

COURTSHIP VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL CONTROL: DOES GENDER MATTER?

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In this exploratory study, we ask whether perceptions of and responses to violence in dating relationships are gendered and whether the factors that affect male perceptions also influence females. Using the social control and feminist literatures as a guide, we explore gender differences in perception of sanction risk and attitudes toward resolution of violence when it occurs. Our data reveal several differences in male and female perceptions of formal and informal sanctions (attachment to significant others and stigmatic costs)—although not always in the expected direction—and show that different factors influence male and female perceptions of sanction likelihood and costs. We also find that females are more likely than males to seek relationship termination, informal controls, or formal justice outcomes if assaulted by their partner. However, the conditions that stimulate victims to consider these decisions vary by gender. These findings are discussed, along with implications for further research.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1970s, feminists challenged typologies that differentiated masculine and feminine characteristics or personality orientations. Today, there is renewed interest, albeit controversial, in recognizing and legitimizing differences in the “voices” of men and women (cf. Gilligan 1982; MacKinnon 1985). At issue is whether males and females have fundamental personality differences resulting from biological and psychological foundations or whether observed differences between them are attributable to social processes. Although this question is well beyond the scope of this research, gender difference is a familiar theme in the social control literature. In this article we combine our interests in gender and social control, examining how social control operates within dating relationships. Using feminist research and theory, we explore how and why responses to violence within these relationships may vary by gender.

Conceptualizing intimate violence within a social control framework is not new (see, e.g., Brownmiller 1975; Pagelow 1981;

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Riger and Gordon 1981; Stanko 1985), nor is it explicitly feminist (Makepeace 1981, 1989; Carmody and Williams 1987; Williams and Hawkins 1989). Most studies tend to focus on the etiology, extent, and/or control of intimate violence. Our concerns are somewhat different. First, we examine gender differences in perceptions of formal and informal sanction risk within abusive relationships. Second, using feminist theory and research as a guide (Chodorow 1978; Johnson 1988; Lees 1989), we describe how intimate relationships are gendered with different controls and meanings for male and female partners. We begin by reviewing the intimate violence and social control literatures. From this review, we derive and then test hypotheses regarding how perceptions of sanction risk and responses to courtship violence may vary by gender and other relevant factors.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Deterrence

Formal and Informal Control

The traditional deterrence doctrine emphasizes the effectiveness of *legal* sanctions in crime control. This process involves making salient the risks involved with law breaking (Geerken and Gove 1975). Deterrence, then, is best characterized as a process of threat communication, with threats generated from a variety of sources such as the media and personal communications. If an individual perceives the costs as very low or nonexistent and the potential gains as substantial, then the act is likely to be committed.¹ However, most perceptual deterrence research indicates that perceived certainty and severity of formal sanctions are *not* important determinants in the deterrence process (see Paternoster 1987). Rather, it is the *informal* controls that play influential roles in facilitating conformity, particularly through such agents of social control as the family, peers, fear of social disapproval, and moral considerations.

In general, the social control literature indicates that women express greater fear of rule breaking and higher perceptions of risk of sanction threats, both formal and informal ones, than do males. This difference has been attributed to the different socialization experiences of males and females (women's behavior is more closely watched), a higher stake in conformity for women, and less experience with, and therefore exaggerated perceptions

¹ Recent findings in the social-psychological literature have challenged the underlying assumptions of rationality within the deterrence doctrine. Rather than relying on accurate information or actuarial data, individuals use heuristic shortcuts, favoring information that is vivid, easy to recall, and personally meaningful, even if it is incorrect or deviates from actuarial information provided (see Nisbett and Ross 1980; Cherniak 1986; Cornish and Clark 1986).

of, the criminal justice system (Finley and Grasmick 1985; Richards and Tittle 1981). If the deterrent processes that inhibit females from violating the law for other offenses operate similarly for intimate violence, then we would expect the females in this study to perceive greater formal and informal sanction risk than males.

Intimate Violence and Perceptual Deterrence

Despite the manifest importance for understanding the dynamics of intimate violence, only two studies have specifically examined the sources of sanctions/control within relationships and in each of these, researchers examined only male perceptions (Carmody and Williams 1987; Williams and Hawkins 1989). The obvious gender bias notwithstanding, several findings are relevant here. First, males perceive informal sanctions to be more likely than legal sanctions as a reaction to abuse. Moreover, they perceive social condemnation and self-stigma as the most costly consequences of arrest. Second, of the various possible informal consequences associated with battering, men assume that the loss of their partner is least likely. Williams and Hawkins interpret this to mean that men assume their relationships are stable and resilient enough to be able to tolerate physical abuse.

Williams and Hawkins (*ibid.*, p. 172) hint at, but do not pursue, the implications of gender inequality for this finding: "An alternative explanation, of course, is that some men think their partner will do nothing if assaulted, even if an arrest results. This may be the case in relationships with marked inequality (i.e., men are dominant and women are dependent)." Such speculations are offered in isolation of any knowledge of how patriarchy structures male and female relationships and absent any in-depth research on women's understanding of or reaction to violence. Extant research reveals that women respond to battering in a variety of ways, one of which is to leave their abuser. In the next section, we examine when and under what circumstances abused women are apt to terminate abusive relationships.

Victim Response to Battering

Although the full extent of intimate violence is unknown, a variety of methodological approaches have indicated that the problem of woman battering is pervasive.² Victims of abuse are often

² Estimates from various sources regarding the incidence of woman battering indicate that millions are assaulted by their intimate partners each year. National surveys using representative samples of more than two thousand households report that 28 percent of the female respondents experience at least one physical assault in their lives and 16 percent reported at least one violent incident in the year preceding the interview; extrapolating rates from these findings suggest that well over 1.5 million women are battered by their partners annually (Straus et al. 1980; Straus and Gelles 1986). Victimization data from the National Crime Survey estimate that 2.1 million women are vic-

hesitant to respond to this violence with formal legal action.³ Some estimates suggest that only 10 percent of incidents are reported to the police (Steinmetz 1977; Walker 1979; Schulman 1980); others suggest that roughly half are reported (Langan and Innes 1986). Those women who do not seek legal recourse often turn to more informal options such as women's groups, shelters, and counseling.

Another alternative for battered women is to terminate the abusive relationship. The parameters and context in which this decision is made are not well understood. We do know that a significant number of women leave their abuser,⁴ although they may experience a series of separations and reconciliations prior to a permanent breakup (Okum 1988).

In the few studies that have examined when women are apt to terminate abusive relationships, several determinants emerge as important:⁵ (1) the length of time in which intimates have been together; (2) the strength of commitment of the relationship; and (3) whether the offender and victim are married (Snyder and Fruchtman 1981; Snyder and Scheer 1981; Strube and Barbour 1983, 1984). Those women who leave relationships are likely to have endured less severe violence than those who stay.⁶ They also are less likely to have initiated criminal proceedings against their partner (Gelles 1976; Snyder and Fruchtman 1981; Strube and Barbour 1984). In addition to these correlates, the victim's willingness to leave her abuser is affected by her psychological commitment to the relationship, the economic hardship that would occur as a re-

tims of intimate violence at least once during a year-long period, with a 32 percent reoccurrence rate within six months of the initial report (Langan and Innes 1986). Estimates based on interviews with battered women or random sample studies conducted in various communities place the incidence rate much higher—around 50 percent (Walker 1979; Frieze et al. 1980; Russell 1982). Although the full extent of intimate violence remains unknown, it is clear that regardless of methodology, the problem of woman battering is pervasive.

