

likely to report violence involving intimate partners than violence between acquaintances.²

Some scholars question gender comparisons arguing that violence against female partners occurs in a different context than violence against male partners [e.g. Dobash and Dobash, 1998]. They claim that the former is more likely to be serious and to involve continual abuse, and is less likely to be victim-precipitated. To address this issue the studies described above included controls for contextual and demographic factors. In particular, they attempted to control for injury, weapon use, prior violence, and victim-precipitation [e.g. Archer, 2000; Felson and Cares, 2005]. Still, it is impossible to know whether all contextual factors are adequately controlled in a correlational study. Experimental data are useful for controlling context and isolating the effects of relationship and gender.

In this research we use an experimental design to examine whether attitudes toward assaults and attitudes toward reporting those assaults to the police depend on the gender of the offender and victim and their relationship to each other. We base our analysis on responses to an assault scenario from a nationally representative sample of adults. We first examine whether moral evaluations and reporting depend on the gender of the offender, the gender of the victim, or both. We also examine whether respondents respond differently when the antagonists are married than when they are acquaintances and whether gender differences depend on marital status. In addition, we examine whether the effects of gender and marital status on reporting reflect differences in moral evaluations of the offense. Reporting differences may reflect strong moral condemnation of men who assault women or their wives, or it could reflect a response to the risk of future attacks. Finally, we examine whether the response to these scenarios depends on the gender, age, ideology, and education of respondents. These analyses address, in part, the issue of whether protective attitudes toward women reflect traditionalism. We begin with a theoretical discussion of the norm protecting women. Then we review the empirical literature on the topic.

THE NORMATIVE PROTECTION OF WOMEN

Felson [2000, 2002] argues that there is a norm in society that discourages people from harming

²In an experimental study, Shotland and Straw [1976] found that witnesses were less likely to intervene themselves in a staged fight involving a couple than a fight involving strangers. They did not examine reporting to the police.

women and encourages others to protect them. The norm leads to greater moral condemnation and enhanced punishment for violence when the victim is a woman, as well as a greater willingness to intervene on her behalf. The norm protecting women may be particularly likely to inhibit men from harming women and to encourage them to protect women. The expectation that men protect women and otherwise treat them well is sometimes described as “chivalry.”

The norm protecting women has important effects on altruistic behavior as well as aggression. For example, it plays a role in petty acts—opening doors and “ladies first”—and in the assistance provided to mothers through the welfare system [Felson, 2002]. Experimental studies consistently show that participants are more likely to give help to women than men in emergencies and other situations [Eagly and Crowley, 1986]. Thus, the norm involves both a proscription against harming women and a prescription to provide assistance when women are threatened or harmed.

The most common explanation of the norm protecting women is that it reflects an exchange of submission for protection [see Brownmiller, 1975; Chesney-Lind, 1978; Visher, 1983]. From this perspective, chivalry is a form of “benevolent sexism” that provides a justification for traditional gender roles [Glick and Fiske, 1999]. From this perspective, men are only willing to protect women who are submissive, that is, who conform to gender roles. However, evidence in the literature described below suggests that deviant women are actually treated *less* severely by the criminal justice system than deviant men.

Another explanation is that the norm reflects the desire to protect children by protecting mothers [Felson, 2002]. From the point of view of evolutionary psychology, the life of a woman has more reproductive value than the life of a man, since she is much more limited in the number of offspring she can produce. In addition, her survival may be more important because of her child-rearing function [see Campbell, 1999]. This explanation, however, cannot easily explain why women who are past child-bearing ages also receive protection.

A third possibility is that the norm reflects the fact that women are vulnerable to men, since the average male is physically bigger and stronger, more skilled in violence, and more inclined to use violence than the average female [e.g. Archer, 2006; Pheasant, 1983]. Thus, in their classic discussion of norms, Thibaut and Kelley [1959] argue that groups develop norms to protect weaker parties and discourage the

exercise of raw power. This explanation is consistent with the idea that male violence against women is most strongly condemned. A man who hits a woman (or a smaller man) should “pick on someone his own size.” In other words, a fight between a man and woman is not a “fair fight.” However, gender differences in strength and violent behavior cannot explain the special protection accorded to women in emergencies. Perhaps, the normative protection of women has more than one source.

The norm protecting women is controversial because of the image of weakness and dependency that it seems to imply for women, and because of its association with traditional gender roles. Perhaps that is why it has received so little attention in the violence literature. The controversy is not new. For example, when the Titanic went down, some women’s groups complained about the maritime rule that gave women first access to lifeboats [Wade, 1992]. More recently, Carpenter [2007] criticized human rights activists and international agencies for their treatment of atrocities in the former Yugoslavia. To elicit public support, they emphasized attacks on “women and children” even though they acknowledged that attacks on men were much more numerous.

