,000	-0.01	0.99	0.95816	0.03	1.03	0.70694
Small city, town or farm—< 50,000	-0.18	0.84	0.24137	-0.06	0.95	0.64970

(continued)

Table 5 (continued)

	Female Assailant <i>n</i> = 3,555			Male Assailant <i>n</i> = 14,339		
	Beta	AOR	<i>p</i>	Beta	AOR	<i>p</i>
Employment (vs. working full-time)						
Working part-time	0.09	1.10	0.51761	-0.28	0.76	0.00452*
Unemployed	-0.14	0.87	0.45871	-0.20	0.82	0.11791
Retired	-0.04	0.96	0.77986	0.01	1.01	0.96085
In school	-0.33	0.72	0.04913	-0.04	0.96	0.73840
Keeping house	-0.04	0.96	0.82577	0.03	1.03	0.80462
Other	-0.01	0.99	0.98577	0.43	1.54	0.08561
Income (vs. less than \$20,000)						
Between \$20,000-\$39,999	0.11	1.12	0.38153	0.02	1.02	0.87144
Between \$40,000-\$59,999	0.05	1.05	0.75759	-0.11	0.90	0.30804
\$60,000 or more	-0.27	0.76	0.06718	-0.23	0.79	0.02297
Number of people supported on income (vs. 1)						
2	0.12	1.12	0.40951	0.08	1.09	0.40291
3	0.24	1.27	0.12270	0.17	1.19	0.11647
4	0.14	1.15	0.40980	0.15	1.17	0.20619
5 or more	0.30	1.35	0.09693	0.18	1.20	0.16310
Personally know an IPV victim (vs. no)						
Yes	-0.02	0.98	0.80822	0.01	1.01	0.85334
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²			0.1991			0.1746

Note. All vignette variables and all measured respondent variables listed above, as well as the clustered nature of the observations, were taken into consideration in these analyses.

p* < .01. *p* < .001. ****p* < .00047, the statistical significance level after making a Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

intimate. When a man was the assailant, respondents had higher odds of reporting that the behavior should be illegal if the assailant had been drinking heavily or if it was the fifth time that the incident occurred. In addition, when a man was the assailant, Hispanic respondents and respondents who were born outside the U.S. had higher odds of believing that the behavior ought to be illegal. There may, however, be more predictors of men's violence against female intimates than women's violence against male intimates because of differences in sample size; recall that there are about four times as many vignettes involving men's violence.

We next conducted an initial assessment of our hypothesis that social norms about women's violence toward a male intimate would be less clear than norms about men's violence toward a female intimate. We calculated and compared the standard deviation of the residuals by assailant gender for the outcome variable, belief that a behavior ought to be illegal. Supporting our hypothesis, the standard deviation of the residuals was 35.5% larger when the assailant was a woman (0.2199 vs. 0.1623).

The preceding analyses identified predictors of the outcome variables by assailant gender. We next checked for variables that appear to differ between the regressions for the female and male assailants. To easily identify and present the findings, we plotted each coefficient obtained in the female assailant regression against the corresponding coefficient obtained in the male assailant regression.

For ease of exposition, we report regression coefficients; corresponding AORs are shown in the figure legend. The coefficients are comparable because they all are derived from binary variables, which allows for proper comparison of the regression coefficients. There are more coefficients than those that are graphed; overlapping coefficients are not shown.

The outcome for the "should be illegal" question is shown in Figure 1. In this and all other figures, the dotted line represents the 1.0 slope that would have been obtained had there been no differences between responses for the male and female assailants. A solid line indicates the regression line. The slope of the coefficient plot is rather flat (0.57); for each 1.0 unit change for women assailants, the corresponding unit change is 0.57 for male assailants. The slope of 0.57 indicates that respondents make greater distinctions between predictors for women's violence than they do for men's violence. Thus, when the assailant is female, respondents take features of the vignette more fully into account in their judgments. These findings further buttress the second hypothesis.