³ Women do not contact justice authorities when victimized by their partners for a number of reasons. They fear retaliation from partners and believe that police will be unresponsive to their fears (Gelles 1974; Walker 1977). If they push their case through the justice system, they often find that their conduct, and not their partners', is on trial (Bowker 1984; Stanko 1985; see also Edwards 1989). Police may trivialize intimate violence by failing to arrest, prosecutors may refuse to file charges, and judges may dismiss cases or impose lenient sentences (see Buzawa and Buzawa 1990).

⁴ Okum's (1988) research on three hundred shelter residents found 30 percent of the women ended their relationship directly following shelter stay and 43 percent terminated within two years. But Strube (1988) asserts that at least half of the women who seek some other form of a nonlegal intervention return to their relationships.

⁵ Caution should be used in interpreting these findings due to the limitations of the samples employed. Most of the samples are nonrepresentative, nonrandom, have short follow-up periods, and are often comprised of volunteers or shelter residents (Strube 1988).

⁶ In at least one study, injury is unrelated to a woman's decision to remain with her batterer; see Snyder and Scheer 1981.

sult of her departure, and her economic dependence on her partner (Strube and Barbour 1983, 1984).

Women who seek assistance from shelters, social service agencies, or other informal sources may be *very* different from women who desire legal intervention and women who do nothing and keep the abuse secret. In our research, we make two kinds of comparisons; we compare females who seek formal intervention with those who either use informal coping strategies or choose to terminate a relationship. We also contrast female with male responses to violence. We suspect that females will be much more likely to remain in abusive relationships than males; they remain in large part because of the importance of relationships in women's lives, but also because it is difficult to break away from the informal control that is exerted over women in these unions (Kruttschnitt 1982; Eaton 1986; Daly 1987; Lees 1989).

Gendered Relationships and Social Control

Feminists argue that intimate relationships are explicitly gendered so that males and females experience and understand them quite differently. For instance, Johnson (1988:5) suggests: "The structure of the husband-wife relationship, considered apart from other contravening sources of power, tends to define wives as lesser partners in any marriage. . . . From a structural standpoint, marriage institutions tend to be controlled by men and serve to control and organize women's mothering." Although Johnson is discussing a particular type of relationship in which duties and responsibilities are explicitly and formally defined (i.e., marriage), other forms of relationships are also characterized by gender inequality and patriarchal control. For instance, in her study of 15- to 16-year-old girls from varied social classes and ethnic groups in Great Britain, Lees (1989) shows how female sexuality and behavior are controlled through a process of derogatory gossip (typically about a girl's sexual activity) and verbal abuse called "slag."

The potency of "slag" lies in the wide range of circumstances in which it can be used. It is this characteristic that illustrates its functioning as a form of generalized social control, along the lines of gender rather than class, steering girls, in terms of both their actions and their aspirations, into the existing structures of gender relations. (Ibid., p. 21)

Since only unattached females are vulnerable to slag, girls seek the "protective" status of going steady. Exclusive dating relationships provide safe haven for adolescent females from gossip about their sexual behavior. Being coupled means having an acceptable avenue for sexual expression within the confines of patriarchal control. Many girls fear independence because of their perceived vulnerability to male violence and sexual harassment but also be-

cause going steady is seen as a precursor of marriage—a positively valued and functionally necessary status.⁷

Females seek in their male partners that “human connection” that they never obtained with their own parents. This search for “that grand symbiotic union in love, in sex, in daily living” (Gilbert and Webster 1982:131) is also a search for self. Heterosexual unions define who and what a woman is. As a member of a relationship, a woman gains valued capital. She becomes someone’s girlfriend, wife, mother. But the male partner, as Gilbert and Webster (*ibid.*, p. 136) point out, does not need a woman to gain a sense of self. “A man merely needs a woman to settle down.”

If coupling is essential for the legitimate expression of female sexuality (but not for males), threats to an intimate relationship are apt to be deemed quite serious by female partners.⁸ Moreover, because women prioritize relationships over other socially valued capital, they tend to value them more than do men, even when they are inherently unstable and morally problematic (Gilligan 1982:62). Thus, when violence occurs within relationships, we expect females to be more likely than males to attempt to repair and maintain the relationship. Males, on the other hand, will be less inclined to do so.

We also expect that females in violent relationship will be more apt than males to seek both formal and informal sources of sanctions. This expectation stems partially from an assumption that in their effort to maintain their relationship, females will rely on sources other than termination to control the violence. Among males, however, we expect that those in violent relationships will be less likely than other men to discuss their problem with friends and family and/or call in the police because these strategies run counter to male stereotypes and might be perceived as unmasculine. Moreover, males are not likely to perceive their relationship as threatened by violence (Williams and Hawkins 1989).

Relationships, then, have pushes and pulls for females. On the one hand, females seek the protection, intimacy, and emotional security that relationships offer. Human connections are seen as integral and binding, forming a “web” of interconnectiveness (Gilligan 1982). On the other hand, it is within relationships that females fall under the direct control of males (Lees 1989; Johnson

⁷ Even though the reality of marital life is starkly presented to the girls in Lees’s study through their parents’ (especially mother’s) experience, the institution of marriage is culturally represented as the only route they have to intimacy and love (Lees 1989:29).

⁸ In Lees’s (1989) study, girls were preoccupied with what might happen after they were dropped by their boyfriends. Some were concerned that he would openly discuss their sexual relationship (implying that if she did “it” with him she’d be willing to do so with others). But actually having sex with a boy didn’t matter as much as a perceived looseness. This could be established by mere appearance, for example, being dropped by one boy and dating another.

1988), control that directly affects male and female perceptions of intimate violence.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Most studies of violence among intimates focus on couples who are married or living together, implying an economic interdependency along with interpersonal commitment. Our research confronts the problem of intimate violence prior to this stage—during courtship and dating.

We administered a questionnaire to 640 college students in eight university classes. Students enrolled in these classes receive partial fulfillment of the university's requirement for distributive studies; hence, one particular major field of study is not over-represented in the data. Although participation was voluntary, only five individuals refused to complete the questionnaire.⁹

While college students do not represent a random sample of individuals engaged in dating relationships, they do come from a socially active group likely to engage in dating. As such, they provide an opportunity to study violence as it occurs outside of the marital context.¹⁰ Moreover, because students are particularly influenced by informal social control factors, such as stigmatic, attachment, or commitment costs (Paternoster 1987; Williams and Hawkins 1986), our test examines how perceptions of informal sanction risks may inhibit intimate violence in a population likely to be maximally sensitive to those constraints.

Measures¹¹

Dependent Measures of Formal/Informal Sanctions and Outcomes

Our study explores respondents' perceptions of both formal

⁹ The characteristics and demographics of this sample are consistent with other student populations represented in the dating violence literature (see Pirog-Good and Stets 1989). Other studies have used opportunity or random sampling techniques, distributing questionnaires in college classrooms (Laner and Thompson 1982; Bernard and Bernard 1983; Sigelman Berry and Wiles 1984); they report similar racial breakdowns, ages, majors (Matthews 1984; Makepeace 1981), and family incomes (Lane and Gwartney-Gibbs 1985; Matthews 1984).