PRIOR RESEARCH

Two types of evidence suggest that people evaluate violence against women more negatively: research on the frequency of violence toward men and women and research on reactions to violence against men and women.³ Regarding frequency, research from the National Crime Victimization Survey suggests that men are more likely to be the victims of violent crime than women [e.g. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997]. In addition, participants in laboratory experiments, particularly male participants, are much less likely to deliver shock to women than to men [e.g. Taylor and Epstein, 1967]. Gender differences have been found in a large number of experimental studies using different procedures, different measures of aggression, and different populations [see Baron and Richardson, 1994]. Research also shows that the presence of audiences and mirrors, which are known to inhibit antinormative behavior, are more likely to inhibit violence against women than violence against men [e.g. Carver, 1974; Feld and Robinson, 1998].

³Studies that focus only on violence against women cannot address this issue and we do not review them.

Experimental studies of reactions to violence in scenarios involving dating and spousal violence show that participants evaluate perpetrators more negatively if the violence involves a male attacking a female than if it involves a female attacking a male [Bethke and DeJoy, 1993; Beyers et al., 2000; Feather, 1996; Hannon et al., 2000; Harris and Cook, 1994]. Follingstad et al. [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. Since these scenarios involve heterosexual couples, they do not disentangle the effects of gender of offender and victim. It may be that assaults on women are viewed as more serious than assaults on men, regardless of who commits them. Alternatively, it may be that assaults committed by women are taken less seriously than assaults by men. In addition, these studies do not examine whether gender effects depend on the victim–offender relationship since they only examine intimate partners. It may be, for example, that male violence against their wives is viewed as more or less serious than male violence against other women.

Harris and Cook [1994] compared evaluations of gay men and heterosexual couples [see also Russell et al., 2009]. They found that college students evaluated violence against wives more negatively than violence against husbands and violence between gay male couples and they were more likely to say they would report them to the police. However, one cannot fully disentangle gender effects without including lesbian relationships in the mix. In addition, the study did not examine the effects of intimate relationship.

Harris [1991] did attempt to disentangle the effects of the gender of actor and target, and their relationship to each other. Undergraduates evaluated aggressive behavior on a scale that included items on degree of harm and inappropriateness. Evaluations were more negative if someone slapped a woman (vs. a man), particularly if the aggressor was a man. In a separate analysis, she found mixed evidence as to whether respondents evaluated violent husbands more negatively than violent wives [see also Kanekar et al., 1981]. Note that Harris’ measure did not focus strictly on moral evaluations. It was not clear whether respondents were judging whether the behavior was harmful or inappropriate or both. In a later study, Harris and Knight-Bohnhoff [1996] separated acceptability from harmfulness in a study of 79 people working on a military base and 115 college students. They found few significant effects of gender of offender or victim on the acceptability of

violence. However, her evidence may have been inconsistent because of the small cell sizes.

The generalizability of these experimental findings is unknown since they are based on college students or other nonrepresentative samples. College students are obviously considerably younger and of higher socioeconomic status than most American adults. We were able to find only one study that examined gender effects using a large, representative sample. Sorenson and Taylor [2005] found that respondents in California judged violence against intimate partners more harshly and were more likely to favor reporting it to the police if the offender was a man than a woman [see also Taylor and Sorenson, 2005]. Gender, age, and education were unrelated to responses toward violence, regardless of the gender of the assailant. However, because the scenarios involved heterosexual partners, the effect of gender of offender could not be disentangled from the effect of gender of victim, and the role of victim-offender relationship could not be evaluated.

Correlational studies have also examined gender effects among intimate partners. They indicate that respondents generally evaluate violence against female partners more negatively than violence against male partners [Arias and Johnson, 1989; Greenblat 1983; Simon et al., 2001; Straus and Kantor, 1994]. Evidence also suggests that the relationship between the offender and victim affects judgments. Rossi et al. [1974] found that respondents ranked beating up a spouse as a more serious offense than beating up an acquaintance, but less serious than beating up a stranger. There was a high level of agreement between men and women in their evaluation of these offenses. Respondents were not presented with information about gender, but presumably they were thinking of male violence against females in the case of spousal violence and violence between males in offenses involving acquaintances and strangers. Note that correlational studies are more subject to socially desirable responses and that they do not allow the research to assess what factors produced the response [Sorenson and Taylor, 2005].

