

DOES VIOLENCE INVOLVING WOMEN AND INTIMATE PARTNERS HAVE A SPECIAL ETIOLOGY?*

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We used data from a survey of inmates who have committed homicide or assault to examine whether men and women who have killed or assaulted their intimate partners are different from other violent offenders. A “gender perspective” implies that intimate partner violence and violence between the sexes have different etiologies than other types of violence, whereas a “violence perspective” implies that they have similar etiologies. Our evidence supports a violence perspective. In general, offenders who attack their partners are similar to other offenders in terms of their prior records, alcohol and drug use, and experiences of abuse. We observed some differences between men who attack women (including their female partners) and other male offenders, but the differences were opposite those predicted by a gender perspective. For example, men who attacked their partners were particularly likely to have been abused by their partners. In addition, men who attacked women were particularly likely to have experienced sexual abuse during childhood and to have been intoxicated at the time of the incident. These results suggest that some well-known predictors of violence are particularly strong predictors of male violence against women and female partners.

Some scholars have implied that men and women who commit violence against their intimate partners (IPV) are different from each other and from other offenders (e.g., Browne, 1987; Dobash and Dobash, 1979). They have claimed that misogynist men assault their female partners to

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maintain their dominance, whereas violence committed by women is likely a response to the violent behavior of their partner and is motivated by self-defense (see Archer, 1994; Fagan and Browne, 1994 for reviews; Dobash et al., 1992; Goetting, 1995; Saunders, 1986; Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 1993).

Felson (2006) referred to the idea that violence committed against men and women in intimate relationships as the “gender perspective” (see also Dutton, 2006; Felson, 2002; Hamel, 2005; Straus, 2004). He contrasted this perspective with the “violence perspective,” which emphasizes similarities in the etiologies of violence against intimate partners and other victims. According to the violence perspective, the motivation for IPV is not much different from the motivation for other types of violence.

Prior research has addressed these perspectives by estimating statistical models in which various characteristics of offenders or violent incidents are related to the gender of the offender and victim, and whether they involve IPV. Such a design allows for the examination of whether violence by men and women against their partners is special. For example, Felson and Messner (1998) examined the additive and interactive “effects” of gender and victim–offender relationship on whether homicide offenders had a prior record of violence. Their results suggested that men and women who killed their partners were equally likely to have violent criminal records as men and women who killed in other circumstances (see also Mann, 1988). A gender perspective would suggest that female offenders tend to be relatively nonviolent in other circumstances.

Felson, Burchfield, and Teasdale (2007) used the same method as Felson and Messner (1998) to examine whether victims reported that the offender was drinking during an assault. Their evidence suggested that offenders who assaulted their intimate partner were less likely to be intoxicated than other offenders, but this pattern was much weaker for male offenders. Men who engaged in IPV were more likely to be intoxicated than women who committed this offense.

Other research has also examined whether IPV offenders are special. Marvell and Moody (1999) reviewed several studies showing that men who engaged in violence against their partners typically had criminal records (see also Giordano et al., 1999). Other research suggests that the relationships between personality factors and IPV are similar for men and women (Moffitt et al., 2000; see also Straus and Medeiros, 2002). However, some research has suggested that many men who engage in violence toward their wives do not report violence outside the family (Saunders et al., 1992; see Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart, 1994, for a review).

In our research, we used Felson and Messner’s (1996) method to examine whether men and women who assault or kill their partners are different from other violent offenders and from each other as well as

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

323

whether offenders who commit violence against victims of the opposite sex are different from those who commit violence against victims of the same sex. Specifically, we examined differences in whether offenders had committed prior violent or nonviolent crime, they had an alcohol problem or used serious illegal drugs, they were intoxicated during the incident, they had been abused by their partners or other adults, and they had been physically or sexually abused when they were children. These risk factors are some of the most well-known for violence. Our analysis of prior violent crime was similar to Felson and Messner's homicide study, but we applied it to assault as well. Our analysis of intoxication was similar to Felson, Burchfield, and Teasdale's (2007) study of the general population, but we applied it to more serious offenses committed by an inmate sample. We also had the self-reported drinking of the offender available rather than the judgment of the victim. The other outcomes had never been examined using this framework.