¹⁰ Research suggests that violent behavior may be a common aspect of any intimate interaction, with the premarital period viewed as a time of socialization into later spousal violence (Makepeace 1989). Studies of dating violence support this contention, with rates matching those of national samples of cohabitating or married couples (Pirog-Good and Stets 1989). The prevalence of violence among dating partners is estimated to range between 20 and 36 percent (Bogal-Allbritten and Allbritten 1985; Makepeace 1981; Stets and Pirog-Good 1987; Lane and Gwartney-Gibbs 1985).

¹¹ Our primary research interest is to determine whether perceptions of sanction risk and response to violence vary by gender. Consequently, we provide in Appendix A descriptive statistics (means, medians, percentages, and standard deviations) for variables used in our analysis, by gender.

and informal sanctions, using scales designed to reflect different perceptual properties of these measures.¹² The certainty and severity of formal sanctions were measured by asking respondents the likelihood that they would be arrested, taken to court, and jailed for hitting their partner (certainty) and their perceptions of how much of a problem arrest, court, and jail would create in their lives (severity).¹³

The certainty and severity of informal sanctions were measured by asking about the impact respondents perceived intimate violence would have on valued relationships and future self-esteem and dating prospects. Appendix A lists the scale reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) for all items. The exact wording of items included is listed in Appendix B.

To determine whether responses to abuse vary by gender, we constructed scales to measure attitudes toward possible outcomes to violence within relationships.¹⁴ Respondents were asked what they thought should happen under two hypothetical conditions: (1) if they were hit by a partner and/or (2) hit and injured by a partner, should they pursue a criminal case (formal justice process); terminate the relationship (termination); or intervene informally (informal intervention)?

Independent Measures Affecting Perceptions of Sanctions and Responses to Violence

The sociodemographic variables of interest are gender, race, and family income.¹⁵ As stated earlier, we expect females to perceive greater sanction risk and consequence than males, regardless of whether sanctions are formal or informal. They also are more likely to seek formal and informal interventions when victimized

¹² All the formal and informal sanction measures were derived from a ten-point Likert-style scale in which the upper end reflects greater perceived certainty or severity. To determine the unidimensionality of the scales, initial maximum likelihood factor analyses were run. The internal consistencies of the scales were examined using Cronbach's alpha. Final scales were constructed by summing the scores of each individualized item.

¹³ Respondents were asked to estimate their *own* likelihood of apprehension. Past research finds that self-reported behavior is affected more by self-perceptions than by those of a "generalized other" (Jensen, Erickson, and Gibbs 1978; Paternoster et al. 1983).

¹⁴ This scaling technique, used extensively in parole and sentencing prediction research, is known as the Burgess point scoring method (Gottfredson et al. 1978; Nuttal et al. 1977; Gottfredson and Gottfredson 1985). For greater detail on the Burgess point scoring technique, see Copas and Tarling (1986).

¹⁵ Other potentially important variables such as age, religion, and school year were included in our initial analyses, but none had meaningful effects. Only nine of our sample respondents were currently married; three were separated, divorced, or widowed. Because these numbers are not large enough to provide meaningful comparisons with respondents who are single and their inclusion may confound effects, we limit our analysis to never-married respondents.

than males but less likely than males to terminate their relationship when violence occurs.

We expect that whites and Asians (coded as 1) will perceive greater sanction threat and consequence than blacks and Hispanics (coded as 0).¹⁶ This expectation is based in findings from other research. Straus and his associates (1980:134) found that rates of intimate violence were highest among blacks—almost 400 percent more common than in white families. Others have found Asians to report lower and Hispanics slightly higher levels of intimate violence than whites (Sugarman and Hotaling 1989).

Official data from hospital emergency rooms and police records suggest that violence is more common in lower-income relationships and families (Straus et al. 1980). Thus, family income should be negatively related to formal justice outcomes. Those from higher income backgrounds should seek informal intervention strategies. Finally, we expect that blacks and Hispanics, because they are disproportionately represented in lower-class homes, will rely more on the formal justice process to control their disputes (Miller 1989).

The social control and intimate violence literatures suggest several measures that are expected to influence respondents' perceptions of sanction risk as well as likely responses to violence. For instance, if one's parents hit one another (parents violent), we expect perceptual deterrence to decrease, especially if parents were not formally sanctioned for their violence—and in the case of the eighty-six respondents who report parental violence, police were almost never called.

In a similar vein, we expect that respondents who have participated in past violent relationships will perceive fewer sanction risks and consequences.¹⁷ Past violence is captured by coding respondents' answers to Straus's (1979) Conflict Tactics Scale into two scale measures: serious and mild violence. If respondents admitted to participating in physically intimidating tactics or actions with potentially grave consequences during the past year (e.g., beat up or used a knife or gun on partner), they were coded as "serious." Those who reported less consequential but threatening or physical acts against a partner were coded as "mild" (e.g., threw something at partner, slapped, hit with a fist).

Date rape and other types of courtship violence are the focus of media attention, special seminars, and information campaigns

¹⁶ While our dummy coding of whites and Asians together is somewhat unique, our preliminary analyses indicated that patterns of Asians ($N=35$) conformed most closely with white respondents, while Hispanics ($N=17$) resembled black respondents. These results also correspond to general patterns of crime by race (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990:150).

¹⁷ Respondents in our sample had very little personal involvement with the criminal justice system; only two males had been arrested for intimate violence, and only one female and one male had been arrested for some other offense.

on many college campuses. We expect that respondents with greater exposure to the subject (knowledge) will perceive greater certainty and severity of sanction threats. Dating status, especially for women, should have important effects on both perceptions of sanction risk and likely responses to violence within relationships. Those women who consider themselves involved in an intimate and committed relationship (serious dating) should perceive greater severity and certainty of sanctions because discovery may threaten the stability of the couple. Women who casually date have not yet committed themselves to an exclusive relationship and therefore should be less concerned than their serious dating counterparts about the risk and impact of sanctions in their lives. Among males, dating should be less important—both in terms of deterrence and responses to victimization.

Most of our measures are based on questions that ask respondents about their own experiences, attitudes, and perceptions. However, one of our independent variables is framed in the language of the generalized other. To the extent that students think that others rationalize and justify violence within relationships, including control over a partner, to force sex, teach them a lesson, and so forth, they should be more likely to perceive social controls over these behaviors to be lacking (or at least weak). Therefore, respondents who score high on our measure “reasons for violence” should perceive sanction threats as minimal.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Three sets of equations are reported for all dependent variables.¹⁸ In the first set of equations, we examine whether gender affects perceptual deterrence and how potential victims respond to courtship violence, controlling for other explanatory factors. These same models are then replicated for male and female respondents separately.

Formal Sanction Severity and Certainty

The ability of gender to account for perceptions of formal severity and formal certainty after controlling for a number of other variables is tested in Table 1. Several findings are worth highlighting. Focusing on formal sanction *severity* first, we note that for all respondents, only race and serious dating are significant predictors. Whites and Asians are more apt than blacks and Hispanics to perceive police intervention, court time, and jail as a big problem in their lives. Respondents who in the past twelve months have been involved in a committed and intimate relationship (seri-

¹⁸ The correlation matrix in Appendix C shows no problems of multicollinearity.