Finally, research shows that the criminal justice system treats female offenders more leniently and punishes offenders who commit violence against women more severely [e.g. Beaulieu and Messner, 1999; Daly, 1994; Daly and Bordt, 1995; Moulds, 1978; Steffensmeir et al., 1998]. A study of arrest found that gender effects depended on the victim-offender relationship. The police were particularly unlikely to make an arrest when a woman assaulted her male partner than when other

gender-relationship combinations were involved [Felson and Paré, 2007]. While men were no more likely to be convicted, they were more likely to be incarcerated, regardless of their relationship to the victim.

Historical data that makes statistical comparisons between men and women are, not surprisingly, limited. Felson and Paré [2007] found that the gender differences described above were no different for assaults committed prior to 1980. They did find an increase in arrest since the 1980s for intimate partner violence, regardless of gender. Survey data from the 1920s indicate that rape, an offense primarily committed against women, was considered a more serious crime than homicide [Krus et al., 1977]. Seduction was considered as serious a criminal offense as assault and kidnapping. Seduction was charged when a man promised to marry a woman to encourage sexual intimacy but then, after intimacy, reneged on his promise.

Historically, attitudes toward violence against wives in the United States were similar to what they are today, according to Pleck [1987]. She suggests that it was concerns for family privacy that sometimes reduced the likelihood of legal intervention in cases of domestic violence. Since violence against women was more likely than violence against men to involve family members, women sometimes did not receive protection from the criminal justice system. Research shows that the offsetting effects of gender and victim-offender relationship on reporting continue today. Violence against women is more likely to involve known offenders and violence involving people who know each other in any way are less likely to be reported to the police than violence involving strangers [Felson, 2000; Felson et al., 1999]. However, controlling for victim-offender relationship, violence against women is more likely than violence against men to be reported to the police.

In summary, correlational research suggests that violence against women is more likely to be reported to the police than violence against men. It is unclear whether gender effects reflect some unmeasured characteristic of the offense. Experimental studies have found mixed evidence as to whether men's violence against women is evaluated more negatively than other violence. These studies were limited in that they were based on nonrepresentative samples, they did not examine reporting to the police, and they did not distinguish moral judgments from evaluations of degree of harm. An experimental study using a California sample [Sorenson and Taylor, 2005] found gender effects on evaluations and reporting in a more representative sample.

However, since the antagonists in their scenarios were heterosexual couples, they could not disentangle the effects of gender of victim, gender of offender, and victim–offender relationship. Our results will show that the gender of both parties is critical.

THE CURRENT STUDY

Our experimental study goes beyond prior research in seven ways: (1) we disentangle the effects of gender of offender from gender of victim; (2) we examine whether it matters if the offender and victim are married; (3) we use a large, nationally representative sample; (4) we examine attitudes toward reporting the incident to the police as well as moral evaluations of the offense; (5) we examine whether moral evaluations mediate effects of gender and relationship on reporting; (6) we examine gender effects on perceptions of dangerousness; and (7) we examine whether the effects of gender and relationship depend on the characteristics of respondents. Studies by Harris [1991] and Sorenson and Taylor [2005] each included a few of these elements, as indicated earlier, but they lack most of them.

Unlike earlier studies, we address the issue of *why* gender and relationship might affect reporting. Prior studies have been descriptive—no attempt was made to interpret gender effects or test explanations of why they might be observed. We recognize the limitations of our study for theory testing, but we think it provides a first step toward a theoretical understanding of protective attitudes toward women.

Our first task is to disentangle gender and relationship effects. A norm protecting women implies a main effect of gender of victim: respondents judge violence against women more negatively and advocate reporting it to the police regardless of whether a man commits it, and whether the man is her partner or not. If the norm protecting women reflects a desire to protect women from harm from any source (perhaps because of their role as mothers), then we should observe a main effect of gender of the victim. We might also observe main effects of gender of offender if respondents view violence committed by men as more dangerous or violence committed by women as a violation of gender roles. A chivalry effect implies that respondents should be particularly likely to condemn violence and favor reporting it to the police when it involves a male offender and a female victim. We should therefore observe a statistical interaction

between the gender of the offender and victim on reporting and moral evaluations. Such a pattern is consistent with the idea that women's physical disadvantage leads people to condemn male violence against women and require that women be protected from men.

We also examine whether the norm protecting women should be stronger or weaker within marriage. Some scholars suggest that violent behavior of men toward their wives is legitimized in patriarchal societies [e.g. Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Pagelow, 1984]. This perspective implies a statistical interaction between marital status and gender. Other scholars suggest that there is more tolerance of marital violence than other violence; some even call the marriage license a hitting license [e.g. Pagelow, 1984; Straus et al., 1980]. This perspective implies a main effect of marital status on reporting and moral evaluations.