Variables for which regression coefficients were larger than 0.75 or smaller than -0.75 (AOR ≤ 0.47 and AOR ≥ 2.12) were identified. The conventional approach of examining all coefficients that are statistically significant is not indicated here. With the large sample size, we risk interpreting many regression coefficients of little substantive

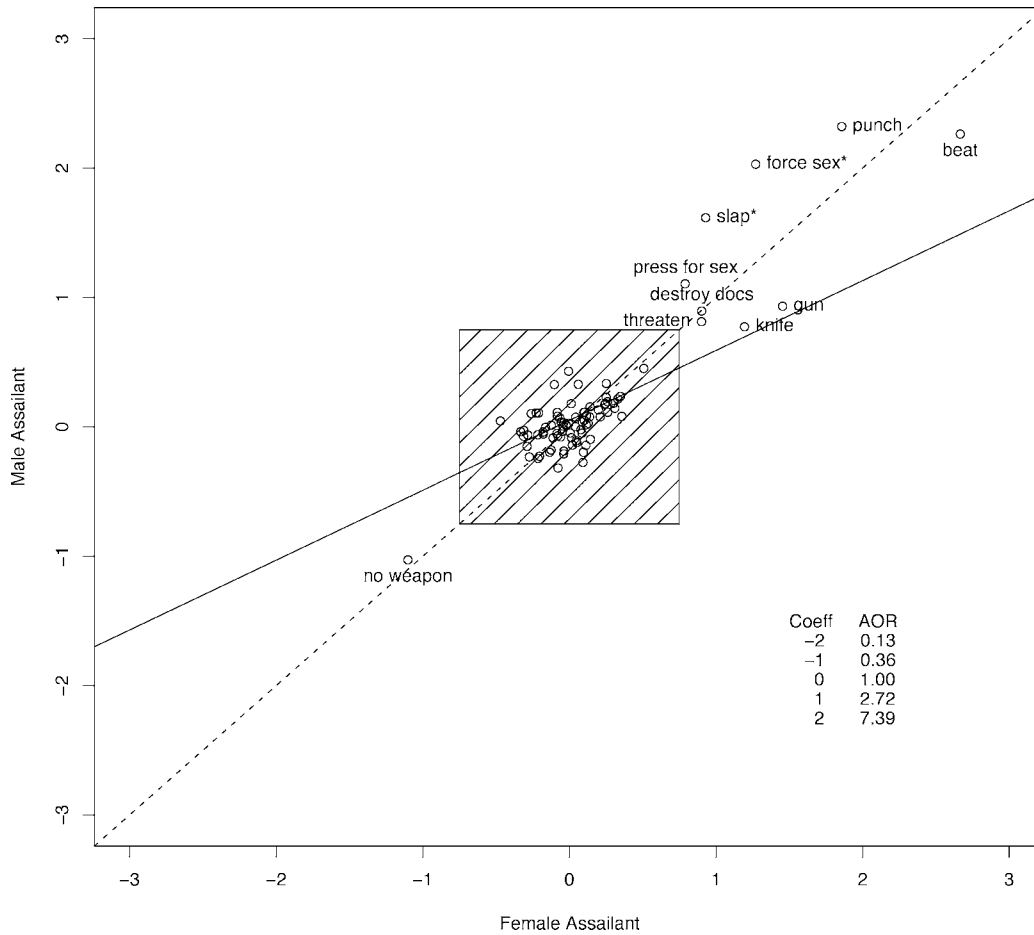


Fig. 1. Regression coefficients by assailant gender for “Should the behavior be illegal?” * $p < .05$.

significance. After examining the regression coefficients for male assailants and for female assailants for each outcome variable, a relatively consistent pattern of findings emerged among those coefficients that document a larger discrepancy between ratings for male assailants and female assailants. Even if we used a less demanding threshold (e.g., regression coefficients that are larger than 0.5 or smaller than -0.5), these strong findings would have emerged and dominated the results.

We will focus only on those variables that meet this criterion; a shaded box is shown on each figure to indicate those coefficients that are inside and outside the ± 0.75 mark. We also include information about the findings of substantive importance that are statistically significant. Specifically, the regression coefficients accompanied by an asterisk are those for which the difference between judgments about women’s behaviors and judgments about men’s behaviors is statistically significant at $p < .05$.

As can be seen in Figure 1, several vignette characteristics and no respondent characteristics predicted judgments of whether the behavior should be illegal. All of the coefficients of interest were from the “type of violence” and “weapon” variables, and only two categories—slap and force

sex—differed statistically by assailant gender ($p < .05$). Both slap and force sex fell above the 1.0 line, indicating that respondents were more likely to think that these behaviors should be illegal when performed by a man than by a woman. Five other types of violence categories appear outside the shaded box: Two—punch and pressure for sex—also fell above the 1.0 line, and two—threaten and destroy identity documents—fell on the 1.0 slope, the latter indicating that respondents’ judgments about whether these behaviors should be illegal did not differ by assailant gender. Only one type of violence category—beat—fell below the 1.0 slope line, which indicates a more common belief that a woman beating a man should be illegal than a man beating a woman, although the difference was not statistically significant. Three weapon categories appear outside the shaded box on the graph: knife and gun fell below the 1.0 line, but the difference between the coefficients was not statistically significant. Finally, if no weapon was mentioned in the vignettes, respondents were less likely to think it should be illegal—a judgment that did not differ by assailant gender as indicated by the fact that the coefficients fall on the 1.0 line. No respondent characteristics were substantively linked to their judgments about whether the behavior should be

illegal. In sum, several categories of the type of violence and weapon variables met the criteria for substantive import (i.e., fell outside the shaded box) but only two—slap and force sex—differed statistically by assailant gender.