Table 1. Perceptions of Severity and Certainty of Formal Sanctions

	All		Males		Females	
	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>
Formal Severity						
Race	.85	.10*	.67	.07	1.25	.16*
Parents violent	.12	.02	.03	.01	.55	.07
Knowledge	.70	.07	1.07	.11*	-.36	-.04
Casual dating	.14	.02	-.28	-.03	.71	.11*
Serious dating	.61	.09*	.09	.01	1.79	.24***
Reason for violence	-.00	-.01	-.01	-.02	.00	.01
Family income	.09	.05	.06	.03	.18	.10
Serious violence	-.87	-.06	-1.53	-.10*	.13	.01
Mild violence	.15	.02	-.21	-.03	.69	.11
Gender	-.30	-.05				
Constant	26.15		26.73		24.44	
R^2	.03		.03		.12	
<i>N</i>	542		327		214	
Formal Certainty						
Race	-.97	-.08	-1.28	-.09*	-.78	-.09
Parents violent	-.18	-.02	.03	.00	-1.15	-.13*
Knowledge	.11	.01	.58	.04	-1.23	-.12*
Casual dating	-.21	-.02	-.68	-.06	.40	.05
Serious dating	-.81	-.08	-.72	-.07	-.59	-.07
Reason for violence	-.10	-.19***	-.13	-.21***	-.08	-.20**
Family income	.05	.02	.02	.01	.13	.06
Serious violence	.23	.01	.14	.01	.72	.04
Mild violence	-1.27	-.13**	-1.74	-.15**	-.71	-.10
Gender	2.32	.25***				
Constant	5.84		9.25		5.13	
R^2	.13		.09		.08	
<i>N</i>	551		333		217	

* Significant at .05 ** Significant at .01 *** Significant at .001

ous dating) are also more likely to perceive formal justice sanctions to be severe. Gender has no effect on perceptions of formal sanction severity. The low R^2 of this model suggests that these variables are not, for the most part, good predictors of variations in perceptions of sanction severity.

Some key differences in perceptions of formal sanction severity do, however, emerge when male and female subsamples are analyzed separately. Among male respondents, seriously violent offenders are less likely than other males to perceive arrest, sentencing, and jail to be severe. Males with more knowledge of courtship violence are significantly more likely to perceive formal justice processing as consequential. The race and serious dating effects are exclusively female. White and Asian females perceive greater sanction severity than their black and Hispanic counterparts as do females who are dating. Perceptions of sanction severity are stronger among women involved in serious relationships ($B = .243$, $p < .05$). Overall, this model of formal sanction severity is stronger for females ($R^2 = .12$) than it is for males ($R^2 = .03$).

Our models of formal *certainty* display quite different pat-

terns than those for severity. There is a strong inverse relationship between formal certainty and reported mild violence. Among those who engage in mild forms of courtship violence (such as slapping, pushing, grabbing, and/or throwing things at a partner) and those who believe that courtship violence is justified by others, formal justice intervention is not perceived as a likely outcome. Gender effects are also strong. Women are much less likely than men to think that courtship violence will result in a formal justice response.

Perceptions of formal sanction certainty reveal important differences by gender. Male perceptions of sanction risk, unlike female perceptions, are affected by participation in mild violence. Further, black and Hispanic males are significantly less likely than whites and Asians to perceive the criminal justice process as certain. Both males and females are influenced by generalized others' justifications for violence (negatively so). This is an intriguing finding in that perceptions of how others rationalize and justify violence appear to influence how individual respondents perceive sanction certainty. Among women, those who have experienced intimate violence doubt sanction certainty, as do those more knowledgeable about the problem of courtship violence. Knowledge and experience seem to create cynicism among women about the criminal justice process.

Informal Sanction Severity and Certainty

Respondent perceptions of informal sanctions are examined in Tables 2 and 3. In Table 2 we examine perceptions of the *severity* of informal sanctions, specifically disapproval of friends and the impact of courtship violence on future dating and respondent self-respect. In the full sample, those with first-hand experience of violence are significantly less likely than others to perceive any negative effects on peer relationships. This is true for respondents who report participation in both mild and serious violence. Whites and Asians are significantly more likely than blacks and Hispanics to perceive peer disapproval, as are males in comparison to females.

When these relationships are examined separately by gender, we see that the negative effect of serious violence on peer disapproval is significant only for males. Mild violence remains negative and significant for both sexes. Casual dating is negatively related to peer disapproval for males but positively related for women. This difference suggests that violence in the context of a dating relationship means something different for men than it does for women.

When we ask how big a problem courtship violence poses to future dating and self-respect, we see that not one variable in our model is a significant predictor. When analyzed separately by gender, however, the model is better suited for our male than it is for

Table 2. Perception of Severity Informal Sanctions

	All		Males		Females	
	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>
Disapproval of Female and Male Friends						
Race	1.29	.10*	1.15	.09	1.05	.08
Parents violent	-.43	-.05	-.19	-.03	-1.30	-.10
Knowledge	.11	.01	.31	.02	-.85	-.05
Casual dating	-.22	-.02	-1.72	-.15**	1.62	.15*
Serious dating	-.40	-.04	-.63	-.06	.28	.02
Reasons for violence	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.04	.02	.03
Family income	.26	.08	.21	.07	.38	.12
Serious violence	-3.23	-.14***	-3.07	-.14**	-3.70	-.15*
Mild violence	-1.27	-.12***	-1.67	-.16**	-.62	-.06
Gender	.83	.08*				
Constant	11.75		14.66		9.68	
<i>R</i> ²	.08		.09		.11	
<i>N</i>	544		332		211	
Dating and Self-Respect						
Race	.55	.06	.15	.02	1.27	.15*
Parents violent	-.31	-.05	-.37	-.08	-.09	-.01
Knowledge	.68	.07	.65	.07	.21	.02
Casual dating	-.29	-.04	-1.09	-.13**	.60	.08
Serious dating	.10	.01	-.01	-8×10^{-4}	.20	.02
Reasons for violence	.01	.03	.01	.04	.00	.00
Family income	.11	.05	.03	.02	.25	.12
Serious violence	-1.29	-.08	-2.76	-.18***	1.44	.09
Mild violence	-.29	-.04	-.29	-.04	-.25	-.04
Gender	-.03	-.00				
Constant	14.71		16.19		13.17	
<i>R</i> ²	.03		.07		.06	
<i>N</i>	551		334		216	

* Significant at .05 ** Significant at .01 *** Significant at .001

our female respondents. Only race has any effect on perceptions among females in the sample. Whites and Asians see a greater threat to their dating chances and self-image than do blacks and Hispanics. Among men, casual dating and experience with mild violence are negatively related to perceptions of sanction severity.

In Table 3, we examine the perceived *certainty* of informal sanctions. Gender effects are particularly strong here. Men are significantly more likely than women to think that their violence would result in disapproval from significant others and affect future dating chances and self-esteem. Race also has important effects for both types of informal controls. Whites and Asians are more apt than blacks and Hispanics to perceive familial and peer disapproval as certain. They also are significantly more likely to perceive that their dating chances and self-respect would suffer as a result of hitting their partner. Respondents with personal experience of mild date violence are significantly less apt to perceive informal sanctions as certain. Also, those who think others justify and rationalize violence perceive a lower probability that their own dating and self-respect would be affected by violence.