We are also interested in whether moral condemnation mediates the effects of gender and relationship on attitudes toward reporting to the police. If gender and relationship effects on reporting are reduced when perceptions of moral seriousness are controlled, it will suggest that reporting reflects greater moral condemnation. It will suggest that respondents are more likely to report men's violence, or violence against women, or men's violence against women or wives, because they consider them more serious offenses. Serious offenses are more likely to be reported to the police than minor offenses [e.g. Felson et al., 1999].

On the other hand, gender effects on reporting may reflect concerns for deterrence rather than justice. Respondents may favor police intervention because they believe that men are more dangerous or women or wives are more vulnerable to future attack and injury. Thus, Bethke and DeJoy [1993] found that participants in an experimental study thought that the risk of future violence was greater when a man committed violence against a woman than vice versa, even though the circumstances were the same. If this is the case we may find that, even with moral evaluations controlled, respondents are more likely to favor reporting an assault when the offender is a man and the victim is a woman.

Unfortunately, we do not have a direct measure of perceptions of dangerousness so we are not able to examine whether such perceptions mediate gender effects on reporting. We do, however, have a measure of whether respondents thought the victim was likely to get hurt *if* he or she retaliated. Retaliation is an alternative to calling the police for victims [Black, 1976]. We can therefore examine

whether gender and victim–offender relationship affect perceptions of the danger of retaliation. If respondents think that women are more likely to be injured if they retaliate against men, then we should get a gender-by-gender interaction. On the other hand, we may get only main effects of gender if respondents think that women are more likely than men to get hurt in any physical altercation, or if they think that retaliation against men is more dangerous than retaliation against women.

Finally, we examine whether groups differ in their attitudes toward violence against women and protecting women. Perhaps both men and women have similar attitudes. For example, men may feel obliged to be chivalrous and women expect them to behave this way. On the other hand, an in-group bias might lead men to be less sympathetic to female victims. One might also expect that groups that tend to have traditional attitudes about gender roles judge violence against women more harshly than those who have more liberal attitudes.⁴ Respondents who are male, older, less educated, or ideologically conservative may be more offended by violence against women, because they tend to have more traditional attitudes [e.g. Thornton et al., 1983]. On the other hand, if intervention reflects concerns for deterrence rather than justice, we may not find group differences in reporting. Attitudes toward reporting may reflect practical concerns that are unrelated to ideology.

METHODS

We created an experiment within the context of a telephone survey conducted on a representative sample of American adults ($N = 810$). The data were collected by Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS) based on funding from the National Science Foundation. The sample was drawn by the Indiana Survey Research Center using the Genesys list-assisted method as a guide to selecting a national random sample of home telephone numbers.⁵ Respondents were randomly selected from among adults residing in the selected households. Each selected respondent was randomly assigned to one of our six conditions with fixed

⁴The evidence as to whether traditional men are less likely to engage in violence against women is mixed [Hotelling and Sugarman, 1986]. The inconsistent results probably reflect differences in the measurement of traditional attitudes. These measures may reflect, in varying proportions, traditionalism, hostility toward women, and antisocial attitudes.

⁵For a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of telephone surveys, see Lavrakas [1993].

probabilities. There were no categorical quotas imposed upon the sample.

Respondents were presented with a scenario where an offender was described as getting angry and hitting another person. The dependent variables were whether respondents thought the victim should report the incident to the police and their moral evaluation of the attack. The experimentally manipulated independent variables were the gender of the offender, the gender of the victim, and the relationship (spouse or acquaintance) between the offender and victim. We examined both main effects and statistical interactions between these variables. Then, we introduced the moral judgments as a covariate in the equation for reporting to the police. The effects of gender and relationship on reporting should be reduced if the moral judgment is a mediating variable. Finally, we examine statistical interactions involving the characteristics of respondents, that is, their gender, age, political ideology, and education.

The interviewer introduction was as follows:

Many people think it is important to stand up for yourself when someone mistreats you, but people have different opinions about what to do. I am going to describe a situation where someone is treated badly, and ask you whether you agree or disagree with several statements about what that person should do.

Then the scenario containing the experimental manipulation was read to the respondents. One version of the scenario is reproduced below:

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

This version includes a male offender and a female victim who are acquaintances of one another. Other versions vary the gender of the offender and the victim and the nature of the relationship between them (spouse vs. acquaintance). Our design includes six different conditions after the exclusion of the two conditions that would have involved same sex spouses. After presenting the scenario, the interviewer asked respondents whether they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed, or strongly disagreed with a number of statements: "Beth should call the police;" "In your moral judgment, John's swearing and hitting Beth in this situation was a serious offense;" "If Beth hits John back, Beth is likely to get hurt by John." The response to the measure of moral

condemnation was highly skewed, with most respondents agreeing that the attack was a serious one. To capture the variation, we dichotomized this variable depending on whether the respondent strongly agreed with the statement. The distribution on these variables is presented in Table I.