Remaining Outcome Variables

The same analyses (i.e., multivariate logistic regressions by assailant gender) were conducted for each of the remaining outcome variables for which the sample size was large enough to support the analyses (i.e., whether police should be called, whether the assailant should be arrested, whether a restraining order should be issued, and whether guns should be removed). We present and discuss graphical displays of the findings.⁹

Each of the figures to follow (Figures 2–5) documents that respondents made greater distinctions in their judgments about women’s violence than about men’s violence. The slope for the data points ranged from 0.55 to 0.60 for whether the assailant should be arrested, whether a restraining order should be issued, and whether guns should be removed from the assailant’s possession. The slope was higher

0.83 for whether police should be called, indicating greater agreement in respondent judgments regarding the behavior of male and female assailants, but distinctions again were greater for women’s violence than men’s violence. In addition, for these remaining outcome variables, the standard deviation of the residuals was the same or larger (0.0%–20.9%) when the assailant was a woman. These patterns of findings are consistent with the second hypothesis that respondents would take contextual characteristics more fully into account in their judgments when the assailant was female than when the assailant was male.

Should police be called? As shown in Figure 2, each of the coefficients of interest for whether police should be called were, as in Figure 1, related to the variables of type of violence and weapon use. Respondents were more likely to think that the police should be called if the assailant was male and the behavior was to punch, force sex, slap, or pressure for sex. Differences by assailant gender were statistically significant for three categories: slap, force sex, and punch. Assailant gender did not affect respondent judgments about beating an intimate partner. Coefficients

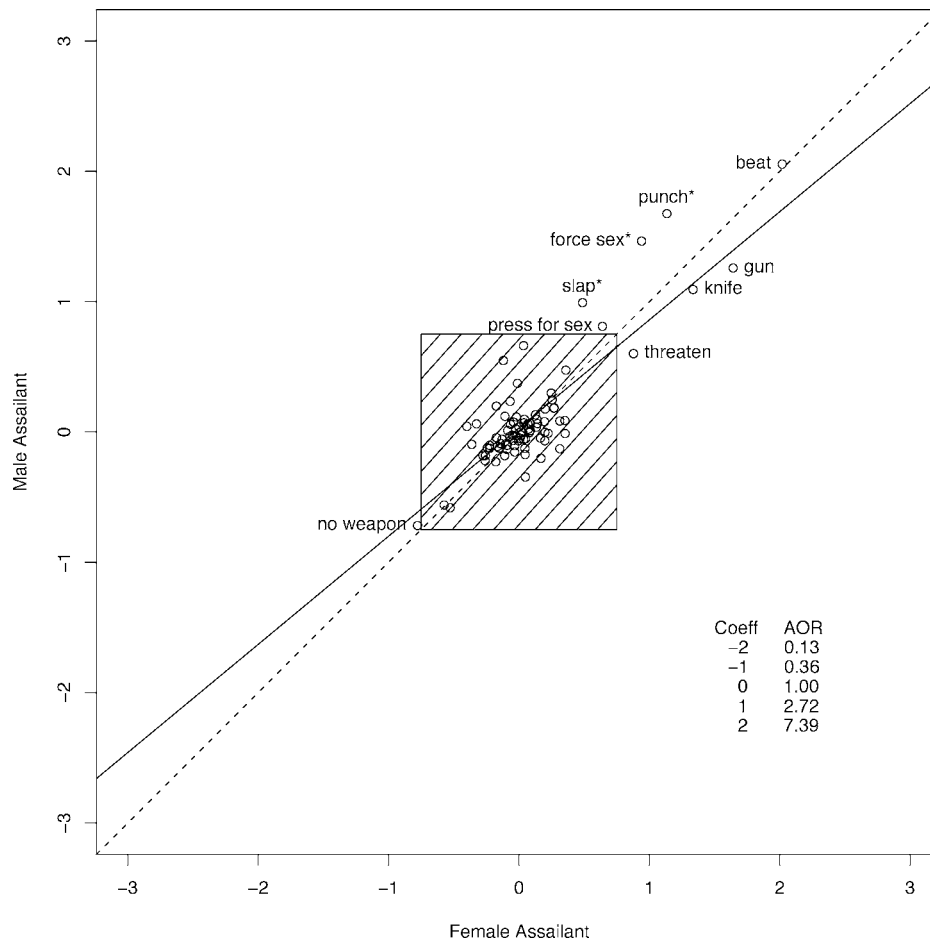


Fig. 2. Regression coefficients by assailant gender for “Should police be called?” **p* < .05.

