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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: PERCEIVED LIKELIHOOD OF VIOLENCE AS
A FUNCTION OF SITUATION AND SEX OF AGGRESSOR

A Thesis

by

ADRIAN C. SHERMAN

Submitted to the Graduate School

Appalachian State University

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Adrian C. Sherman

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APPROVED BY:

Joan W. Walls
Chairperson, Thesis Committee

Susan D. Moss
Member, Thesis Committee

Nancy K. Neale
Member, Thesis Committee

Frank R. Terrant Jr
Member, Thesis Committee

Joyce G. Crouch
Chairperson, Department of

Psychology

Joyce V. Lawrence
Dean of the Graduate School

ABSTRACT

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: PERCEIVED LIKELIHOOD OF VIOLENCE AS A
FUNCTION OF SITUATION AND SEX OF AGGRESSOR. (May 1982)

Adrian C. Sherman, B. A., California State University

M. A., Appalachian State University

Thesis Chairperson: Joan W. Walls

This research was intended to investigate the perceived probability of violence as a function of specific situations and the sex of the aggressor. In particular, the research was designed to explore perceptions of domestic violence in an experimental, non-clinical population.

Based on a pilot study, vignettes were written for five issues ranked as most likely to produce domestic violence: (1) alcohol, (2) past experience with violence, (3) jealousy, (4) personality conflict, and (5) finances. For each vignette one issue was the theme of an argument between a male and a female stated as having engaged in domestic violence. The five vignettes were presented to 344 introductory psychology students in a randomized order, with half receiving arguments with the male as aggressor and half reversed with the female as aggressor. A 2 x 2 x 5 factorial design was employed (sex of subject, sex of aggressor and the five vignettes). The dependent measure was the subjects' rating of the

likelihood that each argument would result in physical violence (0% to 100% in increments of 10%).

For three of the five situations described in the vignettes, subjects rated the likelihood of violence significantly different for a male and female aggressor. Non-parametric analyses utilizing a Kruskal-Wallis One-way ANOVA yielded the following: jealousy, $\chi^2 = 30.03$, $p < .001$; alcohol, $\chi^2 = 30.90$, $p < .001$; past experience with violence, $\chi^2 = 7.84$, $p < .005$. Personality conflict and finances showed no significant differences as a function of sex of aggressor. Also, there was no significant sex difference across subjects in their perception of the likelihood of violence for male or female aggressors. Thus, for both male and female subjects, violence is significantly more likely to be perceived as occurring with a male aggressor when jealousy, alcohol, or past experience with violence are involved. When personality conflict or finances are involved, however, violence is perceived as equally likely with a female or male as aggressor. Events leading to domestic violence may depend less upon male dominance than upon male dominated issues or situations in which both sexes accept the social expectation that males will be violent. Females, no less than males, can be expected to be violent in other situations deemed more appropriate for them. Additionally, subjects with a history of exposure to, or participation in domestic violence tended to view the probability of violence differently from subjects with no such history in at least one specific situation. Clearly, situational factors and role expectations deserve further investigation as contributors to domestic violence.

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My sincere best wishes and prayers for the future go to a woman named Dolly whose plight as a victim of domestic violence first prompted me to undertake this study.

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INTRODUCTION

Just under a century ago, the existence of domestic violence in this country was recognized as a serious problem which might require government intervention (Martin, 1979). The recognition of the problem, however, was only the beginning of efforts to understand and prevent a complex social issue such as domestic violence. In general, violence within the family has been a difficult issue to address since intrusion into the family relationship conflicts with the social norms concerning the sanctity of that relationship. In particular, violence between husband and wife or conjugal partners has been a persistent social problem, yet, it is only within the last decade that social scientists have seriously begun to address the issue and investigate its causes (Steinmetz, 1978). In fact, many researchers feel that the recent interest in violence between partners is a direct result of the feminist movement (Unger, 1979).

The recognition of the problem of domestic violence has occurred within the context of a broad, underlying theme of violence in our culture to which both sexes are exposed (Gibbons, 1971). Violence is deemed acceptable and even praiseworthy in many areas of our society including sports, television, the military and other areas. In short, violence is strongly engrained in our culture and all of us are continuously exposed to it (Straus & Hotaling, 1980).

Along with the underlying theme of violence in our culture, there are differences in how males and females are socialized to respond to violence and violent acts between the sexes (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961; Frodi, Macaulay & Thome, 1977). It is thus of further value to investigate the ways in which domestic violence differs depending upon the sexes of the individuals involved, either as aggressor or victim. The history of violence in domestic situations clearly reveals that there are significant differences in social role expectations for males and females.

Social and Legal History

The roots of domestic violence with a male aggressor and a female victim date back to the beginnings of human civilization and to the basic social structure of the family. Physically stronger males dominated females with violence as a common method of insuring domestic tranquility. Women without a mate to protect them were helpless against other males who might beat them or rape them at will (Brownmiller, 1975).