Respondents were classified as conservative or not based on the following item: "In general, when it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as a liberal, a conservative, a moderate, or haven't you thought much about this?" We also classified respondents as age 50 or above (the median) vs. under 50. Respondents were classified as having at least some college education or not based on the following question: "What is the highest grade of school or level of education you have completed?: Less than high school degree, high school degree; some college; college degree or higher."

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table I. They show that about half of the respondents agreed that the police should be called. They generally disapproved of the violence in our scenario with 82.5% agreeing that the incident was serious.

In preliminary analyses we examined all three possible statistical interactions involving gender of

TABLE I. Frequencies

Variable	%
<i>Dependent variable</i>	
Should victim report the incident?	
Strongly agree	27.6
Somewhat agree	22.0
Somewhat disagree	17.4
Strongly disagree	31.9
Was this a serious incident?	
Strongly agree	55.7
Victim likely to get hurt?	
Strongly agree	12.7
Somewhat agree	16.1
Somewhat disagree	33.1
Strongly disagree	36.5
<i>Characteristics of scenario</i>	
Female offender/female victim	18.8
Male offender/female victim	33.1
Female offender/male victim	27.7
Male offender/male victim (reference)	20.3
Offender/victim married	27.6
<i>Respondent characteristics</i>	
Male	46.4
Age 50 or older	52.7
Attended college	65.3
Conservative	28.8

offender, gender of victim, and marital status. In our analysis of both moral seriousness and reporting, we observed significant statistical interactions between gender of offender and gender of victim (Wald = 16.10; $P < .0001$; and $t = -3.09$; $P = .002$). In our analysis of reporting, we observed a borderline statistical interaction between marital status and gender ($t = 1.93$; $P = .054$). We present the results from our final models in Tables II and III. To better reveal the gender patterns, we created dummy variables for the gender combinations with assaults involving males as the reference category.

The results in Table II show that respondents are much more likely to condemn male violence against women than male on male violence. The odds that the respondent considers the assault serious is 3.6 times as likely when it involves a man hitting a woman. The effects for the other gender combination are small and not statistically significant. The table also reveals a main effect of marital status: respondents condemn marital violence more than violence between acquaintances.

TABLE II. Effects on Moral Judgments (Logistic Regression)

Variable	B	SE	Exp(B)
Constant	-0.281*	.157	0.755
<i>Offender/victim relationship^a</i>			
Female/female	-0.076	.227	0.927
Male/female	1.279*	.227	3.592
Female/male	0.036	.229	1.037
Offender/victim married	0.508	.201	1.662

* $P < .05$.

^aMale offender/male victim is the reference category.

TABLE III. Effects on Attitudes Toward Reporting to the Police (Ordinary Least Squares)

Variable	Equation (1)			Equation (2)		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Constant	2.362*	.088		2.093*	.092	
<i>Offender/victim relationship^a</i>						
Female/female	-0.094	.127	-.031	-0.083	.123	-.027
Male/female	0.651*	.128	.254	0.457*	.126	.178
Female/male	-0.162	.137	-.060	-0.165	.133	-.061
Offender/victim married	-0.107	.151	-.040	-0.191	.147	-.071
Married \times male offender	0.398	.206	.116	0.434*	.199	.126
Seriousness	-	-	-	0.625*	.082	.258

* $P < .05$.

^aMale offender/male victim is the reference category.

We observe a similar gender pattern for reporting (Table III, Equation (1)). The results show that respondents are much more likely to favor calling the police if a man has assaulted a woman than if a man has assaulted a man. The effects for the other gender combination are small and not statistically significant. The table also displays the statistical interaction between gender of offender and marital status (Equation (2)): respondents are particularly likely to favor calling the police if a man assaults his wife. Graphs showing the raw means for the different experimental conditions are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

In Equation (2) of Table III, we introduce the moral judgment as a covariate in our prediction of reporting. The results show that the coefficient for the male/female term is reduced from .651 to .457 when the moral judgment is controlled, a decline of 30%. The decline is statistically significant, according to a Sobel Test ($z = 4.53; P < .0001$). The results suggest that one of the reasons respondents are more likely to advocate reporting an incident to the police when men assault women is that they view such an assault as particularly serious. The other coefficients in Equation (1) are similar to those we observe in Equation (2).