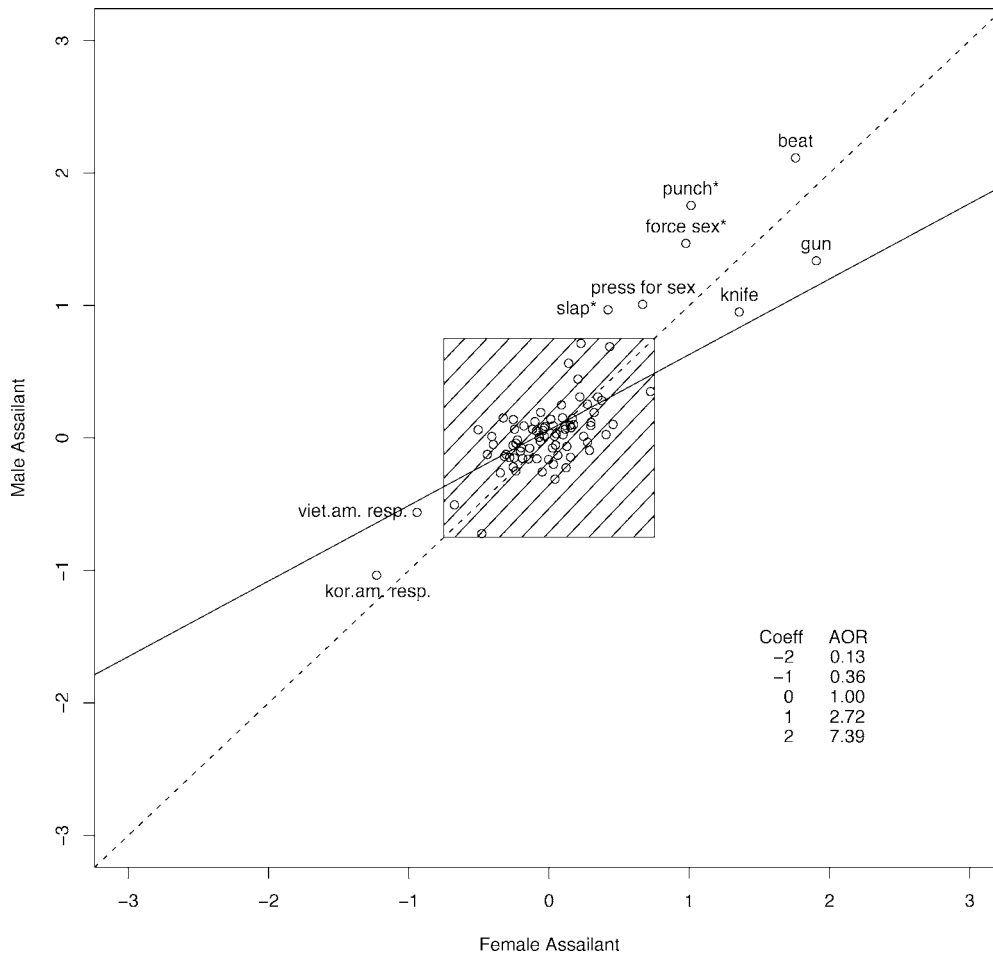


Fig. 3. Regression coefficients by assailant gender for “Should the assailant be arrested?” * $p < .05$.

falling below the 1.0 line were threaten, knife, and gun; none were statistically significant. The “no weapon mentioned” category fell just outside the shaded box indicating that respondents were less likely to think the behavior merited a call to law enforcement when an external weapon was not involved; respondent judgment differed little by assailant gender here. No respondent characteristics were associated with judgments about whether police should be called in response to an incident.