Further, Langley and Levy (1977) suggest that strength was not the only important physical difference, pregnancy and menstruation limited females in their ability as hunters, thus increasing their dependence on males for protection and food supply. The females' lack of mobility at these times gradually evolved into a social pattern where the women tended the hearth and raised children while the men became the providers for themselves and their families. Steinmann and Fox (1974) comment: "Role differences developed between the sexes which originally stemmed from physiological

differences relating to strength, menstruation and pregnancy. Then as social systems developed, the physiological differences and the functional role that proceeded from them, combined with the actual postures of the two sexes during intercourse, led to value judgements concerning the dissimilarity of the two sexes, with man seen as superior and woman inferior" (p. 105).

These value judgements became part of the structural backbone of religions, customs and laws. For example, several of the great religious documents, the Old and New Testaments, the Talmud, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon, generally reinforce the notion of male superiority and female submission to authority. Additionally, women have been consistently limited by men in their religious involvement and ability to hold secular office (Langley & Levy, 1977).

The notion of male superiority and female inferiority has been incorporated into the laws of nearly every civilization in recorded history. Women have been considered property, without rights to hold land, to vote, divorce, hold titles, or inherit wealth (Langley & Levy, 1977). As religious and civil laws established the rights of males to dominate females, it was implicitly understood that these rights included the right of a man to beat his wife (Langley & Levy, 1977).

While most societies have moved away from the view of women as property and men as their legal controllers, these changes were slow in coming. Throughout the middle ages wife beating was common practice in western Europe although laws were enacted to limit the severity of the beatings. In Wales, for example, the common law

held that "a husband could beat a disrespectful wife a maximum of three strokes with a rod the length of his forearm and thickness of his middle finger" (Langley & Levy, 1977). Blackstone later recorded the English "Rule of Thumb" which referred to a husband's right to "chastise his wife with a whip or rattan no bigger than his thumb, in order to enforce the salutary restraints of domestic discipline" (Langley & Levy, 1977). Further, in England, if a woman was injured by anyone other than her husband, then her husband was allowed to sue for damages in a manner similar to that of livestock. Additionally, in the eyes of English law, when two people were married they became one, which prevented a wife from suing her husband because one cannot sue oneself. An extension of this concept protected men from prosecution for wife beating: if a man and wife are one, how could someone be arrested for beating oneself? Although life was difficult for women in western countries at this time, it was far better than the lives of women in the Orient at the same time. Women in the Far East had no rights at all and female infants were routinely killed for both economic and social reasons, indicating that females were generally considered to be of little value.

Conditions for women in America were similar to those in England, since our legal system evolved from the English system. For instance, in 1824 the Mississippi State Supreme Court ruled that a husband could "moderately chastise his wife without subjecting himself to vexatious prosecutions" (Langley & Levy, 1977). Laws were similar in other states even through the Civil War.

Shortly after the war, however, the Married Women's Act was passed by a number of state legislatures. The passage of these acts was due to a number of factors including the women's suffrage movement and westward expansionism, since the western territories were interested in attracting more women and these acts were part of that campaign (Stanton, Anthony & Gage, 1969; Flexner, 1959). These acts provided for property ownership by women, the right to enter contracts and establish her own residence, and granted other legal freedoms. The new laws began to erode the absolute dominance that men had heretofore exerted over women. In fact, court decisions followed which limited a husband's right to violence. For example, in 1882, Maryland passed a law that actually punished wife beaters with forty lashes from a whip or a year in jail (Langley & Levy, 1977). Although some laws began to change, a woman still could not bring suit against her husband for a beating, a notion that was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1910 (Langley & Levy, 1977). It was not until much later, in 1962, that this inconsistency in the law began to change. California became the first state to abolish immunity from prosecution by wives for husbands who were beating them. In the U.S. there are no longer legal sanctions maintaining husbands' absolute control over their wives. In fact, in three states it is a felony for a man to beat his wife. Although laws now protect women from abuse, the application of the laws is inconsistent and in fact many men still abuse their wives and feel justified in doing so.

While violence with a male aggressor and female victim has a long history upheld by law, religion and culture, violence with a female aggressor and a male victim is an entirely different issue with no such historical perspective. Husband battering has little legal, religious or cultural precedent and, in fact, contradicts the notion of male superiority.

It is only in the last decade that husband battering has come to public attention and has become a topic of psychological and sociological investigation. In a study of domestic violence, Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (1980) found that women had committed acts of violence against their spouses almost as frequently as men, although women typically do not do as much physical damage. Further, wives who were violent tended to commit violent acts more frequently than violent husbands. It must be noted, however, that in many cases husband battering appears to be a response to previous acts of wife beating. The latest research has led one author to assert that husband battering may be the most hidden crime (Freeman, 1979).

There are several very obvious reasons why husband battering may be such an underreported crime. First, as previously mentioned, husband battering directly challenges the notion of male superiority. Second, battered husbands are often the subject of ridicule by their peers and society in general. Finally, men who allege violence by their mates are not as likely to be believed as are women (Freeman, 1979). Husband battering appears to have a different set of sociological roots and calls for a reevaluation of

the differences, (if indeed there are any), in male and female patterns of aggression.