We tested our models using a nationally representative sample of state and federal prison inmates. We believed that using an inmate sample provided the gender perspective a distinct advantage. These serious offenses are likely to involve what Johnson (1995) would characterize as "intimate terrorism" rather than "common couple violence." He, therefore, would use a gender perspective to explain them. Nonetheless, we had few, if any, classic cases of self-defense in our sample because these offenders are unlikely to be incarcerated. However, the gender model attempts to explain female IPV generally and not the relatively few cases of IPV that have been legally recognized as self-defense. Felson and Messner (1996) did include such incidents and found that prosecutors attributed 9.6 percent of the homicides committed by women to self-defense versus .5 percent of the homicides committed by men. The gender difference in self-defense was no stronger among IPV offenders.

We estimated equations with independent variables that included the gender of the offender, the gender of the victim, the relationship between the offender and victim, and in some cases, a Gender \times Partner interaction term. This interaction term should be statistically significant if men or women who assault their intimate partners are different from other offenders. In other analyses, we substituted a Gender of Offender \times Gender of Victim interaction term.

Following Felson and Messner (1996) and Felson Burchfield, and Teasdale (2007), we treated the various forms of abuse, substance use, and prior behavior as dependent variables even though we did not consider them causal outcomes. In some instances, the reverse might make more sense theoretically; prior abuse and substance abuse might have different effects on violence against different types of victims. We chose this design

because it allowed us to examine additive and interactive “effects” of gender and various victim–offender relationships. If we treated abuse and substance abuse as independent variables, we would have a cumbersome list of categorical dependent variables that involved various types of victims and that required multiple comparisons.

HYPOTHESES

From a violence perspective, gender and IPV should have only additive effects on partner abuse. Women are more likely than men to be abused by partners, and offenders who attack partners are more likely to have been abused by those partners. The gender model, however, predicts a Gender \times Partner interaction. Women who attack their partners should be particularly likely to have been abused by their partner because many of them committed the offense in response to the abuse. The circumstances that lead to the offense tend to be different.

The models also make different predictions about risk factors associated with a predisposition to use violence. These risk factors include the past record and substance use of the offender as well as his or her experiences of child abuse and abuse by adults who are not partners. A prior violent record is an indicator of a violent disposition, and a prior nonviolent record and use of serious drugs are indicators of a disposition to commit nonviolent crime. Alcohol abuse, intoxication at the time of the incident, and child abuse are known to be strong correlates of violent behavior (e.g., Fagan, 1990; Widom, 1989).¹ Abuse by adults who are not partners is not a well-known risk factor, but it is useful for comparing our analysis of abuse by partners.

According to the violence model, the risk factors are the same for IPV and other types of violence. Men and women who attack their partners are equally likely to have a predisposition toward violence as men and women who attack other people. They are typical violent offenders whose characteristics and experiences are similar to those of other violent offenders. They should be equally likely to have prior records, engage in substance abuse, be intoxicated during the incident, have been abused as a child, and/or have been abused as an adult by a nonpartner. We should not observe main effects of IPV or Gender \times Partner statistical interactions. Male offenders may be different in some ways from female offenders (e.g., men tend to be more violent than women), but those differences should be observed regardless of whom they victimize.

The gender model does predict effects of IPV because it suggests that many of the men and women who attack their partners are atypical

1. The extent to which these issues are causal factors or spurious correlates of violence is not important for our purposes.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

325

offenders. The men are motivated by sexism, whereas the women are responding to a violent partner. Thus, concerns for dominance may lead some men without a violent predisposition to use violence against their partners. Their behavior, at least in its less serious forms, involves conformity to conventional gender norms, not deviant behavior. They should be less likely to have alcohol problems or to be intoxicated during the incident. The motive to dominate implies a future orientation, whereas alcohol intoxication is associated with a present orientation, careless thinking, and impulsive behavior (e.g., Steele and Southwick, 1985). Similarly, women who attack their partners should be less likely to have a predisposition to use violence than women who attack other people. These women have been victimized by their partners—their response was forced by circumstances. Women without a violent predisposition would become violent in these circumstances, not only those who have violent tendencies or are intoxicated.