Table 3. Perception of Certainty of Informal Sanctions

	All		Males		Females	
	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>
Disapproval of Female and Male Friends						
Race	2.63	.08*	1.86	.06	4.21	.15*
Parents violent	-.88	-.04	-1.06	-.07	-.87	-.03
Knowledge	-.71	-.02	.57	.02	-4.06	-.12
Casual dating	.62	.02	.17	.01	1.30	.05
Serious dating	.04	.00	-.22	-.01	.59	.02
Reasons for violence	-.04	-.02	-.03	-.02	-.07	-.06
Family income	.24	.03	.02	.00	.62	.08
Serious violence	-1.73	-.03	-4.21	-.09	3.76	.07
Mild violence	-2.66	-.09**	-2.61	-.11*	-2.45	-.10
Gender	14.56	.54***				
Constant	11.74		27.53		11.00	
<i>R</i> ²	.34		.04		.06	
<i>N</i>	542		330		211	
Dating and Self-Respect						
Race	2.00	.12***	1.69	.12*	2.60	.18**
Parents violent	-.02	-.00	-.14	-.02	.01	8×10^{-4}
Knowledge	.18	.01	.65	.04	-1.19	-.07
Casual dating	-.90	-.06	-1.35	-.11*	-.32	-.03
Serious dating	-.06	-.00	-.30	-.03	.28	.02
Reasons for violence	-.06	-.08*	-.04	-.06	-.10	-.16**
Family income	.18	.05	-.03	-.01	.54	.15*
Serious violence	-1.93	-.07	-2.87	-.12*	-.07	-.00
Mild violence	-1.43	-.11**	-1.43	-.12*	-1.14	-.10
Gender	6.18	.49***				
Constant	7.21		14.37		6.08	
<i>R</i> ²	.30		.07		.10	
<i>N</i>	552		333		218	

* Significant at .05 ** Significant at .01 *** Significant at .001

Perceptions of informal sanction certainty are not strongly gendered, and separating males from females yields little new information. Looking first at family and friend disapproval, race is positive and significant for females—Asians and whites perceive greater certainty than blacks and Hispanics—but not for males. For male respondents, mild violence has significant negative effects but no significant effects for females. But for the most part, these differences are more of degree than substance.

The same point can be made about the perceived impact of violence on dating and self-respect. Although our gender-specific models yield more significant variables than those for family and peer sanctions, with one exception these differences again reflect similar patterns. The exception is family income which, among females, is positively and significantly related to perceptions of sanction certainty. Its effects are negative and insignificant among male respondents. However, whites and Asians are more likely to perceive informal sanction certainty, regardless of gender. Males who are casually dating and who report violent relationships in the

past are significantly less likely to perceive future dating and self-esteem to be affected. But these same variables are negative (albeit insignificant) for female respondents. Similarly, females who believe violence is justified by others are less likely to see courtship violence as affecting their dating relationships or sense of self-worth. This same pattern is true for male respondents, but the effect is not significant.

In sum, we find strong support for our hypotheses that perceptions of sanction certainty and severity are gendered. In four of six equations in which variables are modeled for the whole sample, gender strongly affects perceptual deterrence. Consistently important variables, although not necessarily so for both males and females, include (1) race; (2) experience with violence in past dating relationships; (3) beliefs that others excuse and rationalize intimate violence; and (4) dating status.

Responses to Violence: Probable Outcomes

Our final series of regressions examine whether there are gender differences in how "hypothetical" victims of courtship violence would respond to their victimization. These dependent variables are attitudinal, not experiential. In Table 4, three possible outcomes are considered: (1) bringing in criminal justice authorities; (2) relationship termination; and (3) informal interventions. Our strategy, as before, is first to examine which variables determine anticipated outcomes for the entire sample and then assess these effects for males and females separately.

Formal Justice Outcomes

Gender is the most powerful predictor of which respondents, if victimized by courtship violence, will call on justice authorities. As expected, women are significantly more likely than males to say they would pursue this option. Also as anticipated, blacks and Hispanics are significantly more likely than whites and Asians to say they would call the police and/or lodge a criminal complaint. Respondents who think others rationalize and justify violence are less likely to say they would bring their victimization before the criminal justice system. This is true whether one is male or female. Finally, those who have experienced mild forms of courtship violence report they are not as likely to use the justice system as their less experienced peers.

Among males, the more knowledge a respondent has about the problem of courtship violence and the more he believes others excuse violence, the less likely he is to bring a criminal complaint. Additionally, men who admit participation in mild courtship violence are less likely than other men to pursue criminal justice resolution. Among female respondents, blacks and Hispanics are more likely than whites and Asians to use the formal justice sys-

Table 4. Attitude Toward Likely Outcomes

	All		Males		Females	
	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>
Formal Justice Intervention						
Race	-.87	-.18***	-.38	-.08	-1.57	-.34***
Parents violent	-.17	-.06	-.11	-.04	-.30	-.06
Knowledge	-.41	-.08	-.57	-.11*	.08	.02
Casual dating	-.06	-.01	.18	.04	-.37	-.10
Serious dating	-.15	-.04	-.03	-.01	-.53	-.12*
Reason for violence	-.03	-.14***	-.03	-.12*	-.04	-.18**
Family income	.01	.01	.05	.04	-.05	-.04
Serious violence	.35	.04	.52	.07	-.19	-.02
Mild violence	-.65	-.16***	-.68	-.17**	-.60	-.16*
Gender	-1.20	-.31***				
Constant		4.69		2.54		5.80
<i>R</i> ²		.17		.06		.19
<i>N</i>		518		319		198
Termination						
Race	-.03	-.02	-.05	-.02	-.02	-.01
Parents violent	-.09	-.07	-.08	-.07	-.19	-.14*
Knowledge	-.14	-.07	-.15	-.07	-.12	-.08
Casual dating	.07	.04	.09	.04	.08	.08
Serious dating	-.17	-.10**	-.27	-.16**	.05	.04
Reason for violence	-.01	-.14***	-.02	-.17**	-.01	-.09
Family income	.03	.07	.04	.08	-.01	-.03
Serious violence	.08	.02	.14	.04	-.06	-.03
Mild violence	-.20	-.12**	-.09	-.05	-.34	-.32***
Gender	-.55	-.37***				
Constant		2.19		1.76		2.11
<i>R</i> ²		.18		.08		.14
<i>N</i>		479		279		197
Informal Intervention						
Race	.44	.09*	.44	.09	.34	.07
Parents violent	-.00	-5×10^{-4}	-.02	-.01	.20	.04
Knowledge	-.02	-.00	-.25	-.05	.50	.09
Casual dating	.02	.00	-.13	-.03	.18	.05
Serious dating	-.18	-.04	-.14	-.03	-.26	-.06
Reason for violence	-.02	-.10**	-.02	-.09	-.02	-.11
Family income	.01	.01	.02	.01	.02	.01
Serious violence	-.27	-.03	-.00	-2×10^{-4}	-.91	-.11
Mild violence	-.42	-.10*	-.47	-.11*	-.33	-.09
Gender	-.88	-.22***				
Constant		3.12		2.50		2.65
<i>R</i> ²		.08		.03		.06
<i>N</i>		511		310		200

* Significant at .05 ** Significant at .01 *** Significant at .001

tem should they be victimized. Negatively related to this outcome among women are perceptions that others justify violence, serious dating, and mild violence.

Termination

We had anticipated that females would be less likely than males to terminate their relationships if violence occurred. Our data show otherwise. Women are significantly more likely to terminate abusive relationships than men. Respondents who think others rationalize courtship violence are less apt to end their relationship. Finally, termination is less likely among respondents who are dating seriously and who have personal experience with mild violence in past relationships.

We find several important differences between male and female respondents. Males who consider their dating to be committed and intimate are significantly less likely than other males to terminate an abusive relationship. Moreover, for those males who believe others rationalize situations in which violence is acceptable, termination of a relationship is unlikely. Among females, exposure to parental violence and mild violence within their own relationships decreases the likelihood of termination.