Aggression and Violence

Psychological and sociological research beginning in the 1930's and carried on through the seventies, has consistently supported the idea that males, in nearly every instance, appear to be more aggressive than females (Terman & Tyler, 1954; Maccoby, 1966; Omark, Omark & Edelman, 1973). This phenomenon seems to exist across many cultures (Omark et al., 1973). However, it has been suggested by several researchers, that the sexes may be equally aggressive but characteristically differ in the ways in which they exhibit their aggression. There are two general hypotheses advanced to account for this idea: (1) the two sexes are reinforced for different types of aggression (Bandura, 1961); and (2) aggression, in general, is less acceptable for females (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). For example, several studies have indicated that males tend to be more physically aggressive but not necessarily more verbally aggressive (Bandura et al., 1961; Taylor & Smith, 1974). In terms of socialization of the sexes, Bandura (1962) has hypothesized that aggression is generally labeled "female-inappropriate" behavior. As an extension of this theme it has been hypothesized that male/female differences in aggression may be shaped more by social and situational determinants than by biological factors (Frodi et al., 1977). These same authors cite a lack of research on social and situational factors as they relate to aggression between the sexes. The present investigation will attempt to focus on domestic violence as a function of specific situational factors in the context of current social values.

Social Factors

Social factors refer to broad cultural norms and values which operate in any given society. First, there is the underlying current of violence in our culture which has been incorporated into the very structure of the family. Second, there is the sexist organization of the family and society in general, which has received a great deal of attention as one major cause of domestic violence (Straus & Hotaling, 1980). Understanding this sexist organization is particularly useful in describing husband to wife violence since it reflects the hierarchical and male dominant society typical of both western and eastern cultures. The right to use force exists to provide ultimate support for maintaining the power structure and dealing with individuals lower in the hierarchy who have difficulty accepting their status and their roles (Goode, 1971). Straus and Hotaling (1980) argue that sexism produces violence because men use violence to maintain their positions as "head of household." They list nine specific ways in which the male dominant structure of society and the family create and maintain a high level of domestic violence. They are: defense of male authority, compulsive masculinity, economic constraints and discriminations, burdens (for women) of child care, the myth that women cannot maintain single parent households, preeminence of the wife role for women, development of negative self image for women, myth of women as "childlike" and finally, the male orientation of the criminal justice system.

Gelles (in Martin, 1979, Chap. 6) maintains that there are two social-psychological forces associated with domestic violence. The first is that the family unit is a breeding ground for violence.

Research on murderers, child abusers, and wife batterers supports the hypothesis that the more violence an individual experiences as a child growing up, the more likely he is to use violence as an adult (Palmer, 1972; Guttmacher, 1960; Gelles, 1976). Further, for women, the more violence experienced as a child, the more likely she is to be a victim of violence in her own conjugal unit (Gelles, 1976). Gelles proposes two possible explanations: one, a genetic predisposition to be aggressive or passive; and two, a learned response to the psychological trauma of being victimized. He asserts, however, that it is the social psychological factor of experiencing "role models" for violence in the family which is the most viable explanation. Children who see or experience violence within the family while they are growing up tend to incorporate violent problem solving strategies into their adult family lives. This is referred to as the cycle of violence (Gelles, 1980).

The second factor Gelles recognizes is privacy. Small family units and fewer relatives living within the family unit reduce the chances that someone may be able to avert violence by intervening or acting as a referee. He maintains that this lack of someone to intervene may actually accelerate conflict in a violent episode.

The previous discussion focused on social and social-psychological factors which are useful primarily in investigating violence with a male aggressor. It appears, however, that a different social factor may be emerging which facilitates violence with a female aggressor. Female to male aggression may not be a new phenomenon but it has only received serious attention in the last decade and there is every indication that it is surprisingly common

and increasing even though women still tend to be the losers in male/female violence (Steinmetz & Straus, 1974; Gelles, 1976). There are two possible explanations for this, both of which are linked to the shift toward an equalitarian society and the feminist movement. The first theory is that female aggression may be a reaction to male repression similar to a slave rebellion (Freeman, 1979). The second theory is that largely because of the feminist movement of the 20th century, female aggressiveness is becoming more socially acceptable. This latter theory and the general shift toward an equalitarian society both predict a short-term increase in domestic violence. Not only will women become more aggressive, but some men may actively resist giving up their dominant position (Kolb & Straus, 1974; Whitehurst, 1974). Some researchers, however, predict that the long term effect will be a decrease in domestic violence (Straus & Hotaling, 1980).

It appears then, that very broad and general social norms in our culture allow and perhaps encourage interpersonal violence. Additionally, it is well recognized that these norms are passed from generation to generation with remarkable efficiency. The present study, however, will not focus on specific social or social-psychological factors but rather will assume that these factors will have already had a significant impact on the subjects in the survey.