One could argue that the gender model is not as clear in its prediction about male predispositions as it is about female predispositions. Perhaps the men who attack their partners are both sexist and predisposed to use violence. Perhaps women who commit IPV are atypical but not men. If so, we should find Gender \times Partner statistical interactions.

Finally, the two perspectives imply different predictions about whether one should observe statistical interactions between the gender of the offender and the gender of the victim. The violence perspective predicts additive effects; men who attack women are similar to men who attack other men, and women who attack men are similar to women who attack other women. The gender perspective implies that men who attack women are different from men who attack other men, and women who attack men are different from women who attack other women. The risk factors associated with violence, therefore, should be better predictors of same-sex violence than violence between the sexes.

METHODS

Data for this research came from the 1997 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the Bureau of Prisons (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000). The survey is based on a nationally representative sample of inmates from state and federal facilities. Participants were selected using a two-stage stratified selection process. The first stage involved selecting prisons from a universe of 1,409 state and 127 federal prisons. Inmates then were selected from the sampled prisons, which resulted in a total of 14,285 respondents from state facilities and 4,041

from federal facilities. Interviews were conducted using computer-assisted personal interviewing. The response rate was 92 percent.

We selected those inmates whose primary offense involved murder, voluntary manslaughter, or physical assault and who committed their crime against a single victim ($N = 2,124$). We omitted incidents that involved same-sex couples because too few were available for analysis ($N = 18$). Our sample size depended on which dependent variable we were examining. The sample size for the alcohol intoxication analysis at the time of the offense was smaller ($N = 1,744$) because 15.3 percent of the offenders did not know whether they were drinking at the time of the offense, presumably because they did not remember. The sample sizes for the analyses of the other dependent variables varied between 2,080 and 2,096 cases.

MEASUREMENT

We measured the following nine dichotomous dependent variables: 1) abuse by the adult partner of the inmate, 2) abuse by another person as an adult, 3) childhood physical abuse, 4) childhood sexual abuse, 5) prior violent offense, 6) prior nonviolent offense, 7) alcohol abuse problem, 8) serious drug use, and 9) alcohol intoxication at the time of offense.

The abuse items are based on questions in which respondents were asked whether, prior to entering prison, they had “ever been physically abused” and whether “anyone ever pressured or forced sexual contact against your will, that is, touching of genitals, or oral, or anal sex.” Respondents who answered in the affirmative to these questions then were asked whether the physical abuse occurred before or after age 18 or both.² Respondents also were asked about their relationship to the perpetrator. If respondents were abused by someone 18 or older and if “at least one of the perpetrators was an intimate—spouse or boyfriend or girlfriend,” then they were coded as abused by an intimate partner. If respondents were abused by someone 18 or older, but not by a partner, then they were coded as having been abused by someone else as an adult. If respondents indicated abuse before the age of 18, then they were coded as having been sexually or physically abused during childhood. Note that the questions allowed respondents to report multiple types of abuse. Also, note that the measures of partner and other adult abuse do not necessarily imply that the incident itself involved victim precipitation or self-defense. The abuse could have occurred at any time. Finally, it is possible that the partners who abused the respondents were different from the partners

2. Eighty five percent of the perpetrators of physical abuse and 87 percent of the perpetrators of sexual abuse were older than 18 years.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

327

they attacked. However, we observed a strong relationship between partner abuse and violence against partners, which suggests that the same partner is involved.

Offenders also were asked about their prior convictions as an adult or a juvenile. We constructed dichotomous variables based on whether respondents had ever been incarcerated or put on probation for violent or nonviolent offenses. Murder, voluntary manslaughter, robbery, as well as sexual and physical assault were coded as violent offenses, whereas all other offenses were coded as nonviolent.

Our measure of alcohol problems was based on the CAGE assessment; a well-known substance abuse screening tool. Respondents were asked: "Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking? Have people ever annoyed you by criticizing your drinking? Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking? Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning [an eye-opener] to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover?" Respondents who gave three or more affirmative responses were coded as having a problem with alcohol abuse. Alcohol intoxication at the time of offense was based on the response of the inmate to the following question: "Had you been drinking any alcohol at the time of offense?"