Should the assailant be arrested? As shown in Figure 3, the variables of interest for whether the assailant should be arrested were, again, primarily those related to the type of violence and weapon involvement. If a male assailant beat, punched, forced sex, pressured for sex, or slapped his female partner, respondents tended to be more likely to think that the assailant should be arrested than if a female assailant performed these same behaviors with a male partner. The three categories for which assailant gender differed statistically—slap, force sex, and punch—are the same statistically significant categories as in the previous figure. Four variable categories—knife, gun, and two respondent ethnicity characteristics—fell outside

the shaded box and below the 1.0 line. The two latter data points, Korean American respondents and Vietnamese American respondents, are both associated with a reduced likelihood of thinking that the assailant should be arrested. However, the difference between the judgments for female assailants and male assailants is not statistically significant.

Should a restraining order be issued? As shown in Figure 4, the type of violence, weapon use categories, and a few other variable categories were associated with an increase in respondents believing that a restraining order should be issued. Respondents tended to be more likely to believe that a restraining order should be issued if the assailant was male and the behavior was to force sex, punch, or pressure for sex. Also falling above the 1.0 line were the vignette categories related to frequency of the incident (fifth and one of many), and one respondent characteristic, being divorced. Those categories falling below the 1.0 line were gun, knife, and threaten. Three vignette variable categories—punch, fifth time, one of many times—and no respondent characteristics were statistically significant predictors of assailant gender differences in respondent

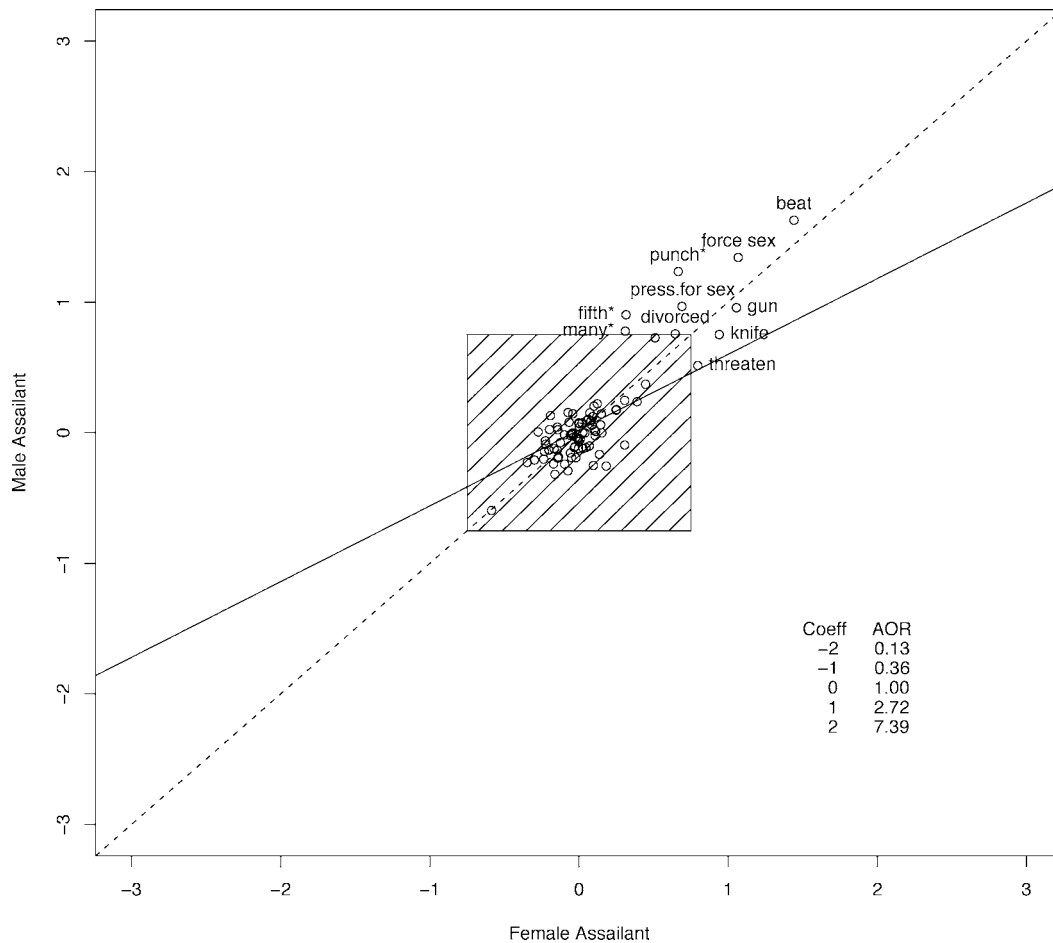


Fig. 4. Regression coefficients by assailant gender for “Should a restraining order be issued?” * $p < .05$.

judgments about whether a restraining order should be issued.