Situational Determinants

In addition to social factors, there are specific situational factors which are unique to the violent episode. Included in this area are such things as jealousy, use of alcohol, economic stress and other frustrators (Steinmetz, 1978). Gibbons (1971) asserts

that instances of aggression and violence usually do not occur unless other events transpire such as a marital dispute while drinking. It is important to be aware of specific situational determinants in violent episodes because they often indicate the types of behavior the participants have been socialized to exhibit. For example, violence which is caused by jealousy is socially acceptable for males because they are righteously defending their territory and property (Martin, 1976). As previously stated, regardless of any biological differences, instances of male and female aggression differ significantly because males and females are taught to respond differently in specific situations.

Situational determinants of violence have received a great deal of attention from researchers, particularly as they relate to clinical populations with a history of violence (Gibbons, 1971; Gelles, 1976). While many different situational factors have been isolated, few are clearly understood for the role they play in the violence paradigm. Perhaps the most generally accepted situational factor in domestic violence is past experience with violence. In a survey of 150 cases of wife abuse, Maria Roy (1977) found that 33.3% of the women had experienced violence in their childhood, but an overwhelming 81.1% of the men who beat their wives had experienced violence in their childhood. It is important to note that past experience with violence can act as both a social and situational factor and it is difficult to determine in which manner it operates in any given situation.

Another factor which has received a great deal of attention is alcohol (Bard & Zacker, 1974). Estimates of the involvement of

alcohol in domestic violence range from 40% to 95% of the spouse abuse cases (Langley & Levy, 1977). Gelles reported that drinking played some part in 47% of spouse abuse cases he studied but he is unclear as to whether alcohol directly caused violence or was merely the excuse used after a violent episode (Gelles, 1974). Roy (1977) contends that alcohol merely acts as a catalyst for violence when other situational factors such as money problems are present.

Other situational factors which have been implicated as causes of domestic violence are: finances (Prescott & Letko, 1977), conflicts over children (Gelles, 1974; Gil, 1970), jealousy (Langley & Levy, 1977), sexual incompatibility (O'Brien, 1971), social isolation (Gil, 1970), and psychological disorders (Elmer, 1971). These situational factors are difficult to investigate as one or more factors may be involved in any given violent episode. Further, these factors are examined primarily with clinical populations where a history of domestic violence has been reported, making generalizations to the population at large questionable.

The present research is designed to evaluate the influences of specific situational factors as they relate to non-clinical populations responding to domestic violence in a hypothetical situation. Additionally these factors will be investigated as they relate to the sex of the aggressor. In order to determine the situational factors a normal population perceives as precipitating violence, a pilot study was conducted in which 241 introductory psychology students at Appalachian State University were asked to rank ten situational factors in domestic violence. The factors chosen, in descending order of importance, were: alcohol, past experience with

violence, jealousy, finances, and personality conflict. There were no sex differences in the ranking of the five items. Interestingly, the subjects' choice of alcohol and past experience with violence as numbers 1 and 2, respectively, is remarkably consistent with the literature on clinical populations.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As previously mentioned, most research on domestic violence has been done with clinical populations and very few experimental studies have been undertaken. In their review of the literature, Frodi et al. (1978) cite that only 24% of experimental studies on aggression were done using both sexes, and that more comparative studies are clearly needed. While a number of studies have been done manipulating the sex of aggressor (Taylor & Smith, 1974; Bandura et al., 1961) and others have explored situational components of violence (Gelles, 1974; Gibbons, 1971), there does not appear to be any research in which the situational determinants of violence have been studied as a function of the sex of the aggressor. Additionally, there seems to be little information on whether both sexes perceive situational determinants similarly as potential causes of domestic violence.

The questions, then, that this research investigated were twofold. First, are there differences in how males and females view situational determinants as potential provokers of domestic violence; and second, does the situational determinant vary in strength as a potential cause for violence if the sex of the aggressor is changed?

There are four general hypotheses to be tested:

1. Some situational determinants will be perceived as more likely to produce domestic violence than others, regardless of sex of subject.
2. Violence will be perceived as more likely with a male aggressor than with a female aggressor regardless of sex of subject or specific situation.
3. Male and female subjects will perceive the probability of violence to be the same regardless of the situation.
4. Subjects with a history of exposure to violence will rate the probability of violence differently from subjects without such a history.

METHOD

Subjects

Three hundred and forty-four introductory psychology students from Appalachian State University were subjects in the main research survey. There were 116 males and 228 females ranging in age from 18 to 24 years.

Apparatus

The primary instrument (presented in Appendix A) consisted of five vignettes, or stories, in which a male (John) and a female (Mary) argue about a specific situational factor related to domestic violence. Each vignette, written by the researcher, was based on one of the factors chosen from the results of the pilot study as being a likely cause of domestic violence. The situational factors used were: alcohol, past experience with violence, jealousy, finances, and personality conflict. The five vignettes were written so that either John or Mary appears as the aggressor in the argument, which, in each case, stops just short of physical violence. Additionally, the dialogue was written in sex-neutral language so that the sex of the aggressor could be reversed while keeping the argument realistic.