Intervention

Bringing in family and friends to help resolve intimate violence is a strategy most likely to be pursued by females and whites and Asians but least likely by respondents who perceive that others rationalize and justify its occurrence. Again, mild violence exerts a negative effect. When separated into gender-specific subsamples, none of the independent variables have significant effects for females and only one (mild violence) has predictive value for males.

Discussion

We thus find support for our central thesis that males and females hold different perceptions of sanction risk and severity and may respond differently to violence when it occurs. Gender matters, although not necessarily in the ways extant research would predict. We have also shown that male and female perceptions of and responses to courtship violence are influenced by different factors.

In our sample, males, more than females, believe that certain types of informal sanctions, especially those with attachment and stigmatic costs, present more of a problem in their lives. Males are also more certain of formal and informal sanctions. This may rest in a greater knowledge (thanks to public education) that violence against women is a crime rather than a male prerogative. These are, after all, college students. It may also reflect a realistic perception by males that dating partners will not tolerate abuse. Although some dating relationships may be quite serious, they are more ephemeral than marriages. It is easier for women to pursue criminal charges against an offender who is not also economically

or psychologically responsible for her (and her children's) well-being. Moreover, because dating partners who are college students are not as apt to live together as are married couples, violence and its consequences are more visible to others. Visibility invites stigma and disapproval from significant others.¹⁹

Perhaps the best explanation for why males perceive greater informal sanction risk stems from the differing interpretations given to male and female violence within a dating relationship. Both males and females in our sample trivialized female violence against males. Some comments illustrate these sentiments. One woman said, "I can't hit very hard (at least hard enough to hurt)," while another added, "even if I hit him my hardest, there's no way I could hurt him." Males also took a more cavalier view of female violence, one reporting "no woman would be arrested for [hitting her partner]." Male violence against females, however, was taken more seriously. Many male respondents did not hit their partners because they were afraid of injuring them or because they had been taught "not to hit girls." Both sexes acknowledged the disproportionate threat that male violence held vis-à-vis female, for example, "I think they [others] would worry about me being hurt—not me hurting him" and "I would have to hurt her if she resorts to that course of action." Such interpretations are apt to be captured in male beliefs that their violence is more certain to be criminally pursued and informally consequential than that of females.²⁰

Given that important gender differences in perceptions of sanction risk and severity exist, we pursued the question of whether males and females were affected by similar variables. Our data suggest that in addition to overall gender differences in perceptions of sanction risk and responses to courtship violence, the factors that affect these outcomes may be quite different for males and females. For instance, among females, dating (whether serious or casual) is typically positively related to perceptions of sanction risk and consequence in ten out of twelve possible relationships. For males, nine of the possible twelve relationships are negative. And although dating is only occasionally a significant predictor, when it is significant, casual and serious dating is *positively* related to formal and informal sanction severity for women, while casual

¹⁹ This clearly depends on whether intimate violence is positively or negatively viewed by the respondent's peers and relatives. Responses to some of our open-ended questions suggest both views are operative. For instance, one male suggested that his close male friends "would congratulate me" if he hit his girlfriend, but another said that "everyone would be shocked and disappointed."

²⁰ These interpretations may also affect respondent definitions of victimization. We broke down offender-victim status by gender by examining responses to the question "Who used violence first, you or your partner?" Based on their responses, only fifteen women could be classified as victims, but forty-five would be characterized as offenders. Conversely, forty-five males were defined as victims and fifty-four as offenders.

dating is *negatively* related to informal severity (both stigmatic and attachment costs) and informal certainty for males. Dating females apparently see greater threats to their lives/relationships if they hit a partner than do their nondating counterparts. It appears that perceived costs may be greater for women who view their relationships as high priorities and thus more valuable. Males who date, on the other hand, see fewer costs possibly because their relationships are less important to them.

Dating differences are not the only subgroup contrasts we found. Race and income affect perceptions of sanction severity differently for males and females. Race distinguishes female perceptions of formal sanction severity but not those of males. White and Asian females see formal sanctions as creating a bigger problem in their lives than do other nonwhites. Such perceptions may be realistic given how female experiences with the criminal justice system vary by class and race. Criminal processing tarnishes a woman's respectability (Kruttschnitt 1982), and a single woman cannot necessarily look to the courts to protect her (Daly 1987; Eaton 1986), particularly if she engages in a "non-traditional" offense (Berstein, Kick, Leung, and Schulz 1977; Schur 1983). White women may be more sensitive to this risk because they have more to lose in a social system that accords privilege to whites over minorities (Simpson 1991:213).

Moreover, female whites and Asians and those with higher incomes believe their future dating and self-respect would suffer as a consequence of hitting their partner. Thus, the threat to their respectability jeopardizes females' views of themselves and their perceived desirability to prospective dating partners. Informal controls over female offending may exert themselves through class and race experiences. Examining risk perceptions solely by gender masks these important race and class distinctions.

Past exposure to violence is more likely to make its effects felt among males than among females. Men who admit participation in serious violence are significantly less likely than nonviolent males to perceive formal and informal sanctions as inconsequential and future dating and self-respect to be unaffected. Those that have engaged in mild violence are also significantly less likely than other males to think that formal sanctions are certain. Males with prior experience with courtship violence are apt to believe they can escape with impunity from both informal and formal consequences and thus may revise their risk estimates. Previously violent males have lower perceptions of sanction consequences, suggesting an experiential effect of the kind identified by Saltzman et al. (1982). The experiential effect is also apparent among females. Those who report prior serious violence perceive fewer attachment

costs (i.e., parental and peer disapproval) than those women who are nonviolent.²¹

Up to this point, we have focused on gender differences in perceptions of sanction likelihood and consequence. However, we also find strong gender differences in how males and females respond to courtship violence once it occurs. Females are significantly more likely than males to pursue both formal and informal intervention as well as termination of the relationship. If male violence is perceived to be more serious in its consequences²² and females are not economically dependent on their partners, these outcomes make sense. Although dating may socialize males into later spousal violence (Makepeace 1989), it is also a period in which male violence may be less tolerated. As Sugarman and Hotaling (1989:10–11) suggest:

Females may have greater power in dating than they do in other relationships with males. They may be more successful in communicating that they will not stand for violence on the part of dating partners. Also, they can more easily end dating relationships and may be less reluctant to report violence directed against them than married women.

Shifting from an examination of outcome differences between males and females to intrasex contrasts, we again find different influences on responses to violence. Among women, blacks and Hispanics are significantly more likely than white and Asian women to rely on the formal justice system as a mechanism to resolve intimate violence. We suspect this occurs because the justice system is a more familiar source of dispute resolution for lower income women (disproportionately black and Hispanic) who cannot afford more expensive means of resolving conflicts and who are less familiar with or more distrustful of other alternatives.

Males who are more knowledgeable about violence are less likely than other males to pursue a formal complaint. Perhaps experiences with mild forms of courtship violence and knowledge exert similar influences on male attitudes toward the criminal justice process. Violent males know the system does not work very well (they have not been caught and prosecuted) and males who are familiar with how the system can revictimize the complainant are apt to believe other interventions may be more effective.

Males and females choose to terminate a relationship under different circumstances. Males who are involved in intimate relationships are significantly less likely than other males to seek an end to their relationship. Williams and Hawkins (1989) found that

²¹ Of course, since these data are cross-sectional, what we have called an experiential effect may actually be the result of preexisting differences between respondents with and without prior violent experience.