Should guns be removed? As shown in Figure 5, type of violence and weapon use were again important considerations in respondents’ judgments, this time judgments about whether guns should be removed from the assailant. Three type of violence categories fell above the 1.0 line: slap, force sex, and punch; the latter two types of violence differed significantly by assailant gender. If the behavior was to beat an intimate, participants responded the same to male and female assailants in terms of firearm removal—they thought the gun(s) should be removed. By contrast, if a knife or gun was involved in the vignette (vs. an available object grabbed in a threatening way), the coefficient fell below the 1.0 line. Respondents were more likely to think that firearms should be removed from the respondent if the vignette mentioned a gun and the assailant was female rather than male. Four respondent characteristics fell outside the shaded box: Latino respondents judged male and female assailants the same; coefficients for Korean American and retired respondents fell below the 1.0 line. Retired respondents were more likely to believe that guns should be removed from female versus

male assailants. Male respondents, regardless of assailant gender and other vignette and respondent characteristics, were less likely than female respondents to think that guns should be removed from the assailant.

Results Summary

In sum, there was little difference between respondent judgments about female and male assailants. The categories of variables in which there were differences most often were related to the type of violence and the weapons mentioned in the vignette. Three categories of type of violence were statistically significant across several outcome variables: slap, force sex, and punch. For each outcome, the behavior was judged more harshly when the assailant was male rather than female. The frequency of the behavior was related to thinking that a restraining order should be issued. If it was the fifth time or one of many times the incident had occurred, respondents were more likely to believe that a restraining order should be issued if the assailant was a man rather than a woman. Respondents were more likely to indicate the belief that guns should be removed from a female assailant than a male assailant. Respondent charac-

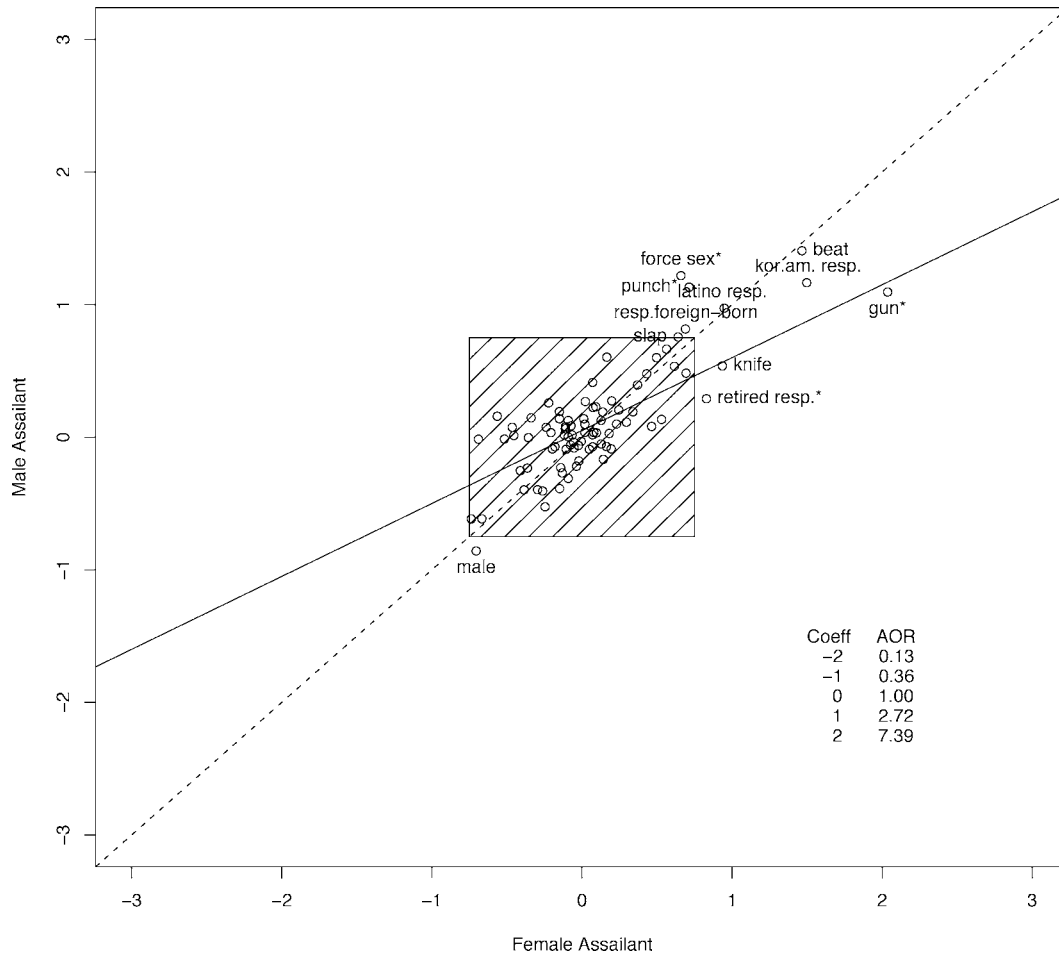


Fig. 5. Regression coefficients by assailant gender for “Should guns be removed?” **p* < .05.

teristics were rarely associated with substantively important findings for any of the outcome variables.