A brief history of the couple preceded the vignettes stating that John and Mary had previously engaged in verbal arguments, some of which resulted in physical violence, although no one had ever

been seriously hurt. Physical violence was defined as slapping or hitting someone intentionally.

At the end of each vignette was a question asking subjects to rate the probability that the argument would end in physical violence. The probability of violence was rated on a scale ranging from 0% to 100% in 10% increments. A second question asked subjects to choose who was most responsible for the violence; John, Mary, or both. The instrument also included a series of demographic questions designed to determine any past experience with violence and to establish characteristics of the subjects' background.

Procedure

Subjects were asked to volunteer to complete a survey on domestic violence. The paragraph describing the history of the couple was read by the researcher while subjects followed on their copies. Subjects were then given instructions on how to record their answers and requested to answer all demographic questions.

Design

A 2 x 2 x 5 factorial design was employed, crossing sex of subjects and sex of aggressor with the five vignettes. Half the subjects received vignettes with a male aggressor and half received vignettes with a female aggressor. The order of the vignettes was randomized utilizing a modified Latin square design to eliminate order effects. The dependent measures were the subjects' ratings of the likelihood that each argument would result in physical violence. There were eleven possible response categories ranging from 0% to 100% in increments of ten.

RESULTS

The data were analyzed with non-parametric statistics because response categories were discrete intervals and normality was not assumed. The mean ratings for probability of violence for the five vignettes are given in Table 1. The mean ratings range from 69.41 for past experience with violence to 44.70 for finances. A Friedman Two-way ANOVA for the five vignettes was significant ($\chi^2 = 215.167$, $p < .001$). Thus the situational factors were not perceived as identical in ability to provoke violence. Past experience with violence was rated the most likely provoker, and finances rated as the least likely.

For two of the five vignettes, subjects rated the likelihood of violence higher with a male aggressor than with a female aggressor. In the jealousy vignette it appears that female aggressor was rated higher than the male, but actually this represents a flaw in the vignette itself (See Table 1). A Kruskal-Wallis One-way ANOVA showed sex of aggressor differences to be significant as follows: jealousy ($\chi^2 = 30.03$, $p < .001$); past experience with violence ($\chi^2 = 7.84$, $p < .005$); alcohol ($\chi^2 = 30.90$, $p < .001$). Personality conflict and finances showed no significant differences. Thus, significant sex of aggressor differences appear in three of the five vignettes.

TABLE I
EFFECTS OF SEX OF AGGRESSOR AND SITUATIONAL FACTORS
ON RATED PROBABILITY OF VIOLENCE

Situational Factor	Mean Rating (For Aggressor)		Kruskal-Wallis χ^2	Freidman Two-way ANOVA
	Male	Female		
Past Experience With Violence	73.04	65.70	7.84*	3.66
Alcohol	71.66	54.29	30.90**	3.24
Personality Conflict	63.10	62.76	.017	3.15
Jealousy	50.11	67.23	30.03**	2.97
Finances	47.01	42.35	2.54	1.98

*p < .005

**p < .001

Male and female subjects did not differ significantly in their perception of the likelihood of violence, although females consistently rated the probability of violence higher than males (see Table 2). A Mann-Whitney analysis yielded no significant differences here.

Finally, there were two situations in which subjects with some past history of violence perceived the probability of violence differently from other subjects. The mean ranks for subjects who had experienced violence as a child were lower than the other subjects when the argument was about finances (see Table 3). A Mann-Whitney analysis showed this difference to be significant ($p < .05$). Additionally, there was a trend for subjects who had abused an animal to view personality conflict as provoking more violence than other subjects. Subjects who rated themselves as highly religious perceived jealousy as more likely to provoke violence than less religious subjects, with the Mann-Whitney approaching significance (see Table 3).

TABLE II
 THE PROBABILITY OF VIOLENCE FOR MALE AND FEMALE
 SUBJECTS ANALYZED WITH A MANN-WHITNEY TEST

Situational Factor	U Score		Probability
	Males	Females	
Past Experience With Violence	163.87	176.10	.276
Alcohol	170.57	172.72	.848
Personality Conflict	163.70	176.19	.267
Jealousy	164.75	175.66	.333
Finances	162.59	176.75	.208

TABLE III
 SELECTED COMPARISONS OF SUBJECTS' HISTORICAL DATA AND SPECIFIC
 SITUATIONAL FACTORS ANALYZED WITH A MANN-WHITNEY TEST

Situational Factor	Selected Comparisons		Probability
	U Score		
Jealousy	Highly Religious 178.46	Less Religious 155.39	.0517
Finances	Violence As A Child 154.97	No Violence 178.62	.0458*
Personality Conflict	Abused An Animal 201.10	No Abuse 168.02	.0557

*p < .05

DISCUSSION

The experiment supported the hypothesis that subjects would not view all five situational determinants as equally likely to produce violence. It is interesting to note that two of the three factors chosen as most likely to produce violence, past experience with violence and alcohol, have received a great deal of attention as significant factors in recent and current studies of domestic violence. Further, research with clinical populations commonly expose these factors as precipitants of violence. It would appear from this study that ideas of which situational events precipitate violence are shared by most of the subjects and not just by those who participate in, or have a history of violence. Past experience with violence was viewed as most likely to precipitate violence, which may have to do with the fact that it is a social factor as well as a situational factor and thus, perhaps more potent. Also this factor has received a great deal of attention and some media coverage which may make it more familiar to the subjects.