²² Researchers find that although females engage in at least an equal amount of violence among intimates, its injuriousness is much less than that of their male counterparts (Saunders 1988, 1986; Steinmetz 1977).

male batterers believe their partners will not leave them. The similar hesitation to leave by our seriously dating male respondents in response to a hypothetical victimization suggests a more general pattern: If males feel that courtship violence is acceptable to others and consistent with an intimate relationship, they will not expect or initiate the end of their own relationship when it occurs.

Among females, the decision to terminate is negatively influenced by two important factors. Women whose parents are violent and who have experienced mild violence themselves seemingly discount the significance of being hit and/or injured by their partner. These women are significantly less likely to seek termination than are other females. The literature on the cycle of intimate violence would predict these findings, but from our perspective the interesting finding here is that the same cycle does not exist for males.

Finally, females are significantly more likely than males to seek informal intervention. Women are more likely to talk personal problems over with friends than are males; they also are more likely than males to seek professional help with their problems. Therefore, the gender difference we observe is not surprising. Overall, this strategy is preferred by whites and Asians more than blacks and Hispanics. Quite probably, this reflects a greater dependency on family and friends to work out personal issues or stronger beliefs that community intervention and religious and family pressures are appropriate and effective mediators of partner conflicts. The only difference between male and female decisions to resolve conflicts by informal mechanisms is related to past mild violence. Violence is inversely related to informal strategies among male respondents but not among females. Variables related to other outcome decisions such as family income, commitment to a relationship, and parental violence are not significant here.

CONCLUSION

This study of courtship violence examine how perceptions of formal and informal sanction risk vary by gender. Further, we investigated whether males and females respond differently to violence once it occurs. The traditional deterrence literature led us to expect that females, more than males, would perceive greater sanction likelihood and severity. However, this was not the case. The gender effect is just the opposite.

In addition, drawing from the feminist literature, we anticipated that females would be less likely to terminate a relationship in which violence occurs. We hypothesized that when violence occurs, females would be more likely to repair or maintain the relationship instead of seeking help from informal sources, terminating the relationship, or pursuing formal justice options. Again, our

findings are contrary to expectations. In fact, females are more likely to do anything *but* accept the *staus quo*.

Although we conclude that gender does matter, these effects are often mediated by other factors. For instance, race and class effects often complicate gender differences in regard to who perceives formal and informal (stigmatic) sanctions as likely. Also, past experience with violent relationships (either one's parents or one's own) affects how women cope when intimate violence occurs.

In the context of other deterrence research, some of our findings—particularly those which show race effects—differ from patterns observed by others. Finley and Grasmick (1985) report that nonwhite females perceive less certainty from formal sanctions than do whites.²³ Our results show this effect for formal severity but not certainty. Finley and Grasmick report no significant race differences for either certainty or severity of informal sanctions like loss of respect from significant others. In contrast, we find white and Asian females to differ significantly from black and Hispanic females in their perceptions of stigmatic certainty (future dating and self-respect).

The race and gender differences we observe may suggest a more fundamental problem with anchoring intimate violence within a traditional deterrence framework. Intimate violence occurs within the context of relationships in which other attachments, commitments, and responsibilities mediate the interpretations of offending and victimization. These concomitant factors are apt to influence perceptions of informal and formal sanction risk and severity in ways that are different, unique, or not operative in more traditional types of offending.

Exploratory studies often raise more interesting questions than they can rightfully answer. This research is no exception. Some of our contradictory findings may be due to focus. Most deterrence research focuses on delinquency—with more traditional dependent variables in mind (e.g., minor property offending, drugs and alcohol, status offenses). It also is conceivable that our results are due to our sample. But because there are no studies that examine male *and* female perceptions of sanction risk in response to date violence, it is difficult to assess which explanation is more likely. Our qualitative data suggest another interpretation—that females may have lower estimates of perceived sanction risk (severity and certainty) because they feel their “violence” would never be forceful enough to cause injury. Males, however, perceive

²³ Although Finley and Grasmick's study examines perceptions of sanction threat for a variety of relatively minor offenses (e.g., illegal gambling, tax cheating, petty theft, littering, assault, and DWI), their respondents are adults and they do search for gender differences. Our sample differs from theirs in that our respondents are not selected randomly and are drawn from a relatively well-educated population. With these caveats in mind, we draw careful comparisons.

their own violence as more injurious and, consequently, more subject to sanction.

The outcome findings are less counterintuitive when placed in the context of dating. Courtship does not typically result in economic dependency or children, two common explanations for why women remain in abusive relationships. Further, termination is not the only outcome women are more apt to seek. They also, as the literature would suggest, are more likely to pursue informal means to mediate the abuse—such seeking mediation from family or friends.

The study of courtship violence is important for several reasons. Dating represents a prelude to more permanent relationships. Thus, patterns and responses to violence can be established early and remain an integral part of an individual's assessment schema. Our finding that battering is discounted among young women whose parents were violent and who themselves have experienced mild violence, supports the characterization of a cyclical transmission of learned toleration of violence among females. Intervention at the premarital state is potentially a more productive and educative strategy than waiting until violence explodes within the bonds of matrimony.

Studies of date violence also allow us to examine the process through which female independence is translated into dependence. Future research should investigate at what point women in relationships become reticent about reporting violence and taking protective action. Finally, it is important to understand how violence is patterned by peer associations such as fraternities, sports teams, and other groups which culturally objectify and debase women through language and collective activities (Warshaw 1988). Comments from respondents in their questionnaire responses and their informal comments indicate that individual perceptions of the appropriateness or inappropriateness of date violence are a function of peer-group support.

APPENDIX A
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS, BY GENDER

	FEMALES (251)			MALES (367)			Scale Reliability
	% Yes or Mean	S.D.	N	% Yes or Mean	S.D.	N	(Cronbach's alpha)
Race (1=white/Asian,0=black/Hispanic)	81%	.39	249	84%	.37	366	
Parents violent (1=yes,0=no)	18%	.39	250	17%	.78	367	
Family income (range=1 to 7)	5.53	1.60	233	5.48	1.55	355	
Casual dating (1=yes,0=no)	67%	.47	247	79%	.41	366	
Serious dating (1=yes,0=no)	78%	.41	248	67%	.47	366	
Knowledge (range=0 to 2)	.87	.34	248	.89	.35	359	.63
Reason for violence (range=1 to 42)	26.17	8.85	250	27.51	8.34	361	.92
Serious violence (range=0 to 4)	.05	.21	247	.05	.21	358	.69
Mild violence (range=0 to 4)	.35	.48	245	.25	.43	358	.79
Formal severity (range=0 to 30)	28.41	3.20	245	28.05	3.38	354	.85
Formal certainty (range=0 to 22)	1.37	3.39	249	3.78	4.96	363	.93
Certinf1 (family/friends) (range=0 to 40)	12.87	11.36	241	27.77	10.58	359	.92
Certinf2 (dating/self-respect) (range=0 to 20)	7.04	5.63	249	13.43	5.21	361	.74
Sevinf1 (friends) (range=0 to 20)	13.07	5.04	242	13.96	4.75	361	.80
Sevinf2 (dating/self-respect) (range=0 to 20)	16.27	3.64	247	16.28	3.39	363	.62
Formal justice (range=0 to 6)	2.50	1.87	225	1.23	1.74	347	.85
Relationship termination (range=0 to 2)	1.75	.50	227	1.24	.80	302	.63
Informal intervention (range=0 to 6)	2.63	1.89	226	1.83	1.93	337	.78

APPENDIX B
ITEMS USED TO CONSTRUCT INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES²⁴

Family Income

Below \$10,000 (1)	\$41,000–50,000 (5)
\$10,000–20,000 (2)	\$51,000–60,000 (6)
\$21,000–30,000 (3)	Over \$60,000 (7)
\$31,000–40,000 (4)	

²⁴ The questionnaire items and coding procedures used to create the indices for each of the variables are available from the authors on request.