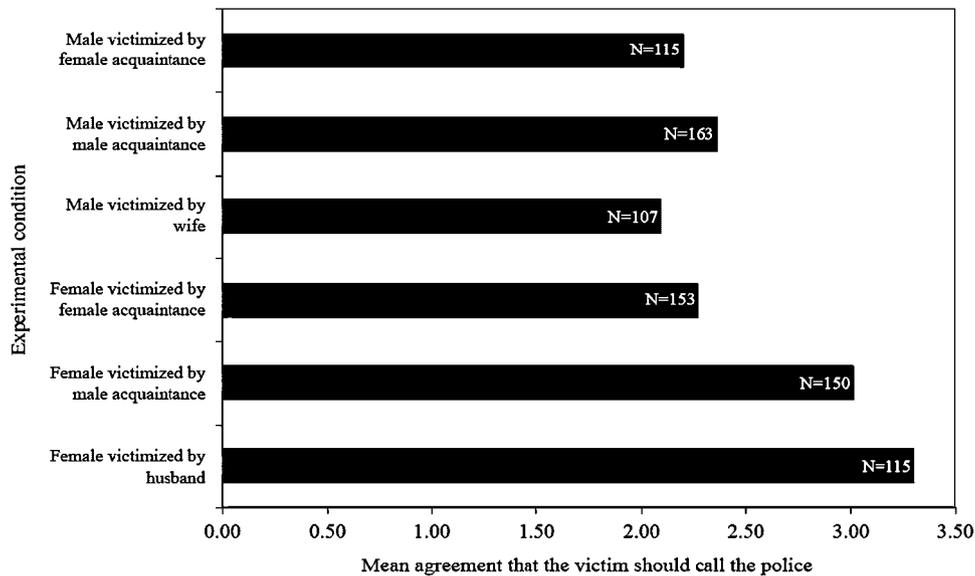


Fig. 1. Attitudes toward reporting to the police for different experimental conditions.

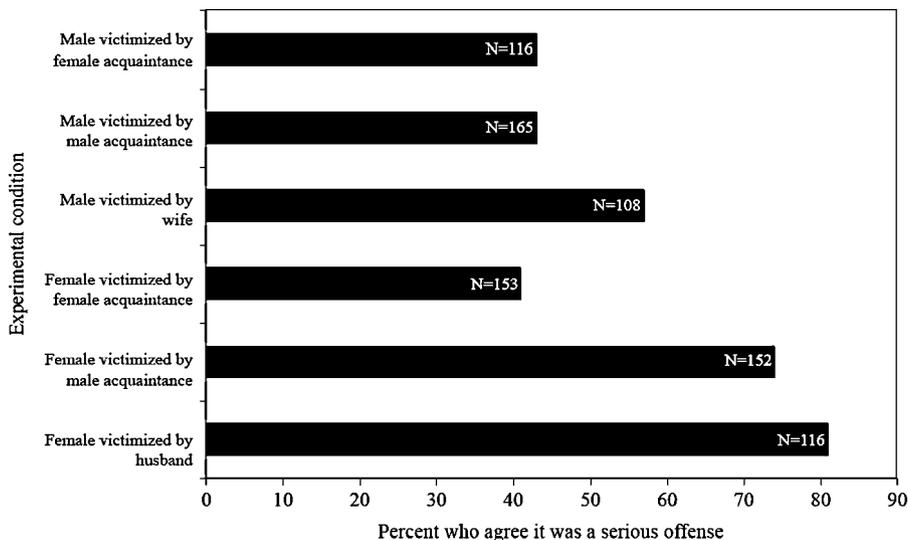


Fig. 2. Moral judgments for different experimental conditions.

TABLE IV. Effects on Likelihood Victim Would be Injured (Ordinary Least Squares)

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	β
Constant	3.012*	.071	
Offender/victim relationship ^a			
Female/female	0.039*	.103	.015
Male/female	0.806*	.102	.352
Female/male	-0.423*	.097	-.194
Offender/victim married	-0.098*	.083	-.043

* $P < .001$.^aMale offender/male victim is the reference category.

Our analysis of mediation reveals that much of the gender effects are unexplained. The remaining effect may be due to respondents' concern for deterrence and their perception of the risks of future violence and injury when men assault women. Some supporting evidence is indicated by our analyses of whether respondents thought the victim was likely to get hurt if he or she retaliated (see Table IV). This equation reveals a statistically significant interaction involving the gender of the offender and victim. The pattern of means reveals that respondents are particularly likely to think that a female victim who retaliated against a male offender would get injured.⁶ They are also particularly unlikely to think that a male victim who retaliated against a female offender would get injured. These findings are consistent with the idea that respondents view men as particularly dangerous in violent encounters with women.