The hypothesis that violence would be perceived as more likely with a male aggressor was supported in two of the five vignettes. Further, these two vignettes were based on situations chosen as most likely to precipitate violence, past experience with violence and alcohol. A third situation, jealousy, showed a significant difference between male and female aggressors but in the opposite direction.

This appears, however, to be a flaw in the writing of the vignette. In this vignette the aggressor was not the person who became jealous and verbally aggressive. The subjects overwhelmingly blamed the jealous person for causing the violence just as they blamed the aggressor in the other vignettes. It must be noted that while blame for the violence was not analyzed in this research, in the other four vignettes the aggressor was always blamed for the violence.

The subjects viewed violence with a male aggressor and female aggressor almost equally likely in the arguments over personality conflict and finances. In no case, however, was violence viewed more likely with a female aggressor. This may indicate two situations in which aggression by a female is more socially acceptable or situations in which males are less "invested" and therefore less likely to be violent. Personality conflict was rated third as a probable cause of violence in general, yet, the probability of violence was seen as nearly equal with a male and female aggressor. Personality conflict has not received any attention in the literature and the results suggest that it should be investigated further. It is also possible, however, that the vignette may have been measuring something else such as poor communication. As previously mentioned, two vignettes showed no difference with sex of aggressor and in no case was the probability of violence viewed as more likely with a female aggressor. This may indicate that although aggression may be permissible for females in certain situations, it is not perceived as likely that females will be more aggressive than males. Also, in general, the more likely a situational factor is perceived

as precipitating violence, the more likely a male will be the aggressor.

The third hypothesis, that male and female subjects would not differ in their overall perception of the likelihood of violence, was also supported. Of interest, however, is the fact that in every situation females perceived violence more likely than males, though the difference was not significant. This may indicate that females are more sensitive to violence, perhaps because they are more vulnerable in violent situations. Conversely, males may be more accustomed to violence and therefore not as likely to perceive situations as potentially violent. Additionally, it appears that perceptions of males as aggressors and females as non-aggressors are mutually held. This may explain why husband battering is such a hidden crime: the myth that females are non-aggressive is popular with both sexes.

The fourth and final hypothesis (that subjects with some past experience with violence would view violence differently than other subjects) was supported in one instance. Although many demographic features were analyzed, only three proved to be of interest. Subjects who reported that they had been the victims of violence as children did not appear to feel that arguments over finances were as likely to lead to violence as the other subjects. This may indicate that finances alone are not likely to precipitate violence unless other factors are involved. Two demographic analyses approached significance and may therefore merit further investigation. Subjects describing themselves as highly religious tended to feel that

an argument with jealousy involved had a greater probability of violence than less religious subjects, and subjects who had abused animals found personality conflict a greater probable cause of violence than their peers. The relationship between these variables is unclear although suggestive that, in general, past exposure to different kinds of violence may affect perceptions of violence in later life.

In conclusion, it appears that there is indeed a perceived relationship between situational factors in domestic violence and the sex of the aggressor. It may be as Bandura et al. (1961) and Frodi et al. (1978) claim: aggression by females is deemed in most situations as less appropriate and therefore less likely than male aggression. The fact that female aggression is perceived to be more likely when personality conflict and finances are involved brings up an interesting question. As we move toward a more equalitarian society, will there be an increasing number of areas in which female aggression is permissible? If this occurs, we surely can expect the short term rise in domestic violence that some authors predict.

One of the most promising aspects of this research, beyond any particular significant result, is the method itself. The method demonstrates an experimental technique which can be used to study the violence paradigm with non-clinical as well as clinical populations. In fact, a next logical step would be to compare results from a variety of clinical and non-clinical groups using the same instrument. The similarity between data found in this study and the information received from clinical populations indicates that this instrument may, indeed, measure what it was intended to

measure: how people perceive the relationship of situational factors and sex of the aggressor affecting the probability of violence. The instrument might be used to compare different age groups, married and unmarried groups, language factors, and socioeconomic factors. In essence the instrument functions as a verbal projective test, allowing a subject's individual attitudes and perceptions to be measured without sacrificing the ability to group subjects along different dimensions. If this is the case, then, with further development, this type of research may allow for effective experimental isolation of the components of violence in our society. As a society, we will have a difficult time reducing violence if we do not clearly understand what perpetuates it.

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APPENDIX A

Primary Instrument

PRIMARY INSTRUMENT

John and Mary have been living together for several years. Both have held good jobs although one of them is unemployed at the present time. Occasionally this couple has heated verbal arguments which, on more than one instance, have led to physical violence.