Our measure of serious drug use was based on whether offenders used an illegal drug other than marijuana in the month prior to their current arrest. Offenders were asked whether they had used heroin, opiates, methamphetamines, amphetamines, quaaludes, barbiturates, tranquilizers, crack, cocaine, PCP, LSD, inhalants, or other drugs besides marijuana. Respondents who indicated a use of any of these substances in the prior month were coded as serious drug users.

Our victim-offender relationship categories included the following: intimate partner (spouse/boyfriend/girlfriend), family member, other known person, and stranger (the reference category). Our equations also included controls for race/ethnicity, years of education, age at the time of arrest, and whether the offense was a homicide or an assault. We classified race/ethnicity as African American, Hispanic, other races, and non-Hispanic White (the reference category). The number of years the respondent attended school was used to measure education.

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics are presented in table 1. They show that offenders were more than twice as likely to have a prior conviction for a nonviolent offense than a violent offense. Approximately 25 percent of the sample had alcohol problems, 27 percent used serious drugs in the month prior to their current arrest, and more than half were intoxicated at the time of their offense. Almost half of the sample reported that they were

abused physically as a child. Childhood sexual abuse and victimization in adulthood were much less frequent. For example, 7.4 percent of the offenders reported being abused by their partner. A breakdown by gender showed that female offenders were *much* more likely than male offenders to report abuse by a partner (38.8 percent vs. .7 percent; results not shown). Finally, approximately 17 percent of the offenders assaulted or killed an intimate partner.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (N = 2,124)

Variables	%
Dependent Variables	
Partner abuse	7.4
Other abuse as an adult	8.2
Physically abused as a child	44.0
Sexually abused as a child	9.9
Prior violent offenses	20.2
Prior nonviolent offenses	45.3
Alcohol problems	25.6
Serious drug use	27.0
Intoxicated at time of offense	52.7
Independent Variables	
Offender male	83.3
Victim male	69.0
Homicide (versus assault)	68.6
Offender–Victim Relationship	
Partner	17.3
Family	8.6
Other known	33.4
Stranger ^a	40.7
Race	
Black	47.7
White ^a	32.0
Hispanic	15.5
Other race/ethnicity	4.8
Years of education \bar{x}	10.7
Age at arrest \bar{x}	28.0

^aReference category.

Our multivariate analyses were based on logistic regressions. In our initial models, we estimated equations that included either the Gender × Partner term or the Gender × Gender term. The coefficients for these statistical interactions are presented in table 2. In table 3, we present the results from our final models, which include interaction terms that were statistically significant in the initial models.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Table 2 shows that only one out of nine of the Gender × Partner interactions examined is statistically significant. This pattern is more consistent with the violence model than the gender model. The one statistical interaction we observed involved partner abuse, but it was not in the direction predicted by the gender perspective. The results suggest that men (not women) who assault their partners are particularly likely to have experienced partner abuse. Table 2 also shows that only two out of nine of the Gender × Gender interactions examined were statistically significant. One of the significant effects was a Gender × Gender statistical interaction for childhood sexual abuse. The results show that men who attack women are more likely to have been sexually abused than men who attack men. The other Gender × Gender statistical interaction involved drinking during the incident. The results showed that men are particularly likely to be drinking when they attack women. These patterns are not consistent with the gender perspective, which predicts that risk factors for violent crime should be less important for violence of men against women. The statistical interactions are not predicted by the violence perspective, but given the direction, they are not inconsistent with it either.