DISCUSSION

Consistent with prior research, we found that men’s violence against their female intimates is judged more harshly than women’s violence against their male intimates. In this study, women’s violence against a male intimate was judged to be less wrong than men’s violence against a female intimate as well as less likely to be illegal, less likely that it ought to be illegal, and less in need of a variety of widely used interventions in intimate partner violence, including law enforcement intervention, arrest, restraining order, and firearm relinquishment. These findings support our first hypothesis. Our second hypothesis—that social norms about women’s violence toward a male intimate would be less clear than norms about men’s violence toward a female intimate—was also supported by the data. In general, responses were more systematic when the assailant was a man. Thus, norms about male-to-female violence appear to be clearer and more widely understood than norms about female-to-male violence.

The type of violence and the presence of an external weapon played a central role in respondent judgments. Regardless of assailant gender and all other vignette and respondent characteristics, sanctions against the behavior were more likely to be supported when nonpsychological abuse occurred—specifically, when the victim was threatened, slapped, pressured to have sex, punched, beat up, or forced to have sex—or when a knife or gun was present. The type of violence was also important when judgments were made about men’s versus women’s behavior: if a male assailant slapped a female partner, forced her to have sex, or punched her (versus belittled and insulted her), respondents had higher odds of reporting that his behavior should be illegal and in need of intervention. In other words, physical and sexual violence was taken more seriously than emotional abuse.

It is important to note, as well, the few ways in which respondents were in agreement in their judgments about the behaviors of male and female assailants. Respondents were more likely to think that the behavior ought to be illegal when the assailant threatened his or her partner or destroyed his or her partner’s identifying documents. They were less likely to think that it should be illegal when no

external weapon was mentioned in the vignette. Respondents were more likely to think that police should be called and that guns should be removed from the assailant when the assailant beat the victim. Respondent judgments about these categories were in agreement for male and female assailants, indicating that certain contextual factors are sometimes more important than assailant gender.

Respondent characteristics were largely unrelated to the outcome variables; the few respondent characteristics that did emerge were not consistent predictors across outcomes. This finding is important because the data do not support suppositions about ignorance of the law or greater tolerance of intimate partner violence by members of certain ethnic groups or recent immigrants. In addition, although gender of the assailant was important in respondent judgments, gender of the respondent was not.

One of the problems created by our study design was the wealth of resulting data. We focused herein on key findings, yet a few others deserve mention. First, the statistically significant predictors of whether the behavior should be illegal, police be called, and the assailant arrested generally were consistent. Whether the behavior ought to be illegal was not associated with the status of the relationship but legal intervention usually was: There were higher odds of endorsing the calling of law enforcement if the couple was separated or divorced, of supporting arrest if the couple was divorced, and of supporting the issuance of a restraining order if the couple was dating, separated, or divorced rather than married. Therefore, being married appears to be associated with less willingness to intervene in the violence.

Second, a slap is perceived differently if delivered by a woman rather than a man. Findings herein suggest that a woman's slap may even be in a class of behavior all its own. When assessing whether the behavior should be illegal, vignettes in which a woman slapped (vs. belittled and insulted) a male intimate had an elevated and statistically significant AOR of 2.53. However, none of the AORs for the interventions that followed were statistically significant for slap. This is in contrast to other behaviors (i.e., threatened, pressured for sex, forced sex, punched, beat) in which two to four of the interventions were believed to be appropriate. In other words, respondents believe that a slap by women ought to be illegal, but they don't want police to be called, her to be arrested or serve time, a restraining order to be issued, or guns to be removed. Either respondents want something else to follow from their belief that it ought to be illegal or they want the behavior to be illegal but nothing, at least in terms of a criminal justice response, to happen. This is in marked contrast to beliefs about what should happen when a man slaps a female intimate—the behavior is described as something that should be illegal and that standard legal interventions should follow (i.e., police should be called, he should be arrested, a restraining order should be issued, and guns should be removed). Although a slap by a woman and by a man is considered behavior that should

be illegal, it is as if a woman's slap, but not a man's slap, is exempted from the standard interventions that logically follow.