On the following pages you will read about five different arguments Mary and John had. After reading about each argument you will be asked to assess the percentage chance that this argument led to physical violence (for example, 10%, 20%, 30%, etc.). You will also be asked who you believe is most responsible for the argument occurring.

After reading and answering questions about all of the arguments, please answer the questions on the last page about yourself and your life experience. These surveys are anonymous so DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ANYWHERE ON THE SURVEY. Thank you for your participation.

Mary is seated in the living room watching TV. John comes out of the bedroom putting on a coat.

John: I'm going out for a while. I'll be back later.

Mary: Are you headed down to the coffee house again?

John: Yah, anything wrong with that? I thought I'd get a beer.

Mary: There's nothing wrong with that, if that was the only reason you're going. But I'm not so sure it is.

John: What in hell are you talking about?

Mary: I'm talking about that new waitress down there. You sure gave her a lot of looks the last time we were in there, and from what I hear you two are real chummy.

John: You mean Sue? Sure, she's nice, but we're just friends. She's had a lot of problems and just wanted someone to talk to.

Mary: And you just had to volunteer, right? Such a nice person you are! Is that why Denise saw you two sitting on a blanket in the park?

John: I just happened to run into her and she invited me to sit down.

Mary: Since when do you take walks in the park? I don't believe a word of it. You're just whoring around.

John: I don't have to take this bullshit! Get out of my way, I'm getting the hell out of here!

Mary: You're not going anywhere!

Column 1. What is the percentage chance that this argument resulted in physical violence?

0=0% 1=10% 2=20% 3=30% 4=40% 5=50% 6=60%

7=70% 8=80% 9=90% BLANK=100%

Column 2. Who do you believe is most responsible for this argument?

0=John 1=Mary 2=Both

Mary is seated at the dining room table going through a stack of bills and writing checks. John comes in the front door.

John: Well, is there anything left in the checking account?

Mary: We'll be \$200.00 overdrawn if I pay all the bills.

John: How in the hell can that be? I just made a deposit Friday! You must have made a mistake.

Mary: No, there's no mistake. Two checks were written last month and never recorded in the ledger. Plus, you took part of that deposit in cash.

John: Shit! How many times have I told you to write the damn checks down! How much was it!

Mary: It was \$87.00, but I only wrote one of them for \$16.00. You forgot to write down the \$71.00 insurance payment.

John: That's crap! It's in there somewhere.

Mary: Find it, smart ass. By the way, how much cash do you have left? We need groceries.

John: I've only got about five bucks now.

Mary: Five bucks? What in hell did you do with the rest? The rest was for entertainment, right? Or did you buy some more clothes?

John: Shut up! I'll do whatever I want with the money. So keep your mouth shut or I'll shut it for you!

Mary: You don't scare me.

Column 3. What is the percentage chance that this argument resulted in physical violence?

0=0% 1=10% 2=20% 3=30% 4=40% 5=50% 6=60%

7=70% 8=80% 9=90% BLANK=100%

Column 4. Who do you believe is most responsible for this argument?

0=John 1=Mary 2=Both

Mary and John are seated across from each other at the dining room table eating dinner.

John: Are these all the rolls?

Mary: No, there are more in the oven.

John: Well, go get them. It's your turn to cook so you should have put them all out to begin with.

Mary: Why don't you get them yourself?

John: If my mother ever talked like that to my father, he'd slap her face! What in hell is wrong with you anyway? You should show more respect.

Mary: Respect! Why in hell should I give you any respect? Do you give me any respect?

John: I ought to give you a slap in the face! I've taken too damn much from you. Maybe I need to slap some sense into you! It worked for my father. My mother was never disrespectful to him. Keep pushing and you'll get your turn.

Mary: If you touch me just one time, you'll regret it!

John: Shut up and get the damn biscuits!

Mary: Go to hell!

John: My father was right. If you let them start bitching at you and getting away with it, it only gets worse. If you open your mouth just one more time, I'll smack you.

Mary: The hell you will!

Column 5. What is the percentage chance that this argument resulted in physical violence?

0=0% 1=10% 2=20% 3=30% 4=40% 5=50% 6=60%

7=70% 8-80% 9-90% BLANK=10%

Column 6. Who do you believe is most responsible for this argument?

0=John 1=Mary 2=Both

Mary is taking several beer cans from the living room to the kitchen trash. As she starts to reenter the living room, John walks out of the bathroom staggering slightly.

John: Did you bring me another beer?

Mary: Don't you think you've had enough?

John: Hell no! Besides, you've had damn near as many as me.

Mary: That's right, and I know when to quit. I'm as high as I want to get.

John: Well, you may be, but I'm not! I'm going to get a beer.

Mary: You might as well, I guess. There's only one left.

John: Only one? Well, shit, I'm just going to have to drive down to the store and get another six pack or two.

Mary: Oh come on, you don't need that much more beer; besides, you're in no condition to be driving.

John: Shut up! Who in hell asked you? Driving is no problem and the air will do me good. Where are the keys?

Mary: If you want fresh air, take a walk. I'm going to bed.

John: Where are the damn keys?

Mary: I'm not telling you...you don't need to be driving.