Table 2. Logistic Regression Coefficients for Statistical Interactions[†]

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables								
	Adulthood Victimization		Childhood Victimization		Any Prior Offenses		Substance Problems		Alcohol Intoxication
	By Partner	By Other Person	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Violent	Non-violent	CAGE	Drugs	at Time of Offense
Male Offender × Partner	1.490* (.731)	.646 (.493)	-.328 (.330)	.308 (.483)	.356 (.473)	.043 (.362)	.471 (.349)	.473 (.362)	.421 (.349)
Male Offender × Male Victim	-.592 (.726)	-.166 (.451)	-.425 (.311)	-.840* (.392)	.168 (.411)	-.199 (.369)	-.402 (.333)	-.133 (.319)	-.695* (.332)

NOTES: Sample sizes varied from N = 1,744 to N = 2,096. Values in parentheses represent standard errors.

[†]Additive terms included but not presented.

*p < .05.

The evidence in regard to differences between attacks on partners and attacks on other people also supports the violence model more than the gender model (see table 3). Most of the main effects of IPV were not statistically significant; men and women who attack their partners are equally likely to be drinking at the time of the incident as those who attack strangers, as well as to have alcohol problems, have violent records, be abused by nonpartners, and have been abused as children. Those who attack partners *or* other family members are less likely to have prior nonviolent

Table 3. Final Logistic Regression Models*

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables									
	Adulthood Victimization		Childhood Victimization		Any Prior Offenses		Substance Problems		Alcohol Intoxication at Time of Offense	
	By Partner	By Other Person	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Violent	Non-violent	CAGE	Drugs		
Male offender	-5.220*** (.529)	-2.597*** (.190)	.141 (.132)	-1.848*** (.304)	.701*** (.181)	1.162*** (.143)	-.110 (.139)	-.367** (.138)	.742** (.265)	
Male victim	-.148 (.286)	-.027 (.197)	-.067 (.112)	.345 (.285)	-.064 (.139)	-.039 (.113)	-.225 (.121)	-.249* (.118)	.257 (.284)	
Partner	.854* (.346)	.350 (.263)	.033 (.160)	-.278 (.269)	-.229 (.199)	-.476** (.163)	.083 (.171)	-.357* (.174)	-.333 (.182)	
Family	-.343 (.387)	-.007 (.317)	.394* (.184)	.159 (.276)	-.223 (.235)	-.447* (.186)	.228 (.196)	-.508* (.213)	-.066 (.191)	
Other known	-.094 (.324)	.021 (.237)	-.054 (.109)	-.064 (.206)	.138 (.131)	-.015 (.107)	.215 (.125)	.113 (.117)	.188 (.117)	
Black	-.132 (.241)	-.753*** (.200)	-.820*** (.109)	-.735*** (.179)	.573*** (.136)	-.032 (.106)	-.470*** (.118)	-.326** (.116)	-.269** (.112)	
Hispanic	.049 (.363)	-.555 (.289)	-.836*** (.148)	-1.017*** (.287)	.232 (.185)	-.485** (.147)	-.348* (.163)	-.156 (.156)	.255 (.158)	
Other race/ethnicity	-.092 (.483)	-.135 (.382)	-.740** (.230)	-.634 (.398)	.291 (.280)	-.700** (.236)	.217 (.232)	-.814** (.241)	.202 (.241)	
Years of education	-.013 (.043)	-.069 (.035)	.003 (.020)	-.046 (.035)	-.053* (.023)	-.043* (.019)	-.062** (.021)	-.057** (.021)	-.153*** (.022)	
Age at arrest	.028** (.012)	.007 (.010)	-.065*** (.006)	-.035** (.010)	.023*** (.006)	.008 (.005)	.027*** (.006)	-.016** (.006)	.010 (.006)	
Homicide/assault	.311 (.241)	.097 (.197)	.015*** (.006)	.161 (.183)	-.790*** (.116)	-.643*** (.100)	-.354** (.109)	-.064 (.110)	-.064 (.107)	
Male Offender × Partner	1.490* (.731)									
Male Offender × Male Victim										
Constant	-1.323* (.667)	.049 (.554)	1.936*** (.335)	-.840* (.392)	-1.860*** (.409)	-.223 (.329)	-.555 (.353)	.835* (.353)	-695* (.332)	1.164** (.387)

NOTES: Sample sizes varied from $N = 1,744$ to $N = 2,096$. Values in parentheses represent standard errors.