We attempted to address concern about the welfare of child witnesses to intimate partner violence by including in some of the vignettes mention of a child who was "in the other room." Information gleaned from focus groups convened during the refinement of the questionnaire confirmed that respondents understood our intent when we included this variable. Focus group members indicated that they believed that the child knew what was happening; they noted that children watch and listen such that they see and hear things that adults think that they do not. Given these comments, it is perhaps not surprising that analyses indicate that the welfare of children may trump considerations of the gender of the assailant. Whether social workers should be called to check on children was the only outcome variable examined that did not differ by assailant gender.

Study Limitations

Although we used an experimental vignette method and examined the effect of many victim, assailant, and incident characteristics in a large, diverse sample, we must acknowledge at least three limitations of our research. First, although we made every effort to choose the best variables and to identify the most appropriate categories within those variables, it is possible that we did not include variables and variable categories that are relevant to people's judgments about assailant gender in intimate partner violence. Second, although the sample is the most diverse sample to date in the study of intimate partner violence, we acknowledge that we do not have the full population of persons whose judgments enter into the development of society-wide norms. Third, the response rate is lower than we would like. Although the obtained response rate is consistent with the current response rates obtained in other multilingual RDD samples, when the response rate approaches 50%, caution is in order. Nonetheless, we found that characteristics of respondents in the cross-sectional sample were fairly similar to the characteristics of the state's population as a whole, which increases confidence in the sample quality.

Conclusion

Women's violence against male intimates is judged less harshly than men's violence against female intimates. This conclusion, arrived at by multiple research studies, is evidenced in action. Fewer women are incarcerated in the U.S. than would be expected by their offending rates (Daly & Tonry, 1997). Even when controlling for confounding factors, men are 8 to 26% more likely than women to receive prison sentences (Daly & Bordt, 1994). When appearing in court under similar circumstances, men are sent to prison for longer terms than are women (e.g., Jeffries,

Fletcher, & Newbold, 2003)—about 12 months longer according to some research (Daly & Bordt, 1994). Thus, our findings about societal perceptions of intimate partner violence by women is consistent with findings about how women are treated in the criminal justice system, a sometimes flawed but necessary system for carrying out injunctive social norms that have been written into law—women are treated less harshly. Criminologists (e.g., Moulds, 1978) have raised the question of whether such treatment is an indicator of chivalry or paternalism.

In sum, the issue of assailant gender in heterosexual intimate partner violence goes beyond the epidemiological questions of who does what, with what frequency, and with what outcomes. Because women's violence in intimate relationships has not been acknowledged to the same degree as men's violence, it is reasonable to expect that social norms are less clear about what ought to happen about her violent behavior than about his violent behavior in an intimate heterosexual relationship, and we found this to be the case. Situational characteristics of women's violence against a male intimate were taken more fully into account in making social judgments than when men were violent against a female intimate. With rare exception, women were viewed less negatively and treated less harshly when they engaged in the same violent behaviors as men. Placed in a larger context, these findings may say more about societal expectations and beliefs about women, men, and gender roles than they do about any specific form of violence.

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NOTES

1. For ease of exposition, we refer to injunctive social norms as social norms throughout this article.
2. These considerations are particularly important given that 28.4 million immigrants reside in the U.S., triple the number residing in the U.S. in 1970 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Immigrants comprise 26.2% of the population in California, the site of the present investigation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).
3. Pretesting indicated that seven was the maximum number of vignettes that could be handled by respondents within the allotted interview time.
4. Federal law prohibits the purchase or possession of a firearm by persons under a domestic violence restraining order and by persons convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence.
5. These findings are reported elsewhere (Taylor & Sorenson, 2004a).
6. These and related findings are reported elsewhere (Sorenson & Taylor, 2003).
7. The examination of adults' social norms about teen dating violence is reported elsewhere (Taylor & Sorenson, 2004b). The analysis of the gay and lesbian couple vignettes is underway.
8. As noted in the methods section, another part of the survey assessed whether the respondent had ever personally known

a victim of domestic violence. We included the dichotomous "personal knowledge" variable in the regression models. Personal knowledge of a domestic violence victim was not related to beliefs about what was wrong or what should be done. Although counterintuitive, the finding is consistent with prior research on beliefs about violence against women (e.g., Beyers et al., 2000; Burt, 1980).

9. The regression findings (i.e., regression coefficients, AORs, and *p*-levels) are available to interested readers upon request.

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