John: Who in the hell do you think you're talking to? Now give me the damn keys before I knock your damn head in!

Mary: No way.

Column 7. What is the percentage chance that this argument resulted in physical violence?

0=0% 1=10% 2=20% 3=30% 4=40% 5=50% 6=60%
7=70% 8=80% 9=90% BLANK=100%

Column 8. Who do you believe is most responsible for this argument?

0=John 1=Mary 2=Both

John and Mary are seated in the living room watching TV. The program is just over and Mary gets up to turn off the set.

John: I can't believe we wasted the whole damn evening watching TV when we could have been at Madge and Harry's party.

Mary: I told you, I didn't feel like going.

John: Hell, you never feel like going anywhere. I don't know how many times we've been invited out and didn't go just because you didn't feel like it. I'm sick of it!

Mary: Who in their right mind would want to go to one of those stupid parties? I just don't want to socialize with those damn phonies. I'm just different than you.

John: Different? Hell, I'll say you're different. It doesn't matter what I do, you don't want to. You're so weird!

Mary: We just don't have the same kind of personality, that's all. You knew that when you met me.

John: We never had personality clashes when we first started going out. You were a lot nicer then.

Mary: Go to hell! I haven't changed, it's you.

John: Of course I've changed. Who could get along with a bitch like you?

Mary: What makes you think you're so easy to live with? You're the most disagreeable bastard I've ever met.

John: Bastard huh? How would you like a slap in the face?

Mary: Try it.

Column 9. What is the percentage chance that this argument resulted in physical violence?

0=0% 1=10% 2=20% 3=30% 4=40% 5=50% 6=60%
7=70% 8=80% 9=90% BLANK=100%

Column 10. Who do you believe is most responsible for this argument?

0=John 1=Mary 2=Both

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN THE CORRESPONDING COLUMNS
COLUMNS

11. SEX
0 Male, 1 Female
12. AGE
0 - to 18, 1 = 18-19, 2 = 20-21, 3 = 22-23, 4 = 24-26
5 = 26 and up
13. MARITAL STATUS
0 = Single, 1 = Married, 2 = Divorced or Separated, 3 = Widow
14. HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED
0 = up to 9th, 1 = 10-11, 2 = H.S. Grad., 3 = College Grad.
15. HOW RELIGIOUS DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF?
0 = Not Religious, 1 = Somewhat Religious, 2 = Moderately Religious, 3 = Very Religious
16. I HAVE BEEN THE VICTIM OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AS AN ADULT
0 = Frequently, 1 = Occasionally, 2 = Once, 3 = Never
17. I HAVE BEEN THE VICTIM OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AS A CHILD
0 = Frequently, 1 = Occasionally, 2 = Once, 3 = Never
18. I HAVE HIT MY PARTNER/SPOUSE
0 = Frequently, 1 = Occasionally, 2 = Once, 3 = Never
19. I HAVE FEARED BEING PHYSICALLY HURT BY A MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITE SEX
0 = Frequently, 1 = Occasionally, 2 = Once, 3 = Never
20. I HAVE BEEN AFRAID THAT I WOULD PHYSICALLY HARM A MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITE SEX
0 - Frequently, 1 = Occasionally, 2 = Once, 3 = Never
21. I HAVE ABUSED AN ANIMAL OR PET
0 = Frequently, 1 = Occasionally, 2 = Once, 3 = Never
22. I HAVE SEEN ONE OF MY PARENTS GET PHYSICALLY VIOLENT WITH THE OTHER
0 = Frequently, 1 = Occasionally, 2 = Once, 3 = Never
23. I BELIEVE THAT SPANKING IS AN APPROPRIATE FORM OF DISCIPLINE FOR CHILDREN WHEN USED
0 = Frequently, 1 = Occasionally, 2 = Once, 3 = Never

24. LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS SHOULD BE NOTIFIED ANY TIME ONE
PERSON HITS/SLAPS ANOTHER
0 = Yes, 1 = No
25. WHO DO YOU BELIEVE IS UNEMPLOYED?
0 = John, 1 = Mary

VITA

Adrian C. Sherman was born August 16, 1950 on Clark Air Force Base, Republic of the Philippines. Adrian attended public school in Florida, graduating from Satellite High School, Satellite Beach, Florida in 1968. He attended Florida State University until 1970 when he was drafted into the United States Army.

Adrian spent two years in the Army as a Special Forces Medic and attained the rank of sergeant. He spent time overseas in Okinawa and Taiwan where he trained in rough terrain parachute jumping and served as medic for a flood stricken village.

Adrian completed his undergraduate degrees at California State University, graduating in 1977 with degrees in Biological Sciences and Psychology. He has spent the last two years studying for his masters degree in Experimental Psychology at Appalachian State University.

Adrian has traveled extensively including trips to Greenland, Portugal, Spain, Mexico, Japan, Hong Kong, Guatemala, Canada and the Philippines. Upon completion of his degree he hopes to return to the Philippines and the Orient to study faith healing and eastern medicine.