*Nonsignificant interaction terms omitted.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

331

offenses or to have used serious drugs in the month prior to arrest. Overall, the evidence suggests that men and women who attack their partners are typical violent offenders.

Table 3 also shows that only one of the nine main effects of the victims' gender was statistically significant. In general, the results showed that offenders who attack women are similar to offenders who attack men. The one small effect suggests that offenders who attack women are slightly more likely to have used serious drugs. These results are more consistent with a violence model than with a gender model.

We also observed some main effects of the offender's gender. Women are much more likely than men to have been abused by their partners and other adults and to have been sexually abused as children. Women are less likely to have a prior conviction for violent and nonviolent offenses than men, and they are less likely to have been intoxicated at the time of the offense. They are more likely to have used serious drugs. Note that differences in offender characteristics in an inmate sample may reflect differences in the general population. For example, we expected to find that female offenders are more likely to have been sexually abused than male offenders because that pattern has been observed in the general population. One cannot infer from this pattern that sexual abuse plays a greater role in female offending than male offending.

We also found evidence of retaliation and mutual violence by partners. Offenders who assaulted their partners were more likely to have been abused by their partners. In addition, offenders who attacked family members were slightly more likely to have been physically abused as children.

In analyses not presented, we restricted our analyses to homicides. These analyses addressed the issue of the inmate sample's adequacy; we can be more confident about the representativeness of the homicide sample than the assault sample. The patterns observed in the analyses of this subsample were similar to those presented. Most of the effects of gender and relationship are additive. We observed the same Gender \times Partner interactions as we did in the full sample; men who killed their partners were particularly likely to have experienced partner abuse ($b = 2.013$; $p = .021$). The other two interactions were not statistically significant with the reduced sample, but the b 's were similar in strength ($b = -.784$, $p = .106$ for sexual abuse; and $b = -.744$, $p = .091$ for intoxication).

DISCUSSION

The pattern of effects we observed for IPV provides more support for the violence perspective than for the gender perspective. Men and women who killed or assaulted their partners tended to be similar to other violent male and female offenders. The women who attacked their partners were

not particularly likely to have been abused by their partners. Rather, we found that men who attacked their partners were particularly likely to have suffered partner abuse. This result challenges the idea that these women were responding to a history of abuse. Violence against partners and victimization by partners were strongly associated for both men and women, which indicates that a considerable amount of mutual violence was present in this relationship. However, the link between offending and victimization is weaker, not stronger, for female offenders. The Gender · Partner interaction suggests that men are more reluctant than women to use violence against partners unless their partners have used violence against them.

In discussing the Gender · Partner statistical interaction, it is important to emphasize that female offenders are *much* less likely to have been abused by a partner than male offenders. The main effect of gender is consistent with research that shows large gender differences in more serious forms of IPV and in violence generally (e.g., Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997; Fagan and Browne, 1994). The gender difference is observed regardless of who the women attacked (although it is weaker for IPV offenders). The difference in reported abuse could reflect a greater tendency for women to use the word “abuse” to describe the behavior of their partner or for men to avoid acknowledging victimization.³ However, the fact that the gender effect for partner abuse is much stronger than the gender effect for abuse by other adults suggests that gender differences in reporting cannot fully explain the pattern.

Our evidence in regard to predisposing factors also was more supportive of the violence model than the gender model. We found little evidence that offenders who attacked partners were different from other offenders, and we found no evidence of Gender × Partner statistical interactions. Those who assaulted or killed partners were equally likely to be drinking at the time of the incident, have alcohol problems, have records of criminal violence, be abused by nonpartners, and have been abused as children. In general, the results suggested that men and women who were violent toward their partners were typical violent offenders. This pattern is consistent with past research that examined other risk factors (Giordano et al., 1999; Moffitt et al., 2000; Straus and Medeiros, 2002).

It is interesting that those offenders who assaulted partners or family members were less likely to have prior nonviolent offenses or to have used serious drugs than those who attacked strangers. Offenders who engaged

3. Follingstad, DeHart, and Green (2004) found that psychologists were more likely to rate a behavior as psychological abuse if it was committed by husbands than if the same behavior was committed by wives.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

333

in any kind of domestic violence were apparently less versatile than other offenders in terms of their tendency to commit nonviolent crime.