Effects of Respondent's Characteristics

We next estimated the models in Tables II and III separately for men and women, conservatives and nonconservatives, respondents over vs. under age 50, and respondents who did not go to college with those that did. These analyses (not presented) revealed only slight differences across these subsamples for either moral judgments or reporting.⁷ We did observe a substantial difference between male and female respondent subsamples in the coefficient for the interaction term involving gender of offender and marital status. The effect was observed for female respondents ($B = 0.676$; $P = .012$), but not for male respondents ($B = 0.069$, n.s.). The result suggests that women but not men are particularly likely to favor reporting male violence

⁶Note that adding this measure as an independent variable to Equation (1) in Table II had almost no effect on the other coefficients.

⁷The results were the same when we examined interactions using a continuous measure of age.

against their wives. We examined the statistical significance of this three-way interaction and it was only significant if we left out the nonsignificant two-way interactions ($t = -2.022$; $P = .044$). We assume we do not have the power to detect the three-way interaction.

DISCUSSION

Our evidence suggests that the gender of offenders and victims in an assault have strong effects on the response to that violence. Our respondents were much more likely to condemn men's assaults on women than violence involving other gender combinations and to favor reporting those assaults to the police. The results support the idea that a chivalry norm affects the attitudes of Americans toward violence against women. Prior correlational research suggests that these attitudes inhibit male violence against women and encourage police and other third party intervention. Together, the research suggests that violence against women occurs, in spite of, not because of social norms. Future research will have to determine why social norms sometimes fail to deter male violence against women.

Attitudes toward seriousness and reporting are similar in all cells except the one involving a male offender and a female victim. Thus, the results do not support the idea that Americans condemn violence against women more than violence against men: they are not particularly offended or quick to report when a woman assaults a woman. This evidence is more consistent with the idea that respondents are concerned about women's physical disadvantage than their role as mothers.

Nor do we find evidence that Americans are more or less tolerant of violence committed by women, or that they take women's assaults on men less seriously. This evidence is not consistent with the argument that chivalrous treatment is only extended to women who comply with gender roles. A woman who engages in assault has violated gender roles. Yet she is not treated more harshly. This conclusion is consistent with evidence (cited earlier) that female offenders are punished less, not more, severely than male offenders by the criminal justice system.

We also examined whether gender effects on moral judgments could explain gender effects on reporting. To some extent, the tendency to condemn men's violence against women explained why respondents preferred calling the police in these cases. However, much of the effect of gender on

reporting was not mediated by moral judgments of seriousness. These results suggest that some other factor is operating as well.

We think that attitudes toward reporting also reflect concerns about risk and deterrence. Even though the scenarios were the same, the risks of *future* violence and injury are perceived as greater when a man hits a woman. The pattern is consistent with the idea that respondents are protective of women because of gender differences in strength and violent behavior.⁸ We found some evidence consistent with this argument. Respondents were particularly likely to say that a female victim who retaliated against a male offender would get injured.

Perceptions of risk and the desire to deter future violence may also explain why female respondents are particularly likely to favor calling the police when men assault their wives. They may think that a violent man is particularly dangerous to a woman if they are living together; he might do it again. Apparently, they have a special concern about protecting women victimized by their husbands, whereas male respondents do not. The gender difference in attitudes implies that women may be more likely to encourage wives to call the police than men and that women may be more critical of wives who do not call.

We do find a main effect of marital status on moral evaluations. Respondents tend to think it is worse to hit a spouse than an acquaintance. These results are consistent with prior research based on correlational data [Felson and Cares, 2005; Rossi et al., 1974]. They directly contradict the idea that violence is more normative in marriage. However, it should be noted that the scenario involved a fairly serious assault—the victim was injured and most respondents rated the incident as serious. The results might have been different if the violence involved a slap or some other minor act of violence.

Our results suggest that the effects of the gender of adversaries on moral judgments and reporting do not depend on the gender, the age, level of education, or political ideology of the respondent. These results are consistent with the idea that attitudes toward violence against women reflect practical concerns for deterrence rather than ideology. Liberals and conservatives, and men and women, have a similar response. It is also possible that both traditionalism and feminism produce strong condemnation of violence against woman and so we observe no group differences.

⁸We still think that it is useful to attribute the response to a social norm because the response is widely held and because someone who behaved differently would elicit criticism from others.