Knowledge

- 1) In watching television in the past year, about how often were you exposed to portrayals, discussions, or news reports about violence within relationships?
- 2) In reading news articles, commentaries, magazine stories or books in the past year, about how often were you exposed to descriptions, discussions, or reports about violence within relationships?

Reasons for Violence

When partners hit each other, they have possible reasons they use or believe for doing so. For each reason, tell me how often you think other people might use it as a reason for hitting their partner during an argument:

- 1) Letting off steam
- 2) Punishing their partner
- 3) Teaching their partner a lesson
- 4) Getting their own way
- 5) Keeping them from leaving
- 6) Getting them under control
- 7) Forcing them to have sex

Mild Violence

- 1) Threw something at partner.
- 2) Pushed, grabbed or shoved partner.
- 3) Slapped partner.
- 4) Kicked, bit, or hit partner with fist(s) or with something other than fists.
- 5) Threatened to hit or throw something at your partner.

Serious Violence

- 1) Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something other than your partner.
- 2) Beat up partner.
- 3) Threatened with a knife or gun.
- 4) Used a knife or gun.

Formal Justice Process

If a girlfriend/boyfriend hits you during an argument:

- 1) Should police be called?
- 2) Should an arrest be made?
- 3) Should they go to jail?

If a girlfriend/boyfriend hits you during an argument badly enough to cause some injury:

- 1) Should police be called?
- 2) Should an arrest be made?

3) Should they go to jail?

Relationship Termination

If a girlfriend/boyfriend hits you during an argument should the relationship end?

If a girlfriend/boyfriend hits you during an argument badly enough to cause some injury should the relationship end?

Informal Intervention

If a girlfriend/boyfriend hits you during an argument:

- 1) Should friends get involved?
- 2) Should relatives get involved?
- 3) Should outside community or counseling groups get involved?

Formal Severity

- 1) If you were to hit your girlfriend/boyfriend during an argument and you were caught and arrested, how much of a problem would that create for your life? (Rate how big a problem on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 meaning not a problem at all for you, and 10 meaning an extremely bad problem.
- 2) If you were to hit your girlfriend/boyfriend during an argument and you were arrested and taken to court, how much of a problem would that create for your life? (Rate how big a problem on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 meaning not a problem at all for you, and 10 meaning an extremely bad problem.
- 3) If you were to hit your girlfriend/boyfriend during an argument and you were arrested, taken to court, and jailed, how much of a problem would that create for your life? (Rate how big a problem on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 meaning not a problem at all for you, and 10 meaning an extremely bad problem.

Formal Certainty

Imagine you hit your girlfriend/boyfriend during an argument. Rate the chances of each result happening from 0 to 10.

- 1) Be arrested.
- 2) Be arrested and taken to court.
- 3) Be arrested, taken to court, and jailed.

Disapproval of Family and Friends (Certainty)

Imagine you hit your girlfriend/boyfriend during an argument. Please read below the list of things which might happen to you as a result. Rate the chances of each result happening from 0 to 10.

- 1) Disapproval or loss or respect from your male friends if they found out.

- 2) Disapproval or loss of respect from your female friends if they found out.
- 3) Disapproval or loss of respect from your parents if they found out.
- 4) Disapproval or loss or respect from other relatives if they found out.

Dating and Self-Respect (Certainty)

Imagine you hit your girlfriend/boyfriend during an argument. Please read below the list of things which might happen to you as a result. Rate the chances of each result happening from 0 to 10.

- 1) Find it more difficult to get other dates if they found out.
- 2) Think less of yourself or feel ashamed.

Disapproval of Friends (Severity)

If you were to hit your girlfriend/boyfriend during an argument, how much of a problem would that create for your life? Circle your response: on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 meaning not a problem at all for you, and 10 meaning an extremely bad problem.

- 1) If you were to hit your girlfriend/boyfriend during an argument and your male friends disapproved or lost respect for you, how much of a problem would that create for your life?
- 2) If you were to hit your girlfriend/boyfriend during an argument and your female friends disapproved or lost respect for you, how much of a problem would that create for your life?

Dating and Self-Respect (Severity)

If you were to hit your girlfriend/boyfriend during an argument, how much of a problem would that create for your life? Circle your response: on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 meaning not a problem at all for you, and 10 meaning an extremely bad problem.

- 1) If you were to hit your girlfriend/boyfriend during an argument and you found it difficult to get other dates, how much of a problem would that create for your life?
- 2) If you were to hit your girlfriend/boyfriend during an argument and you felt ashamed and thought less of yourself, how much of a problem would that create for your life?

APPENDIX C

Correlations

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)
Independent variables:																			
(1) Gender	1.00																		
(2) Pace	.04	1.00																	
(3) Parents violent	.00	-.20**	1.00																
(4) Casual dating	.14**	.01	.04	1.00															
(5) Serious dating	-.12*	.03	-.05	-.13**	1.00														
(6) Family income	-.01	.21**	-.20**	.06	.13**	1.00													
(7) Reason for violence	.08	-.01	.02	.03	.00	.09	1.00												
(8) Mild violence	-.11*	-.08	.14**	-.12*	.17**	.00	-.04	1.00											
(9) Serious violence	.01	-.09	.06	-.03	.05	.02	-.04	.23**	1.00										
(10) Knowledge	-.02	.04	-.01	.06	-.04	-.04	-.05	-.10*	-.03	1.00									
Dependent variables:																			
(11) Formal severity	-.05	.12*	-.04	.00	.06	.10*	-.01	.02	-.06	.07	1.00								
(12) Formal certainty	.26**	-.03	-.02	.04	-.12*	-.04	-.14**	-.15**	-.01	.02	.04	1.00							
(13) Informal certainty	.56**	.13**	-.10*	.12*	-.06	.04	.04	-.16**	-.04	-.01	.14**	.27**	1.00						
(14) Informal certainty	.50**	.15**	-.04	.01	-.06	.06	-.01	-.18**	-.10*	.03	.18**	.34**	.66**	1.00					
(15) Informal severity	.10*	.15*	-.07	.02	-.06	.10*	.03	-.16**	-.18**	.04	.29**	.13**	.28**	.36**	1.00				
(16) Informal severity	.00	.11*	-.07	-.03	.02	.10*	.07	-.06	-.09	.09	.45**	.08	.20**	.25**	.51**	1.00			
(17) Formal justice	-.33**	-.14**	-.04	-.05	-.02	-.04	-.12*	-.06	.04	-.01	.17**	.18**	-.12*	-.08	.03	.12	1.00		
(18) Relationship	-.35**	.03	-.12*	.02	-.06	.07	-.12*	-.09	-.02	-.03	.07	.06	-.10	-.07	.08	.13*	.47**	1.00	
(19) Informal	-.20**	.10	-.04	-.04	-.03	.02	-.06	-.10	-.05	.04	.16**	.02	-.04	.07	.20**	.18**	.46**	.27**	1.00

*Significant at .01

**Significant at .001

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