We also found some evidence of interactions that involve the gender of the offender and victim. Men who attacked women were more likely than men who attacked men to have been sexually abused as children. This pattern is not consistent with the gender perspective, which would predict that risk factors for male violence would be less important for men who attack women. The fact that men who attacked women were more likely to be drinking than men who attacked men is also inconsistent with the gender perspective. If men who were violent against women were attempting to control future behavior of women, then we would have expected to find that alcohol played a less important role.

One might question whether these statistical interactions were consistent with the violence perspective, which implies additive effects. The results suggest that some differences can be found between men who attack men and men who attack women as well as between men who attack their partners and men who attack other people. Some important risk factors for violence generally are even more important for male violence against female partners and women. Perhaps male violence against women and female partners is perceived to be a particularly serious crime, and environmental factors must be more extreme to produce it. Future research should examine why these differences were observed.

LIMITATIONS

It is important to acknowledge the methodological limitations of this research. First, the survey did not include any measures of the male offenders' attitudes toward women or male dominance or their prior treatment of women. We cannot rule out the possibility that some male IPV offenders are motivated by misogyny. It would be surprising if that were not the case.⁴

The second major limitation was our reliance on self-reports. The reports might have been affected by memory, interpretation of questions, and social desirability. For example, offenders could differ in what they define as abuse and whether they are willing to report it on the survey. Researchers might have a broader definition of abuse than the offenders. One could argue that an offender's perception of abuse is a better measure in a study that examines the offender's response to that behavior. Offenders presumably respond to their "definition of the situation." However, one also could argue that measures focusing on actual behavior (like our

4. We could not address the possibility that male violence reflects conceptions of masculinity, and these conceptions stem from sexism (e.g., Malamuth et al., 1991). Our focus is on men's differential treatment of men and women.

sexual abuse measure) are stronger because they are less ambiguous and less subject to reporting biases.

Note that reporting biases are only problematic to the extent that they result in systematic measurement error (i.e., to the extent that they are related to both our independent and dependent variables). Systematic error is most likely to be a problem when interpreting the effects of the offender's characteristics, and these characteristics are not of particular interest in this study. It seems less likely that reporting biases are related to victim gender or the victim-offender relationship. It is possible, however, that men who have attacked their female partner falsely claim partner abuse because violence against female partners is more strongly stigmatized than other types of violence (Felson and Feld, 2009). We suggested that the Gender · Partner interaction was because of male reluctance to use violence against female partners unless their partners were violent, but it also could be argued that the interaction is because of a reluctance to admit unprovoked violence against a female partner. Still, it seems unlikely that measurement error can account for the more objective measures (e.g., prior record) or the consistency of results across nine dependent variables.

We must be cautious in generalizing our results to homicides and assaults that do not lead to incarceration in state or federal prisons. Minor offenses and offenses that were unsolved or unreported were not included. Violence that involves strangers is probably undersampled because these cases are comparatively difficult to solve. We addressed these issues to some extent by performing analyses on the homicide subsample. Selection is a less serious problem for homicide than for assault because the former are much more likely to lead to incarceration. The number of homicide incidents judged to be justifiable is relatively small (Lundsgaarde, 1977; Tennenbaum, 1994). In addition, Curtis (1974) found that the likelihood of victim precipitation in homicides that were cleared by arrest did not differ significantly from homicides that were not cleared. The influence of sampling bias on our analyses of the homicide subsample, therefore, is likely to be modest. The fact that effects were similar for homicide and assault increases confidence in the generalizability of our results to serious offenses.

Incidents that criminal justice officials attributed to self-defense were excluded from our study, which is another sampling issue. Thus, our research addresses incidents that do not involve classic self-defense. Note, however, that Felson and Messner (1996) used such a sample and found effects on prior record similar to those we report.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

335

In conclusion, the literature focuses on different variables and different types of samples, but it reveals similar patterns. It seems that the circumstances and individual characteristics associated with IPV tend to be similar to those associated with other types of violence.

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INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

337

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