Our evidence is not consistent with Black's [1976] argument that the legal system is more likely to be involved in crime when the relational distance between adversaries is low. Respondents were not more likely to favor reporting violence involving acquaintances than violence involving spouses. If we assume that women have lower status than men, our evidence is not consistent with Black's argument that offenders can avoid legal intervention if their status is lower than the victims. We observe the opposite pattern: respondents are more likely to favor reporting when men assault women.

There are several limitations to our study. The main limitation is that it is based on responses to a scenario rather than a real life situation. We have sacrificed some external validity to gain the internal validity associated with an experimental design. In addition, we used a single, brief scenario. Perhaps the genders of offender and victim interact with some aspects of the particular scenario we used. It is possible that the gender interaction we observed would be stronger or weaker if we presented a more or less serious offense, a more justified attack by the offender, or more contextual information. For example, if the offender killed or seriously injured the victim, we would expect observers to favor calling the police regardless of gender. Perhaps, respondents were more likely to report male violence against women because they assumed that the bruises were more serious. The fact that effects on reporting remained when we controlled for perceived seriousness argues against this possibility. Future research, however, will have to determine how characteristics of the offense might affect social reactions.

Despite the inevitable limitations of a single study, we are encouraged by the fact that the statistical interactions we observe are so strong and that they are consistent for different outcomes and different subsamples. In addition, our results are generally consistent with studies on actual reporting based on victimization surveys. That research shows that third parties are particularly likely to notify the police when a man attacks a woman [Felson et al., 1999]. Recall, however, that Felson and Paré [2005] found that third parties are more likely to report violence against women, regardless of the gender of the offender.

Another limitation is that we had only indirect measures of traditional attitudes toward gender roles. Respondents who indicated they were conservatives may have been conservative on economic issues but not social issues.

Like any attitude, attitudes toward the protection of women are likely to vary across individuals and across cultures [see Archer, 2006]. The degree to which individuals believe in the norm may depend on

their observational learning histories [Huesmann and Guerra, 1997; Prinz, 2005]. For example, children may not learn the norm if they observe their fathers hitting their mothers. It is also possible that there are subcultures within the United States where the chivalry norm does not operate or where other factors over-ride its effect. For example, Miller and White [2003] did a qualitative study of dating violence among African-American youth in distressed neighborhoods [see also, Mullins et al., 2004]. They argued that, despite a taboo against boys hitting girls, girls sometimes get hit, and then blamed for the event. It is not clear from the study, however, whether male victims are assigned less blame than female victims. At any rate, we cannot examine the attitudes of African-American youth with our data. Analyses not presented, however, indicate that our results were not affected by the race of the respondent.

Our results are most relevant to survey research on third party effects, since our respondents are not involved in the incident themselves. However, it should be noted that our reporting variable is based on a question in which respondents are asked what they think the victim should do. We believe the item measures whether respondents think the incident should be reported and that they are not thinking about who does the reporting. It is possible, however, that respondents have different attitudes toward what victims should do and what third parties should do. Perhaps they are inhibited about recommending that women report male offenders because they fear the offender will retaliate if the victim reports. Following this line of reasoning, the strong pattern we observe would be even stronger if we had it measured attitudes toward third party reporting. Note, however, that Sorenson and Taylor [2005] found that respondents were more likely to think the "police should be called" for intimate partner violence if the assailant was a man vs. a woman. When we compare their results to ours for the cells involving marital partners, we find that the gender difference we observe is slightly greater: We found that 74.8% of respondents agreed that a woman should call the police on her husband, while 36.4% agreed that a man should call the police on his wife. Sorenson and Taylor report corresponding figures of 58.9% and 39.9%.

Finally, one might argue that the word "chivalry" does not fully describe the responses to these scenarios. Chivalry usually refers to role behavior prescribed for a man and we asked respondents what the female victim should do when she is assaulted by a man. The evidence suggests that *people* should protect women: the rule is not just a gender role expectation for men. On the other hand, chivalry

does seem to accurately describe the moral condemnation of men's violence against women. In other words, violence against women is proscribed role behavior for men, but assisting female victims is prescribed behavior for both men and women.

In summary, our evidence suggests that Americans are particularly likely to condemn violence and favor calling the police when a man assaults a woman. These attitudes reflect a consensus between groups rather than the traditional attitudes of some groups. The desire to call the police reflects to some extent stronger condemnation of men who assault women, but there is also evidence to suggest that it reflects concerns about physical disadvantage and future risk. The protection of women from men apparently reflects both moral concerns and concerns about deterrence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge the assistance of TESS, Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (NSF Grant 0094964, Diana Mutz and Arthur Lupia, Principal Investigators) for collecting the data for this project. We also appreciate the assistance of Kelsea Jo Lane.

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